

FUNDAMENTAL ARMENOLOGY

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electronic journal

ISSUE 1 (23) 2026

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National Academy
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HISTORY

AN EPISODE FROM THE HISTORY OF THE 1299 SYRIAN CAMPAIGN OF THE MONGOL ILKHANATE AND THEIR ALLIES

Aram Hovhannisyan¹

ABSTRACT

The history of Armenian-Mongol relations occupies a very important and unique place in the history of Cilician Armenia. Unfortunately, to this day, many events in the history of these relations have not been subjected to meticulous study, and numerous issues have not been properly evaluated. Our present research is dedicated to filling that gap.

It is well known that the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia became a junior ally of the Mongols through the Armenian-Mongol treaty signed in Karakorum in 1254. Together with them, it participated in numerous campaigns against the Mamluk Sultanate of Egypt, which subsequently earned the Armenian kingdom the Sultanate's enmity.

Keywords: Cilicia, Mongol, Syria, allies, troops, campaign, Ghazan Ilkhan, King of Armenia, Hetum II

Although the Mongol Ilkhanate had weakened considerably by the late 13th century, during the reign of Ghazan Ilkhan (1295–1304), this ruler took several steps toward strengthening the state and achieved certain initial successes. To consolidate his achievements, it was certainly in the interests of the Mongol Ilkhanate to carry out a campaign toward Assyria (Syria) and Palestine to reach the Mediterranean coast—an objective the Mongol Ilkhanate attempted to realize throughout its entire existence.

Naturally, in the implementation of this Mongol plan, a specific role was also assigned to its allies, among whom was the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia. In general, the Mongol Ilkhanate's campaigns beginning in 1299 were to have extremely significant importance not only for the Ilkhanate itself but also for the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia and other allies.

As the contemporary researcher S. Der Nersessian testifies, King Hetum II of Cilicia still hoped to defeat the Egyptians with the help of the Mongols². Naturally, in such a scenario, new perspectives would also open up for the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia.

Thus, in 1299, the Mongol Ilkhan Ghazan, finding a favorable opportunity, began the next Syrian campaign. Various medieval chroniclers speak of this campaign, though the most detailed account is provided by Rashid al-Din. According to his testimony, the

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² Der Nersessian 2005: 409.

Mongol army left Tabriz on October 16, 1299, and moved toward Syria³. Naturally, both the peoples of Transcaucasia who were part of the Mongol Ilkhanate and the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia took an active part in the aforementioned campaign.

This is also evidenced by the famous author of Mongol history and contemporary chronicler, Hayton (Hetum the Historian), who participated in all important events from the beginning of the campaign to its end. He testifies that before starting the campaign, Ghazan Ilkhan ordered the Armenian and Georgian kings and other Christians of the Eastern lands to present themselves to him with their troops⁴. In addition to the peoples of Transcaucasia, the army of Cilician Armenia, led by Hetum II, also participated in the 1299 Syrian campaign, which indicates its importance. In the event of this campaign's success, the positions of the Sultanate of Egypt and its allies in the region would weaken, which was extremely important for the Armenian state.

Although medieval chroniclers speak extensively about the mentioned campaign and its details, there are nevertheless highly contradictory and conflicting testimonies in the information they provide. First and foremost, it is interesting to clarify with what number of troops the Mongols and their allies marched toward Syria. We have testimonies from several authors regarding this.

According to the account of Hayton the Historian, the number of Mongol troops during the Syrian campaign was fifty (50) thousand⁵, while the Georgian chronicler puts it at one hundred and thirty (130) thousand⁶.

As we can observe, there is a certain contradiction in the information provided by medieval chroniclers. However, the issue does not end there, as Nerses Palients also speaks of a quantity of one hundred and fifty (150) thousand, further complicating the problem under investigation⁷. It is difficult to give a clear assessment of what caused such conflicting information from medieval chroniclers.

As we have already mentioned, Rashid al-Din—who was appointed to a high position during the reign of Ghazan Ilkhan and was well aware of almost all important developments—also provides quite reliable information regarding these events. In his turn, referring to the 1299 Syrian campaign, he states the number of Mongol troops as eighty (80) thousand⁸.

In fact, Rashid al-Din also provides us with new and contradictory information, further complicating the issue.

Ultimately, comparing the chroniclers' information, the view of eighty (80) thousand put forward by Rashid al-Din can be considered the most acceptable, since the 50,000 mentioned by Hayton the Historian likely refers only to the Mongol troops. Rashid al-Din

³ Rashid al-Din 1946: 182.

⁴ Hayton (Hetum) the Historian 1842: 62.

⁵ Hayton (Hetum) the Historian 1842: 62.

⁶ Georgian Chronicle 1971: 180.

⁷ Minor Chronicles 1956: 183.

⁸ Rashid al-Din 1946: 182.

probably noted the total number of the allies' and the Mongols' troops together. As for the data reported by the Georgian chronicler and Nerses Palients, these should be considered an obvious exaggeration. Unfortunately, no information has been preserved in medieval primary sources regarding the number of the Egyptian Sultanate's armies.

In fact, from the testimonies of the chroniclers, we can clearly record that the Mongol Ilkhanate, together with its allies, attached great importance to the aforementioned campaign and, for that reason, began the expedition with such large-scale forces.

Ultimately, the troops of the Mongol Ilkhanate and their allies entered Syria in 1299 and besieged the strategically important city of Aleppo; however, the allied forces met with fierce resistance there, which forced them to bypass it and capture the city of Hama⁹. Continuing their advance, they also approached the city of Homs, where on December 22, 1299, a second major battle took place between the Mongol forces, the allies, and the troops of the Egyptian Sultanate¹⁰. The chronicler Rashid al-Din, who is one of the reliable authors of that period, notes that the Mamluk army relied on its numerical superiority, but they occupied a tactically incorrect position; consequently, the Mongols and their allies were able to celebrate victory and capture the city of Homs, which was undoubtedly a significant achievement. According to researcher S. Der Nersessian, King Hetum II of Cilicia participated in the Battle of Homs with five thousand warriors¹¹, which, in our view, may be accurate.

Following the capture of Homs, separate detachments of the Mongol Ilkhanate and its allies continued their military successes and, pursuing the enemy, reached as far as Jerusalem and Gaza. M. Ormanian expresses his view on these events, according to which King Hetum II also aided the Mongols with his regiments and reached Jerusalem¹².

Undoubtedly, the capture of Homs and the advance of the Mongol troops brought great enthusiasm among the allies and, conversely, created a state of panic among the Muslim population of Syria. It seemed as though the Holy Land was to pass back into their administration¹³, but one more important circumstance must be noted. Unfortunately, Ghazan Ilkhan, who was one of the wise Mongol leaders of the time, committed a major tactical error. Instead of pursuing and destroying the enemy's troops, he ceased military operations, sufficing himself with putting the enemy to flight; this, in our view, was a mistake, as it provided the enemy with the opportunity to reorganize their forces.

⁹ The Cambridge History of Iran 1977: 387; Mikayelyan 2007: 436; Stewart 2001: 136-140; History of the Armenian People 1976: 764.

¹⁰ Lane-Poole 1901: 296; Muir 1896: 54. Georgian researcher B. Khurtsilava finds that this battle took place on December 23. 2025: 255.

¹¹ Der Nersessian 2005: 409.

¹² Ormanian 2001, column 2059.

¹³ History of the Armenian People 2014: 372.

In 1299, the united army of the Mongols and their allies also captured Damascus, which was an event of major significance. The military forces of Cilician Armenia, led by King Hetum II, also took an active part in the capture of the city, which was undoubtedly to complicate Armenian-Egyptian relations even further in the future. Among contemporary researchers, C. Mutaſian expresses a view regarding the aforementioned events, according to which the Armenian King Hetum II constantly urged Ghazan to fight against the Egyptians¹⁴. Continuing his thought, Mutaſian adds that Hetum II perhaps felt that this was the only hope for his kingdom¹⁵. To what extent the Armenian king was able to influence the Mongol Ilkhan is difficult to state clearly, but one circumstance is plain: Ghazan Ilkhan was very well-disposed toward the Armenians, as evidenced by his subsequent actions.

Thus, by participating in the Ilkhanate's 1299 Syrian campaign, the Armenian King of Cilicia initially reaped significant benefits. Specifically, the Cilician kingdom received from Ghazan Ilkhan those fortresses and territories that the Armenian state had previously conceded to the Sultanate of Egypt. This is also attested by the Arab historian and geographer Abu'l-Fida, who notes that when the Mongols entered Damascus, the Armenians wanted to recover those cities that had been captured by the Muslims earlier and which the Muslims—being weakened—could not defend¹⁶. Continuing his thought, the author notes that in this manner the Armenians regained those cities and took back Hamus, Til Hamdun, Kwayra, Sarvandikar, Noghayr, and other places, and the Armenians also took possession of other castles and cities located south of the Jahan (Pyramus) River¹⁷.

As we can observe, Ghazan Ilkhan highly valued the alliance with the Armenians, and the start of the 1299 Syrian campaign he undertook was quite successful both for the allies and especially for the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia, as the latter expanded their state borders and recovered territories of strategic importance. It is also interesting to note that the conquest of Syria by the Mongols and their allies generated great enthusiasm in Western Europe and the Christian world in general. This is evidenced by the fact that King James II of Aragon sent a letter to the Mongol leader Ghazan, congratulating him on his successes in the Syrian campaign. Furthermore, the King of Aragon even offered military assistance to the Mongol Ilkhan. Although the successes of the allies were obvious, they changed a short time later, which was to become extremely dangerous for the Armenian state of Cilicia as well.

Thus, the events of previous years soon repeated themselves¹⁸, and Ghazan Ilkhan learned that a rebellion had broken out on the eastern borders of his state and

¹⁴ Mutaſian 2001: 456.

¹⁵ Mutaſian 2001: 456.

¹⁶ Arabic Sources 1965: 243-244.

¹⁷ Arabic Sources 1965: 243-244.

¹⁸ Hovhannisyan 2023: 419-426.

hurried back to Tabriz¹⁹. It is not excluded that a certain agreement existed between the enemies of the Mongol Ilkhanate and the Sultanate of Egypt, and for that reason, the same events repeated during this Syrian campaign once again. Naturally, the departure of the Mongol monarch from Syria caused great anxiety for the Armenian King of Cilicia, who realized well that the allies, even with certain Mongol troops, would find it difficult to achieve success in the struggle against the Mamluks and fulfill the task set before them. It is true that the Mongol Ilkhan promised to return the following year and continue the Syrian campaign, but his departure meant the return of Syria to Mamluk jurisdiction—a circumstance that was extremely dangerous for the Armenian kingdom and the other allies.

It is true that in the subsequent years of 1300 and 1303, the Mongol expeditions into Syria were resumed; however, overall, these ended with negative outcomes. The Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia suffered the most from this in the following decades, as it was left entirely alone against a powerful enemy. This is also attested by the prominent researcher René Grousset, who similarly believes that the Armenians, having joined the Mongol Ilkhanate, became more vulnerable than ever²⁰. S. Bornazyan has also addressed this issue, clearly stating that the Ilkhanate's nearly half-century-long struggle to conquer Assyria (Syria) was unsuccessful, and the rule of the Egyptian Sultanate was consolidated in Palestine and Syria²¹.

CONCLUSION

Thus, at the end of the 13th and the beginning of the 14th centuries, Armenian-Mongol cooperation began to yield negative consequences, and the Armenian state fell into a dire situation.

Although the Syrian campaign undertaken in 1299 by the Mongol ruler Ghazan Ilkhan achieved certain initial successes, its ultimate failure dealt a heavy blow to the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia. Because the Armenian state shared a direct border with Syria, it was destined to receive the first blow from the Mamluks in the following years, while the Mongol Ilkhanate, as an ally, would be unable to help the Armenians. Following the 1299 Syrian campaigns organized by the Mongols, a period of decline began for the Kingdom of Cilicia, along with a search for new allies. This circumstance did not bring significant success to the Armenians; instead, it further aggravated relations between Cilician Armenia and the Egyptian Sultanate, contributing to the future agony and eventual collapse of the Armenian kingdom.

¹⁹ Hayton the Historian 1842: 63; Gadzhimuradov 2025: 8.

²⁰ Grousset 2005: 345.

²¹ Bornazyan 1973: 35.

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THE ACTIVITIES OF THE HUNCHAKIANS IN TRANSCAUCASIA, 1918–1920

Gegham Hovhannisyan¹

Abstract

During the final period of World War I, the visible victory of the Entente on one hand, and the collapse of Tsarism in Russia on the other, created objective prerequisites for the restoration of Armenian statehood. The national parties, having assumed the role of the Armenian people's political leadership, attempted to orient themselves within the vortex of rapid geopolitical events. Each of them had its own unique vision for solving this problem.

The Hunchakian Party was in a similar situation. Although the Hunchakians' vision of independent statehood differed from that of the ARF (Dashnaktsutyun), which played a dominant role in Armenian socio-political life, throughout the entire existence of the First Republic of Armenia, the Hunchakians considered it an inseparable part of United Armenia. After the fall of the Republic, the Hunchakians declared that they were setting aside ideological differences and were ready to cooperate with the Soviet authorities of Armenia.

Keywords: Hunchakian Party, Transcaucasia, Russia, Turkey, Armenian statehood, Republic of Armenia, Dashnaktsutyun Party, “Gortsavor” (Worker) newspaper, Entente powers.

Introduction

In October 1917, the Bolshevik Party of Russia overthrew the Provisional Government and took power into its own hands. Shortly thereafter, Russia deviated from its natural path of development and found itself in ideological, political, and economic chaos. This event had a turning point significance in the lives of the peoples of Russia. Objective prerequisites were created for conquered peoples on the path toward separation from Russia and self-determination.

The objective of this article is to comprehensively, impartially, and completely present the activities of the SDHP (Social Democrat Hunchakian Party) in Transcaucasia during a period that was chronologically short but of decisive significance in the life of the Armenian people. From this perspective, the issue is being highlighted for the first time².

The emphasis on the importance of Transcaucasia is due to the fact that as early as the initial period of World War I (1915), the center of the Hunchakian Party had

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² During the period under discussion, the activities of the Hunchakians have been addressed by A. Kitur (1962); R. Khurshudyan (1979); V. Melikyan (2010); E. Djeredjian (2017); G. Hovhannisyan (2014).

moved from Paris to Tiflis (Tbilisi), which increased the role of the Transcaucasian Hunchakians and that region within the party. Transcaucasia had objectively become the center of Armenian political consolidation. It was no coincidence that the activities of Armenian political forces, including the Hunchakians, were concentrated here.

The Restoration of Armenian Statehood and the Hunchakians

The October Revolution was perceived in Transcaucasia as a betrayal of the February Revolution and the democratic development prospects of the Provisional Government. All political parties in the region, except for the Bolsheviks, condemned the illegal seizure of power³. The vast majority of Hunchakians in Transcaucasia stood on this same ideological foundation; their anti-Bolshevik position had been demonstrated as early as June 1917 at the conference of Hunchakian branches of Russia, Persia, and Transcaucasia held in Tiflis⁴.

The Soviet government of Russia unilaterally withdrew from the war and began separate peace negotiations with the Central Powers. This policy led to the withdrawal of Russian army units from occupied areas of Western Armenia starting in January 1918. Taking advantage of the exposed front, the Turks began their advancement. Resisting the enemy became the primary task for the Armenian people. Like other national-patriotic forces, the Hunchakians also committed themselves to this cause.

To clarify the party's priorities and coordinate actions in the current situation, the Central Executive in Tiflis wrote to the American branch in January 1918, proposing to convene a general representative assembly of the Hunchakian Party⁵. However, that meeting did not take place, primarily due to the lack of safe travel and transportation caused by the war. (The previous 7th General Assembly had been held in 1913).

On February 8, the Yerevan branch of the Hunchakian Party for "Turkish-Armenians" (meaning Western Armenians) published a call urging people to take up arms and defend the fatherland⁶. During this period, the issue of Armenian autonomy became a subject of wide discussion in the influential Hunchakian periodical "Yeritasard Hayastan" (Young Armenia). Its editor, Sapah-Gulian, did not believe that after the withdrawal of Russian troops from the Caucasian front, "Turkish hordes would not enter Armenia under false pretenses"⁷. Events proved that Sapah-Gulian's fears were not unfounded. This view was also shared by A. Babyan, head of the SDHP Central

³ Melikyan 2010: 7.

⁴ National Archives of Armenia (NAA), f. 1456, l. 1, g. 206, p. 1; etc.

⁵ NAA, f. 1456, l. 1, g. 2014, p. 1. (Note: Since the start of WWI, the party had been unable to convene due to unfavorable conditions. The Turkish branches were destroyed. The Paris center, consisting only of Sapah-Gulian and Varazdat, was inactive. By the initiative of US Hunchakians, a new Central Executive was elected via referendum to be based in Tiflis).

⁶ NAA, f. 1456, l. 1, g. 215, p. 1.

⁷ Yeritasard Hayastan, 1918, №78, February 23.

Executive. In his article “The Armenian Question at the Present Moment,” he wrote that for the many sufferings it had endured, the Armenian people should be rewarded not only with autonomy but also with political self-determination⁸.

The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, signed in March 1918, caused deep disappointment among the Hunchakians. That treaty “ignored and annulled the principle of self-determination of nations adopted by the Bolsheviks and the decree ‘About Turkish Armenia,’ giving preference to the problem of maintaining power. In Brest, the rights of the Armenian people were trampled, and a far-reaching deal was signed to hand over regions that did not belong to them to the Ottoman Empire”⁹.

“Yeritasard Hayastan” also addressed the ideology of the representatives of the former Tsarist government—or as Sapah-Gulian characterized it, “Old Russia”—regarding Armenian autonomy. In his opinion, the representatives of Old Russia “did not want us to exercise our right to self-determination on either side of Masis”¹⁰.

On April 9, 1918, under pressure from the Menshevik-Musavatist block of the Transcaucasian Sejm, Transcaucasia separated from Russia and was proclaimed the Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic. Realizing the grave consequences of this decision, the Central Executive of the Hunchakian Party published a call to the population of Transcaucasia in Armenian and Russian on April 11, condemning the Sejm’s decision to separate Transcaucasia from Russia and declare an independent republic. It condemned the “counter-revolutionary nationalists and false socialists of Transcaucasia, who, by uniting, have severed ties with the Russian Democratic Republic and based the international legal-political status of Transcaucasia on a Turco-German orientation”¹¹.

The consequence of the Sejm’s anti-Armenian policy was the collapse of Erzurum’s defense and the city’s fall¹². On April 25, Kars was surrendered to the Turks, and on May 15, Alexandropol followed. Eastern Armenians faced a mortal threat. On May 16, 1918, the SDHP Central Executive issued a call to the Armenian people to set aside all party differences, unite, and take up arms to struggle against “the enemy invading the country.” The call stated that it was better to die with a weapon in hand for the people and the achievements of the revolution “than to fall slavishly before the enemy’s sword and bullet”¹³.

It should be emphasized that in the struggle against the Turkish troops during the winter and spring of 1918, Hunchakian figures such as Sargis Armaghanyan, Vahagn Nalbandyan (Sebastatsi Vahagn), Sargis Chebejian, and many Hunchakian volunteers

⁸ Yeritasard Hayastan, 1918, №33, August 24.

⁹ Melkonyan 2015 (Ed.): 614.

¹⁰ Yeritasard Hayastan, 1919, №95, March 26.

¹¹ NAA, f. 1456, l. 1, g. 216, p. 2.

¹² Melikyan 2019: 138.

¹³ NAA, f. 1456, l. 1, g. 219, p. 1.

distinguished themselves¹⁴. Pandukht (Mikael Seryan), a devotee of the Armenian liberation struggle and a figure of the Hunchakian Party, also made an unreserved contribution to the fight against the Turkish invaders. In 1918, we find Pandukht in the battles of Sardarapat, and later in Karabakh-Zangezur. In April 1919, after Turkey returned the Kars region to the Republic of Armenia, Pandukht and his small number of comrades-in-arms were stationed in the border town of Sarighamish¹⁵.

The Turkish invasion of Transcaucasia further deepened the disagreements between the Armenian, Georgian, and Muslim deputies of the Sejm, which resulted in the collapse of the Transcaucasian Federative Republic. Under conditions where Turco-Transcaucasian peace negotiations had begun in Batum on May 11, the Georgian and Muslim deputies—under the patronage of Germany and Turkey—announced their withdrawal from the Sejm. On May 26, the independence of the Republic of Georgia was proclaimed, and on the 27th, that of Azerbaijan. Nothing remained for the Armenian deputies of the Sejm but to orient themselves toward the independence of Armenia. On May 30, the Armenian National Council in Tiflis declared the independence of Armenia. It was a historical necessity and, under the created conditions, had no alternative¹⁶.

This historical event was not unequivocally accepted by all Armenian political forces. In a leaflet-call published on May 31, 1918, the Central Executive of the Hunchakian Party condemned the May 30 decision of the Armenian National Council in Tiflis to proclaim itself the sole supreme authority of the Armenian provinces of Transcaucasia. The reason for the dissatisfaction was the significant influence of the Dashnaktsutyun Party within the National Council—a reality with which the other parties did not wish to reconcile. This was why the Hunchakians proposed forming a “New Provisional National Council consisting of an equal number of representatives from all political, revolutionary, and socialist organizations”¹⁷.

In the socio-political life of the First Republic of Armenia, created after the heroic May battles, the Hunchakians—along with the Mensheviks, Bolsheviks, SRs (Socialist Revolutionaries), and “Specifics” (Social-Democrat Armenian Workers’ Organization)—formed the left wing of that political field.

The Baku Commune and the Hunchakians

As a result of the Turkish invasion of Transcaucasia, the borders established by the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk had already been violated by May 15, 1918. Turkey sought to seize the oil of Baku, then advance to the North Caucasus and ultimately to Central

¹⁴ Djeredjian 2014: 200-202.

¹⁵ Djeredjian 2018: 217.

¹⁶ Melkonyan 2010 (Ed.): 15-16.

¹⁷ NAA, f. 1456, l. 1, g. 221, p. 1.

Asia to realize the project of creating “Great Turan”¹⁸. Since April 25, 1918, a Council of People’s Commissars had been established in Baku, headed by Stepan Shahumyan.

The task of halting the Turkish troops’ advance fell to the forces of the Baku Commune, the overwhelming majority of which consisted of Armenian national military units. The fall of Baku would have dire consequences for the Armenian population; for this reason, the ARF (Dashnaktsutyun), the primary force in Armenian political life, cooperated with the Baku Commune and the Bolsheviks. The Baku Committee of the SDHP also became actively involved in the defense of Baku.

After the February Revolution, the Baku branch of the Hunchakian Party emerged from the underground and elected a new committee of seven members (Sahak Muradyan, Mkrtich Manucharyan, Misak Hakobyan, Khurshud Melik-Aghamiryan, Sargis Sargsyan, Melkon Aslibekyan, and Vardges Geghamyan). On July 6, 1918, the publication of the branch’s organ, the newspaper “Mer Orer” (Our Days), began¹⁹. At the suggestion of St. Shahumyan, the Baku Hunchakian Committee organized the “Red 24th Battalion,” consisting of 700 men, in which Hunchakian Party members formed a significant number. Hunchakian figure Tigran Ghazanchyan was appointed commander of the battalion. By the decision of the SDHP Baku Committee, committee member Sargis Sargsyan was appointed as his deputy. T. Ghazanchyan appealed to the citizens through the Baku Commune’s newspaper “Izvestia”, calling on his party comrades to join the forming battalion (June 24, 1918)²⁰.

In June 1918, the famous Hunchakian military figure Vahagn Nalbandyan (Sebastatsi Vahagn) reached Baku along with Sepuh and Murad of Sebastia, who were rushing from the North Caucasus to aid the defenders of Baku²¹. The capture of Baku by the Turks on September 15, 1918, had grave consequences for the local Armenians. Those who remained in the city were massacred by the invaders. The Hunchakian organization of Baku also suffered heavy losses. The editorial office of the “Mer Orer” newspaper and the branch archives were destroyed. Sahak Muradyan, secretary of the Hunchakian Baku Committee, was killed along with his family²².

The Hunchakians condemned the conspiratorial murder of the 26 Baku Commissars. The article “St. Shahumyan and Comrades” was published in the party’s Tiflis branch periodical, where Shahumyan was highly praised both as an individual and as a practical leader²³.

In his memoirs, Kh. Aghamiryan writes that after the tragic events in Baku, the Hunchakian Party no longer had a structure in the city. After the establishment of Soviet rule in Azerbaijan, the party members—concluding that they had no fundamental

¹⁸ Stepanyan 2016: 497.

¹⁹ NAA, f. 1456, l. 2, g. 23, p. 15; etc.

²⁰ NAA, f. 1456, l. 2, g. 22, p. 64-65.

²¹ Djeredjian 2017: 163-164.

²² NAA, f. 1456, l. 2, g. 22, p. 69.

²³ Gortsavor (Worker), 1919, №1, March 24.

disagreements with the Bolsheviks—considered it unnecessary to restore the Hunchakian organizational structure in Baku and declared that they remained Bolshevik sympathizers²⁴.

The Hunchakian Vision of Independent Armenia

On the eve of the Entente's victory in World War I in the autumn of 1918, the Hunchakians began to widely discuss the theme of restoring Armenian statehood. They maintained that the Entente powers must recognize the "independence of the Araratian Armenian Republic," while simultaneously acknowledging that the greater part of the Armenians' historical homeland was still awaiting its salvation. For this reason, they argued, "until the final solution of the Armenian Question, we stand by their side and shed our blood"²⁵.

In discussing the restoration of Armenian statehood, the Hunchakians believed that at the future peace conference, the Armenian side should propose and defend the idea of separating the six Armenian vilayets and Cilicia from the Ottoman Empire to create an independent Armenian state together with the "Araratian Republic"²⁶.

As early as January 1918, the Central Executive of the Hunchakian Party had reached out to its branches regarding the convening of a general assembly of the party at the end of that year. However, that meeting did not take place because the party's overseas branches did not respond. Consequently, in late December 1918, the Hunchakian center in Tiflis issued a new circular announcing that it reserved for itself the right to determine the party's future course of action²⁷.

One of the significant events in Armenian socio-political life was the Second Congress of Western Armenians held in Yerevan in early 1919 (February–March). Hunchakian figure A. Kitur served as one of the secretaries of the congress's organizing committee. He was also elected to the "Executive Body" responsible for implementing the decisions of the congress²⁸.

The "Gortsavor" (Worker) Newspaper

The Hunchakian perspective on socialism, the resolution of the national question, Armenian-Georgian and Armenian-Azerbaijani relations, and several other issues found expression in the weekly newspaper "Gortsavor", which began publication in Tiflis in March 1919. It was the organ of the party's Tiflis branch. The periodical was edited by

²⁴ NAA, f. 1456, l. 2, g. 22, p. 69.

²⁵ Yeritasard Hayastan, 1918, №37, September 7.

²⁶ Yeritasard Hayastan, 1918, №48, October 16.

²⁷ National Archives of Armenia (NAA), f. 1456, l. 1, g. 248, p. 1.

²⁸ Pan-Armenian Consultations (Hamahaykakan khorhrdaksutyunner) 2004: 296.

Simon Hovvyan (Tashir), a member of the SDHP Central Executive, and Bagrat Syunik, an alternate member of the board and a well-known publicist²⁹.

The editorial of the first issue, titled “Our Unswerving Path,” outlines the Hunchakian view on the path to resolving the Armenian Question—a matter of vital significance for the Armenian people. Essentially, the solution to this issue was linked, on one hand, to Soviet Russia and, on the other, to the policies pursued by the Entente powers. The author of the editorial (Tashir) expressed a fear that if the Armenian Question were not resolved then, it would be buried “finally and irretrievably”³⁰.

The author approached the issue from a class perspective, maintaining that regardless of what solution the Western powers might provide for the Armenian Question, from the viewpoint of socialist Hunchakians, it could not be considered “perfect liberation” for the exploited masses of the Armenian people. Concluding the article, the author noted that he saw the solution to this and other international political issues within the decisions of the Third International (Comintern) convened in Moscow in 1919.

It is necessary to emphasize that these so-called “left” (pro-Bolshevik) Hunchakians held an exaggerated view of the capabilities of the international socialist movement and the role it played in world politics. It should be noted that of the five members of the Tiflis Hunchakian center, only Tashir and Maro Nazarbek held such views. The other members of the center—Lazo (Hakob Ghazaryan), Mars (Vahan Ghukasyan), and Arshak Babyan—and the vast majority of Transcaucasian Hunchakians at this time were closer in their views to the Social-Democratic Mensheviks.

Another Hunchakian publicist, Bagrat Syunik, discussed the policies of the Great Powers, the political orientation of the Armenian people, Pan-Turkism, and the situation of Armenians in Azerbaijan in his articles. Syunik subjected these issues to critical analysis, viewing them within the context of international political events and arriving at conclusions that remain relevant today.

“Gortsavor” was published during the peak of the Paris Peace Conference. The Armenian delegates participating in its work, as representatives of a people who had made the greatest sacrifices in the war, expected the Entente powers to create an Armenian state separated from Turkish rule. Touching upon this issue in the article “The Victory of the Allied States and the Liberation of Small Nations,” Syunik wrote that from the very beginning of the war, the Entente states declared that their struggle against the Germans was not only defensive but was also for the “cause of the liberation of oppressed small nations”³¹.

The author emphasized that despotic Russia also responded to this declaration of the Entente, though Russia was “only endowed with the virtue of smothering the

²⁹ Museum of Literature and Art (GAT), S. Hovvyan fund, g. 144a, p. 11.

³⁰ Gortsavor, 1919, №1, March 24.

³¹ Gortsavor, 1919, №1, March 24.

national-liberation aspirations of its subject peoples and the liberal movements of the Russian people in blood”³². According to Syunik, with that declaration, Russia intended to prevent “probable uprisings and rebellions of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Finland, Ukraine, and Islamic tribes” in the event of German success³³.

One characteristic phenomenon of the period was the Civil War in Russia, the outcome of which would determine the future of not only the Russians but also the constituent peoples of Russia. In the article “Lenin or Denikin,” Abgar Payazat wrote that thanks to the impulses of the revolution, the peoples of Russia had “dived so deep into their self-determination that no matter how much they might avoid Bolshevism, in a choice between Lenin and Denikin, they would choose Lenin, because he gives these nations not only the minimum of their desires, but even the maximum”³⁴. The author believed that “the Russian people have moved too far from the possibility of understanding Denikin, and Denikin’s efforts will be in vain”³⁵.

Speaking on this issue, Stepan Sapah-Gulian considered it a mistake of Armenian diplomacy to send representatives to the governments created by Tsarist generals Kolchak, Denikin, and Yudenich: “A step that could create unkind feelings among the Bolsheviks, leading them to assume that we, too, were in agreement with the Kolchaks and Denikins”³⁶.

We believe that Sapah-Gulian’s view on this matter should be approached with reservation. The fact is that during the peak of the Civil War in Russia in 1919–1920, when the aforementioned generals had achieved great military successes, the government of the Republic of Armenia could not yet be certain of a Soviet victory. Therefore, having Armenian representation in the governments created by those generals could not be considered a diplomatic-political error. In this context, referring to Georgia and Azerbaijan, the Hunchakian theorist believed that Armenia could not ally with those states because “we can gain no advantage other than harm”³⁷.

After the creation of the independent democratic republics of Transcaucasia, inter-ethnic relations and issues took on a new character. The Hunchakians were bewildered and outraged that the Social Democratic Menshevik Party—which had fought alongside them against Tsarism and shared the same ideological platform—essentially abandoned the principles of Social Democracy upon coming to power in Georgia.

“Intoxicated by the success of national independence, the ruling party of the Georgian people has chosen a path diametrically opposed to that which a Social-Democratic faction should have adopted. Internationalist principles have been replaced by nationalist, chauvinist thoughts and slogans... Such an extraordinary transformation

³² Gortsavor, 1919, №1, March 24.

³³ Gortsavor, 1919, №1, March 24.

³⁴ Gortsavor, 1919, №1, March 24.

³⁵ Gortsavor, 1919, №1, March 24.

³⁶ Yeritasard Hayastan, 1920, №90, March 13.

³⁷ Yeritasard Hayastan, 1920, №81, February 11.

of a party is unprecedented in revolutionary history,” we read in the editorial article “The Constituent Assembly of Georgia”³⁸. It is noted that in the Georgian Constituent Assembly, there was no representation for the various nationalities making up one-third of that country, nor for any other political party. “The Georgian government developed such restrictive electoral rules that as a result, all 130 deputies were exclusively Georgians”³⁹.

Addressing the territorial dispute between Armenia and Georgia in “Gortsavor”, Bagrat Syunik writes: “Regarding the land disagreements with Georgia, the similar historical past, present, and most importantly, future interests of Armenia and Georgia necessitate and make a close rapprochement a commanding requirement, which is possible by taking the path of mutual concessions”⁴⁰. This approach by the Hunchakian theorist was undoubtedly realistic and in harmony with the interests of these countries.

The topic of inter-ethnic relations also resonates today, as explored in B. Syunik’s article “Pan-Turkism and Karabakh.” The author writes that the Republic of Azerbaijan, encouraged by the prospect of Pan-Turkism and trampling the principle of national self-determination, seeks to crush the will of the Armenians of Karabakh by force of arms and incites inter-ethnic clashes everywhere. The author emphasizes that “struggling Karabakh was not discouraged at all by its brilliant heroic battle; instead, knowing well the inner meaning of the treacherous Ottoman promises, it remained clung to its weapons until the end”⁴¹. The author presents the grim prospect that could result from the implementation of the reactionary political program of Pan-Turkism. According to him, “The victory of Turanism in the world meant death for Armenia, threatened the national-political ideals of the Arabs and Greeks with grave danger, and menaced the independence of Iran”⁴². Syunik considered it a success that “the victory of the allies (the Entente countries) halted the development of Pan-Turkism with a sharp blow”⁴³.

Continuing this theme in another article, Bagrat Syunik concludes that “no matter how the Entente acts, we must remain firm in our standpoint without hesitation. Driven by the supreme interests of its freedom and historical-individual existence, the Armenian people must defend its just and legal demand to unite Karabakh with the Araratian Republic at the cost of the heaviest sacrifices, if it does not want to put its freedom and existence under the fatal Turkish threat should the political horizon in the Near East redden”⁴⁴.

Syunik’s view is further strengthened by the argument that “The Musavatists, carried away by the obsession of creating a ‘Great Azerbaijan,’ made encroachments

³⁸ Gortsavor, 1919, №3, April 7.

³⁹ Gortsavor, 1919, №3, April 7.

⁴⁰ Gortsavor, 1919, №8, May 19.

⁴¹ Gortsavor, 1919, №3, April 7.

⁴² Gortsavor, 1919, №3, April 7.

⁴³ Gortsavor, 1919, №3, April 7.

⁴⁴ Gortsavor, 1919, №8, May 19.

not only on the core Armenian territories of Transcaucasia but also on Persian Azerbaijan⁴⁵. On the path to realizing their goals, the Musavatists were guided by the national-religious slogans of Pan-Turkism⁴⁶.

Publications regarding the state structure and the policies pursued by Armenia also occupy a significant place in "Gortsavor". Being in opposition to the ARF (Dashnaktsutyun), the Hunchakians had a different view regarding the vision of a United and Independent Armenia. On one hand, they welcomed the creation of the Republic of Armenia—which they characterized as the "Araratian Republic"—but on the other hand, they viewed it as only one part of a future United Armenia. This contradiction was largely due to the disagreements between the two Armenian delegations in Paris. In this context, Hrayr Vanyan's article "The Yerevan Parliament and the Turkish-Armenians" notes: "The governing bodies of the political life of the Russian-Armenians clearly strive to transfer the weight of the Armenian Case to Yerevan by all possible means, aiming to strengthen their position in the resolution of the Armenian Cause"⁴⁷.

Questions regarding the state structure and form of government of Armenia are discussed in A. Babyan's article, "The Future State Structure of United Armenia." The article presents the political and economic challenges facing the republic. Babyan argues that the successful implementation of the construction of the future democratic republic is beyond the strength of a single party, and it is necessary to solve the issue of cooperation between revolutionary-socialist parties. The author expresses hope that "common points of mutual contact will be found among us" to resolve this issue⁴⁸.

The fact that the Hunchakians were in the opposition did not mean that they criticized every action of the Armenian government. Regarding interstate relations with Armenia's neighbors, the Hunchakians also supported and approved the steps taken by the authorities. In this regard, the following report from "Gortsavor" is characteristic: At a conference of representatives of the Transcaucasian republics convened in Tiflis, the Georgians and Azerbaijanis demanded that issues regarding disputed territorial regions be decided by a majority vote. This would have meant losing on the issues of Armenian Lori, Akhalkalaki, and Karabakh, conceding due to being in the voting minority.

Furthermore, the Armenians at the conference were asked to sign an alliance between the Transcaucasian republics for the protection of their independence. "Against whom would this alliance be directed—Lenin, Denikin, the Entente, or Turkey?" the periodical raises as a rhetorical question, concluding that it was correct that "the delegates of the Araratian Republic rejected those proposals"⁴⁹.

The ideological direction of "Gortsavor" and its bold, critical articles turned the Georgian Mensheviks against the publication. Their newspaper, "Borba" (Struggle),

⁴⁵ Galoyan 1999: 112.

⁴⁶ Non-proletarian Parties of Russia, 1984: 312.

⁴⁷ Gortsavor, 1919, №3, April 7.

⁴⁸ Gortsavor, 1919, №1, March 24.

⁴⁹ Gortsavor, 1919, №10, June 2.

demanded that the Georgian government close it down, labeling it a “Bolshevik paper.” Eventually, the publication of “Gortsavor” was discontinued after 21 issues had been released⁵⁰.

The Sovietization of Azerbaijan on April 28, 1920, generated great enthusiasm among Armenian Bolsheviks. Ignoring the actual balance of power, they resorted to open rebellion in May 1920 with the aim of seizing power in Armenia. Discussing this issue, Hunchakian theorist A. Kitur writes that “the Tiflis Hunchakian center had already made a decision to overthrow the May 28 regime and Sovietize Armenia”⁵¹. In reality, the Hunchakian center made no such decision, and Kitur does not support his statement with any documentation. There is another circumstance: M. Nazarbek, one of the members of the Hunchakian center, used her great authority within the party to try in every way to increase Bolshevik influence over the Hunchakian Party. Maro Nazarbek herself did not hide this. In her memoirs, she writes that when she returned from exile after the February Revolution of 1917 and met Lenin, Trotsky, and Shahumyan in Petrograd, she remained in the ranks of the Hunchakian Party on their advice to propagate Bolshevik ideas among the Armenians⁵².

We believe that the report of the SDHP Central Executive addressed to the Central Executive Committee of the RSFSR on September 10, 1920, regarding the situation of the Republic of Armenia, is more reliable. While emphasizing the friendly disposition of the Armenian people toward Soviet Russia, they nevertheless considered the May uprising of the Armenian Bolsheviks to be “untimely and extremely inconsistent with the objective conditions of life”⁵³. This document is also valuable in another sense. Undoubtedly, the Tiflis Hunchakian center was aware of the anti-Armenian decisions adopted at the Congress of the Peoples of the East held in Baku in early September 1920 and sensed the danger threatening Armenia. For that reason, in the aforementioned report, they attempted to demonstrate to Lenin’s government—justifying it with arguments—that the Republic of Armenia was not a threat to the Russian revolution, but rather that its existence fully corresponded to the interests of Soviet Russia, and that Armenia could only play a positive role in Russia’s policy in the Near East.

The Fall of the Republic of Armenia and the Hunchakians

On September 28, 1920, Kemalist Turkey attacked the Republic of Armenia. The Armenian army suffered a defeat. In the occupied territories, the Turks implemented their policy of Armenian extermination.

⁵⁰ National Archives of Armenia (NAA), f. 1456, l. 2, g. 21, p. 91.

⁵¹ Kitur 1962: 488.

⁵² NAA, f. 1456, l. 2, g. 31, p. 19.

⁵³ NAA, f. 1456, l. 1, g. 241, p. 17.

In late October 1920, during the height of the Armenian-Turkish war, the inter-party body of Armenia's political parties published a call addressed to the citizens of Armenia. The document exposed the genocidal goals of the Kemalists and announced a mobilization of all citizens capable of bearing arms⁵⁴. As Mustafa Kemal later admitted, Turkey's goal in that war was to destroy the Armenian state and subsequently annex Azerbaijan to Turkey; in other words, the policy of Pan-Turkism was being put into action⁵⁵.

In this alarming situation for Armenia, a conference of the Georgia branch of the SDHP was held in Tiflis in November 1920. After examining "Armenia's present alarming and desperate situation" over several sessions, a resolution was adopted on November 11. It concluded that the only way to save the Armenian people from final destruction and to protect their physical existence and independence was the "overthrow of the reigning regime and the establishment of a workers' and peasants' Soviet government"⁵⁶.

Taking advantage of the Republic of Armenia's dire military-political situation, Soviet Russia consistently pushed forward its plan for the Sovietization of Armenia. Ultimately, the last government of Armenia, standing on the brink of collapse, entered into negotiations with Russian representatives. By an agreement signed in Yerevan on December 2, 1920, power was ceded to the Military Revolutionary Committee, which had entered Armenia with the 11th Army of Soviet Russia. Under the Yerevan Agreement, Soviet Russia and Armenia became allied states. A legal basis was prepared for the deployment of Soviet Russian Red Army units on Armenian territory. The latter was a significant factor in preventing the possible further advancement of the Turkish army and creating a powerful barrier on the road to "Great Turan"⁵⁷.

The agreement of December 2 closed the final page of the First Republic of Armenia. Armenia entered the Soviet period of its history. Upon coming to power, on December 9, 1920, the Armenian Revolutionary Committee (Heghkom) reached out to the Yerevan branch of the Hunchakian Party, asking it to express its attitude toward the change of power in Armenia and the foreign policy of Soviet Russia. In a written response on December 11, the SDHP Yerevan branch announced that it welcomed "the coup d'état in Armenia and the established Soviet government," as it had created a workers' and peasants' government and brought freedom to the Armenian working class. Regarding their position on Soviet Russia's foreign policy, the Hunchakians stated that since the goals of Soviet Russia were in harmony with those of the Social-Democratic Hunchakians, they supported Soviet Russia's foreign policy⁵⁸.

⁵⁴ National Archives of Armenia (NAA), f. 1456, l. 1, g. 243, p. 1.

⁵⁵ Khachatryan 2007: 30.

⁵⁶ NAA, f. 1456, l. 1, g. 244, p. 1.

⁵⁷ Avetisyan 1997: 353.

⁵⁸ NAA, f. 1456, l. 1, g. 245, p. 1.

The letter noted that after the establishment of Soviet rule in Armenia, “there is no longer any reason for the troops of Mustafa Kemal—who declares himself a friend of Soviet Russia—to remain in the territories of Soviet Armenia, an ally of Russia. No danger threatens him from Soviet Armenia because, by overthrowing the previous government, Soviet Armenia has no imperialist aspirations; meanwhile, the withdrawal of his (Kemal’s) troops from the borders of Armenia should allow the displaced population of the occupied areas to return to their settlements”⁵⁹. The document was sealed and signed by Geghuni, chairman of the SDHP Yerevan board.

The repressions initiated by the Revolutionary Committee against non-Bolshevik parties in Armenia forced the Hunchakians to be cautious. This is evidenced by the minutes regarding the internal political situation of Armenia from the SDHP Yerevan branch on December 19, 1920. It instructed all Hunchakians in Armenia that until they were informed of the real intentions of the Armenian government and the SDHP Central Executive, they should “be extremely careful and reserved, and give no word or express a decisive opinion regarding either Bolshevism or the Entente”⁶⁰.

It can be said with certainty that “the attitude of the Hunchakians toward Soviet Armenia was never hostile. Regardless of the political regime, they continued to perceive the Armenian SSR as a fatherland, and in terms of status, as an autonomous state entity within the Soviet Union”⁶¹.

Conclusion

In 1918–1920, Transcaucasia became the primary center of the Hunchakian Party’s activities. During the period under discussion, the Hunchakian Party maintained its oppositional position toward Bolshevik ideology. From a theoretical and ideological perspective, the Hunchakian Party possessed a national-socialist character, and in terms of its program, it shared close ties with the Menshevik Party. In 1918–1920, the Hunchakians actively participated in the socio-political processes of Transcaucasia.

Despite ideological disagreements with the ARF (Dashnaktsutyun), the Hunchakians stood unhesitatingly in defense of the Armenian people and the First Republic of Armenia during moments of existential crisis. Following the establishment of Soviet rule in Armenia, while maintaining their ideological differences with the ruling regime, they continued to regard the Republic of Armenia as the homeland of all Armenians and expressed their readiness to cooperate with the Soviet authorities for the benefit of Armenian statehood and the Armenian people.

⁵⁹ NAA, f. 1456, l. 1, g. 245, p. 2.

⁶⁰ NAA, f. 1456, l. 1, g. 246, p. 1.

⁶¹ Melkonyan 2022: 61-97.

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Translated from Armenian by Gevorg Harutyunyan

THE HIERARCHY OF THE COUNTRIES OF THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

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Abstract

According to numerous sources, from the 3rd millennium BC until the fall of the Sasanian Empire (7th century AD), there was a clear hierarchy between the countries and territorial units of the Ancient Near East, and later, mainly between the countries of Western Asia. The countries of the region and the territorial units included in them or their rulers were hierarchically classified by ranks and titles expressing the degree of power, or by direct numbering. Thus, the boundaries of the parties' authority and jurisdiction have been determined. The hierarchy was established or confirmed during special ceremonies designated for this purpose and was considered a law set by the dominant king.

The discovery of the hierarchy allows us to form more specific ideas about the position and influence of the countries included in the Ancient Near East region to better understand the course of historical events and the logic of their development.

Keywords: Sumer, Egypt, Assyria, Iran, Armenia, Sumer, Egypt, Assyria, Urartu, Achaemenid Empire, Parthian Empire, Sasanian Empire, Armenia, Cyropaedia, Behistun Inscription, ŠKZ, Armenian historiography, Gahnamak.

Introduction

From the emergence of the earliest state formations until the fall of the Sasanian Empire, a hierarchy or gradation existed between the countries and territorial units of the Near Eastern or Western Asian region, or among those who ruled them. Numerous testimonies to this exist in sources well known to science, but we are not aware of any study concerning the hierarchy that existed in the mentioned area for more than three millennia. Within the framework of the history of the Armenian people, we have partially addressed this issue². In this examination, we will attempt to address the same question as comprehensively as possible. Since we are dealing with a very extensive period, we will content ourselves here with presenting the main data and arguments known to us regarding the hierarchy, leaving the conclusions derived from them mainly for the future.

Preliminary Conceptions: 3rd–1st Millennia BCE

The hierarchy is expressed as early as in **Bronze Age sources**. In inscriptions and especially in the correspondence of the 3rd–1st millennia BCE, the kings and rulers of the Near East, when possessing equal status, officially address one another as

¹ Murad Ohanyan, Independent Researcher muradohanyan@gmail.com

² Ohanyan 2001.

“brother (ahum)”. Conversely, rulers with different statuses interact using the term *“father (abum)”*, expressing seniority/superiority, or *“son (marum)”*, expressing subordination. During the 3rd–2nd millennia BCE, Egypt, Hatti, Mitanni, Babylonia, and Assyria—which established almost simultaneous hegemony in the region—headed unions composed of subordinate countries. The kings of these listed dominant countries held equal status toward one another, an expression of which is that they officially called each other *“brother”* and bore the same title: *“Great King”*³. For these kings, subordinate rulers were “sons”, who could likewise have their own “brothers” and “sons”. Among “brother” rulers, there was also a gradation: *“elder brother, younger brother”*⁴. Parallel to changes in the statuses of rulers, their rank-based titles changed as well; a “brotherly” relationship could transform into a “father-son” status or vice versa⁵.

Kinship terms were also used in the official relations between the rulers of Assyria and Urartu. According to Ashurbanipal (668–633 BCE), Sarduri III treated him as a son treats a father. Thus, the latter recognized the supremacy of the King of Assyria and, as a subject, paid him tribute. However, according to Ashurbanipal, their royal ancestors had “brotherly” relations⁶—that is, equal status.

Such relationships existing between the same countries are correlated with the myth-like conceptions known from the Greek historian Ctesias (5th c. BCE), according to which *“Ninus, the King of the Assyrians”*, conquers almost the entire Near East and destroys the kingdoms located there. The only exception is Armenia = Urartu, whose king, Barzanes, submits and agrees to give military aid to Ninus. Thus, Barzanes becomes a *“friend (φίλος)”* to Ninus and receives from him permission to continue the kingship in his country⁷. Here, the “friendly” relationship between Ninus and Barzanes identifies with the “brotherly” status of the kings of Assyria and Urartu mentioned by Ashurbanipal.

Assyria and Armenia = Urartu appear with the same statuses in the History of the 5th-century Armenian historian Movses Khorenatsi, but already with a numbered hierarchy: Ninus, the king of *“Assyria and Nineveh”*, gave Aram (the second eponym patriarch of the Armenians) *“permission... to be called second after himself”*, a grace which his son also merited⁸.

³ Moran 1992: 141-142/EA73, 147/EA77, 152/EA82, 170/EA96, 244/EA158, 251/EA164; Bryce 2003; Veenhof, Eidem 2008: 277, 308-309, 322-323; Podany 2010; Beckman, Bryce, Cline 2011: 125-129/AhT5, §§2-4, 7-8 etc.

⁴ Veenhof, Eidem 2008: 299, 305; Podany 2010: 9.

⁵ Veenhof, Eidem 2008: 277-278, 299; Podany 2010: 70.

⁶ Novotny, Jeffers 2013: 261-262/ x40-50, 307-308/ 121b-124a.

⁷ Diod., Vol. I.2.8-9.

⁸ Khorenats'i, I.13.9; 15.2.

Some kings of Urartu present themselves with the titles “*Great King*” and “*King of Kings*”⁹. The first title confirms the presented data and conceptions that Urartu held equal status with Assyria or followed immediately after it. Meanwhile, the title “*King of Kings*” is considered the primary evidence of the establishment of Urartu’s hegemony in the region¹⁰.

Kinship titles were used not only in the official relations of rulers; in the hierarchy of the Sumerian school, the director of the school is called “*father*”, the teacher “*big brother*”, and the student “*son*”. We see similar titles, but of an official order, in epic conceptions; the ruler of Aratta, defeated in a correspondence debate, recognizes one of the Sumerian rulers as “*big brother*” and declares: “*I am second to you, I was not your equal*”¹¹.

It is evident that the kinship titles given in official relations served as titles expressing degrees of power. Other types of titles given to subordinate rulers are also known (*šarru*, *šarranu*, *wardum*, *hazannu*, *awilu*, *rubā’ū*, etc.)¹², which, together with kinship terms, could indicate the specific position each ruler occupied in the hierarchies of the unions headed by paramount kings or within the region as a whole.

Data of another kind confirming the existence of a hierarchy is reported by the Assyrian king Sargon II (721–705 BCE). He recruited Mannae—formerly subordinate to Urartu—into the ranks of his allies and granted its king, Ullusunū, a throne (Akkadian: GIŠ.GU.ZA) that was higher in rank than that of his father¹³. While in previous examples the hierarchy was expressed through kinship terms, in this case, it is expressed through throne ranks.

Sargon raised Ullusunū’s throne rank or status during a formal banquet he hosted. This detail is significant, as we see in the cases of kings preceding and succeeding Sargon that they defined or confirmed the hierarchy during events often called the “royal banquet” or by an equivalent name in multilingual sources.

Bronze Age sources contain many other data points and conceptions regarding hierarchy, which we will address later in comparison with sources from a subsequent period.

The Period of Median-Achaemenid Hegemony, 6th–4th Centuries BCE

The most direct data and conceptions confirming the existence of a hierarchy relate to Iranian formations and the countries within their sphere of influence. In the 6th–4th centuries BCE, the Near East was partially included in the Median Empire, and subsequently, almost entirely within the Achaemenid Empire, its political successor.

⁹ Melikishvili 1960: 101; Çifçi 2025.

¹⁰ Piotrovski 1959: 80–82.

¹¹ Kramer 1963: 232, 239, 240, 267; Back 1978: 12.

¹² Moran 1992, xxvii, Veenhof, Eidem 2008: 178.

¹³ Frame 2021: 282/ text II.

Near Eastern countries that previously held partial or complete independence were mostly transformed into satrapies, which, during the period of Achaemenid supremacy, were governed exclusively by the Persian elite. The Achaemenid army was also primarily led by Persians¹⁴. However, the army was composed of ethnic military units with their own commanders and a degree of autonomy, among which a hierarchy is observable.

Xenophon's Cyropaedia

The hierarchy is expressed in various sources, the most detailed of which is Xenophon's (4th c. BCE) *Cyropaedia*. In this novelistic work, the dominion led by the Medes and then the Persians is presented as a confederate union established by the mutual consent of several countries and peoples and confirmed by treaties¹⁵. Important decisions and undertakings are adopted and implemented with the participation and consent of their leaders, who consider one another allies¹⁶. In the federal army of this formation, only the military units of the related Iranian peoples (Persians, Medes, Cadusians, Sacae, Hyrcanians), the Susians, the Armenians, and two Assyrian provinces are included through alliance treaties. A specific hierarchy is observed among these units, presented as the primary nations of the Median-Achaemenid Empire, which is emphasized throughout the *Cyropaedia*.

The Achaemenid "Royal banquet"

Just as in Sargon II's inscription, the hierarchy in the *Cyropaedia* is linked to the ceremony of the banquet. In the records of previous millennia, these events held under the leadership of the king are given the Akkadian names "*royal meal-banquet (naptan šarrim)*" or "*royal table (paššnlu šarrim)*"¹⁷. The event is called by a phrase expressing the same meanings in the *Cyropaedia*: "*βασιλέως τραπέζης*"¹⁸. According to Xenophon's work, the most solemn royal banquet takes place after the triumphal parade organized by Cyrus the Great (559–530 BCE)¹⁹. To each of the high-ranking guests invited, he assigns a hierarchical place called a "*throne, honored seat*" (*ἔδρα, τιμιωτέραν ἔδρα*). This seat, considered a place of honor, corresponds to the evaluation the guests received from Cyrus. This evaluation is called "*honor (τίμη)*". The one with the highest "honor" sits on the left side of the king, the "*second (δεύτερον)*" in rank of honor sits on the right side, the "*third (τρίτον)*" sits on the left, the "*fourth (τέταρτος)*" on the right. The other guests then receive places in the same order. This method of representing the

¹⁴ Briant 2002: 80-82, 350-354.

¹⁵ I.1.4; II.4.22; III.1.10,21; IV.2.7-8, 21; 6.8-10; V.1.22; 3.19; VII.5.50-51 etc.

¹⁶ IV.5.35-37; V.1.19-20, 29-34; 4.19; VI.1.1,6-8,11; 2.14; 4.13; VII.5.7; VIII.1.6 etc.

¹⁷ Sasson 2004.

¹⁸ VIII.2.4; the Greek word "τράπεζα" means "table", from which the second meaning, "banquet", is derived. Etymology of Ancient Greek words: - Liddell, Scott 1940.

¹⁹ VIII.4.3-5.

Achaemenid upper class with numbered ranks of honor was seen previously in conceptions regarding Bronze Age rulers and will be encountered more frequently and prominently in sources from later times.

The Achaemenid hierarchy

Those who received the highest honor of sitting immediately next to Cyrus could be the high-ranking guests of the banquet mentioned just before the seat order was defined. These are the ethnic commanders who emerged during the period of Median hegemony and are listed in the Achaemenid stage in the following numbered sequence:

1. Cyrus's Persian friends, 2. Artabazus the Mede, 3. Tigranes the Armenian, 4. The commander of the Hyrcanians, 5. Gobryas the Assyrian²⁰.

In this list, the commanders of the ethnic units mentioned in the Cyropaedia as allies of Cyrus are listed either by name or by position. They represent Media, Armenia, Hyrcania, and Babylonia²¹. To the leaders mentioned in the same list, one must also add Cyrus, who presided over the banquet and represented both the Achaemenid Empire and Persia²².

In the provided list, only the identity of Cyrus's friends remains uncertain. He calls those commanders who accompanied him since childhood "*friends (φίλος)*", all of whom are Persians. From these officers considered "*peers (ὁμοτίμων)*", Cyrus grants the honor of participating in the banquet to those most devoted to him²³. These are likely the more than ten highest-ranking Persian officers mentioned by name in the Cyropaedia who served as generals (μυριάρχης), colonels (χιλίαρχος), or commanders of large military formations (Adusius, Asiadas, Arsamas, Artabatas, Artagerses, Artaozus, Hystaspas, Madatas, Pharnuchus, Chrysantas, etc.). These high-ranking officers probably headed Persian tribal military units, which is inferable from the

²⁰ VIII.4.1

²¹ Gobryas is viewed as the representative of Babylonia based on the following reasoning: according to the Cyropaedia, Gobryas was an Assyrian (IV.6.1) and the ruler of one of the provinces of Assyria. However, in Babylonian chronicles, he corresponds to the individual known by the name variants "Gubaru" or "Ugbaru," who was the governor of Gutium, located in the north-eastern regions of Assyria. Based on the etymology of the name, it is assumed he was of Median or Persian ethnicity, which aligns with the fact that in Assyrian annals, the Iranian tribes living in the Zagros region are called "Guti." According to the same sources, Cyrus the Great appointed Gubaru-Gobryas as the governor of Babylonia, leading to the conclusion that he actually represented Babylonia (Dandamayev 1992: 72-73; Briant 2002: 41-42; Van De Mieroop 2002).

²² According to the Cyropaedia, during the stage of Median hegemony, Cyrus led mainly the Persian regiment, and after receiving the supreme throne, he was to be proclaimed king also in Persia, where his father continued to reign: - I.5.4-5, VIII.5.22-26.

²³ I.5.5-7, II.1.10.

Cyropaedia's report that Persian age groups—including those subject to military service—were grouped according to the 12 Persian tribes²⁴.

It follows from these clarifications that, through Cyrus, his friends, and his allies participating in the triumphal parade, the list refers to the commander-representatives of the ethno-tribal-territorial allied units of the Achaemenid Empire. "Royal banquets" hosted by Bronze Age kings have a similar composition, where the high-ranking guests presented in detail are provincial rulers, military commanders, and the allied or subordinate kings, leaders, or delegates of neighboring ethno-tribal units²⁵.

In the Cyropaedia, the ethnic military units led by Cyrus and his allied leaders are listed collectively several times. In the most complete of these military registers, which includes all allies, the ethnic infantry regiments are arranged in the following order (numbered by us):

1. Persians, 2. Medes, 3. Armenians, 4. Hyrcanians, 5. Sacae, 6. Cadusians, 7. Assyrians of Gobryas²⁶.

The cavalry follows almost the same ethnic arrangement:

1. Persians, 2. Medes, 3. Armenians, 4. Sacae, 5. Cadusians²⁷.

The Hyrcanian subdivision is absent from this specific list, which is likely one of the Cyropaedia's recurrent omissions. This is confirmed by the fact that the Hyrcanian unit is present in two other cavalry lists, where, as in the infantry formation, it ranks fourth. Another cavalry register consists of 4 units:

1. Persians, 2. Medes, 3. Armenians, 4. Hyrcanians²⁸.

The other units present in previous lists are likely intended in this list under the expression "*and those of the rest of the allies*". During the triumphal parade led by Cyrus, the cavalry has the following arrangement:

1. Persians, 2. Medes, 3. Armenians, 4. Hyrcanians, 5. Cadusians, 6. Sacae²⁹.

In this version, the Cadusians are mentioned before the Sacae, while the Assyrians, as in the previous two lists, are absent. This can be attributed to the latter's small numbers, or the fact that the Assyrians representing the baggage train did not participate in active combat operations.

Two other regiments are presented as federal units in the Cyropaedia, but they are absent from the provided military lists, implying that their role in the Achaemenid army was considered insignificant in the Cyropaedia. One of these, led by the Assyrian Gadatas, is the only military unit whose numbers are not specified, only stating that it was small in number³⁰. The other regiment, consisting of 1,000 horsemen led by

²⁴ I.2.4-5.

²⁵ Ermidoro 2015: 104, 119, 156, 179-182, 206; Portuese 2020: 55-59.

²⁶ V.3.34-40.

²⁷ V.3.41-42.

²⁸ V.5.5.

²⁹ VIII.3.16-18.

³⁰ V.4.2.

Abradatas, King of Susa, takes no part in the formation of the alliance led by Cyrus, as he joins the already established alliance only during the final events³¹.

Thus, the provided military lists enumerate 7 ethnic regiments. We see the leaders of five of these in the list of ethnic commanders, while the leaders of the Cadusians and Sacae are missing. This can also be considered an omission of the Cyropaedia, as the regiments led by those leaders are mentioned in three of the four provided military registers.

In these same lists, only the military units or the commanders of the Persians, Medes, and Armenians occupy fixed positions, leading all lists in an unvarying sequence. This arrangement is not coincidental; it corresponds to the numerical strength of these same units:

1. Persians – 111,000, 2. Medes – 70,000, 3. Armenians – 24,000.

Initially, the Medes—who dominated the alliance—possessed the largest army³², but they were later surpassed by the Persians after the latter assumed hegemony³³. The total strength of the Armenian army was 48,000, half of which they were obligated to send to the federal army³⁴, to which some unspecified number was added later³⁵.

Throughout the Cyropaedia, clear precedence is given to this same trio, presented as the primary contributors of military force. As early as the period of Median hegemony, only the military units of Media, Persia, and Armenia were included in the allied army; the combined force formed by their divisions fought the first battle against Assyria³⁶. A 4,000-strong regiment of Chaldaeans, neighbors to the Armenians, was also involved in that war³⁷. However, this tribe was included in the army led by Cyrus not as a federal ally but through mercenary obligation³⁸. This is confirmed by the fact that in the Cyropaedia, the Chaldaeans are never mentioned as allies, and their regiment is not listed in any military register, even though its numbers exceed those of some actual allies.

The countries of the primary trio also differ from the other units in the alliance by their higher status of statehood: the status of a kingdom. The King of Media was Astyages, succeeded by his son Cyaxares (in authentic sources, they reigned in reverse order). The King of Persia was Cambyses, and while the king reigning in Armenia is mentioned several times in the Cyropaedia, his name is not cited³⁹.

³¹ VI.1.3.35, 46, VII.1.32.

³² II.1.6.

³³ I.5.5, II.1.2-3, V.5.3, VII.4.16.

³⁴ II.1.6, III.2.3.

³⁵ III.3.4.

³⁶ II.1.2-6.

³⁷ III.3.1.

³⁸ III.2.25-26.

³⁹ I.2.1, 5.2, II.4.22, etc. Khorenatsi calls this king “Eruand the Short-lived”, who, as in the Cyropaedia, was the father of Tigran—the ally of the last King of the Medes and Cyrus the Great (I.24.4, 15, 25.2). In the

According to the *Cyropaedia*, among the countries included in the alliance led by Cyrus, Susa also held the status of a kingdom. However, as previously mentioned, its king, Abradatas, was initially part of the opposing camp led by Assyria and took no part in the formation of the alliance led by Cyrus.

Thus, according to the *Cyropaedia*, during the stage of Median hegemony, the regional hierarchy was headed by Media, Persia, and Armenia, which had their own native kings. In the subsequent Achaemenid stage, we see a hierarchy only among the ethnic commanders and the ethnic armies they led; among these, as in the previous stage, the Persian, Median, and Armenian units—having the largest numbers—held primary status. The other allies joined this trio while still in the stage of Median hegemony. The order in which these others are listed no longer corresponds to their numerical strength (Hyrcanians – 2,000; Cadusians – 24,000; Sacae – 12,000; Assyrians of Gobryas – 1,000). Regarding these units, the *Cyropaedia* lacks specific data expressing status or rank that could explain the positions they occupy in the provided military lists. However, this sequence cannot be considered accidental either, as the ethnic military units included in the Achaemenid alliance are mentioned in the same or similar order in other sources, which will be addressed below.

There are other literary motifs in the *Cyropaedia* related to the hierarchy and the “royal banquet” that are also found in their main episodes and specific details in the primary sources of previous millennia. Solemn banquets were organized by Egyptian Pharaohs and the kings of Sumer, Akkad, Mari, Urartu, Assyria, and other countries of Ancient Mesopotamia on the occasions of their birthdays or accession anniversaries, military victories, the completion of significant structures, and ritual or other holidays⁴⁰. In the records of the same periods—banquet ledgers or pictorial scenes—certain emphasized characteristics (the placement of tables and benches, sitting style, the size and shape of thrones and chairs, clothing and adornment, the variety of food, etc.) express the different ranks of the participants⁴¹. According to more specific data, high-ranking guests sat in front of the king; those sitting closest to him held the highest ranks—that is, the ranks of the guests corresponded to their sequence following the king⁴². We saw a similar seating arrangement in the *Cyropaedia*, with the difference that participants sat not in front of the king presiding over the banquet, but at his sides in a left-right sequence, where those sitting closest to the king likewise held the highest rank or “honor”.

During banquets, Cyrus grants delicious foods, expensive jewelry, clothing, and other rewards to his close associates or worthy servants, and sends them to those who

Cyropaedia, the last King of the Medes is mistakenly called “Cyaxares” instead of “Astyages.” Khorenatsi calls him Azhdahak” which is the Armenian version of the name “Astyages”, also according to Eusebius: - I.44, 45, 54, 101, 102).

⁴⁰ Ermidoro 2015: 12, 90; Tarhan 2024: 381-385.

⁴¹ Green 2004: 211-213; Ermidoro 2015: 255-258.

⁴² Portuese 2024: 356-357.

are absent⁴³. According to Xenophon, this order—still preserved in his time—had been established by Cyrus the Great⁴⁴.

However, kings of previous millennia were already distributing similar gifts to their guests and sending them to absent subordinates. According to the *Cyropaedia*, Cyrus assigns uniform (Median) festive, multi-colored clothing to the high-ranking participants of the parade preceding the banquet⁴⁵. We see the same order in the records of previous millennia: participants of the “royal banquet” are given multi-colored garments specifically intended for that festive event⁴⁶.

According to a numbered Neo-Assyrian guide for conducting court banquets (K.8669), the chief court overseer manages the banquet while standing⁴⁷. In the *Cyropaedia*, a similar official position is held by the court eunuch Gadatas, who oversees the service of the high-ranking guests invited to Cyrus’s banquet while standing⁴⁸.

The *Cyropaedia* shares various commonalities not only with the primary sources of previous millennia but also with those of subsequent centuries, which we will address below.

Comparison with Curtius Rufus and Herodotus

Data significantly comparable to the *Cyropaedia* regarding the Achaemenid army are found in the Roman historian **Curtius Rufus’s** (1st c. CE) *History of Alexander the Great*. While Xenophon’s work considers the early Achaemenid army, Curtius’s *History* describes the same army in its penultimate battle—the Battle of Issus. In terms of military numbers, it is led by the same ethnic trio in a sequence corresponding to the *Cyropaedia*:

1. Persians – 100,000, 2. Medes – 60,000, 3. Armenians – 47,000⁴⁹

According to the Roman historian, as in the *Cyropaedia*, the other ethnic military units are numerically inferior to the leading trio: Derbices – 42,000; Caspian tribes – 14,000; Barcanians – 12,000; Hyrcanians – 6,000; Tapurians – 1,000⁵⁰. This

⁴³ VIII, 2.2-4, 7-9; 4.6-7, 24, 27.

⁴⁴ VIII.2.7.

⁴⁵ VIII.3.1-8.

⁴⁶ Sasson 2004: 203; Ermidoro 2015: 114, 116, 261.

⁴⁷ Ermidoro 2015: 167, 168, 185, 187.

⁴⁸ VIII.4.2.

⁴⁹ III, 2.6: The entire sentence regarding the number of the Armenian troops is missing from the 1963 Russian translation (p. 23), although it is present in the parallel Latin text. The same omission was preserved in the Armenian translation made from that edition (p. 282). The prevailing belief in Armenian studies that the Armenian army only participated in the Battle of Gaugamela in the war against Alexander the Great should be considered a consequence of this omission.

⁵⁰ III.2.7-9. Greeks were also included in the same army, but these were mercenaries representing another country.

composition is close to the version in the Cyropaedia (Persians, Medes, Armenians, Assyrians, Hyrcanians, Cadusians, Sacae). The ethnic units differ to some extent, but they are almost identical in regional terms. In both cases, besides the Persians, Medes, and Armenians, South Caspian and Central Asian ethnic subdivisions are also included in the Achaemenid army.

While motifs related to hierarchy are absent in Curtius's History, it confirms the existence of the hierarchy because Curtius's version of the ethnic trio (possessing the largest military units) and their numerical sequence repeats the hierarchy expressed in the Cyropaedia.

Similar conceptions regarding hierarchy are also known to Herodotus (5th c. BCE). He refers to the "*royal banquet* (*βασιλῆιον δεῖπνον*)" that took place every year on the birthday of the Achaemenid King of Kings, Xerxes I (486–465 BCE)⁵¹. In this case as well, the king grants gifts to his guests, but data related to hierarchy is absent from these descriptions. However, we see such data in the description of a military council hosted by the same Xerxes⁵². Its high-ranking participants also represent ethno-territorial units (subject kings, ethnic rulers, ethnic leaders of naval fleets). They receive seats just like the high-ranking guests at the banquet organized by Cyrus the Great; these seats correspond to the evaluation given to the council participants by Xerxes, which is also called "*honor* (*τιμὴν*)". Naturally, the Achaemenid King of Kings occupies the most honorable place, and the other kings and leaders occupy seats in a sequence following one another by rank.

Comparison with Old Testament

Interconnected motifs related to hierarchy, including specific terms and phrases, are also found in the Old Testament. In the Hebrew version of this source (**Tanakh**), we see the same phrase: "*the royal table* (*לַמֶּלֶךְ לִשְׁלֵחַ*)"⁵³. This same phrase appears in the Ancient Greek translation, the **Septuagint** (*τράπεζαν τοῦ βασιλέως*)⁵⁴, which mirrors the version found in the Cyropaedia (*βασιλέως τραπέζης*)⁵⁵. This phrase is encountered in the narratives concerning the Prophet Samuel; under the leadership of Saul, the first king of Israel, regular banquets took place where every participant - just as in the Cyropaedia's version of the "royal banquet"—had an assigned seat⁵⁶. Naturally, "*the chiefest place* (*בִּלְיָדָה לְבָשִׁיל*)" belonged to the king, which he had received earlier from

⁵¹ IX.110.

⁵² VIII.67.

⁵³ Samuel, I.20.29. The Hebrew word *לִשְׁלֵחַ* means "table," from which the secondary meaning "banquet/feast" is derived. — **Bible Dictionary**, 117, №7979.

⁵⁴ Kings = Samuel, I.20.29.

⁵⁵ Cyropaedia, VIII.2.4.

⁵⁶ Samuel, I.20.24-25, 27, 29.

the Prophet Samuel during a previous feast⁵⁷, while the other seats were occupied by Saul's subjects.

The Old Testament also holds certain conceptions regarding the Achaemenid hierarchy which, as in the *Cyropaedia*, is envisioned as being numbered. In the Book of Esther, the Persian King Artaxerxes (Ahasuerus) organizes a grand banquet during the third year of his reign. Participating in this—as in the presented versions of the “royal banquet”—are the rulers of various provinces and subject lands of the empire, the highest-ranking princes, military commanders, and nobles⁵⁸, among whom *“the seven princes of Persia and Media, who saw the king’s face, and sat the first in the kingdom (בַּמְלָכוֹת הָאֲשֶׁר רָאָה הַמֶּלֶךְ הַיְּשָׁבִימִים)”* occupied the primary positions⁵⁹.

In another episode of the same book, Artaxerxes grants the highest princely throne (כֶּסֶף) to Haman the Amalekite⁶⁰, but during another banquet, he strips him of his power and subjects him to execution⁶¹. At that same banquet, Haman’s position is given to Mordecai the Jew, which is considered an *“honor (יָקָר)”* given by the king’s command⁶² and represents the *“second (הַשֵּׁנִי)”* place in the kingdom after the king⁶³.

We see these same motifs in the Prophecy of Daniel: the Babylonian King Belshazzar organizes a massive banquet for his thousand officials, during which he grants the Jewish prophet Daniel the *“third (שְׁלִישִׁי)”* authority in his kingdom⁶⁴.

The notion that primary places in the Achaemenid hierarchy could be given to an Amalekite or a Jew—supposedly recorded in the “chronicles of the Kings of Media and Persia”⁶⁵—are novelistic inventions lacking a historical basis, an approach often seen in the *Cyropaedia* and other historico-fictional sources. This contradicts the Book of Esther itself, in which, as mentioned, the primary places of the Achaemenid hierarchy were occupied by the seven princes of Persia and Media, who were also reserved the right to communicate directly with the King of Kings⁶⁶. This report aligns with Achaemenid primary sources and Ancient Greek historiography⁶⁷, a point with which current scholarship generally agrees.

The “deprivation of power/punishment” motif (regarding Haman) is also present in the Old Testament; while absent in previous sources, it appears in later records

⁵⁷ Samuel, I.9.22.

⁵⁸ Esther, 1.3.

⁵⁹ Esther, 1.14.

⁶⁰ Esther, 3.1.

⁶¹ Esther, 6.14; 7.1, 6-10; 8.1.

⁶² Esther, 6.3, 6-7, 9, 11.

⁶³ Esther, 8.2; 10.3.

⁶⁴ Daniel, 5.1, 7, 16, 29.

⁶⁵ Esther, 6.1-2; 10.2.

⁶⁶ Esther, 1.14.

⁶⁷ Herod. III, 84.

presented below. This motif provides an additional understanding of the processes occurring during events called “royal banquets”.

Comparison with Achaemenid sources

Among the sources confirming the existence of a hierarchy, Achaemenid primary sources are of primary importance⁶⁸. While they contain no direct testimonies regarding the hierarchy, there are weighty data through which the upper levels of the Achaemenid hierarchy are envisioned exactly as in the *Cyropaedia* and Curtius’s *History*.

The *Cyropaedia* presents 8 units as the primary nations within the Achaemenid Empire that were allies and possessed their own military units: Persians, Medes, Armenians, Babylonians (Gobryas), Hyrcanians, Cadusians, Sakas, and Susians (Abradatas). However, in the lists of countries found in Achaemenid royal inscriptions, we see only six countries representing these ethnic units: Persia, Media, Armenia, Saka, Babylonia, and Elam-Susa. The lands of the Hyrcanians and Cadusians are absent from these lists, which already precludes them from having been primary units⁶⁹.

The **Behistun Inscription** of Darius I (550–486 BC) shares much more significant commonalities with the *Cyropaedia*⁷⁰. According to this chief Achaemenid primary source, the Achaemenid army was likewise composed of ethnic subdivisions. Of these, only the Persian and Median armies are directly mentioned, as certain subdivisions within them had sided with Darius I or his opponents⁷¹. The armies resisting Darius in various countries were likely composed of other ethnic regiments detached from the Achaemenid army, often referred to in the annals as the “*rebellious army*”⁷².

From a general examination of the Behistun annals, it becomes quite obvious that the most powerful and extensive rebellions against Darius I took place in Persia, Media, and Armenia. Only the rebellions originating in these countries expanded beyond their borders to include other regions. The rebellion started in Persia spread particularly toward the east to encompass Sattagydia and Arachosia; the Median rebels were supported by Parthia and Hyrcania; and the first battle against the Armenian rebels took place in the territory of Assyria (Izala). These rebellions lasted incomparably longer than the others—6 to 7 months—during which Darius’s army fought 4 to 5 battles to suppress each of the rebellions originating in these three countries. In total, he fought 21 battles against 8 rebellious countries and their joined allies, 14 of which were in the aforementioned three countries or in regions that fell under their influence⁷³.

⁶⁸ Kent 1950; Lecoq 1997; Schmitt 2009, etc.

⁶⁹ Hyrcania is mentioned only once in the Behistun Inscription as a country that rebelled along with Parthia. — Schmitt 1991, §35.

⁷⁰ Schmitt 1991.

⁷¹ §§24, 25, 33, 36, 40, 41.

⁷² §§ 25-30, 33, 35-36, 38, 45-46, etc.

⁷³ Summarizing in §52, Darius testifies to 19 victorious battles, to which he adds two more (§§ 71, 74). The first of these battles is considered the victory over Gaumata. — Briant 2002, 113, after which the main rebellions began.

For comparison, it should be noted that the rebellions that broke out in other countries were purely local in nature and were suppressed with relative ease. The issue of the two Elamite rebellions was resolved without military intervention; they ceased once the rebel leaders were arrested and executed (§§ 16-17, 22-23). The rebellions of Margiana, Sagartia, the second Babylonian, the third Elamite, and Scythia were suppressed with a single battle each (§§ 33, 38, 49-50, 71, 74). Only the first Babylonian rebellion was suppressed with relative difficulty—through two battles taking place with a five-day interval (§§ 18-19).

Egypt is also mentioned among the rebellious countries in Darius's annals (§ 21). However, since nothing is reported regarding the suppression of that rebellion—not only in the annals but also in ancient Greek sources—it is assumed that this rebellion was insignificant⁷⁴. The same can be said for Assyria, which is also mentioned in the list of rebellious countries.

The power balance expressed in the Behistun Inscription fully aligns with the conceptualizations known from historiographical sources. Persia, Media, and Armenia, which raised the most powerful rebellions against Darius, are the very countries that, according to Xenophon and Curtius, possessed the largest military contingents in the Achaemenid army.

Even more distinctly, the representatives of the nations forming this same trio stand out. Eight of Darius's chief commanders are Persians (Hydarnes, Omises, Hystaspes, Dadarshi, Artavardiy, Vivana, Intaphernes, Gobryas), one is a Mede (Takhmaspada), and one is an Armenian (Dadarshi). There are no representatives of other nations in the highest command of the Achaemenid army.

Darius's ten supreme commanders represent not only the Achaemenid military power but also the administrative-political authority and the highest-ranking nobility. Among them, Hystaspes is Darius's father, who was likely the satrap of Parthia and had a large force at his disposal (§§ 35–36). The Persian Dadarshi was the satrap of Bactria, and Vivana was the satrap of Arachosia (§§ 38, 45–47). Intaphernes, Hydarnes, and Gobryas were among those who overthrew the magus Gaumata along with Darius. These are the six high-ranking individuals to whom Darius gave special mention in the Behistun Inscription, entrusting his successor kings to care for their descendants⁷⁵.

Although no specific political role, office, or high ancestral origin is attributed to Darius's other four generals, it is clear that as members of Darius's supreme staff, they also constituted the highest-ranking representatives of the Achaemenid elite.

Darius's opponents were likely also representatives of the Achaemenid upper class, among whom this same ethnic trio also occupied a significant place. They were

⁷⁴ Dandamaev 1985, 104.

⁷⁵ §§ 68–69. According to Herodotus, the six high-ranking individuals who supported Darius were the “*leading (πρώτους)*” Persians who had the right to claim the royal throne and enjoyed the privilege of free entry into the court and meeting the King of Kings at any time (III, 70, 84).

proclaimed kings in six different countries (Persia, Elam, Babylonia, Media, Sagartia, Margiana), mostly presenting themselves as the son of Cyrus the Great or as descendants of pre-Achaemenid kings who had ruled in Media, Babylonia, or Elam⁷⁶. There are nine such leaders, six of whom are Persian, Median, or Armenian (Gaumata, Vahyazdata, Martiya, Phraortes, Tritantaechmes, Arakha).

The Achaemenid hierarchy is also partially reflected in the Behistun Inscription. The Babylonian and Aramaic versions of this source list the numbers of casualties and prisoners among the rebels, the examination of which⁷⁷ has led to the following conclusion:

The losses inflicted on the enemy by each Persian commander are counted in the thousands, while in the case of Median and Armenian generals, they amount to only a few hundred. There is also a gradation within the results of the Persian commanders themselves. The greatest losses to the enemy were inflicted under the command of Darius, followed by his father, and then the other Persian commanders. From this approach, it is evident that the casualty figures in the inscription are not real but are adjusted to the ranks of the military commanders.

Through the artificiality or intentional distortion of casualty distribution, the Babylonian and Aramaic versions of the Behistun Inscription outline the same units occupying the first three places in the Achaemenid ethnic hierarchy that we saw in the Cyropaedia and Curtius's History. With eight commanders inflicting the greatest losses on the enemy, the Persians hold supreme primacy, followed by Median and Armenian commanders according to the ranks expressed by the distribution of casualties (the specific hierarchical sequence between the latter two is difficult to determine, as data regarding the losses they inflicted on enemies are incomplete).

We saw an ethnic ratio similar to the composition of Darius I's general staff in the supreme command of Cyrus the Great as presented in the Cyropaedia, led by the ethnic trio: more than a dozen Persians, the Mede Artabazus, the Armenian Tigranes, as well as two other Medes (Andamyas, Rambacas) and one Armenian (Embas)⁷⁸ generals mentioned later.

In the political sphere, the highest Achaemenid offices, as stated, belonged exclusively to Persians⁷⁹. However, we see a different situation in the army: the Cyropaedia mentions representatives of eight nations in the Achaemenid supreme command, where the Achaemenid ethnic hierarchy was expressed. But in the supreme command of Darius I, we saw representatives of only three nations. Likely, as in the Cyropaedia, there were commanders of other nations in his army, but we do not see

⁷⁶ P. Briant considers them representatives of the local ruling class. — Briant 2002: 120-121.

⁷⁷ Hyland 2014. We thank J. Hyland (Ph.D. and MA in Ancient History, BA in History) for providing us with a copy of his article titled "The Casualty Figures in Darius' Bisitun Inscription".

⁷⁸ Xen. Cyr. V.3.38, 42.

⁷⁹ Briant 2002: 82.

them in Darius's general staff because they may have occupied lower command positions.

P. Briant refers to the ethnic elite holding the highest positions in the Achaemenid political, military, and other administrative spheres as *"the dominant socioethnic class"*⁸⁰. From the presented examination, it can be concluded that the events conditioned by the reign of Darius I mainly constituted a struggle that broke out within the Achaemenid dominant socio-ethnic class, in which Persians, Medes, and Armenians formed the majority.

We do not know of any direct reports regarding hierarchy in Achaemenid primary sources. However, the agreements and commonalities between the Achaemenid records and the conceptions directly related to this topic found in historiographical sources are so close that, as we have seen, they confirm and complement each other in certain important matters. Through these obvious commonalities with the records, the historiographical reports concerning the Achaemenid hierarchy receive serious primary-source substantiation. This particularly applies to the *Cyropaedia*, in which we saw clear agreements not only with Achaemenid but also with Bronze Age and Babylonian primary sources (these agreements themselves confirm that the author of the *Cyropaedia* was quite well-acquainted not only with Achaemenid epic traditions but also with authentic history).

The Period of Macedonian Hegemony (4th–2nd Centuries BC)

With the collapse of the Achaemenid Empire, the hierarchy in the region likely disappeared. The first kings of Seleucia, who achieved dominance in Western Asia, bore the title *"King of Asia"* inherited from Alexander the Great⁸¹. However, this could no longer be practical once a number of other kingdoms entered the arena in "Asia" (Pontus, Bithynia, Cappadocia, Sophene, Commagene, Armenia, Atropatene, Parthia, Bactria, etc.). The kings of these lands bore various titles following the hierarchical sequence of *"King, Great King, King of Kings"*. Yet, it is difficult to envision the regional hierarchy through these titles alone, as some kings bore the same titles simultaneously. These often did not correspond to their actual power or status but rather expressed claims derived from the high royal origin of a given ruler⁸².

The Macedonian "Royal Banquet"

During the final period of Macedonian hegemony, prior to the Seleucid phase, a formal hierarchy likely had not yet formed, but conceptions survived that testify to the existence of certain traditions related to hierarchy. One of these is known from the Greek historian **Diodorus Siculus** (1st century BC), which relates to the now-familiar

⁸⁰ Briant 1988: 137-138, 164, etc.; Briant 2002: 82, 352, 679, 780-783, 869, etc.

⁸¹ Engels 2014: 336; Strootman 2020: 132, 135-137, 146.

⁸² Engels 2014: 351; Strootman 2020: 149-151, 153-154.

motif of the “banquet”: Peucestas, the former bodyguard of Alexander the Great and satrap of Persia, organized a massive banquet⁸³.

In this instance, the guests’ chairs were arranged in the likeness of an amphitheater, in four concentric circles. The primary place—which in this version is the center—was reserved in previous examples for the king presiding over the event. However, since the king of the Macedonian Empire, Philip III (323–317 BC), was absent during this ceremony, he was replaced by an altar placed in the center, along with altars dedicated to Alexander the Great and the Hellenic gods.

The chairs located in the first circle surrounding the center were occupied by the satraps, high-ranking generals, and those Persians who held the highest “*honor* (τιμώμενοι)”. This is a scene comparable to the “royal banquets” presented in the *Cyropaedia*, Herodotus’s *Histories*, and the Old Testament, where participants receive places according to their degree of honor.

In the Macedonian version of the banquet seating order, the gradation was also maintained in the subsequent three circles, where the guests were lower in rank than those situated in the inner circles in a step-by-step sequence.

Alexander the Great valued Peucestas, and the locals respected him for speaking Persian fluently, wearing Median clothing, and following local customs⁸⁴. From Diodorus’s description regarding the banquet he organized, the composition of the invitees, and their seating order, it can be inferred that Peucestas not only followed local customs but also attempted to emulate Achaemenid administrative systems.

Peucestas’s favorable attitude toward local orders and customs may explain why a local authority was established in the Persia under his rule, which preserved or emulated Achaemenid traditions in various spheres (dynastic names, titles, dress, iconography, etc.)⁸⁵. The rule of the lords of this dynasty—who bore titles testifying to high political and military autonomy (prtrk’, krny), issued their own coinage, and were later known by the status of “king (mlk’)”—continued into the Parthian period.

The same can be said for the royal houses reigning after the collapse of the Achaemenid Empire in Parthia, Atropatene, Armenia, Commagene, Cappadocia, and Pontus, which were, or presented themselves as, descendants of Achaemenid royal or satrapal houses and continuators of their policy and cultural heritage⁸⁶. Through the mediation of these dynasties guided by Achaemenid traditions, Achaemenid administrative orders and structures could be transmitted to later times, which explains the direct, almost recurring commonalities observed in various fields of Achaemenid, Parthian, and Sassanid heritage.

⁸³ Diod. Vol. IX, 19.22.

⁸⁴ Arr. VI.30.2-3; Diod. Vol. IX, 19.14, 5.

⁸⁵ Engels 2013; Müseler 2018; Luther 2021: 1499-1500.

⁸⁶ Olbrycht 2019; Melikyan 2021.

The Period of Parthian Hegemony (3rd Century BC – 3rd Century AD)

The Arsacid hierarchy

According to the Roman historian **Cornelius Tacitus** (1st–2nd centuries AD), the Parthian King Vologeses I (51–78 AD), who consolidated Arsacids power in Western Asia, convened a “*council (concilium)*”⁸⁷. During this assembly, a formal hierarchy was established between him and his two brothers, who had been proclaimed kings in neighboring countries:

Vologeses, as the eldest, was reserved the first place and the “*supreme title (summo nomine)*”. The next place was occupied by his middle brother, Pacorus, King of Media (referring to Lesser Media – Atropatene). The following place was given to the youngest brother, Tiridates (Tiridates I of Armenia, 53–75 AD). According to Tacitus, the Armenia entrusted to his rule was considered the “*third grade (tertius gradus)*” of Arsacid power⁸⁸.

Through this testimony by Tacitus, we gain a direct understanding of the upper echelon of the Arsacid hierarchy, which appeared as follows:

1. Parthia, 2. Lesser Media (Atropatene), 3. Armenia.

While we saw the Achaemenid hierarchy clearly numbered in the Cyropaedia, the specific countries included were not directly named. Tacitus identifies only the leading trio of the Arsacid hierarchy, though it is assumed that other countries led by Arsacids were also included in this system⁸⁹.

According to Armenian medieval historiography, Armenia occupied a place one step higher in the Arsacid hierarchy. According to Khorenatsi, Vagharshak (brother of the Parthian founder Arshak the Great), his grandson “Artashes the First”, and his successor “Tigran the Middle” all occupied the second throne in the Arsacid hierarchy⁹⁰. **Agathangelos**, a contemporary of Khorenatsi, referring to the final year of Parthian Arsacid rule (224 AD), formulates the following hierarchical rule: “*Khosrov, King of the Armenians, who was second in the Persian Empire; for he who was King of the Armenians was second in the Persian Empire*”⁹¹. This sounds like a long-established order or law, aligning with Khorenatsi’s report that Tigran the Middle held the second throne of Armenia “*as was lawful*”⁹².

Khorenatsi does not explicitly state Khosrov’s rank but grants him the title “*Great*”⁹³. We will see the same title applied below to Hormizd-Ardashir, who was

⁸⁷ Latin etymologies. — Lewis, Short 1879.

⁸⁸ Tac., XV.2

⁸⁹ Melikyan 2003: 26-27: We thank A. Melikyan (Ph.D. in History) for the useful review and positive evaluation.

⁹⁰ II.11.2; 19.2-3; 68.4.

⁹¹ I.1.

⁹² II.13.3.

⁹³ II.73.7.

appointed King of Armenia and occupied the second place in the Sassanid hierarchy. Three Armenian Arsacid kings who reigned between the 1st and 3rd centuries also bore the title “*Great*”, two of them named “*Tiridates*,” as mentioned in several Aramaic and Greek inscriptions found in Garni and Aparan⁹⁴. These data suggest that Armenia’s status rose by one step shortly after Tiridates I (whom Tacitus ranked third), perhaps even during the latter’s reign.

In a later (12th-century) Greek translation of Agathangelos’s History⁹⁵, the upper level of the Arsacid hierarchy is occupied by four units: the empires of the Persians (Περσῶν), Armenians (Αρμενίων), Indians (Ινδῶν), and Massagetae (Μασσαγέται). The latter two are remembered as the “*third (tritōs)*” and “*fourth (tetartō)*” dominions of the “*Persian Kingdom*”. As in the primary version of Agathangelos and the reports of Khorenatsi, the Arsacid hierarchy in this translation is envisioned as numbered—an approach we already saw in Tacitus’s testimony.

Strabo (1st century BC – 1st century AD) calls the supreme body that elected the kings of the Parthian Empire a “*council (Synedrion)*”, just as Tacitus does. It was composed of two groups: the first consisting of the king’s relatives, and the second of wise men and magi⁹⁶. The supreme pan-Arsacid council mentioned by Tacitus notes only the participation of the three Arsacid brothers. This elective body corresponds to the first group of the Parthian court council mentioned by Strabo, which was also composed solely of representatives of the royal family.

The Roman historian **Pompeius Trogus** (1st century BC) also refers to the supreme Parthian elective body, which could appoint kings from among its members or depose them⁹⁷. He calls this body the “*Senatu*”, which corresponds to Tacitus’s “*Concilium*” and Strabo’s “*Συνέδριον*”.

The insights quoted from Tacitus are particularly important because they directly testify to the official existence of a hierarchy in the Western Asian region. These and other presented data draw an equivalence between the “*royal banquets*” of the Achaemenid and earlier Bronze Age periods and the supreme Arsacid elective body—the “*Consilium-Synedrion-Senate*”—which, according to these historians, was the chief institution for appointing rulers of the region’s countries and defining their hierarchical rank.

The Period of Artaxiad Hegemony (1st Century BC)

For nearly three decades, Armenia established dominance in Western Asia. As in the Seleucid era, the regional hierarchy during this period was partially expressed through royal titles. The most powerful king of the Artaxiad dynasty, Tigranes II (the Great), bore the title “*King of Kings*” approximately between 85–55 BC. Throughout

⁹⁴ Perikhanyan 1964; Trever 1953; Muradyan 1981; Bresson, Fagan 2022.

⁹⁵ Muradyan, Topchyan 2008.

⁹⁶ Str. XI.9.3.

⁹⁷ Iust. XLI.2.2; XLII.4.1.

almost this entire period, the Parthian Arsacid kings were known only by the title “*Great King*”, suggesting they recognized Tigranes’s suzerainty. The same can be said for Mithridates VI of Pontus (132–63 BC), a primary power in the region. Although he is sometimes associated with the “King of Kings” title, it was for internal use only; he never used it on his coinage, which is considered an expression of his actual or official international status⁹⁸.

Radical changes occurred toward the end of Tigranes’s reign. Rome emerged as the chief protagonist. Armenia lost its supreme status, while Pontus and the Seleucid Empire were eventually transformed into Roman provinces. Parthia, meanwhile, maintained a passive foreign policy. A glimpse into the hierarchy of this era can be caught through events involving Cleopatra of Egypt and the Roman triumvir Mark Antony. In 34 BC, Antony appointed his young children with Cleopatra as rulers over various lands. According to the Greek historian Plutarch (1st–2nd centuries AD), the eldest son was granted Armenia, Media, and Parthia, while the younger was given Phoenicia, Syria, and Cilicia⁹⁹. Clearly, the lands assigned to the eldest son held a higher status, implying that after Tigranes, Armenia, Media, and Parthia were still considered the primary nations of Western Asia. We see this status preserved a century later when this same trio led the Arsacid hierarchy according to Tacitus.

The Period of Sassanid Hegemony (3rd–7th Centuries AD)

The Sassanid Hierarchy

According to the famous 6th-century Sassanid source, the *Letter of Tansar*, King of Kings Ardashir I classified the nobility according to the “*dignity of rank*” and ordered that the representatives of prominent princely houses be registered in ledgers and archives along with their titles and assigned seats¹⁰⁰. These ledgers, which classified the Sassanid elite by rank, are comparable to the Armenian Gahnamaks (Throne Lists)—registers of ministerial houses kept in royal archives. These ministerial lists, which we will examine more closely later, represent the hierarchy of medieval Armenia. They are also compared to the lists of the Sassanid elite found in the Great Inscription of Shapur I (241–272 AD) at the Ka’ba-ye Zartosht (ŠKZ)¹⁰¹, which allow for a more definite understanding of the Sassanid hierarchy¹⁰².

According to the ŠKZ, the four sons of Shapur I, who were proclaimed kings over the primary lands of the Sassanid coalition (Armenia, Gilan, Meshan, and Hind-Saka-Turan-up to the sea), all bore the title “*King (MLK)*”. However, one of them—Hormizd-

⁹⁸ Sullivan 1990: 119; Engels 2014: 342, 348–351; Gatzke 2019: 67–69.

⁹⁹ Plut. 54.4.

¹⁰⁰ Boyce 1968: 44.

¹⁰¹ Back 1978: 284–371.

¹⁰² Lukonin 1983: 645; Perikhanyan 1968.

Ardashir, King of Armenia—bore the specific title “*Great King (RB’ MLK’)*”¹⁰³. In terms of rank, this title was considered the second highest, following only the supreme “*King of Kings (MLK’-n MLK’)*”¹⁰⁴. This indicates that Hormizd-Ardashir was the highest-ranking king under Shapur I, further confirmed by the fact that he inherited the supreme throne from his father¹⁰⁵.

The hierarchical order of the other royal sons bearing the same title is harder to determine. In the previous Achaemenid and Arsacid stages, Media (and later Atropatene) occupied a stable place alongside Armenia in the second and third positions. Atropatene is missing from the list of kingdoms in the ŠKZ, but we find Gilan under the rule of Shapur’s eldest son, Vahram. Since Gilan was a region of Atropatene, it is possible it served as Vahram’s seat, leading the entire province to be called “Gilan” in this context. Thus, it likely followed Armenia in the Sassanid hierarchy, just as in previous eras.

The fact that the Sassanid King of Kings was followed in rank or office by his sons is directly attested by a Pahlavi text attributed to the late Sassanid period known as “*Sūr ī Saxwan* (The Blessing of a Banquet)”¹⁰⁶. In this text, the chief offices of the Sassanid Empire are listed in an order corresponding to their degree of authority. Naturally, the list is headed by the office of the King of Kings (*šāhān šāh*), followed in rank by the positions of his sons (*pūs ī wāspuhr ī šāhān*), and then by the *wuzurg framādār* and other high officials. This almost mirrors the hierarchy expressed in the ŠKZ inscription. While the *Sūr ī Saxwan* presents the highest Sassanid *offices*, the ŠKZ shows that these positions were indeed occupied in the same hierarchical sequence: first by the Sassanid King of Kings (Shapur I), followed by his sons who served as kings of four subordinate lands (Hormizd-Ardashir, Varahran, Narseh, Shapur), and then by other officials following them in rank. Other known lists of the Sassanid elite¹⁰⁷ repeat this same hierarchy: *štdl’n* (= *MLK’*), 2. *BR BYT’* (= *vāspuhr*), *wcl’n* (= *buzurgān*).

According to Khorenatsi, chief positions were distributed using the same principle in the Armenian Kingdom. Upon ascending the throne, Artashes I (230–160 BC), the founder of a new dynasty, entrusted the command of the border-guarding troops to his four sons¹⁰⁸. These troops were traditionally stationed in four frontier provinces divided by geographical direction, whose rulers were known as *bdeašx* (*բդեաշխ*) or “border-guards (*սահմանապալ, սահմանապահ*). These were considered “*senior (ulwq, qwhtptg)*” princes, as they held a higher status than other princes or ministers (*նախարարք*)¹⁰⁹. Among Artashes’s sons—who became high-ranking princes

¹⁰³ Back 1978: 332, 339-340.

¹⁰⁴ Russell 1987: 84; Daryaee 2017: 85.

¹⁰⁵ Weber 2007.

¹⁰⁶ Daryaee 2007.

¹⁰⁷ Lukonin 1983: 698-703.

¹⁰⁸ II.53.7-8, 10, 12.

¹⁰⁹ Adontz 1908: 283-285; Manandyan 1934: 34-43.

immediately following the king—the eldest, Artavazd, held the highest status. He possessed the second throne of Armenia and eventually inherited the royal throne from his father¹¹⁰. This repeats the scheme known from the ŠKZ, where Shapur I hands the chief lands of his empire to his four sons, the highest-ranking of whom inherits the supreme throne.

According to Sebeos, Arshak the Great, the founder of the Parthian Empire, organized his dominion using the same model, entrusting the chief lands of the empire to his four sons¹¹¹. The same principle is discernible as far back as the aforementioned Neo-Assyrian banquet manual (K.8669), where the chief officials appear in the same sequence:

1. King, 2. Crown Prince and other Princes, 3. Other high-ranking officials.

This same sequence is observed in other texts describing banquets or mass events and in court iconography¹¹².

This “Supreme Ruler + 4 Subordinate Rulers” model likely lies at the heart of the administrative, territorial, and military structures we have addressed in previous studies¹¹³. This model, which served as the foundational structure of governance as early as Lagash, repeats with its unique details in the administrative structures of Elam, the Achaemenid, Parthian, and Sassanid Empires, and Armenia.

In the ŠKZ, three other countries also hold the status of kingdoms: Adiabene, Kerman, and Iberia. Their kings are lower in rank than the four royal sons and are listed after them and other members of the royal family in a second list composed of non-royal representatives¹¹⁴. The higher rank of the four sons over these three kings is also expressed by the fact that the sons held the right to inherit the supreme throne; with the exception of Shapur (who died young), the others eventually ascended to the supreme throne¹¹⁵. According to the data in the ŠKZ and other cited sources, the upper level of the Sassanid hierarchy during the reign of Shapur I appears as follows:

1. Main Iran, 2. Armenia, 3-5. Gilan, Meshan, Sakastan-Hind, 6-9. Adiabene, Kerman, Iberia.

The example of Hormizd-Ardashir, who was first appointed “Great King” of Armenia and later inherited the supreme throne from his father, is not unique. It is assumed that his brother Narseh and later Shapur IV (415–420) also bore the same title, both ascending to or claiming the supreme throne after ruling the Armenian throne¹¹⁶. Likely, these kings—just like the “Great King of Armenia” Hormizd-Ardashir—

¹¹⁰ II.51.3, 7; 61.1-2.

¹¹¹ II.32.

¹¹² Ermidoro 2015: 167-168, 185; Portuese 2024: 71, 82, 115-116, 252-257.

¹¹³ Ohanyan 2019; Ohanyan 2021.

¹¹⁴ Lukonin 1983: 708.

¹¹⁵ Lukonin 1983: 692-693; Daryae 2023: 14-19.

¹¹⁶ Manandyan 1978: 470-472; Frye 1983: 144; Chaumont 1986; Pourshariati 2008: 68; Daryae 2017: 85, Daryae 2021, 62; Daryae 2023: 12-13, 15, 16.

occupied the second place in the Sassanid hierarchy corresponding to their title before ascending the supreme throne.

Since the beginning of the 1st century AD, Armenia also served as the seat for the sons or heirs of Parthian kings¹¹⁷. The most famous among them is the already mentioned Tiridates I, son of Vonones II, who was crowned in Rome by Nero. However, even more frequently in this status—dating back to the time of Mithridates I (171–133 BC)—we see Media Proper, which was replaced by Lesser Media (Atropatene) after losing its kingdom status. Unlike Armenia, the children of Parthian Arsacid kings who received the Median throne often achieved supremacy, meaning they gained the throne of Parthia¹¹⁸. This data indicates that Media-Atropatene initially held a higher status than Armenia, confirming the Arsacid hierarchy presented by Tacitus, in which that country occupies second place and Armenia third. The lack of data regarding the kingdom of Atropatene after King Pacorus II (c. 51–72) testifies to the decline of Atropatene's status. This situation aligns with the testimonies of Agathangelos and Khorenatsi, stating that Armenia occupied the second place in the Arsacid hierarchy.

We also see Media and Armenia under the rule of the sons or heirs of supreme kings during the Achaemenid period. According to the *Cyropaedia*, Cyrus the Great appointed his younger son Tanaoxares as satrap over the Medes, Armenians, and Cadusians¹¹⁹. This epic conception aligns with the data showing that the thrones of Media or Armenia were entrusted to the heirs of the supreme kings of the Parthian or Sassanid empires.

The latter often seized the supreme throne, which we also see in the case of Tanaoxares—but according to more reliable sources, such as the Behistun Inscription and the Greek authors who agree with it (Herodotus, Ctesias, Aeschylus, etc.). Cyrus's younger son (or the one presenting himself in his name), known in these sources as “Bardiya, Smerdis, or Mardis” (names contextually synonymous with “Tanaoxares”), seized the supreme throne after the death of his elder brother, the supreme king Cambyses II¹²⁰. The report of Pompeius Trogus (1st century BC) also aligns with this: the last Achaemenid king, Darius III (336–330 BC), served as the governor (*praeficitur*) of Armenia under the name “Codomannus” before ascending the supreme throne¹²¹.

From the presented data and conceptions, it follows that Media and Armenia consistently served as the seats for the primary candidates for supreme power, not only in the Sassanid and Parthian phases but also in the Achaemenid stage. In the same phases, these countries are presented as units occupying the second and third places in the regional hierarchy. This suggests that the candidates for the supreme throne, who

¹¹⁷ Manandyan 1977: 306, 317-318; Manandyan 1978: 23-24, 44, 55.

¹¹⁸ Debevoise 1938: 21, 75-78, 152; Shayegan 2011: 72-74, 76; Bivar 1983: 79; Olbrycht 2010: 148-149, 155; Olbrycht 2014; Olbrycht 2021.

¹¹⁹ *Cyropaedia*, VIII.7.11.

¹²⁰ Dandamayev 1988.

¹²¹ *Iust.*, X, 3.3-5.

immediately followed the supreme ruler in rank, governed the countries that occupied the positions in the regional hierarchy corresponding to their ranks.

The Sassanid “Royal Banquet”

We have already touched upon the *Sūr ī Saxwan*, the guide for conducting banquets, in which the motifs of hierarchy and the “royal banquet” are interconnected, much like in previous traditions. As a ceremonial guide, it is particularly comparable to the aforementioned Neo-Assyrian guide for royal banquets (K.8669), in which the King of Kings is also followed in rank by his sons, and they by other high-ranking officials. In both guides, an official is present at the ceremony who manages the banquet and formally introduces the high-ranking participants. During the Achaemenid “royal banquet”, we also saw high-ranking guests sitting beside the king (Cyrus the Great) in a hierarchical order, as well as an official managing the banquet (Gadatas).

According to Roman perceptions of the Sassanids and corresponding Iranian sources, participation in the “*royal banquet (mensae regales)*” was reserved for those who had the right to offer counsel and express opinions on state affairs. This right was considered an “*honor (honore)*” bestowed by the king (Shapur II). The high-ranking participants who were granted this royal honor wore a symbolic princely turban¹²². The authenticity of these accounts is confirmed by the high Sassanid priest Kartir, who records that he received his “*honor (padixšar)*”, the symbolic princely crown - diadem (kwr’p-y), and his throne rank (g’s-y, g’h) from various kings¹²³. From these data, it follows that the “honor” granting the right to participate in royal banquets was not merely a title, but included a diadem or headpiece corresponding to the official’s specific rank, granted directly by the monarch.

Kinship Titles Expressing Rank

As in the Bronze Age, rulers of the Sassanid era addressed one another officially using kinship terms that reflected their hierarchical standing. Roman and Arabic sources indicate that Near Eastern rulers who were considered equal in status addressed each other in correspondence as “*my brother*” or “*son of my father*”, just as we saw with Bronze Age kings¹²⁴. This tradition of official address continued even after the fall of the Sassanid Empire¹²⁵. It stands to reason that these kinship terms expressing rank were also utilized in the preceding Parthian and Achaemenid periods, though direct records of such usage from those eras are less common.

The sources examined reveal a consistent structure in the upper levels of the Achaemenid, Arsacid, and Sassanid hierarchies showing remarkable continuity:

¹²² Amm. XVIII.5.6; Lukonin 1983: 707.

¹²³ Regarding Hormizd-Ardashir, Vahram I, and Vahram II. — Sprengling 1953: 50, 56; Back 1978: 213. №131a, 227, №194, 248, №267a, 393-394, 400-402, 406-409; Lukonin 1983: 706.

¹²⁴ Amm. XVII.5.3, 10; Tabari, XXXI.33 / Year 194.

¹²⁵ Drocourt 2018: 2-3; Korobeynikov 2004: 53-54.

Median-Achaemenid Phase: The primary trio consisted of Persia, Media, and Armenia.

Arsacid Phase: Parthia replaced Persia as the dominant power. Media-Atropatene and Armenia maintained their high rankings, though at a certain point, Armenia ascended to the second position.

Sassanid Phase: Persia regained its former supremacy, while Armenia maintained its second-place status (the occupant of the third place remains a subject for further clarification).

These commonalities suggest that the statuses established during the Achaemenid period exerted a significant and lasting influence on the formation of both the Arsacid and Sassanid hierarchical systems.

The Hierarchy of the Armenian Kingdom

The concepts, motifs, rank-titles, and terminology related to hierarchy found in the sources of the previous millennia are often repeated almost exactly in medieval Armenian records. These fragmented data become more complete and intelligible when synchronized with Armenian historiography.

Numbered or Ordered Hierarchy

According to Armenian historiography, the concept of a structured hierarchy was accepted in Armenia and the wider region from the earliest times. Khorenatsi's accounts of hierarchy reach back to Aram, the second eponymous ancestor of the Armenians, to whom the Assyrian King Ninus reportedly *"gave him permission... to be called second after himself"*¹²⁶.

Armenia occupied a high place in its internal hierarchy, which is true for every country included in the regional hierarchy.

Beyond the detailed records of this domestic system, Armenian historiography has preserved memories of the regional hierarchies of Sassanid and earlier times, which we have partially explored.

Included in the Armenian hierarchy were all the ministerial houses or domains. These were the units that possessed significant estates, administrative and judicial authority, tax collection and other agencies, their own capital, fortresses, troops, and flag, and represented large and small autonomies¹²⁷. Various lists called **"Gahnamak"** have been preserved by some historians, in which dozens, sometimes more than a hundred ministries representing territorial units are registered¹²⁸. They are listed, numbered, or ranked according to their position and power, an approach we also saw in the case of the Achaemenid, Arsacid, and Sasanian hierarchies.

¹²⁶ Khorenatsi, I.13.9.

¹²⁷ Adontz 1908: 453-479; Manandyan 1934: 54-56.

¹²⁸ Adontz 1908, 236-297; Hakobyan 2011.

In the throne list presented in Agathangelos's History, only 16 princes representing ministries are listed by number¹²⁹. But these are only the "*chief ministers and governors*", who, according to the Greek version of the same History, were followed by "*the rest of the ministers*". The same version also summarizes: - "*these sixteen grandees, who were listed and mentioned one by one with their respective ranks*" or "*according to the order they occupied*"¹³⁰. It follows from these lines that in Agathangelos's list, the ministers are listed in an order corresponding to the extent of their power. The same is confirmed by **Faustus** (5th c.), according to whom the Armenian kingdom was originally regulated by the principle of "*the grandees according to their throne, and the officials according to their rank*"¹³¹. The same historian also refers to the Sasanian hierarchy, in which the kings included in general assemblies occupied places "*each according to his rank*"¹³². The same idea is expressed more directly by Ukhtanes (10th c.), according to whom the Armenian king acquires the "*Gahnamak of the ministers*" and, guided by it, regulates his domain by "*giving cushion (throne-rank)*"¹³³ and *Honor to the ministers, giving authority according to each throne-rank*"¹³⁴.

In one of the throne lists conventionally called "Zoranamak" the troop strength of the large ministries exceeds one thousand, while the smaller ones have at least 50 warriors¹³⁵. There were also smaller ministries called "*junior (լրնութի)*", which were left out of the main throne lists. Mesrop Yerets (10th c.), who presented 154 ministries in the list of "*Thrones of Armenian Princes*" lists another 13 ministries that were not included in the main throne list¹³⁶. These were probably the units occupying the lowest places in the Armenian hierarchy, which Khorenatsi classifies as "*junior ministerial clans*" as those having insignificant troop strength or as being deprived of rank¹³⁷.

The presented sources regarding previous times give a fragmentary idea of the ancient Near Eastern hierarchies. In them, ideas have been preserved mainly about the first places of the Achaemenid, Arsacid, and Sasanian hierarchies, from which it can follow that only the primary units were ranked. But the Armenian Gahnamaks, which include middle and smallest units along with the main ministries, suggest that all countries were included in the regional hierarchies, in whose internal hierarchies almost all large and small ministerial units were registered.

¹²⁹ 112.1-2.

¹³⁰ Part 98-99.

¹³¹ IV.2.4.

¹³² IV.54.35-36.

¹³³ "Cushion (բաբձ)" was the name for the princely honorary rank or throne-rank. - Acharian 1926, vol. I: 425; Ghazaryan 2000, vol. I: 272.

¹³⁴ I.27.4-7.

¹³⁵ Adontz 1908: 251-252; Hakobyan 2011: 542-548.

¹³⁶ 5.1-3

¹³⁷ II.64.6; III.51.8.

In the presented sources, the hierarchy is confirmed and honorary ranks are granted by Sargon II, Cyrus the Great, Xerxes I, Vologases I, Ardashir I, Shapur II, and other kings. The princely throne (GIŠ.GU.ZA, ἔδρα, ἰαοϝ, g'h), the rank or the throne-rank (gradus) is considered an honor (ἐτίμα, ԲԻՄԱՆ, րհ, honore, padixšar) granted by the kings, while Vologases considers the establishment of the hierarchy in the region as the right (causa) of the Arsacids. We see the same approaches, perceptions, and related terms in Armenian historiography, in which it is often emphasized that the hierarchy was an order or law established by the kings:

Agathangelos, II.11. – *“The King of Armenia ... gave him honor according to the royal laws and seated him on the second chair of his kingdom”*. Pawstos, IV.54.34. – *“it was the custom ... law: ... the kings of Persia and Armenia sat on the same throne”*. V.37.15. – *“the princely honor which he had received from the king”*. Khorenats'i, I, II.19.2-3. – *“Tigran ... willingly kept the second rank, as was lawful”*. P'arpec'i (5th c.), II.55.8. – (King of Kings of Persia). – *“I will give to each lordship, throne and honor”*. Tovma (10th c.), III.24.9. – (The Armenian King to Gorgen) *“entrusted the honor of the Marzpan authority, according to the throne-rank of the Armenian kings”*. Uxtanes, I.27.6-7. – *“The Armenian king ... giving cushion and honor to the ministers”*. Mesrop Erec', V.1. – *“The thrones of the Armenian princes, which were ordained by Khosrov and other kings”*. Drasxanakertc'i (10th c.), 36.13-14. – *“King Smbat ... appoints him king over the world of the Georgians according to the royal law and establishes him as the second of his realm”*.

The Armenian “Royal Banquet”

In Armenian historiography, the banquets presided over by kings are referred to as the *“king's table (սեղան արքայի)”* or *“royal dinner (ընթրիս արքունի)”*¹³⁸. The same or synonymous phrases are found in sources from preceding millennia (*naptan šarrim, paššur šarrim, βασιλέως τραπέζης, βασιλήιον δεῖπνον, ܡܢܬܐ ܡܠܟܝܬܐ, mensae regalis*). In these sources, the motifs of the “royal banquet” and the social hierarchy are interconnected. The same holds true in Armenian historiography:

According to Faustus, the *“great patriarchs, lords, and officials”* sat on their throne-cushions before the Armenian king during the *“hour of the court's joy”*, meaning at the time of the banquet¹³⁹. It was also during the time of joy or *“the hour of supper”* that the Sasanian King of Kings and his subordinate kings sat upon their thrones according to their rank¹⁴⁰. According to Mesrop Yerets, the *“thrones of the Armenian princes”* were established *“at the hour of dinner, around the king's table”*. He quotes a portion of a registry (Gahnamak) consisting of 400 thrones, in which the princes heading the

¹³⁸ Sebeos, 21, 7; Mesrop Erec', 5.1, Kaghankatuats'i, II.1.5.

¹³⁹ IV.2.10. In Classical Armenian, the words for “joy, festivity, banquet” also have the meanings of “eating and drinking, feast.” – Ghazaryan 2000, Vol. 1: 363, 575, 595.

¹⁴⁰ IV.16.3; 54.34-36.

ministries occupied places around the royal table¹⁴¹. Kaghankatuatsi (10th c.) addresses the same theme in more detail: King Shapur, wishing to “*examine which nation and language possesses cushion and honor*”, organizes a “*great banquet for the ancient families of the Persian noble ministers and honors them according to their throne rank*”. Subsequently, the Sasanian king addresses the issue of the Armenian princes having “*rank and honor*” and, guided by a “*writing*” (Gahnamak) consisting of 17 ministerial cushions known from Agathangelos’s History, regulates “*each person’s place around the royal table*”¹⁴².

Other interconnected motifs

Seating Order: In the Cyropaedia, high-ranking guests sit at the banquet in defined hierarchical positions alongside Cyrus, in a left-to-right sequence¹⁴³. According to the 13th-century historian Stepannos (Ch. VI), the Armenian ministers who received a throne and honor corresponding to their position also sit beside the king during the banquet, but in reverse order: “*from right and left*”.

Banquet Attire: In the conceptions of preceding times, participants of the “royal banquet” are given clothing specifically intended for that event. The same motif exists in Armenian historiography: according to Faustus, “*during the supper, King Pap gave a command to dress Dghak the Mardpet in glorious raiment*”¹⁴⁴. According to Elishe, one of the Armenian ministers attends a supper invited by the Sasanian king wearing precious attire received from him¹⁴⁵.

The Manager of the “Royal Banquet”: According to Faustus, there was a service of “*waiting upon the agency while standing*” at the royal banquet¹⁴⁶. In Adontz’s opinion, by this “*waiting (uuywunL)*”, Faustus meant not table service, but an official agency position¹⁴⁷. This “waiting” performed while standing is seen in the accounts of Faustus and other authors: Drastamat, the Mardpet (grand chamberlain) of the Armenian court, serves King Arshak’s supper while standing¹⁴⁸. We saw officials with similar functions in the Neo-Assyrian banquet guide and in the Cyropaedia (in the person of the eunuch Gadatas), who manage the “royal banquet” while standing. The same role is performed by the Sasanian “banquet” manager, whom we saw in Sūr ī Saxwan.

The “Deprivation of Power-Punishment” motif: In Armenian sources, the motif of “deprivation of power-punishment” is also linked to the motifs of the “royal banquet”

¹⁴¹ V.1-3.

¹⁴² II.1.3-12.

¹⁴³ VIII.4.3.

¹⁴⁴ V.6.10.

¹⁴⁵ VI.6.127-128.

¹⁴⁶ IV.2.10.

¹⁴⁷ Adontz 1908: 239, n. 1.

¹⁴⁸ V.7.19-21.

and hierarchical ranking. According to Faustus, during a regular royal supper, the Persian King of Kings, by lowering the status of the Armenian king who sat on the same throne with him, assigns him a place at the very end, and subsequently deprives him of power and imprisons him¹⁴⁹. According to the same historian, in the Armenian court as well, the deprivation of power and punishment of any minister is carried out during a banquet invited by the king¹⁵⁰. According to Khorenatsi, Artaxerxes I (Artashes) arrives at the intention to punish Argam—who occupied the second throne of his domain—during a banquet invited by the latter¹⁵¹. According to Elishe (5th c.), the Sasanian king grants each of the Armenian princes his place, then deprives them of power and punishes them during the supper¹⁵². He also tells of an Armenian minister invited to supper by the Sasanian king who was sentenced to death in the presence of the grandees participating in that ceremony¹⁵³.

The motif of “deprivation of power-punishment” associated with the hierarchy was likely one of the cross-cultural perceptions formed in the Near Eastern area, which we saw in the Book of Esther and in Armenian sources. We also saw the same motif partially reflected in the report of Trogus, stating that the Parthian supreme elective body could not only appoint kings but also deprive them of power. It follows from these examples that the “royal banquet” was perceived not only as a holiday, a celebration, or an event granting and confirming princely ranks, but also as a body that deposes or punishes.

“Honor” and its symbols: When referring to the Sasanians, we saw that participants of the “royal banquet” or high-ranking representatives of the court wore a princely crown - diadem, a symbol of “honor” received from the king. “Honor” is perceived in the same or a similar way in Armenian historiography:

According to Elishe, one of the Armenian ministers received a golden diadem from the Sasanian king when he was invited to supper¹⁵⁴. Faustus also presents the same concepts as interconnected, directly calling the princely crown “honor.” According to him, the Armenian grandees sat at the banquet with the king with *“the honor placed on their heads”*¹⁵⁵. In another episode, the “honor” of the fallen Sparapet (commander-in-chief) Vache is placed on his son’s head in front of the king¹⁵⁶. The historian calls the diadem granted to the Armenian Sparapet by the Persian King of Kings the *“honor of the head”*¹⁵⁷.

¹⁴⁹ IV.54.34-36.

¹⁵⁰ V.6.10-20, 35.13-27.

¹⁵¹ II.51.4-6.

¹⁵² II.49.62.

¹⁵³ VI.6.127.

¹⁵⁴ VI.6.127-128

¹⁵⁵ IV.2.10

¹⁵⁶ III.11.18

¹⁵⁷ V.38.7

It follows from Khorenatsi's reports that the diadems of the Armenian princes, as well as their other finery and attire, differed and corresponded to their rank. In one case, King Vagharshak of Armenia grants a diadem as a *"lordly honor"* to the Bagratid prince and allows him: *"to wear the lesser diadem of three rows of pearls without gold or gems"*¹⁵⁸. In another episode, King Artashes of Armenia allows Argam, who occupied the second place in the hierarchy, to wear: *"a diadem decorated with sapphires, rings for both ears, a red slipper for the one foot"*. To the Bagratid prince, who occupied the next place in the hierarchy, the king allows the same attire and finery, *"except for the two (ear)rings and the red slipper"*¹⁵⁹. Similar perceptions are also known to Sebeos (7th c.); he calls the princely crown a *"diadem of honor"*, which one of the Armenian princes received from the Roman Emperor along with other valuable items expressing high rank¹⁶⁰.

The presented examples refer to princes of different ranks. Faustus also provides an idea of the finery and attire of rulers with equal status; for a certain time, the kings of Persia and Armenia held such a status, sitting together on the same throne during *"times of joy"*, wearing *"monochromatic, same-marked, same-decorated and identical clothing"* and wearing uniform crowns¹⁶¹.

According to the perceptions originating from medieval Armenian and preceding sources, the shape, color, and symbols on the hairbands, clothes, finery, and even shoes granted by a sovereign king to his subordinates—which is expressed quite well especially in Sasanian iconography¹⁶²—expressed the princely rank of the given ruler. Like military uniforms and epaulets, these princely symbols were the insignia that likely fully expressed every ruler's rank and position in the throne hierarchy. The most prominent and precious of these insignias was the princely crown, which should be considered the primary *"honor"* granted by the sovereign king.

In the Bronze Age documents and subsequent sources, the banquets organized by kings are presented as solemn celebrations or lavish festivities on the occasion of a significant event. In them, the theme of hierarchy expressing the governance structure occupies a secondary place, shadowed by other emphasized descriptions of the banquet. However, in Armenian historiography, the true purpose of the *"royal banquet"* is fully realized: through this event, the kings and rulers of Armenia or the countries of the entire region, and the territorial-ministerial units included in them, receive ranked positions or are confirmed in those positions on the ladder of power, which acquires the force of law by the confirmation of the supreme ruler. That is to say, the *"royal banquet"*

¹⁵⁸ II.7.5.

¹⁵⁹ II.47.4.

¹⁶⁰ 44.80

¹⁶¹ IV.16.3-4; 44.34

¹⁶² Overlaet 2013.

in Armenian historiography is viewed and valued as the chief body of territorial administration, whose main members were the rulers of the countries and territorial units included in the entire region or the given domain.

The regional governing body conceived in Armenian historiography aligns closely with descriptions of the Parthian supreme elective body. Among the participants of this council—variously called a “consilium, synedrion,” or “senate”—Tacitus mentions the kings of only three countries, between whom the sovereign king establishes a hierarchy. Thus, the fundamental governing structure of the entire region was established, in which the Arsacid kings occupied the primary positions.

Kinship Titles Expressing Rank

According to medieval Armenian historiography, the kings of the regional countries—as in sources from preceding millennia—officially interacted with one another using hierarchical kinship titles: “father, brother, son”.

According to Faustus, King Shapur of Persia and King Arshak of Armenia were initially “*as brothers*”, meaning they were rulers of equal status. This was reflected in all spheres of their interaction and conduct; it was an established “*law*” that the kings of Persia and Armenia should sit on the same throne, and their crowns, clothing, and finery should be of the same shape, color, and symbols¹⁶³. Guided by these same perceptions known from Faustus, the Byzantine historian Procopius (6th c.) writes that King Pacorus of Persia “*considered King Arshak of Armenia equal, like a brother*”¹⁶⁴. He thus confirms that kings equal in rank recognized each other as “brothers.” But later, according to Faustus, the statuses of these same kings officially changed (confirmed by edicts, oaths, and seals) to a “father-son” relationship. Arshak then submitted to the Persian king “*as a servant to a lord*”, and he could only maintain his former status if he “*desired war*”¹⁶⁵. Alongside the change in status, the change in titles expressing them almost identically repeats the relationships of Bronze Age kings mentioned earlier.

Khosrow Parvez of Persia (591–628) was also in a subordinate status; according to Sebeos, he expressed his readiness to the Byzantine Emperor Maurice to “*be your son*” and in a letter called him “*my father*” and himself “*your beloved son*”¹⁶⁶.

We see the same hierarchical titles in Khorenatsi’s History. King Vagharshak of Armenia, in a letter addressed to his elder brother, Arshak the Great of Persia, considers himself his brother by blood but officially his son: - “*your younger brother ..., your brother and son*”¹⁶⁷. Khorenatsi also directly indicates their places in the regional hierarchy, which are equivalent to the kinship titles given to them: Arshak the Great,

¹⁶³ IV.16.3–4; 20.5; 54.34.

¹⁶⁴ I.5.

¹⁶⁵ IV.52.4; 53.2.10; 54.4,24.

¹⁶⁶ 11.7; 12.6.

¹⁶⁷ I.9.2, 6.

occupying the highest place and officially the “father”, appoints “son” Vagharshak as the King of Armenia, “*making him his second*”¹⁶⁸.

The kings of the region interact with kinship titles in other mentions by Armenian historians as well¹⁶⁹.

From the presented examination, it follows that medieval Armenian sources have preserved the fundamental perceptions and motifs related to the hierarchies of the Ancient Near East seen in Bronze Age, Achaemenid, Ancient Greek, Roman, Parthian, and Sasanian sources. Armenian historiography not only agrees with external sources but also makes important additions and provides a more complete understanding of the hierarchy. This can be attributed primarily to the fact that early medieval Armenian historians lived in a dominion where the orders and governing structures they wrote about were still functioning.

In the context of the examination presented here of the history of the entire region, it appeared quite clearly that since Median-Achaemenid times, Armenia has been one of the three primary countries of the region. It was the direct successor to an earlier representative of the Near Eastern world, Urartu, which existed in the same territories and effectively occupied the same primary places in the regional hierarchy as Urartu. These entities were participants in the primary processes of the Ancient Near East and were an integral part of the region. It should be considered natural that Armenian historiography has preserved valuable and diverse data and perceptions representing primary scientific interest for the history of the entire region, which we have been able to address only partially in this and our previous examinations.

Conclusion

With regard to hierarchy, the presented sources outline yet another model of governance that was accepted in the Ancient Near East from the 3rd millennium BC until the fall of the Sasanian Empire. Other structures of governance were also accepted during these same millennia, which we have addressed in our previous examinations. One of these follows the model of “Supreme ruler + 4 subordinate rulers”, which is accompanied by the same unique details in diverse sources (primary, historiographic, iconographic, cosmological, etc.): the four subordinate rulers stand near the supreme ruler with their hands crossed over their chests, one of whom holds a status of seniority and a corresponding title or symbol¹⁷⁰. We see this model of governance with its specific characteristics in the administrative systems of Sumer, Elam, the Achaemenid, Parthian, and Sasanian empires, and Armenia.

¹⁶⁸ II.68.4.

¹⁶⁹ Agathangelos, 14.4, 5, 126.16; Agath. in Greek, Part 37; Khorenats'i, I.9.2, 6; 28.2, 5; II.33.41, 48; III.17.6; 23.6; 51.14; Pawstos, V.38.16; Sebeos, 11.7; Tovma, II.3.5; Drasxanakertc'i, 31.3, 36.13.

¹⁷⁰ Ohanyan 2019; Ohanyan 2021.

In the diverse sources presented here, the hierarchical model of governance is also accompanied by unique details (a hierarchy expressed through numbering, ranking, or kinship terms; general calls, titles, and idioms related to the hierarchy; the “royal banquet-council” motif; the procedures of this event, seating order, form of attire, order of gifting, etc.).

These conceptual systems, composed of interconnected unique motifs, are repeated almost unchanged for more than three millennia. We believe that these perceptions regarding various structures of governance could not have been transmitted from one source to another and preserved without significant changes over millennia. We consider it more probable that during the mentioned period, the same structures of governance operated within the Near Eastern area, which accounts for the obvious correspondence of perceptions, motifs, iconography, administrative calls, titles, and other terms and idioms related to them in diverse sources. It is difficult to imagine that various governance structures were universally accepted and spread from Sumerian times throughout almost the entire Near Eastern area and were transmitted and operated without significant changes during the Achaemenid, Parthian, and Sasanian eras. However, the presented arguments do not yet propose a more probable alternative hypothesis.

These same correspondences suggest that the history of the discussed period of the Near East—when the mentioned commonalities were steadfastly preserved—should be researched within a single context, as we have sought to do in our present and previous examinations. With this approach, we obtain a concise and complete picture regarding the history of the entire region, the countries included within it, and especially the primary units most known to the sources.

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Acknowledgment

The author would like to express his gratitude to Doctor in History, Professor A. Kosyan for the helpful review, positive assessment, and support in publishing this article.

Translated from Armenian by Gevorg Harutyunyan

TESTIMONIALS OF THE 2ND CAUCASIAN RIFLE BRIGADE OFFICERS ABOUT THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

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Abstract

In the article are presented the memoirs and reports of four officers of the 2nd Caucasian Rifle Brigade, later Division: General T. Nazarbekyan,⁴ Colonel (later General) V. N. Poltavtsev,⁵ M. A. Krim Shamkhalov-Sokolov,⁶ and *zauryad praporshchik* (Warrant Officer) Udovitsa⁷ on numerous cases of mass massacres of Armenians, the Genocide, which mainly took place in the province of Van and the city and district of Mush. The testimonies mostly cover the years 1915–1916. They contain some unknown information about the brutal and inhuman actions carried out by the Ottoman authorities. T. Nazarbekyan's memoirs were written based on materials preserved in his personal archive. V. N. Poltavtsev wrote his memoirs abroad, in Belgrade. The report of the interrogation of Staff Captain Krim Shamkhalov and the report of the *zauryad praporshchik* Udovitsa are preserved in T. Nazarbekyan's personal archive.

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⁴ Tovmas Nazarbekyan (Foma Nazarbekov, 1855–1931), Major General of the Russian army, Lieutenant General (Sparapet) of the Armenian army. Participant in the Russo-Turkish (1877–1878), Russo-Japanese (1904–1905), and First World War Caucasian front (1914–1917), as well as the Turkish-Armenian wars (1918, 1920). Commander of the 2nd Caucasian Rifle Brigade (25.03–19.11.1915), then the division (19.11.1915–10.07.1916), and 7th Caucasian Separate Army Corps (01.1917). Commander of the Armenian Separate Corps (from 26.12.1917). Participant in the battles of Sardarapat and Bash-Aparan (05.1918). After the establishment of Soviet rule in Armenia, he was arrested and transferred to Baku, then to the Ryazan concentration camp (1921). Died in Tbilisi.

⁵ Poltavtsev Vladimir Nikolaevich (1875–1937), colonel (06.12.1912), major general (03.03.1917). Graduated from the Nikolaev academy of the general staff (1904). Participant in the Russo-Japanese war (1904–1905) and the First World War (1914–1917). Chief of Staff of the 2nd Caucasian Rifle Brigade (03.08.1913–02.03.1916), then of the division (02.03.1916–18.05.1917). Participant in the White movement.

⁶ Krimshamkhalov-Sokolov Mikhail Avgusti (1871–1947), colonel of the Russian army (1917). Commander of a company of the Caucasian 8th Rifle Regiment (1915). Head of the intelligence department of the Armenian Corps (04.1918). Participant in the White movement.

⁷ In the Russian army, the title of “*zauryad*” was given to civilians who were conscripted into the army but did not have military education.

Keywords: First World War Caucasian front, Armenian genocide, memoirs, testimonies

Introduction

During the First World War, the Young Turk leadership of the Ottoman Empire carried out mass massacres and deportations of Armenians, an act of genocide. A vast and multilingual body of literature has been produced on this issue, and the flow of scholarly works continues to this day. Foreigners who, for various reasons, were present in Western Armenia and in Armenian-populated regions of Asia Minor witnessed these atrocities firsthand. Valuable archival documents preserved in various countries around the world provide evidence of the Armenian Genocide as a state-organized and systematically implemented policy of the Ottoman government.

Testimonies of the genocide in the Van province

During the years of the First World War, important and credible testimonies about the Armenian genocide were preserved in the memoirs of T. Nazarbekyan, of which he was an eyewitness. The general recalls with sorrow the difficult situation of the Armenian and Assyrian refugees retreating from northern Persia to the Russian border on December 27, 1914. He testifies: "... there was no care for these unfortunate refugees. Their suffering was further aggravated by the impassable mud on the road from Khoy to the village of Sardavar. The unfortunate refugees were simply drowning in that mud. Children, the elderly and weak women were literally dragged out of the mud. All types of troops provided willing assistance".⁸ This was one of the first warnings that heavy and terrible days awaited the Armenian people. As early as 1911, the Armenians of Qaradagh (Armenian Mountains) in the Atropatene province were subjected to an attack by the Shahsevan Turkic tribe, for which they were harshly punished by the Russians.⁹

On June 10, 1915, the brigade crossed into the Van province from Atropatene through the Chukh-Gyaduk pass. Along the way lay a great number of mutilated corpses. The general notes in his memoirs: "They were all Armenians tortured to death by the Kurds and by Jevdet Pasha's detachment".¹⁰ After staying near Van for several days, the Caucasian 2nd Rifle Brigade resumed its march on June 16, and again encountered Armenian "...wealthy villages, all of them in ruins and filled with the corpses of people and animals".¹¹ On the road from Artske to Khanik, the villages they encountered were Kurdish, and their inhabitants had not left their homes.¹² This

⁸ Sahakyan 2019a: 291.

⁹ SARF, collection R-6120, inventory 1, file 5, sheet 7; Sahakyan 2011: 270.

¹⁰ Sahakyan 2019b: 209.

¹¹ Sahakyan 2019b: 214.

¹² Sahakyan 2019b: 215.

testimony of T. Nazarbekov is important because Turkish historiography accuses Armenians of massacring Muslims.

In the village of Purkhush in the province, where there were many refugees, including children, T. Nazarbekyan wished to adopt one of them. However, the boy, who was about 12 or 13 years old, refused, explaining that he wanted to look for his parents, and if he could not find them alive, he would take revenge on the Turks. All the general's persuasions were in vain.¹³

On July 9, 1915, T. Nazarbekov received an order to retreat, as rumors spread that a large number of Turkish forces were approaching. The general, accompanied by a large number of refugee Armenians from Mush, began to retreat. In the village of Tapavank, a barefoot Armenian man begged the soldiers to save his younger brothers, but he refused to go with them, "saying that he had decided to die in his home".¹⁴

The unexpected retreat of the Russian army forced the Armenians of Vaspurakan to abandon their settlements and follow the Russians. T. Nazarbekyan was compelled to protect the refugees with his brigade and Armenian volunteers. Unfortunately, a significant number of civilians were killed as a result of Kurdish attacks.¹⁵

Mass massacres of Armenians in the city of Mush and the province: Testimonies of Muslims

The memoirs of T. Nazarbekyan and V. N. Poltavtsev, along with the reports of Krim-Shamkhalov and Udovitsa, present the massacres of Armenians in the city of Mush and in the Armenian villages of the plain. On February 3, 1916, the Russian army captured Mush. Approximately 50 families remained in the city, including a small number of Armenians. The Armenian population had been massacred in June 1915.¹⁶ Only a small number of craftsmen:¹⁷ tailors, locksmiths, and shoemakers were left alive, as they were essential for the army's needs. A Turk was settled in each of their households, acting as "the full master and owner of both the people and the property".¹⁸ Regarding the Armenian quarter of the city, it was almost entirely destroyed during the self-defense, by Turkish artillery.

¹³ Sahakyan 2019b: 226.

¹⁴ Sahakyan 2019b: 227–228.

¹⁵ American missionaries, one year later in 1916, while in the Berkry Gorge, counted about seven thousand human skeletons. See Ussher, Knapp 1917: 312.

¹⁶ In May 1915, the authorities ordered the residents of Mush to forcibly deport within two hours; however, the Armenians refused and, under the leadership of Hakob Kotoyan (1864–1915), organized the self-defense of the city's five Armenian quarters. The population of Mush, which was 12,000, had been increased by about 10,000 Armenians who had taken refuge from the surrounding villages. The forces were uneven; the Armenians lacked sufficient weapons and ammunition and, in addition, had to fight against approximately 2,000 regular soldiers of the Turkish army, 11 cannons, and Kurdish irregular militias. The battles continued until June 30.

¹⁷ Sahakyan 2020: 301–302.

¹⁸ Sahakyan 2020: 309.

On February 12, 1916, while crossing the bridge over the Euphrates near the village of Sulukh, T. Nazarbekyan noticed that the stones on the riverbank were red in color. He was informed that in June of the previous year, the Turks and Kurds had forced some Armenians to be thrown into the Euphrates, while those who refused were beheaded and thrown into the river.¹⁹ According to Muslim testimonies, even if Armenians managed to escape by swimming, they were caught and thrown back into the river. In this way, about 15,000 Armenians were killed.²⁰

On February 13, T. Nazarbekyan was visited by a delegation of Muslim representatives from Mush, including Sheikh Avis Kadler, several mullahs, Jafar Agha, and other prominent citizens. They raised their voices in protest against the massacres and attempted to stop them, which caused them to face hostility from the authorities. Armenian eyewitnesses confirmed the statements of the Muslims and, at the same time, testified as witnesses to the atrocities committed by the Turks, such as burying people alive.²¹

Colonel V. N. Poltavtsev, chief of staff of the brigade, while still in Northern Persia, reported on the massacre of about 1,000 Assyrians and Armenians in the Dilman region. They were forced to build defensive fortifications and trenches. Upon learning of the approach of Russian troops, the Turks decapitated them, throwing the severed heads to the ground and the bodies into a well. Realizing that it was impossible to kill everyone in this manner, the perpetrators bound the hands of the Armenians and Assyrians and began crushing their heads with mattocks.²² The Colonel testifies about another incident: "According to eyewitnesses, on the eve of the capture of Mush by our troops, the Turks gathered Christian men, and a Turkish doctor shot them one by one with revolvers. They brought them to him individually (Armenians: R.S., N.A., L.K.), and he cold-bloodedly shot them. From time to time, he paused to cool down or change revolvers. In this way, he shot about 500 people."²³ The colonel gives another example: "Near Bitlis, our officers went to inspect an Armenian church that was filled with decomposed bodies and skeletons of Armenians of various ages and genders".²⁴

Staff-Captain Krim-Shamkhalov, a subordinate of T. Nazarbekyan, reports on the inquiry he conducted among Muslims and Armenians regarding the massacre of Armenians in Mush. The general proposes to present this report in the form of an official memorandum.²⁵ On February 16, 1916, the staff-captain presented his detailed report. The organizer of the massacre in Mush was Rashid Bey, a representative of the "Union

¹⁹ Sahakyan 2020: 304.

²⁰ Sahakyan 2020: 308.

²¹ Sahakyan 2020: 305.

²² SARF, collection R-6120, inventory 1, file 5, sheet 15-16.

²³ SARF, collection R-6120, inventory 1, file 1, sheet 10-11.

²⁴ SARF, collection R-6120, inventory 1, file 1, sheet 11.

²⁵ The report of Krim-Shamkhalov was first published by Nersisyan 1991: 501-504. M. G. Nersisyan discovered the copy of the report in the archive of the Institute of History of the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia, Leo's collection, fond 1, inventory 1, file 226, list 1-6.

and Progress” party and later head of military secret intelligence. He was supported by Servet Bey, the governor of the Mush district; Kyazim Bey, commander of the gendarme battalion responsible for massacres in the Van province; and other individuals. The local Muslim clergy protested against the massacres, while the imam of Mush, Sheikh Avis Kadler, appealed to Servet Bey, “asking him to respect the laws of Muhammad, which permit killing only those males aged 15 to 60 capable of bearing arms and resisting”. In response, he was threatened with arrest and subjected to public insults.²⁶ The troops, and partly the Kurds, actively participated in the massacres. The order to begin the killings was given from Constantinople.²⁷ They dug pits, into which women with their children were driven to the edges. “Mothers were forced to push their children into the pit, after which a little soil was poured over them. Then, in front of their bound husbands, the women were raped and killed. After that, the men were killed...”²⁸ Velis Pasha, the commander of the Ottoman 34th Division, also participated in the massacres.²⁹

During a meeting with one of the influential citizens of Mush, Jafar Agha, T. Nazarbekyan spoke about the massacres of the Armenians. Jafar confirmed the facts presented in Krim-Shamkhalov’s report.³⁰ The authorities did not forgive Jafar, and on July 26, 1916, after the Turks recaptured Mush, Jafar Agha was executed.

Insufficient supplies forced T. Nazarbekyan to send armed groups into the deserted and destroyed Armenian villages of the Mush plain to find hidden wheat. Numerous reports from their commanders described the mass killings of Armenians. For example, on March 16, T. Nazarbekyan received the report of *zauryad-yentaspá* (junior officer) Udovitsa about at least 200 charred bodies discovered in three barns in one of the Armenian villages.³¹ The only surviving Armenian reports that these are traces of atrocities committed by the Kurds and Turks. As T. Nazarbekyan notes, there were so many reports of this nature that he sent them to the American representative in Van, probably one of the missionaries, and the photographs to Ashot Atanasyan in Mush,³² who on July 26, 1916, in his report to the Caucasian Committee of the All-Russian Union of Cities, referred to T. Nazarbekyan's conversation with Jafar Agha.³³

²⁶ Sahakyan 2020: 308.

²⁷ Sahakyan 2020: 309.

²⁸ Sahakyan 2020: 308.

²⁹ Sahakyan 2020: 309.

³⁰ Sahakyan 2021: 287.

³¹ NAA, fund 45, list 1, file 11, list 1–36.

³² Ashot Atanasian (1870–1941) was an Armenian public and political figure, agronomist, and editor-publisher. Together with A. Sahakyan, he published the weekly newspaper *Gyughatntes* (The Agriculturist). During the First World War, he was sent to Western Armenia to organize and manage agricultural works.

³³ Sahakyan 2007: 109–110, 42–45.

The massacres of the Armenians in Mush were witnessed by Bodil,³⁴ a Norwegian working at a German missionary institution, and Alma,³⁵ a Swedish missionary. They attempted to protest against the massacres but were unsuccessful. The missionaries were prohibited from sending telegrams, and their correspondence was censored by the authorities. The district governor, Servet, forcibly compelled the missionaries to leave Mush, likely to prevent them from testifying about the atrocities.

T. Nazarbekov testifies to another incident. While in the village of Khashtagh near Mush, he witnessed about 50 naked Russian soldiers fleeing down from the mountains toward their comrades; they had been captured by Kurds. The soldiers recounted that the Kurds, in their presence, humiliated Armenian women, after which they stripped the soldiers naked and began shooting at them.³⁶

Conclusion

The article highlights the testimonies of Russian military personnel who witnessed the consequences of the Armenian genocide in the Ottoman Empire during the First World War. Particularly important and credible are the accounts confirmed by Turkish citizens. Their testimonies indicate that the order to carry out the massacres was given by the highest authorities, with participation from the regular army and Kurdish irregular bands. The operations were directed by local authorities.

³⁴ Bodil Biørn (1871–1960) was a Norwegian missionary. In 1905, she was sent to the Ottoman Empire by the organization “Women’s Missionary Association.” She collaborated with the German missionary mission. Initially, she worked in Mezre (Harput province) before moving to Mush. She was a witness to the Armenian Genocide. After the war, she continued her work in Syria, Lebanon, and Constantinople. In 1922, she founded the “Lusaghbyur” orphanage in Alexandropol to care for 33 orphans.

³⁵ Alma Viktoria Leontina Johansson (1880–1974) was a Swedish missionary. From 1910 to 1915, she was in Mush as part of the German mission, working in a German orphanage established for Armenian orphans. She was a witness to the Armenian Genocide. In Sweden, she published two books dedicated to the Armenian Genocide: *Alma Johansson: Ett folk i landsflykt: Ett år ur armeniernas historia* (1930; facsimile edition 1979) and *Alma Johansson: Armeniskt flyktningliv*, Kvinnliga Missions Arbetare, Stockholm, 1931.

On April 21, 2011, through the initiative of the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, soil brought from Johansson’s grave was interred in the memorial wall of the Armenian Genocide Memorial, and a commemorative plaque was installed. Afterwards, guests from Scandinavian countries planted a Scandinavian tree in the Memory Park in honor of Scandinavian supporters of the Armenian cause. Near the entrance of the Yerevan State University Library, a “Path of Gratitude” was opened, featuring busts of twelve foreign figures who contributed to the Armenian cause, including a bust of Alma Johansson (April 29, 2015).

³⁶ Sahakyan 2020: 293.

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CLIMATIC CRISIS IN THE EASTERN PROVINCES OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE DURING THE SECOND HALF OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY (According to British Consular and Travel Accounts)

Sona Vardanyan¹

Abstract

The article presents the crisis situations—drought, crop failure, and the resulting years of famine—that developed in the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire during the second half of the 19th century, based on British consular reports and travel accounts. These climatic anomalies were part of the final phase of the Little Ice Age, which was characterized by climatic instability that created weather extremes, including fluctuations in temperature and precipitation.

Keywords: Ottoman Empire, climate crisis, drought, crop failure, famine, British sources

1.1 Climatic Factors in the Formation of the Crisis

The climate crisis was a crucial factor in the deepening of the 19th-century crisis in the Ottoman Empire. This period corresponded to the final phase of one of the global climatic eras, the “Little Ice Age.” The Little Ice Age is characterized by climatic fluctuations that began approximately in the 13th-14th centuries, and then—after a certain mild phase—became more pronounced from the mid-16th century to the mid-19th century. This period is characterized by a decrease in global average temperatures².

This is the only period for which data obtained from all regions of the world indicate cooler conditions than the current climate. At the same time, the primary characteristic of the Little Ice Age was not solely the drop in temperature, but also an increase in climatic instability³.

During the Little Ice Age, both short-term climatic episodes and long-term fluctuations occurred⁴. This climatic change can arise from the internal processes of the climate system as well as from the influence of external forcings⁵.

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² Grove 2008.

³ Lamb 1995: 212.

⁴ Collet, White *et al.* 2025: 4.

⁵ Hegerl, Zwiers, Braconnot *et al.* 2007: 667.

Factors of climatic variability include changes in prevailing winds, oceanic circulation, volcanic factors, astronomical cycles (Milankovitch cycles), and solar activity (Spörer Minimum (approx. 1400–1510), Maunder Minimum (1645–1715), and Dalton Minimum [1790–1830])⁶. Prolonged declines in solar activity may be linked to the cooling phases of the Little Ice Age, but they should be viewed as only one component of a broad, multi-factor climate system⁷.

The Earth's climate can change significantly following major volcanic eruptions, which loft dust and gases into the atmosphere that reduce the penetration of solar radiation. Major eruptions eject sulfate aerosols into the stratosphere, which diminish solar radiation; as a result, short-term cooling events occur within the same year or within one to two years⁸.

An example of such a major eruption in the 19th century was the eruption⁹ of Mount Tambora, such that the year 1816 became known “the year without a summer”¹⁰.

One of the factors in global climate change is the North Atlantic Oscillation (NAO). It defines the large-scale meridional (north-south direction) fluctuation of atmospheric mass between the subtropical high-pressure center (located near the Azores) and the subpolar low-pressure center (located near Iceland), which exert opposing climatic impacts on Middle Eastern region during the years of their positive and negative phases¹¹.

Thus, the Little Ice Age was the result of the combined influence of both external climatic factors (volcanic and solar variability) and the internal dynamics of the climate system (oceanic and atmospheric circulation), which led to climatic instability.

On the other hand, climate changes do not operate in isolation; their impact depends on the environment and societal resilience¹².

The relief of the Armenian Highland, with the configuration of its respective mountain ranges and the plateaus and depressions lying between them, presents a system characterized by distinct regularities, the sub-units of which often form axes and analogous zones extending around these axes. This system is characterized by a clear vertical zonation, which is determined by the mountainous nature of the terrain and defines its landscape diversity¹³. The territory of the Armenian Highland belongs to the basins of the Black and Caspian Seas, and the Persian Gulf of the Indian Ocean¹⁴.

⁶ Lamb 1995: 52-70.

⁷ Grove 2008: 365.

⁸ Sigl, Winstrup *et al.* 2015: 1.

⁹ Other major eruptions of the 19th century are: St Helens 1800 (Washington), Tambora 1815 (Lesser Sunda), Cosiguina 1835 (Nicaragua), Chikurachki 1853 (Kurile Islands), Sheveluch 1854 (Kamchatka), Krakatau 1883 (western Java), Okataina 1886 (Tarawera, New Zealand) (Briffa *et al.* 1998: 453).

¹⁰ Sigurdsson and Carey 1992: 38.

¹¹ Cullen & deMenocal 2000: 853–863.

¹² Grove 2008: 420.

¹³ Bobokhyan 2023: 26.

¹⁴ Gabrielyan 2000: 13.

Although the Armenian Highland is a landlocked country, the influence of the seas is significant¹⁵. The seas facilitate the penetration of cyclones and moist air masses moving from west to east, which bring abundant precipitation from the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. The ascent of air on the windward slopes of the mountain ranges causes heavy precipitation. Central and Eastern Anatolia are drier because the mountains obstruct the penetration of moist air, and the air loses its moisture as it crosses the mountains, becoming drier¹⁶.

The distribution of precipitation is highly uneven: it exceeds 1000 mm on the shores of the Black Sea (up to 2300 mm in Rize) and 800–1500 mm on the Mediterranean coast, whereas dry and semi-arid zones are formed on the leeward sides of the mountain ranges. Central Anatolia is semi-arid (350–500 mm), while Eastern Anatolia is relatively more humid, although precipitation decreases in valleys and low depressions. The topography also shapes local microclimates¹⁷.

From a societal perspective, Middle Eastern regions are particularly sensitive to climate change. In these areas, climatic stress is driven by extreme heat and limited water resources, which can create or exacerbate pre-existing socio-political tensions¹⁸.

These parts of the Armenian Highland, as noted, possessed a continental climate, and these areas were considered zones of marginal agriculture, where farming was carried out at the absolute limit of the possibilities offered by climatic, topographical, or soil conditions. However, agricultural regions located on mountainous or climatic margins (for example, Van, Erzurum, Bitlis, and other high elevated provinces) were more frequently subjected to famine and economic crises. This is due to the great climatic fluctuations; in high mountainous regions, one year's harvest could differ drastically from the next because of late-onset frosts, early snow, drought, or low temperatures¹⁹.

Weather parameters directly affect crop yields. In addition to temperature and humidity, sunlight, hail, wind, high humidity, and snow are also important, as they can both damage and protect crops. It is precisely the combined sequence of weather factors that makes certain years extraordinarily good or bad harvest years²⁰. In agricultural societies, the impact of adverse climatic phenomena, particularly prolonged droughts, was determined by both their frequency and the adaptive capacities and available reserve resources of the population. When a drought became continuous, it led to a decline in crop yields, the depletion of food reserves, and the deepening of a food crisis. Malnutrition caused by famine weakened the population's resilience, facilitated the spread of infectious diseases, and significantly raised mortality rates²¹.

¹⁵ Gabrielyan 2000: 133.

¹⁶ Türkeş 1996: 1058.

¹⁷ Türkeş 1996: 1059.

¹⁸ Mann 2002: 287.

¹⁹ For a discussion of marginal agriculture and its vulnerability to climatic change, see Parry 1978.

²⁰ Grove 2008: 417.

²¹ Erler 2024: 707.

Paleoclimatic reconstructions make it possible to reconstruct and study past climatic conditions. According to them, extreme drought events occurred in the Eastern Mediterranean and Asia Minor in the late 19th century, leading to famines, diseases, and economic hardships. The years 1874, 1887, 1890, and 1928 stand out as severely dry years²².

The Little Ice Age exerted its influence right up to the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Within the territory of the Ottoman Empire, the most conspicuous manifestations of this influence were the climate crises of the 1840s–1850s and 1879–1881. These climatic anomalies of the second half of the 19th century resulted from global climate changes. The Ottoman Empire was not exempt from these global climatic developments, and similar climatic manifestations were recorded across its territory simultaneously. The year 1842 was a year of exceptionally severe and prolonged drought in Europe on a pan-European scale²³. In the late 1870s (especially 1878–1879), a sharp cooling occurred in European temperatures, accompanied by prolonged frosts and crop failures; as a result, climatic stress transformed into widespread famines, migration, and agricultural depression²⁴. Nevertheless, the impact of climatic anomalies in the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire could be somewhat different, depending on the geographical and climatic characteristics of the region.

1.2 Drought, Crop Failure, and Famine According to British Authors

The impact of the climatic anomalies of the LIA on subsistence and economic activity in the Ottoman Empire persisted from the mid-19th to the end of the century. According to climatological reconstructions, beginning in the 1850s, the Eastern Mediterranean region was in a phase of high climatic variability, characterized by the instability of precipitation (during the months of May–August)²⁵. Indeed, the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire entered a prolonged phase of climatic instability in the 1830s–1840s. According to British commercial statistics, a widespread failure of grain crops occurred in 1839–1840, creating a severe food shortage; as a result, even regions that were normally exporters were forced to import grain²⁶.

Fluctuations in temperature and extreme climatic events continued from the 1840s into the 1850s. “Unusually” warm weather seasons alternated with exceptionally cold periods. This adverse climatic phase was followed by the famine of 1845–1850²⁷.

The final phase of the LIA Age was thus manifested by precipitation instability and temperature fluctuations. The first half of the 1840s was characterized by relatively high

²² Akkemik & Aras 2005: 546.

²³ Brázdil *et al.* 2019: 1868.

²⁴ Fagan 2000: 217.

²⁵ Touchan *et al.* 2005: 89.

²⁶ MacGregor 1847: 116.

²⁷ Çelik 2017: 96.

temperatures. This warming peaked in 1847, when the highest temperature metrics of the period were recorded²⁸. Insufficient precipitation led to periodic droughts, which were characteristic of the final period of the LIA. The droughts resulted in crop losses and the drying up of meadows²⁹.

Descriptions of the Erzurum region during this period emphasize the short and cold growing season inherent to a high-altitude mountainous environment, where vegetation was only beginning to develop even in early June. Summers were far too short for crops to mature fully, which necessitated the extensive use of artificial irrigation to protect the crops from scorching before they could ripen³⁰.

A similar picture emerged in the Pashalik of Kars. Traveling through these territories in the 1830s–1840s, the British consul James Brant testified that sufficient crops had not been harvested over the preceding two years to meet the needs of the population, and the prolonged retention of snow on the ground often impeded the ripening of grain. The late activation of vegetation (trees only budding in June) underscores once again the shortened nature of the growing season and the climatic severity³¹. In 1841, J. Brant reported that the drought and subsequent years of poor harvests had created a difficult situation among the population. As a result, the price of bread was being sold six times higher than its usual value³².

Another traveler conveyed a firsthand experience of the drought: *“While the population was rapidly diminishing under the destructive wave of the plague and the flight of thousands whose terror had driven them from their homes, another calamity threatened them—hardly less severe. It was autumn, but since the previous April, the sky had not yielded a single drop of rain. The reservoirs that supplied the city were almost completely exhausted, and several of the public fountains had already dried up.”* In Southgate’s words, all classes of the population began to feel the full weight of this misfortune, as water in some neighborhoods was sold at such a high price that a poor man’s earnings were barely enough to purchase his ordinary daily ration³³.

Mass prayers addressed to God to supplicate for rain were among the widespread social manifestations utilized for the purpose of preventing drought in both Islamic and, more generally, European societies³⁴. As the same author notes, not even the strictest fatalism could withstand a new, impending disaster, so public prayer was undertaken to prevent it³⁵. Nevertheless, the author notes that “still there were none of the signs of

²⁸ Çelik 2020: 58.

²⁹ Pehlivan 2016: 184.

³⁰ Hamilton 1842: 182.

³¹ Brant 1836: 198.

³² Pehlivan 2016: 184.

³³ Southgate 1840: 89.

³⁴ Armenians also had the custom of singing rainmaking songs and performing prayers. These songs have been preserved in Armenian folklore. See: Hayrapetyan 2004.

³⁵ Southgate 1840: 90.

winter which usually, in our own country, appear at this season in the same latitudes. The fields, which during the summer had been parched and desert-like, were beginning, under the influence of the autumnal rains, to assume the fresh green tint of spring”³⁷.

The information provided by British consul J. Brant that the water of Lake Van had receded so much in 1838 that the dry land in the vicinity of Archesh had expanded by about approximately 1.6 km could be linked to prolonged arid conditions³⁸.

Under these conditions, regions within the Ottoman administrative system were frequently perceived and characterized as either possessing a “favorable climate” (âb ve havası güzel—having good water and air) or as climatically unfavorable zones. Consequently, no official wished to serve in regions with harsher climatic conditions, whereas locations with a favorable climate were considered preferable for occupying an administrative post³⁹.

In this regard, a letter written in mid-June 1845 by Vasif Pasha, the governor of Ankara, is particularly notable, wherein he describes the process of the formation of the famine in detail. According to his testimony, due to the absence of snow and rain during the preceding winter and spring, the crops were unable to propagate and grow sufficiently. An attempt was made to resolve the problem of water scarcity by opening canals and directing water from smaller rivers and more water-abundant locations to the fields that needed it. Although the population waited hopefully for the harvest for months and survived on limited reserves, the complete absence of precipitation in the summer and the drying up of springs following recent storms led to the total destruction of the

³⁶ Southgate presents this ceremony in detail: “*The Sunneh prescribes that the assembly shall be in the open air; that no public prayer shall be made by the Imam, but that each individual shall offer his petitions for himself; that the ceremony shall be performed by command of the sovereign, and that none but Muslims shall be permitted to join in it. Near the end of September, a royal order having been issued for public prayers for delivery from the drought, fifty teachers of the common schools, accompanied by their pupils, repaired to the great meadow of Kaat Khaneh, or, as my readers will more easily remember it, the European Valley of the ‘Sweet Waters.’ Selecting a large open space, the whole company passed three times around it in solemn procession, headed by an Imam. The teachers then seated themselves upon the grass, and their respective pupils arranged themselves around them. Before each teacher were placed two small bags, one empty and the other filled with clean pebbles. The ceremony commenced. Each of the fifty took a pebble from the full bag, pronounced over it a short prayer, then blew upon it three times and deposited it in the empty bag. This act was performed by all simultaneously, and at the close of each prayer the whole company of boys responded, ‘Amen.’ When the Imam had ascertained by calculation that 72,000 prayers had been offered, he gave the signal for closing the ceremony. The bags containing the pebbles blessed by prayer were then collected and emptied into one large leathern sack. The mouth of this was secured, a cord was attached to it, and the whole was thrown into the stream which flows through the meadow, there to remain until the intercession should take effect.*”

³⁷ Southgate 1840: 93.

³⁸ A-Do 1912: 12.

³⁹ Çelik 2017: 100.

crops. He noted that the food shortage was not limited to Ankara alone but extended to all towns and villages⁴⁰.

Documentary sources testify that a universal shortage of water resources was recorded globally in 1842, as a result of which numerous wells and springs dried up⁴¹, a phenomenon from which, in fact, the Ottoman Empire was not exempt.

The drought of 1845 was one of the most extreme climatic events of the past two centuries. Prior to that, the interval between major droughts was approximately 30 years, but in the final two decades of the century, climatic fluctuations became more frequent and periodic. Beginning from the winter of 1879, climatic disruptions were recorded approximately every 5 to 6 years. The drought of 1879 is considered one of the most severe events of that period. The harshest cold wave was recorded in the winter and spring of 1880, immediately following the severe drought in the region⁴².

Information regarding the famine in the Ottoman Empire also found a wide resonance within British public and charitable circles. In this context, during a meeting of the “Asia Minor Famine Relief Fund Committee” convened in London on June 24, 1875, the committee’s chairman, Major-General Sir Henry Rawlinson, described Anatolia as a “garden of happiness” that had been transformed into a “howling wilderness”⁴³.

American missionaries and British consuls attempted to fill the gaps left by the Ottoman state in providing aid by establishing relief networks, which in many cases became influential. They helped thousands of people, saving them from starvation in the central and eastern provinces, as well as in the Mosul region. However, in addition to humanitarian goals, these figures definitely had their own religious and political agendas. In their descriptions of the two famines (1845–1850 and 1879–1881), they shaped discourses about the Ottoman Empire that were linked to specific ideologies and perceptions of governance⁴⁴. Even while organizing relief under famine conditions, the British continued to conceptualize Anatolia as an “uncivilized” territory. Some British figures did, of course, criticize English industrial cities, stating that they grew wealthy from trade with the East and Asia Minor but ignored the starving population there⁴⁵.

Due to its geographical location—characterized by mountainous terrain, harsh winter conditions, and transportation primarily dependent on pack animals—even a short-term drought in the region could exert a long-term, devastating impact on the subsistence of the local population, literally paralyzing it. Very little time had passed since the Ottoman-Russian War of 1877–1878⁴⁶. The drought of 1879 led to a decline in

⁴⁰ Çelik 2017: 146-147.

⁴¹ Brázdil 2019: 1872.

⁴² Pehlivan 2024: 31.

⁴³ Ó Gráda *et al.* 2006 (Eds): 22.

⁴⁴ Ertem 2017: 160.

⁴⁵ Ertem 2015: 25.

⁴⁶ Ertem, Özge 2010: 75.

crop yields, as a result of which the first alarms of famine were already recorded by September 1879⁴⁷.

In his report, British official Chermside⁴⁸ emphasizes that the severity of the established situation was comparable to the great famine recorded in India. Under the conditions of the severe winter that followed, news of deaths from starvation began to arrive from Van and Diyarbakır as early as January 1880⁴⁹.

From the perspective of presenting the socio-economic situation of the region, British consular reports constitute an important primary source. They are vital sources for reconstructing the societal experiences of climate changes and weather phenomena, as they reflect the immediate reactions of communities within the Ottoman Empire.

In November 1879, a letter from the Armenian bishop's vicar regarding the extreme plight of the Armenian population in the Bashkala region was conveyed to the British consulate through Khrimian⁵⁰. According to the letter, 100 families had already left the region and relocated to Persia, while those remaining were without food and clothing, surviving by begging from house to house. "They have scarcely anything left to eat, and men, women, and children go out into the fields, gathering roots and grass to appease their hunger. Cases are even reported where people have begun to eat earth. Disease is prevalent in consequence of this scarcity, and has caused many deaths, while a part of the emigrants die on the road"⁵¹.

Regarding the Bagrevand district, we find the following description: "All provisions were almost completely exhausted. People first slaughtered and ate their horses and other animals, and then, as the demand for wheat and bread grew increasingly intense, they began to resort to extreme measures. The meat of mangled and dead animals was used as food"⁵².

In the areas around Bayazet, the famine both began earlier and was more severe in its intensity. During the winter frosts, all food supplies were fully depleted, and while communication from all sides was cut off due to the snow, the famine set in. Those who possessed wheat supplies from the previous year demanded inaccessible prices for it, and the poor began to die of hunger. Before affecting humans, diseases spread among the livestock, and a mass die-off began. The careless and unsuitable foods consumed due to the famine proved even more harmful, triggering various diseases⁵³.

⁴⁷ Report 1885: 13.

⁴⁸ Sir Herbert Chermside was a British Army officer and imperial administrator who served as a military attaché and consular official in the late 19th-century Ottoman Empire, reporting on conditions in Anatolia.

⁴⁹ Ghazarian 2022: 492.

⁵⁰ Mkrtich Khrimian (Khrimian Hayrik, 1820–1907) was an Armenian national, ecclesiastical, and public figure who served as the Prelate of Van and later the Patriarch of Constantinople, as well as the Catholicos of All Armenians (1892–1907). He supported relief initiatives and contributed to the organization of assistance for the affected rural Armenian population.

⁵¹ Memorandum by Lord Tenterden on the Distress in Asiatic Turkey: In FO 424/106: 1880: 392.

⁵² Report 1885: 13.

⁵³ Report 1885: 14.

On December 30, 1879, Captain Clayton⁵⁴ reported to Major Trotter⁵⁵ an exceedingly heavy snowfall that had occurred overnight in Bashkala, rendering the roads impassable for laden animals⁵⁶. According to his testimony, “Everywhere the season is very backward; the mountain ranges are still covered with snow, and the roads in the valleys are almost impassable owing to the flooded rivers, many bridges being either broken or under water. The population, both Muslim and Christian, complain of the dearness of bread and hard times.” The apparent scarcity and high prices of grain were the consequence of an invasion of locusts, from which these regions suffered in the autumn of 1879⁵⁷.

The prolonged snow cover delayed the growth of pasture plants, while the price of hay was inaccessible to most people. In April of the following year, Clayton noted: “Most of the animals have either already been slaughtered for food or have died from lack of fodder.” The protracted winter and late-melting snow destroyed the foundations of livestock farming; as a result, the population lost both food and their primary means of economic survival. In the regions of Van and Erzurum, the famine had transformed into a widespread human and pastoral disaster⁵⁸.

On May 27, 1880, the “New York Evangelist” - a journal published in New York and addressed to Protestant communities - published a letter dated to April written by Boyajian, the spiritual leader of the Protestant Armenian community of Diyarbakır. This letter is one of the most important documentary sources regarding the famine that broke out in the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire in 1880—a famine which, according to contemporary data, caused the death of at least 10,000 people. The letter records and certifies on the spot the extreme gravity of the situation prevailing in Diyarbakır. Boyajian describes that the devastation of the war had been followed by a terrible famine, as a result of which the price of bread had increased around 16-fold, and a significant portion of the population—more than 4,000 people—was living on relief. The city was filled with beggars, some of whom were starving to death, and British aid was insufficient to mitigate the consequences of the catastrophe. The severe winter further deepened the crisis⁵⁹.

⁵⁴ Emilius Clayton (1803–1887) was a British diplomat and army officer who served as vice-consul at Van from 1878 to 1881.

⁵⁵ Major Henry Trotter, British Consul for Kurdistan (1879) and subsequently British Consul at Erzurum (1880), was one of the principal British diplomatic observers of the Ottoman eastern provinces in the aftermath of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878.

⁵⁶ Captain Clayton to Major Trotter: Van, December 30, 1879: 165: In FO 424/106: 1880: 392.

⁵⁷ Vice-Consul to Sir A. H. Layard—Received at the Foreign Office, May 11, Koniah, April 22, 1880: 364: In FO 424/106. 1880: 364.

⁵⁸ Ghazarian 2022: 492.

⁵⁹ Ertem, Özge 2010: 74.

Roughly three weeks after the transmission of Boyajian's letter from Diyarbakır, the decree of the Sultan stated that "since it has not rained for a long time, and the crops are in dire need of God's mercy, just as in previous years when there was a cessation of rains," it was necessary once again to go out for rain prayers⁶⁰.

The cold and prolonged winter of 1879–1880 had further deepened the scarcity and increased the loss of livestock. In 1879, the province of Erzurum, particularly its eastern portion, was struck by a prolonged and severe winter, which had a devastating impact on the numbers of large and small livestock. According to a report by British Colonel William Everett in May 1880, nearly half of the oxen and around 70 percent of the sheep had perished in the district of Pasin. Animal mortality was also enormous within Alashkert, which was part of the Sanjak of Bayazet⁶¹.

"Information regarding the famine and distress had also been received from the settlement of Ushak, under the jurisdiction of the Diocese of Smyrna, where the primary cause of the crisis was the devastation wrought by locusts over the preceding two years, which had caused significant damage to agriculture"⁶².

In the "Memorandum on the Distress in Asiatic Turkey," a famine was recorded during the years 1879–1880 in the Asiatic provinces of the Ottoman Empire, specifically in Bayazet, Van, certain parts of the Vilayet of Erzurum, some districts of the Vilayet of Diyarbakır, as well as in the Vilayets of Sebastia, Mosul, Antalya, and Aleppo⁶³. Everywhere, a decline in the 1879 harvest was reported, which had intermingled with the devastation carried out by irregular Kurdish cavalry⁶⁴.

According to British parliamentary documents, the harvest in Bashkala and its villages had failed almost completely, and the yielded crop often did not even cover the seed used for sowing. "In several villages, only three or four of the wealthiest families were able to eat bread, while the rest had slaughtered and salted their sheep and subsisted solely on that meat, without any vegetable food, as a consequence of which diseases began to spread rapidly. In other places, the peasants go to the mountains and gather certain roots, which they grind and use for making bread"⁶⁵.

In March 1880, as Captain Everett reports, famine and poverty were deepening in Erzurum as well. However, according to his testimony, the famine was largely the result of certain individuals hoarding flour with the aim of securing high profits later on. According to Captain Everett's observations, numerous villages in Pasin and adjacent districts—including Zuluk, Kopgli, Haran, and Yuzveran—were in conditions of extreme destitution and at risk of starvation⁶⁶.

⁶⁰ Ertem, Özge 2010: 745.

⁶¹ Köksal and Can 2024: 55.

⁶² Report 1885: 20.

⁶³ Memorandum by Lord Tenterden on the Distress in Asiatic Turkey: In FO 424/106. 1880: 388.

⁶⁴ Memorandum by Lord Tenterden on the Distress in Asiatic Turkey: In FO 424/106. 1880: 388.

⁶⁵ Memorandum by Lord Tenterden on the Distress in Asiatic Turkey: In FO 424/106: 1880: 388.

⁶⁶ Memorandum by Lord Tenterden on the Distress in Asiatic Turkey: : In FO 424/106: 1880: 393.

In February 1880, the entire territory of Diyarbakır, spanning from these regions to Aleppo, was on the verge of famine. Extraordinary snowfalls had occurred, and the ground remained covered under snow for five consecutive weeks, while the cold was extreme. The livestock population was dying by the thousands. In almost every village, one could see anywhere from 12 to 500 dead animals, with very few survivors left alive⁶⁷.

In November 1879, it was reported from Mosul that under the conditions of the ongoing drought, if rains did not fall soon, the region could face the peril of famine. The cost of commodities exceeded the level of two years prior by around 50%, and grain hoarders were holding onto their stocks in hopes of higher prices⁶⁸.

In a communication from Chermside⁶⁹ addressed to Layard⁷⁰, it is noted that the sunny and rainless spring of the preceding year had caused a significant crop failure, creating a severe scarcity. By January, a shortage of provisions and animal fodder was already observable, and even dung—used as fuel—had become rare and expensive. The continuous severe winter had led to heavy famine and the almost total loss of livestock. Beyond the Euphrates, in Kurdish and mixed Arab-Kurdish settlements, due to the scarcity of timber, houses were mostly constructed in the form of mud domed structures or small rooms excavated into the ground⁷¹.

The famine extended from Amadia, Dohuk, Akre, and Zakho toward Eastern Kurdistan and down along the Persian frontier, thence across the entire desert (as well as the losses previously sustained by the Tai, Obeid, and Shammar tribes) all the way to Zor, and from there toward Aleppo and Antioch. Information regarding the famine in the desert was scarce, as many tribes took their food supplies with them into the desert; human suffering is not as severe as the loss of livestock, which has been immense⁷².

Chermside testifies that the winter had passed with exceptional severity. The author notes that in mid-March, snow was still falling in the Mosul region, while winter conditions continued to prevail in the plain of Kharput; snow remained both on the mountain slopes and in the streets, and ice blocks had formed around the springs. The gradual melting and refreezing of the snow had destroyed its natural protective effect, causing severe frosts instead. Consequently, the grain sown in some places had

⁶⁷ Memorandum by Lord Tenterden on the Distress in Asiatic Turkey: In FO 424/106. 1880: 393.

⁶⁸ Memorandum by Lord Tenterden on the Distress in Asiatic Turkey: In FO 424/106. 1880: 395.

⁶⁹ Sir Herbert Chermside (1850–1929) was a British Army officer and military diplomat who served in the Ottoman Empire and produced reports on the administrative, military, and social conditions of Anatolia.

⁷⁰ Sir Austen Henry Layard (1817–1894) was a British archaeologist, diplomat, and later politician who became famous for excavating ancient Assyrian sites at Nineveh and Nimrud. He subsequently served as a British envoy and ambassador in the Ottoman Empire, where he was actively involved in diplomatic affairs and in shaping British perceptions and policy regarding Ottoman governance, particularly in the eastern provinces.

⁷¹ Lieutenant Chermside to Sir A. H. Layard, Kharput, April 3, 1880: In FO 424/106. 1880: 412.

⁷² Lieutenant Chermside to Sir A. H. Layard, Kharput, April 3, 1880: In FO 424/106. 1880: 416.

germinated and subsequently perished, while in other districts it had failed to germinate at all—as was the case, for instance, in the Mardin–Diyarbakır sector⁷³.

In the context of the famine and climatic crisis, inter-ethnic relations in the region deteriorated significantly. The famine of 1879–1880, accompanied by a scarcity of fodder and grain, dealt a heavy blow particularly to nomadic and semi-nomadic groups. In February 1880, the American missionary Robert Chambers wrote that the “Turkish villages” on the Pasin plain of Erzurum were in “a worse condition than those inhabited by Christians.” In the same region a few months later, Trotter noted that “the Turks and Kurds are those who suffer most.” Similarly, outside of Van, Clayton reported that in Karakilisa, the Turks “were dependent even for bread upon their Armenian brethren.” The massive mortality of livestock among the pastoralist population may explain why the nomadic Kurds and tribal groups suffered more severely; however, the question remains as to why the sedentary Kurds and Turks were in an equally dire condition⁷⁴.

In November 1879, heavy snowfalls had also dealt a severe blow to the Circassians, endangering their principal wealth—horses. The British source notes that government inaction and economic pressures could not only cause major livestock losses but also exacerbate the discontent of the Circassians, thereby contributing to an increase in pillage and social instability in the border regions⁷⁵.

In an itinerary dated May 7, 1880, the Armenian Patriarch Khrimian wrote to A. H. Layard: *“The famine does not frighten the population of our vilayet as much as the robberies and crimes committed by the Kurds and those like them, which even today threaten the utter ruin of this province. These Kurds, by obstructing and almost neutralizing the efforts of the committees established both in Constantinople and in Van, which aim to bring relief to the starving, cause the famine to be aggravated thereby instead of being mitigated. For this reason, as soon as the weather permits, these criminals, according to the custom of their race, have begun to move upon the villages, leaving terrible devastations in their wake”*⁷⁶.

Complaints were also received from the Nestorian (Assyrian) community. In 1880, the Nestorian Christian population of Hakkari was in an extremely critical condition. Continuous attacks by Kurdish tribal groups, fiscal oppression by local officials, and violence by Ottoman troops had resulted in widespread plunder, famine, emigration, and death. Mar Shimun⁷⁷ wrote to Clayton: “Can a man, who is not stone, but has flesh and blood, endure such oppressions?”⁷⁸.

At this same time, Vice-Consul Clayton wrote to Major Trotter regarding the rebellion raised in the south by the Kurdish Chieftain Sheikh Obeydullah. Obeydullah

⁷³ Lieutenant Chermside to Sir A. H. Layard, Kharput, April 3, 1880: In FO 424/106. 1880: 417.

⁷⁴ Ghazarian 2022: 492.

⁷⁵ Memorandum by Lord Tenterden on the Distress in Asiatic Turkey: In FO 424/106. 1880: 394.

⁷⁶ The Armenian Patriarch to Sir A. H. Layard: May 1880. In FO 424/106. 1880: 430.

⁷⁷ Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East.

⁷⁸ Mar Shimoun to Captain Clayton: Kotchannis, March 27, 1880: In FO 424/106. 1880: 439–440.

had told Mutasarrıf⁷⁹ Tousoun Pasha: *“What are these rumors I hear, that the Armenians are to receive an independent state in Van, and the Nestorians are preparing to raise the British flag and declare themselves British subjects? I will never permit that, even if I have to arm the women.”* At the same time, the Sheikh had sent a letter to Mar Shimun, calling upon him to join him against the Turkish government. He had made the same proposal to the Armenian ecclesiastical leader there, declaring that he would protect the Christians. He had also forced the villages, even those situated only four hours’ distance from Bashkala, to promise to pay him taxes. The same source reports that the Sheikh intended to send his son to Constantinople with the following proposal: he wished to remind them of the substantial sum that Bedir Khan Beg⁸⁰ used to pay to the Sultan in a semi-independent state, and to offer even larger payments if his authority over Kurdistan were officially recognized and there would be no interference in his administrative affairs. On this basis, Clayton concludes that the Sheikh, and presumably the other Kurdish leaders as well, would look very unfavorably upon granting any special privileges to the Armenians or Nestorians⁸¹.

In October 1880, the British official linked the rise in Kurdish bandit attacks in the Arjesh district of the Van province not only to the instability arising after the Hakkari rebellion, but also to destitution and high grain prices, which forced the Kurds to secure provisions for the winter through plunder⁸².

Writing from Van on June 30, 1880, Vice-Consul Clayton informed Major Trotter that 98 percent of the deaths had occurred precisely among the Kurds, as the Christians possessed greater resources to withstand difficult times and also received more assistance from the Armenian committees. The Kurds, who were the primary victims, had lost almost their entire herds and livestock, upon which their livelihood principally depended. At the same time, Clayton recorded an increase in cases of robbery and pillage: *“The Shikakli Kurds, under Ali Khan, are doing much damage, coming down from the Persian frontier, plundering villages, and then carrying their booty across the border. Since the beginning of spring, about twenty villages have already been plundered. The latest instance was a large Armenian village in Haspistan, which nine days ago was surrounded by Ali Khan’s men, and all the cattle and sheep were driven off from it; out of more than 100 houses in the village, only three lambs were left”*⁸³.

The Armenians demonstrated a much better degree of organization in resisting the famine, coordinating relief through communal networks. In January 1880, the Central

⁷⁹ A Mutasarrıf was a senior Ottoman official who governed a sanjak (district or sub-province) as part of the empire’s provincial administration.

⁸⁰ Bedir Khan Beg was the hereditary ruler (emir) of the Botan principality in southeastern Anatolia, centered around the Cizre-Şirnak region. His authority was abolished as a result of the Ottoman Empire’s centralization policies, particularly within the framework of the Tanzimat reforms.

⁸¹ Vice-Consul Clayton to Major Trotter: Bashkala, July 11, 1880: In FO 424/107. 1881. 105-106.

⁸² Memorandum by Lord Tenterden on the Distress in Asiatic Turkey: In FO 424/106. 1880: 391.

⁸³ Vice-Consul Clayton to Major Trotter: Bashkala, July 11, 1880: In FO 424/107. 1881: 249.

Armenian Committee was formed in Constantinople as an organized body responding to the famine in the eastern provinces during 1879–1880. Its creation was prompted by petitions received from Erzurum, Van, and adjacent regions, which brought information regarding the famine and acute food shortages to the Patriarchate. Formed under the auspices of Patriarch Nerses Varzhapetian, the initial composition of the committee was reinforced with representatives of the Armenian merchant and public circles of Constantinople, including Serovbe and Abel Gulbenkian, Arik Unjian, Poghos Shashian, Grigor Nikodimosian, as well as Sahak Ghazarosian, Gabriel Noradounkian, and Garnik Hovakimian. In a short time, it was transformed into a coordinating body aimed at collecting and distributing aid among the starving population in an organized manner⁸⁴.

During the 1880 famine Armenian communities showed high degree of organized self-relief. Under the aegis of the Constantinople National Assembly were continued donations that extended not only throughout Armenian populated centers but also into the Armenian communities of the Russian Empire. Armenian media has had an important role in the organization of donations. “Mshak” of Grigor Artsruni, “Meghu” of Petros Simonyants and “Ports” («Ardzaganq») of Abgar Hovhannisyan initiated donations in the Caucasus, a part of which immediately were sent to starving provinces⁸⁵. In the article published in “Masis” in 1882 «Famine in Armenia: Amount of the Russian Armenians’ donations” figures the amount of collected donations.⁸⁶

The organization of the Armenians in helping one another during the famine and the consolidated work of the committees further provoked discontent among the Kurds. Although the Committee’s report stated that *“the collected relief was to be distributed equally to all needy, starving persons of the Armenian nation without religious discrimination, and according to necessity and capability, portions were also to be allocated to Turks, Kurds, and people belonging to other creeds and nationalities”*⁸⁷, complaints were nevertheless regularly raised among the Kurds on this account. To such an extent that the British official likewise emphasized that *“the Patriarch collects aid only for Christians, whereas Turkish wheat must be distributed among all Ottoman subjects, regardless of religion”*⁸⁸.

Since the Armenians were able to survive thanks to food aid but were frequently no longer in a position to pay their taxes, Kurdish tribal chieftains expropriated large quantities of Armenian lands, not infrequently entire villages⁸⁹.

Traveling through Erzurum, Layard wrote in his memoir: *“The Kurds and the Armenian Christians, both a hardy and industrious race, are nearly equal in numbers, and live amicably together in the same filth and wretchedness”*⁹⁰.

⁸⁴ Report 1885: 3–4.

⁸⁵ Ghazaryan 2001: 488.

⁸⁶ Ghazaryan 2001: 490.

⁸⁷ Report 1885: 6.

⁸⁸ Captain Everett to Major Trotter: Erzeroum, January 30, 1880: FO 424/106. 1880: 165.

⁸⁹ McDowall 2021: 69.

Conclusions

In the second half of the 19th century, the crisis situation that emerged in the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire—characterized by periodic droughts, crop failures, and famines—was driven by global climatic fluctuations occurring during the terminal phase of the LIA. Although these changes impacted diverse societies worldwide, they manifested with particular severity in the Ottoman East due to the complex topography, continental climate, and structural deficiencies in administration and the economy. British consular reports and travel accounts highlight the manifestations of the climatic crisis on the ecological environment of the Ottoman Empire's eastern provinces: prolonged and harsh winters, an absence of precipitation from spring to autumn, famine, and subsistence hardships. These factors affected the local populations in diverse ways depending on their mode of life. Consequently, the climatic and food crises served as an additional factor driving the accumulation of discontent and the escalation of social tensions among the various communities.

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Translated from Armenian by Gevorg Harytyunyan

THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA AT THE EPICENTER OF AN ETHNOPOLITICAL CONFLICT: MUSLIM UPRISINGS IN ARMENIA'S KARS MARZ IN 1918–1920 AND THE BRITISH POSITION

Vanik Virabyan, Hrant Virabyan¹

Abstract

Against the backdrop of the 1917 Russian revolutions and the collapse of the Caucasus Front, in a tense climate of mutual distrust—and within a foreign-policy environment that outwardly appeared favorable to Armenia—Muslim uprisings erupted. By the Treaty of Batum on June 4, 1918, the Kars *marz* (province), among other regions, was occupied by the Turks. Following its defeat, Turkey was forced to withdraw from Transcaucasia; on November 22, the Turks left Aleksandropol, and on December 4, Armenian troops entered the city. With the annexation of the Aleksandropol *uezd* (district) to the Republic of Armenia (RA), the issue of the Kars province was also raised. According to the Armistice of Mudros, the Armenian-Turkish border was to be restored along the projected 1914 Russian-Turkish border line.

The Turkish-Muslim movements of 1918–1920 in the Kars province and within the sovereign territories of the Republic of Armenia were anti-Armenian and anti-state in nature. The encroachments of the insurgent Muslim population were aimed at redrawing the sovereign borders of the RA proclaimed in May 1918, ultimately leading to the territorial dismemberment of the RA. This aimed to annex not only the regions of Sotk-Basargechar, Karabakh-Artsakh, Zangezur-Syunik, and Nakhichevan to Turkey, but also the Kars province, which held immense strategic importance for the RA.

From the very beginning, Azerbaijan presented territorial claims and ambitions to the Republic of Armenia. The military-political representations of Great Britain and other countries in Transcaucasia carried out an arbitral mission in this matter; however, this mission was fraught with double standards and preconditions. Ultimately, it was not aimed at ensuring the territorial integrity of the Republic of Armenia, thereby facilitating the activation of Muslim insurgent-separatist movements against the sovereign rights of the RA.

Keywords: Kars *marz*, Republic of Armenia, Muslim movements, Great Britain, Azerbaijan, Turkey

The study was supported by the Higher Education and Science Committee of MESCS RA (Research project № 25RG-6A113 - “Interethnic developments and displacements of ethnic groups of population in the Republic of Armenia (1918-1990s)”).

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Acts of violence and encroachments against the sovereign borders of the Republic of Armenia, which had been proclaimed in May 1918, Azerbaijan presented territorial claims and ambitions to the Republic of Armenia from the very outset. This was clearly documented by Ruben Ter-Minasyan:

“...Before moving on to the details, let us see what Azerbaijan practically wanted from Armenia. First, it demanded, in an absolute manner, that the Armenians completely relinquish Karabakh, wishing for the districts of Jivanshir, Shushi, Jebrail, the mountainous part of Gandzak, and Zangezur to be de facto and de jure recognized as part of Azerbaijan. In this manner, the entire province of Gandzak would pass into the borders of Azerbaijan. It tacitly accepted only that the Dilijan and Ijevan regions were part of Armenia, and even that with reservations, because it considered the Bashkend and Karakoyunlu regions as its own. Azerbaijan did not stop there; this was merely a prologue to the realization of its aspirations. It wanted to annex the Nakhichevan and Sharur uezds from the Yerevan province; the regions of Sadarak, Vedibasar (Aygavan), and Zangibasar (a village in the Yerevan uezd of the Yerevan province, now Masis) from the Yerevan and Etchmiadzin uezds; and the entire Surmalu along the right bank of the Araks, by the foothills of Masis, stretching up to the Kars province. If the Kars province was not to belong to the Turks, then it (Azerbaijan) was to extend all the way to the Batum region, from where Azerbaijan would have an outlet to the sea. In addition to this, by connecting the northern shores of Lake Sevan with the Karakoyunlu valley, Azerbaijan demanded the Basargechar region (Vardenis region since 1969), which would secure the rear of Karabakh and the Islamic population annexed to it. This immense project was neither an empty illusion nor a delirium; it was considered an accessible and natural program for the Turkish-Tatars, which was not left as a mere theory for schools, but was put into practice in Transcaucasia starting from 1919, and is still being implemented today.”²

In this regard, the Kars province—along with its districts of Ardahan and Kağızman—which was of strategic importance for the Republic of Armenia, also became a target. It was convulsed by Muslim uprisings, lawlessness, and anti-state, anti-Armenian movements. This was followed by increasingly frequent attacks by the bandit groups of Selim and others against Armenian military units and militiamen in Agbaba, Zod, Zarushat (Zarishad, Zarishat), and elsewhere, where Azerbaijani agents constantly held secret meetings, making provocative calls to overthrow the government of the Republic of Armenia³. Azerbaijan openly laid claim to Kars and its surrounding territories.

Proposing to the British command to occupy Kars as part of its territory, Azerbaijan justified its demand by claiming that the region was predominantly composed of Muslims⁴ who, having been subjected to massacres and pogroms during the Turkish

² Ruben 1982: 182-184.

³ Haraj, May 7, 1920, No. 49.

⁴ Mshak, January 5, 1919.

offenses in early 1918, were forced to flee their native settlements and find refuge in various regions of Transcaucasia. Nevertheless, although the Kars province was an important strategic point for Turkey, it was likewise evacuated by Turkish troops under the terms of the Armistice of Mudros.

In reality, the Muslims of Armenia did not reconcile with the new reality. Less than a week had passed since the signing of the Armistice of Mudros when internal plots were instigated against the RA in preparation for a general uprising. For this purpose, a gathering of Muslim leaders was convened in Kars. On November 5, 1918, a meeting of the Muslim leaders of the province took place in Kars with the participation of Yakub Shevki Pasha, the commander of the Turkish 9th Army stationed in Kars, and Hilmi Bey, the governor of the Sanjak of Kars. By a decision adopted at this meeting, the Muslim Shura of Kars was established, whose most critical political stance was a policy of non-recognition toward Georgia and Armenia.

Furthermore, on November 30, 1918, a new congress was convened in Kars. Muslim representatives from the provinces of Kars and Batum, Akhaltsikhe, Surmalu, Sardarapat, Sharur-Nakhichevan, Ordubad, and several other regions decided to create the "National Muslim Shura" to protect their interests during the withdrawal of Turkish troops stipulated by the Mudros agreement. Ibrahim Bey Jahangir-Oğlu was elected as the head of the Shura⁵.

Failing to carry out the orders of the Armenian civil authorities and seeking to develop a unified resistance plan, the Turkish military command of Kars and the Muslim National Council led the Muslim National Council of Kars to proclaim the "Southwestern Caucasian Republic" on December 1, 1918. It established a provisional government or "Shura," which encompassed the provinces of Kars and Batum, the districts of Akhalkalaki, Akhaltsikhe, Nakhichevan, Sharur, and Surmalu, as well as the southeastern portion of the Yerevan province⁶.

It was composed exclusively of Muslims and operated under the influence of the Young Turk leaders Nuri and Khalil Pashas, receiving significant military, financial-monetary assistance, as well as weapons and ammunition from Turkey, which directly guided its activities⁷. By the end of December, the Muslim National Council of Kars decided to create a provisional government, with A. Atabayov elected as its president⁸. Refusing to recognize the authority of the Republic of Armenia, the Muslim regions of the republic carried out extensive preparatory work to launch a general uprising.

Bearing this in mind, the RA Minister of Foreign Affairs, S. Tigranyan, informed Av. Aharonyan, the President of the RA Delegation in Paris, about the impending severe events: *"It is necessary for the Allies, in order to avoid the shedding of new blood, to restrain the Tatars through strong and decisive measures, so as to preempt probable*

⁵ Knyazyan 2008: 64.

⁶ Safarov 2018: 176; Gajiyev 2017: 56.

⁷ Gajiyev 1992: 10-11.

⁸ Gevorgyan 2008: 260.

*complications...*⁹, referring to the Muslim uprisings against the legitimate government of the RA. Based on S. Tigranyan's telegram, the Armenian delegation prepared a declaration, which was subsequently published in the French journal "Journal des Débats"¹⁰.

The ethnic composition of the population of Kars at that moment was such that it created fertile ground for anti-state movements and the manifestation of a rejectionist attitude toward Armenian officials. According to data by G. Grigoryan, at the time of its inclusion into the Republic of Armenia in 1919, there were 579 villages in the Kars province, of which 513 were inhabited. Additionally, 207 inhabited villages were not included in the registration. The total population was 162,362 people, of whom the number of Armenians reached 46,814 (including 25,755 refugees), the number of Muslims was 69,121 (including 11,102 refugees), the non-Muslim population numbered 29,965 (including 7,288 refugees), and the mixed population stood at 16,566 (including 5,830 refugees)¹¹.

In essence, the Armenian population constituted a minority, which created significant obstacles for the operations of the Armenian administration. Nevertheless, E. Zohrabyan notes that when the Armenian military unit of General Hovsepyants—accompanied by a British detachment—was finally able to enter the Kars province by order of General W. Thomson (the commander of British forces in the Caucasus) and approached the city of Kars on April 23, 1919, the Armenian and Tatar population welcomed them with bread and salt. He further notes that the Tatar population of the city of Kars subsequently maintained a neutral attitude toward the Armenian administration right up until the Turkish-Armenian war, attributing this circumstance to the presence of the garrison troops and the numerical superiority of the Armenian population (those who had fled in 1918 due to the Turkish invasion had returned in 1919).

Throughout 1919 and early 1920, almost no Kurdish-Tatar rebellions took place either in the city of Kars or in the eastern regions of the province, nor in the districts located north, west, and south of Kars. At the same time, however, he documents the active subversion of Tatars living in the northern regions of Agbaba and Zarushat, as well as agents and Kurds arriving from Azerbaijan and from the south and west—namely Sarıkamış, Kağızman, and Merdenek—who were actively supported by the Ottoman Turks¹².

Ever since the declaration of independence in 1918, the Kars province was convulsed by Muslim uprisings, and the task of establishing the Armenian regime there was implemented under conditions of great complexity, marked by escalations and setbacks. Ensign Hovsepyan, the assistant to the chief of the intelligence department of

⁹ Pan-Armenian Consultations 2004: 456.

¹⁰ NAA, fund 278, list 1, file 4, sheet 52.

¹¹ Grigoryan 2005: 175.

¹² Zohrabyan 2012: 3.

the RA General Staff, reported on Azerbaijani-Turkish designs in the Kars province in a communication addressed to the counter-intelligence department. This was also confirmed by captain A. Poidebard, an officer of the French military mission in Armenia¹³, according to whose data Turkish agents were engaged in active propaganda against the legitimate Armenian authorities in late 1918 and early 1919¹⁴.

That intelligence summary reported that Ali Riza, the former “vice-president” of the “Shura” (the so-called “Milli Shura,” the Muslim “autonomy” in the Kars province), had escaped from the Batum prison, passed through Tiflis to Gharachakh, and from there to the Agbaba region, subsequently moving via Zarushat to the Olti region (July 1919). The report added that there were no doubts that Azerbaijan was striving to create a “second Karabakh” in the regions of Agbaba, Zarushat, Ardahan, and Olti, and that a Georgian-Azerbaijani confederation was also being observed. It provided data on the cooperation of Tatars with Kurds, noting that a conversation on this matter had taken place in Erzurum with Colonel A. Rawlinson¹⁵, a member of the British staff¹⁶.

During a visit to Kars on April 7, 1919, in a private conversation with Lieutenant Bekzadov, an officer for special assignments attached to the British military governor, Colonel Alfred Rawlinson—brother of the commander of one of the British units and a well-known intelligence officer in the East—stated the following:

“We would have thrown our troops into the Caucasus long ago and regulated life here if only the Paris Conference permitted it. We are not allowed to govern this country; in other words, we were denied one of our colonies that should have fallen to us in advance, which we, of course, cannot accept because it was costing us excessively. At the time, we proposed to America and France that they assume the protectorate over the Caucasus, but they did not agree. America has promised to help the Caucasus with money and provisions. And so, we have been sent here only for a temporary military occupation. For that very reason, we will probably leave here soon,

¹³ Poidebard, Antoine (1878-1955) – archaeologist, historian, pilot, cartographer, and missionary, who knew Armenian well and was devoted to Armenia and the Armenian people.

¹⁴ Ter-Minasyan 2004: 97.

¹⁵ It is possible that this is the very fact mentioned by R. Hovhannisyan, stating that while outwardly cooperating with the senior British officer Alfred Rawlinson, it was Kyazim Karabekir Pasha himself who secretly ordered his men to dismantle the railway line, and instructed his bands not to attack those removing weapons, but to plunder the armories unhindered. The seized weapons and ammunition were to be carefully hidden and secretly stockpiled for a 50,000-strong Turkish force, which K. Karabekir considered necessary to concentrate on the border of the Republic of Armenia for the effective defense of the eastern vilayets claimed by the latter, hoping that the Allies’ promises to the Armenians would remain unfulfilled—and in this, he was indeed not mistaken. Hovannisian 1971: 468-469. Interesting materials and testimonies regarding the famous British intelligence officer A. Rawlinson, who operated in the East, and particularly in Turkey, and had numerous contacts with Armenian reality and was well acquainted with Western Armenia, can be found in his own work: Rawlinson 1924.

¹⁶ NAA, fund 201, list 1, file 168, sheet 38.

unless, of course, something unusual happens at the Peace Conference. In general, the war is far from over, and great misunderstandings are possible even among the Allies themselves."¹⁷

Information regarding Turkish activity in the Kars region is also of significant interest, even if strictly from the perspective of the prelude to the 1920 Turkish-Armenian War. Highly compelling in this regard is an intelligence summary (No. 8) from the General Staff, which details the events and various developments that unfolded in the Kars province during the period leading up to January 5, 1919. The author of the summary, L. Bashinjaghyan—an officer on special assignment—addresses the extensive propaganda conducted by Turkish officers among the population of the Kars Province, particularly among the Kurds, directed against the Armenians. He notes that the province's Turkish population was well-armed and documents that large stockpiles of provisions had been accumulated by the Turks in Digor and other villages within the Nakhichevan sub-district of the Kağızman district, as well as at the Kızıl-Chakhchakh (or Ghyzyl-Chakhchakh) station. The final section highlights the activity of the Tatars of Shahthakhti, as well as intense Kurdish concentrations in the Aralykh region (in the villages of Bashkend, Ortakend, Shakhler, and others)¹⁸.

Events appeared to take a slightly different course following the arrival of British troops in Transcaucasia after November–December 1918. In January 1919, the British command decided to address the situation in Kars as well. Arriving in Kars on January 7, they presented Shevki Pasha, the commander of the Turkish 9th Army, with an eight-point directive. This document informed him that, following the model of Batumi, the British intended to establish a military and civil administration in Kars in the coming days. This administration would represent Armenia and operate under the supervision of a military governor appointed by the British command. The directive emphasized that the maintenance of the law and the protection of the population would be undertaken by representatives of the Allied powers, and that the responsibility for any insubordination by Turkish troops, as well as possible clashes with the civilian population, would fall squarely upon the General Command of the Turkish forces.

General J. Forestier-Walker issued a number of other orders to Shevki Pasha regarding the proper reception of the Armenian administration, the opening of borders for the free movement of people and trains, and the total withdrawal of Turkish troops from the province by January 25, among other instructions¹⁹. At the same time, wishing to placate the Muslim population, the British command emphasized in the aforementioned document that the Muslims of the Kars Province were unsettled by the establishment of an Armenian administration, even under the command of a British governor. The document noted that it was the duty of the new administration to act in a manner that would reassure the Muslim population and prove that Armenians could

¹⁷ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 92, part I, sheets 200–201.

¹⁸ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 92, sheet 60.

¹⁹ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 92, sheets 38–41, 43.

govern without ethnic prejudices. It also included a caveat that the British command in Transcaucasia might later separate certain districts from the territory of the Kars province that were exclusively inhabited by Muslims²⁰.

Upon his return, J. Forestier-Walker signed an agreement in Alexandropol on January 8 with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, S. Tigranyan. This agreement provided for the appointment of a British Governor-General in Kars, alongside an Armenian civil administration composed of Armenian officials attached to the Military Governor of Kars²¹. However, as D. Knyazyan concludes, the British command temporarily abstained from decisive action and de facto recognized the Kars Shura²², driven by the Shura's resolve to block the return of Armenian refugees to the Kars province, the Muslim Shura's readiness to resist militarily, and the incomplete evacuation of Turkish troops from the province. The traditional pro-Russian orientation of the Armenians was also weighed as a critical factor. Consequently, the British rejected the Armenian side's petitions to permit the unhindered return of refugees and the establishment of a full Armenian civil-military administration in the Kars province²³.

Thus, the Kars Shura temporarily prolonged its existence under the patronage of Azerbaijan and Turkey. Through this arrangement, the Republic of Azerbaijan also aspired to secure an outlet to Black Sea routes, effectively encircling Armenia from nearly all sides. Beginning in January 1919, Turkish agents began hastily concentrating forces in the Potskhov district, launching attacks on Akhaltsikhe²⁴. Simultaneously, Server Bek Atabekov, a representative of the Kars Shura, launched an attack on the Georgian militia under the pretext of countering a Georgian offensive, lodging a protest with the Georgian government and demanding the creation of a commission with British participation²⁵.

G. Anchabadze adds further details regarding the formation of joint Georgian-Muslim military units: *"From January until April 1919, Georgian troops were forced to confront military units of Muslim Georgian separatists in the Akhaltsikhe and Ardahan districts. The insurgents were led by the political and military leader and landowner, Osman Server Bek Atabekov, who came from a family of Georgian nobility that had converted to Islam, and who was a supporter of an independent South-Caucasian Republic. It was a political decision by the authorities to create a Georgian-Muslim cavalry battalion ('division'), as a result of which Muslim and Christian Georgians acted together in the Akhaltsikhe campaign"*²⁶.

²⁰ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 92, sheets 43–47.

²¹ Vracyan 1993: 257; Makhmouryan 2002: 47–48.

²² Knyazyan 2008: 66.

²³ Haraj, February 3, 1919, No. 26; Hovannisian 1971: 206.

²⁴ Mshak, January 28, 1919, No. 20.

²⁵ Knyazyan 2008: 68.

²⁶ Anchabadze 2018: 104.

Nevertheless, it remains a fact that according to General J. Forestier-Walker's memorandum of January 7, 1919, the Kars province was placed under British military administration. The organization of a civil administration and the appointment of civil officials were authorized, with its members to be designated by the Government of the Republic of Armenia. The size of the police force was to be limited, permitted only to the extent necessary, and the Armenian police were to enter the region immediately following the evacuation of Turkish troops, demonstrating tolerance toward the Muslim population. At the suggestion of General W. Beach, Forestier-Walker appointed Captain Clive Temperley—adjutant of the 4th Battalion of the Rifle Brigade of the British forces in Transcaucasia—to the position of British Military Governor of Kars, with the local rank of Lieutenant Colonel (January 1919 – March 1919)²⁷. Meanwhile, the government of Hovhannes Qajaznuni appointed St. Ghorghanyan to the position of Civil Governor (in various years, he had served as an assistant district governor in the districts of Surmalu, Nakhichevan, and Nor Bayazet, and from 1910 to 1915 as the district governor of Qutaisi (in Georgia)²⁸; he held this post until October 30, 1920, when Kars was surrendered by the Armenian armed forces to the Kemalist troops)²⁹. Colonel Pirumyan was appointed commander of the Kars fortress³⁰. On January 8, 1919, Azerbaijan sent a note of protest to General W. Thomson, the commander of the Allied forces, stating that Armenia and Georgia (the latter of which laid claim to the northern districts of the Kars province) wished to forcibly expand their borders at the expense of the Southwestern Republic, whose population was Muslim, and alleging that these lands historically belonged to the local Muslims, who possessed the right to self-determination³¹.

Nonetheless, on January 12, 1919, the British and Armenian civil authorities departed for Kars, where they were met with hostility by the Kars Shura, preventing the Armenian authorities from executing their duties. On January 14, 1919, the Shura Parliament was solemnly opened in Kars under the presidency of Asad Bey; out of 64 deputies, 60 were Muslim, 3 were Greek, and 1 was a Molokan³². The Shura thereby attempted to consolidate its power. In January 1919, the president of the temporary government of the Shura appealed to the government of Azerbaijan several times, asserting that following the withdrawal of Turkish troops, the Armenians might establish themselves in the Kars province and the Georgians in Ardahan. It was deemed necessary to immediately appoint a governor in Kars to prevent the conquest of the province by the Armenians and Georgians with the assistance of the local Turkish population and armed forces. To this end, the Azerbaijani authorities conducted secret

²⁷ Vracian 1993: 261.

²⁸ Avetisyan 2008: 57.

²⁹ Harutyunyan 2018: 12.

³⁰ Khatisyan 1968: 171–172.

³¹ Gevorgyan 2008: 260.

³² NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 92, sheet 64; Vracian 1993: 257.

negotiations in Baku with British representatives, proposing that until the final resolution of the issue at the Paris Peace Conference, the Kars province should remain under Allied control as a part of Azerbaijan, the Kars *status quo* should be preserved, and the establishment of the authority of the Republic of Armenia in the region should be blocked. The long-term objective of this Azerbaijani strategy was to gain time and, should circumstances permit, unify Kars with Turkey³³.

The establishment of Armenian authority in the Kars province was severely obstructed, while the parliament of the Southwestern Democratic Republic of the Caucasus maintained close relations with the British. As a consequence of the British military command's hesitant, mediating policy aimed at ending inter-ethnic clashes, relations between the Muslim and Armenian populations flared up further. The Muslim leaders had been emboldened by the promise made by the British command upon their arrival in Kars to create a separate Governor-Generalship under their own control, which further galvanized the representatives of the Shura.

The British command did not remain steadfast in the agreement reached on January 8 and quickly yielded to local Muslim arbitrary actions directed against the Armenian authorities. The local government created as a result of the activities organized by Turkish-Azerbaijani officers and propagandists was, in essence, recognized by the British military governor, while the Armenian civil governor and his staff were forced to leave Kars. In connection with these events, General J. Forestier-Walker, commander of the British forces in Transcaucasia, informed the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia that it was not yet possible to implement the agreement between them. He justified this by citing the sharply pronounced animosity of the Kars Muslims toward the Armenians, while claiming that the conduct of the Armenian administrators was not conciliatory. He even deemed it unacceptable that, according to information from a British army officer, the Armenian officials had entered the city displaying a large Armenian national flag:

*"It is clear that they did not properly understand the objectives of their mission. I am certain that Your Excellency will understand that in the presence of mutual animosity from both sides, reconciliation becomes impossible. I am writing to inform you that, to my deep regret, I am forced to cancel the agreement reached between us. I have ordered the British military governor of Kars to send these officials back to Alexandropol, where they will undoubtedly receive appropriate instructions from Your Excellency. I deem it necessary to express my profound gratitude to the Government of Armenia for meeting my request so graciously and promptly, and I infinitely regret that this attempt was marked by failure"*³⁴.

The report of A. Aharonyan's meeting with Forestier-Walker in Alexandropol on January 13, 1919, regarding the Caucasus question, also clearly underscores the explicit pro-Muslim disposition of the British: *"Regarding Kars, there appears to be some*

³³ Gevorgyan 2008: 260–261.

³⁴ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 92, sheets 77, 123.

*hesitation in British thinking. They consider the entire province of Kars to be a part of Armenia, and find it possible to separate only the western, purely Muslim-inhabited portion to attach it to the Batumi province. It seems that Britain will resolve the issue of annexing the Kars region to Armenia only when it is assured that Armenia will not, willingly or unwillingly, be annexed to Russia. In the latter case, Britain would prefer that at least the Batumi region, along with the Kars region, not be unified with Russia. We must dispel Britain's doubts and insist that the eastern section of the Kars region in particular must constitute an inseparable part of the Republic of Armenia"*³⁵.

Sending a note to Forestier-Walker on February 4, 1919, the Government of the Republic of Armenia reasserted the necessity of establishing an Armenian administration in the Kars province, stating that they would not renounce their rights over the Kars region³⁶.

Driven by this same motivation, the local Muslim population did not unconditionally accept Temperley from the outset. By February–March 1919, the Muslim population exhibited an openly intolerant and insolent attitude toward him, doing everything in their power to ignore him. The government of Qajaznuni had initially described Temperley as an “arrogant and insolent Englishman” who, by reaching an agreement in Kars with the Shura—officially known as the Provisional Government of the Southwestern Caucasus—had in the initial phase of his tenure opposed every attempt to allocate positions to Armenian administrative workers, and had even presented severe demands to the Armenian officials at Alexandropol, the primary railway junction linking Kars and Tiflis³⁷.

By reaching an agreement in Kars with the Shura—officially known as the Provisional Southwestern Caucasian Government—Clive Temperley opposed every attempt to allocate positions to the Armenian administrative staff and even presented severe demands to the Armenian officials at Alexandropol, the primary railway junction linking Kars and Tiflis³⁸. The Shura preferred not to voluntarily surrender authority to the Armenian governor. According to the memorandum of the Governor of Kars, St. Ghorghanyan, Temperley himself was initially not sufficiently confident in his actions, yet he also mistrusted both the words and deeds of the Muslims: “*Colonel Temperley, listening indifferently to what was being said, stated that the country was being handed over to the Armenian Government, to which the Shura was subordinate in the person of its governor, and with that, he closed the audience. But the next day, Colonel Temperley received a new communication in English. This time, writing in a highly unconstrained style, the Shura informed him that it had absolutely no desire to accept any authority coming from the outside, and requested the removal of the Armenians from Kars. In confirmation of this decisive declaration, about hundred armed Turks lined*

³⁵ NAA, fund 200, list 2, file 65, sheets 2–3.

³⁶ NAA, list 1, file 92, sheet 122a; list 2, file 45, sheet 1.

³⁷ Mnatsakanyan A. *et al.* 1957: 256–258; Denikin 1925: 147; Hovannisian 1971: 220–223.

³⁸ Mnatsakanyan A. *et al.* 1957: 256–258; Denikin 1925: 147; Hovannisian 1971: 220–223.

*up for us to see in front of the Shura house, which was opposite our residence, while an agitator—another newcomer from the regions of Gandzak—began to speak emphatically before the gathered crowd regarding the issue of the day*³⁹.

The situation subsequently changed. Once Colonel Temperley became better acquainted with the facts, interacted more closely with representatives of the Armenian officialdom, and became convinced of the provocative nature of the Tatars' maneuvers, he ordered the arrest of Shukri Pasha, who, however, managed to escape. Colonel Temperley compelled the members of the Shura to be summoned before him and gave them three minutes to surrender governance voluntarily, warning them that he would otherwise resort to arms. The Shura replied that they would comply in order to prevent violence. That night, British special detachments arrested 153 local suspects and deported them to the island of Malta⁴⁰. The British then handed over authority in the Kars province to us and withdrew their army of 3,000 men from the area⁴¹. However, to govern the province, the British formed a council of locals under the supremacy of Colonel Prosser (Henry R. Prosser, 82nd Gloucestershire Regiment – H.V.), which consisted of one Russian, one Molokan, two Greeks, and five Turks. The composition of this council was unsuccessful to the highest degree⁴².

Furthermore, the Civil Governor of Kars, St. Ghorghanyan concludes: *“Leaving aside historical and state objectives and tendencies, and leaving aside the core meaning of the issue, it is impossible not to emphasize that quite apart from all that, these Englishmen were succumbing to the detestable, sycophantic flattery of the Turks... Did the English not comprehend our legal concepts and our state rights, or were they doing all this out of political motives? Only one thing was glaringly obvious: within the span of a single day, they would bargain with me regarding the matter of my rights*”⁴³.

The British continued to maintain a loyal attitude toward the Kars Shura, obstructing potential joint Armenian-Georgian operations against Muslim activities, where common interests might have been found. In this regard, the Armenian side also maintained a certain neutrality, trusting the proposal presented by the British for the regulation of the issue, thereby allowing the Muslims to expand even further into the Armenian-inhabited districts of Georgia, such as Akhaltsikhe and elsewhere⁴⁴.

On January 14, the Acting Minister of Internal Affairs, Al. Khatisyan, reported to his government on his visit to Alexandropol and his directives regarding the creation of an Armenian civil administration for Kars (a civil administration for the province and its districts pending the decision of the Peace Conference, the creation of a militia and

³⁹ Harutyunyan 2018: 31.

⁴⁰ Hovhannisyan 2019: 20.

⁴¹ Harutyunyan 2018: 251.

⁴² Harutyunyan 2018: 35.

⁴³ Harutyunyan 2018: 252, 588.

⁴⁴ NAA, fund 275, list 1, file 114, sheets 1–2.

gendarmarie, the organization of the Kars-Alexandropol railway administration and its staff establishment, etc.). On January 16, the government revisited Khatisyan's report and approved the administrative roster he presented⁴⁵.

However, this first attempt to transfer the governance of Kars to the Armenian administration did not yield much success. The so-called "Shura," which had been established in December 1918, organized a new assembly of Muslim leaders on January 17–18, 1919, where it was decided to merge the national Shuras of all districts and regions to form the "Provisional National Government of the Southwestern Caucasus," headed by Ibrahim Bey Jahangiroğlu⁴⁶. It was precisely these delegates, numbering more than a hundred gathered in Kars, who instigated and organized the protest demonstration of the Turkish inhabitants of Kars against the Armenian administration⁴⁷. The Muslim delegates of the assembly adopted a constitution consisting of 18 articles, according to which the borders of the Southwestern Caucasus were to extend from Batumi to Nakhichevan with Kars as its center, and Turkish as the official language, though outwardly a declaration was also made regarding peaceful coexistence with neighbors⁴⁸.

It must be noted that when presenting this claim over Kars, Ardahan, Batumi, and other regions to the Allies, they justified it through the right to self-determination of the Muslim majority of the Kars Shura⁴⁹, relying also on the military-political support of Turkey and potential reunification with it. In this regard, Azerbaijani historian A. Gajiev attributes a major role to Azerbaijan in the formation of the Kars Shura as an independent state entity, viewing it as a force unifying the Muslims of the Caucasus whose leaders possessed great influence over both the British occupation authorities and the potential orientation of the Muslim population toward Baku⁵⁰; this, however, was a clever political maneuver to strengthen Azerbaijan's role in the Caucasus.

At the instigation of Turkish and Tatar agitators, the Muslims of Kars organized a protest demonstration during which threats were hurled at the Armenians, along with a demand to the British Military Governor of Kars, Colonel Temperley, to expel the Armenian administration from Kars, declaring that they would not submit to it. The English colonel, who had a duty to protect and patronize the administration working under his jurisdiction, succumbed to the threats raised by the Turkish-Tatar mob and advised the Armenian administration to leave Kars. On January 21, in a letter addressed to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, S. Tigranyan, Forestier-Walker announced this development, writing that to his deep regret he was forced to cancel the arrangement made and was issuing an order to the British military

⁴⁵ Galoyan 2000: 84.

⁴⁶ Knyazyan 2008: 65.

⁴⁷ Petrosyan 2011: 175.

⁴⁸ Knyazyan 2008: 65.

⁴⁹ Haraj, March 11, 1919, No. 47.

⁵⁰ Gajiev 2004: 50–51.

governor of Kars to send the officials back to Alexandropol, citing the sharply pronounced animosity of the Kars Muslims toward the Armenians as the reason⁵¹.

The British military mission in Transcaucasia and its field commanders, who suffered from a pronounced, traditional Russophobia, did not trust the Armenians because of their pro-Russian sentiments. The British could in no way reconcile themselves to the idea that Russia might undergo a revival and return to Transcaucasia, a prospect foreseen by Hovhannes Qajaznuni. Experiencing a distinct disillusionment with the shift in British policy, Qajaznuni issued an appeal to General Forestier-Walker on January 25, 1919, imploring him not to cancel his latest directive blocking refugee repatriation, and instead to honor his own promise to oversee the prompt resettlement of refugees. He maintained that the abrupt British reversal had left his government and people completely defenseless, confined to a portion of their territory that had been thoroughly plundered and stripped bare by the Ottoman armies. Indeed, as early as January 1919, under the tenure of Colonel Cl. Temperley in Kars, these forces had transported vast stockpiles of grain and plunder from Kars to Erzurum, exhausting the remaining grain reserves—a process effectively and practically facilitated by the British general, Forestier-Walker⁵².

Thus, as of January 26, 1919, Colonel Clive E. Temperley served as the British Military Governor of Kars. To support his administration, the main body of a British battalion was stationed in the city, having reunited with the initial military escort led by Colonel Frederick Lawton of the 4th Rifle Brigade. Temperley remained in this post until March 2, 1919, after which he was transferred to Yerevan as the British military representative.

During his service in Yerevan, Temperley's attitude toward the Armenians underwent a noticeable shift, which was clearly reflected in the reports he dispatched to the staff of the British 27th Division. In these communications, Temperley expressed profound concern regarding the severe administrative and political difficulties confronting the Armenian government. He frequently attempted to pacify the hostile population of local Muslim settlements that consistently rejected the jurisdiction of the Yerevan government.

Around March 10, when the Muslim population of the Vedichay-Sadarak region resorted to open insurrection, Temperley exerted substantial efforts to calm the region, attempting to halt the increasingly frequent murders, plundering, and bandit attacks directed against Armenians. He sought to restrain the insurgent tribal chieftains and khans, though his efforts yielded no success. Temperley ultimately concluded that this rebellion was not merely an isolated local incident, noting that the military mobilization in the Sadarak region was directly linked to broader, coordinated efforts aimed at unifying and arming the fanatical Muslim populations of Aralykh, Kağızman, and Kars. Furthermore, Colonel Lawton characterized this defiant region as an uncompromising

⁵¹ Petrosyan 2011: 175.

⁵² Hovannisian 1971: 223; Mnatsakanyan *et al.* 1957: 254–255.

territory forming a unified, anti-Armenian chain linked directly to the Kars Shura—an alignment that effectively encircled nearly the entire territory of the Republic of Armenia⁵³.

The restrained efforts of Temperley and Lawton to prevent offensive operations against Armenians and to discipline the lawless Muslim villages met with total failure. The inhabitants of these settlements responded to peaceful British overtures with belligerent aggression, fanatical boasting, and an open, rigid resort to arms. This ominous sign of sedition was further fueled by overt Turkish propaganda and the continuous supply of weapons and ammunition from Turkey to the rebellious Muslim districts. Moving through the Araks Valley from Maku and Aralykh, this wave of destabilization spread rapidly into the Sadarak region, inciting the Muslim population from Böyük-Vedi all the way to Nakhichevan⁵⁴.

On April 28, 1919, Colonel Temperley, accompanied by General Andranik and Major William Gibbon, departed for Tiflis, where on May 1 he temporarily assumed command of the 4th Battalion of the Rifle Brigade⁵⁵, followed by his subsequent military activities in the Zod-Basargechar region.

Ultimately, geopolitical developments around Kars shifted such that by the spring of 1919, with the direct assistance of the British command, the Republic of Armenia successfully extended its authority over the regions of Nakhichevan and Kars. Faced with this stabilization, the Muslim population of Kars formally declared its submission to the Armenian government. Dr. Asad Bey Hajiev, the president of the Muslim National Council authorized by the local population, officially welcomed the extension of the Republic of Armenia's sovereignty and expressed their full readiness to comply with the directives of the Armenian authorities⁵⁶.

During this same period, George F. Gracey, the representative of Sir John Oliver Wardrop in Yerevan, conducted an official inspection tour of the Kars province between March 1 and March 3, 1919. Notably, Gracey reported that he found no evidence verifying Azerbaijani claims regarding Muslim villages allegedly bombarded by Armenian military units. While in Alexandropol, Gracey consulted with Donald Robinson, the regional director of the Near East Relief, who was inclined to justify the defensive actions of the Armenian army. Robinson informed Gracey that a large detachment of Tatars had actually captured the village of Odintsovo, directly disrupting the critical transportation of fuel and other vital supplies from Alexandropol to Kars.

A similar perspective was shared by French officers Antoine Poidebard and Charles de Nonancourt, who likewise justified the actions of the Armenian authorities in the Kars region following their own inspection tour. Concurrently, the local Muslim National Council of Kars officially condemned Zeynalov and other self-proclaimed

⁵³ Hovannisian 1971: 257.

⁵⁴ Hovannisian 1971: 252, 257.

⁵⁵ Hovannisian 1971: 231, 252, 257.

⁵⁶ NAA, fund 275, list 1, file 133, sheet 27.

spokesmen operating in Tiflis and Baku, while also expressing dissatisfaction with the harsh administrative measures implemented by the Armenian General Hovsepyants in Zarushat⁵⁷. This entire friction point constituted a dangerous flashpoint of unnecessary tension, toward the pacification of which Wardrop's mission remained largely indifferent. Captain Poidebard asserted that the British command should have crucially accounted for the formidable strength of the anti-Armenian Muslim organizations established in Kars by the commander of the Ottoman army, General Shevki Pasha, immediately following the armistice, as well as the pervasive propaganda disseminated by Turkish agents⁵⁸.

Broadly speaking, when evaluating the specific nuances of the British geopolitical stance in the region, the observations recorded by Tigran Bekzadyan—who served as the diplomatic representative of the Republic of Armenia in Baku in 1919—are highly characteristic. During a conversation held on March 29, 1919, with General D. I. Shuttleworth (who replaced General W. Thomson as the head of the British Mission in the Caucasus in April 1919), Bekzadyan remarked:

“The role of the English here is exceptionally difficult; they have arrived in a region entirely foreign to them, where they must regulate complex inter-ethnic relations. This task must be carried out with such foresight and insight that the demands of these peoples are satisfied and the principles of justice are strictly maintained.”

In response, General Shuttleworth pointedly emphasized that while Great Britain was a Christian nation, it also possessed “a vast number of Muslim subjects” who “had rendered undeniable services during the war.” Shuttleworth noted that this circumstance imposed specific obligations, stating that the British had arrived solely to restore peace and order, the realization of which required opening trade routes, re-establishing regular communication links, and fostering normal relations between nations. He added that the presence of numerous Muslim subjects obligated them to ensure that the fate of the nations would be decided at the Paris Peace Conference based on global criteria, meaning there was no need to get bogged down in minor local disputes. Nevertheless, Bekzadyan requested the British commanders tasked with resolving these localized matters to carefully consider the distinct psychology of the local population when addressing the Karabakh issue⁵⁹.

Throughout this tumultuous period, both Georgia and Armenia repeatedly asserted their respective historic and administrative rights over the territory, frequently citing the ethnic composition of the population as justification, despite the reality of highly mixed demographic zones. Colonel Clive Temperley initially attempted to establish a framework of compromise with the Southwestern Caucasian (Muslim) Republic. However, he was fundamentally unable to exert effective influence over the heavily

⁵⁷ Hovannisian 1996a: 153.

⁵⁸ Ter-Minasyan 2004: 87.

⁵⁹ Bekzadyan 2025: 69–70, 71.

armed Muslim population, thereby inadvertently enabling the latter's hostile and disloyal policy toward the local Christian inhabitants.

Furthermore, serious disagreements and contradictions regarding the governance of Kars began to emerge within the British military leadership itself. For instance, General Forestier-Walker concluded that the civil administration of both the city and the wider province should be determined by the Armenian government, provided it was closely coordinated with the British military governor⁶⁰. Conversely, General W. Beach bluntly declared to the Armenian government that "the Kars province does not belong to Armenia"⁶¹. Meanwhile, Forestier-Walker saw no obstacle to the Georgians occupying Potskhov—the northwestern sector of Kars province, which the Georgian side viewed as a disputed territory among Armenians, Georgians, and Turks. However, when Georgian troops led by General Giorgi Kvinitadze entered Potskhov, it prompted the British Governor of Kars to issue a stern declaration warning that any further Georgian advance "would be considered an act of hostility against Great Britain."

At the end of March 1919, Clive E. Temperley was succeeded by General William Asser, who promptly overthrew the government of the Southwestern Caucasian Republic. Seizing the opportunity, Georgian forces occupied the northern sectors of this dissolved republic, including Akhaltsikhe and Ardahan, though they subsequently evacuated the area upon the explicit demand of the British⁶². Ultimately, with British consent, Armenian troops occupied the entirety of the Kars province, integrating it into the administrative structure of the Republic of Armenia under a governor appointed by Yerevan. By this time, General George Milne had also emerged as a supporter of annexing the Kars province to Armenia.

On February 7, 1919, General Forestier-Walker, accompanied by General Asser, made his first official visit to Yerevan, holding a lengthy conference with Prime Minister H. Qajaznuni, which was also attended by Foreign Minister S. Tigranyan, Minister of War J. Hakhverdyan, and other senior officials. During this meeting, the question of establishing an Armenian administration in Kars was raised. In response, Forestier-Walker placed the blame for the administrative breakdown entirely on the Armenian regional administrator, labeling him "cowardly and tactless." Notably, the general omitted the fact that Colonel Temperley—whom he had appointed as the military governor of Kars—had taken no measures to restrain or discipline the fanatical Muslim mobs, and had actually been the first to advise the Armenian officials to retreat to Alexandropol.

It must be emphasized, however, that the primary responsibility for the deterioration of the situation rested with the British command. The combination of indecisiveness and pro-Turkish leaning exhibited by General Forestier-Walker and Colonel Temperley severely impacted the displaced Armenian refugees in Kars.

⁶⁰ Makhmouryan 2002: 65.

⁶¹ Makhmouryan 2002: 220–221.

⁶² Denikin 1925: 266–267.

Enduring extreme cold and starvation, and suffering heavy casualties, these refugees were forced to wait an additional three months until the end of April 1919, when the Kars province was officially united with Armenia by order of General Thomson⁶³.

or the British, this applied to all kinds of Russias—be it Tsarist, Communist, or Republican Russia. This was precisely what the Foreign Minister of the RA, S. Tigranyan, also meant when he considered British policy disastrous for Armenia, believing that the British factor was an obstacle for Armenia to gather its lands. Believing that the Turks were capable of becoming a powerful barrier against Russia, and according to which the Muslim population of the Kars region held an anti-Russian sentiment, the British military-political authorities immediately withdrew from the agreement to establish an Armenian civilian administration in the Kars region. This expressed a lack of trust toward the Armenians, whom the British considered “more Russian than the Russians,” thereby damaging the interests of Armenia. This was a warning message from the RA Minister of Foreign Affairs to European countries, with the expectation that the latter would understand that Pan-Turkism threatened Armenia, and that contributing to it meant supporting the Ittihadist (Young Turk) criminal conspiracy to wipe the Armenian people off the face of the earth, getting rid of the Armenian wedge that was driven between Turkey and Europe⁶⁴.

Thus, on March 2, 1919, Temperley was replaced by Brigadier General Vernie Asser, while Temperley transferred to Yerevan as a military representative. It should be noted that as early as February 1919, General W. Thomson—due to the unfriendly, often hostile expressions of attitude by Fahrudin Piroğlu, the leader of the Southwestern Caucasian Muslim Republic of the Kars region, toward the British military-political personnel—had authorized the RA government to occupy the territory of the Kars region with its troops, relying, if necessary, on the support of units of the British 27th Division⁶⁵. The dissolution and cancellation of the Kars Muslim government or “Shura” by the British was welcomed by Georgia, especially since the Shura claimed control over Akhalkalaki and Akhaltsikhe. Georgia also welcomed the privilege granted by General Thomson for a small Georgian detachment to remain in the northern part of the Ardahan district, although British military observers concluded that they were not very much in favor of the expansion of the Georgians; for that reason, they were forced to withdraw from Ardahan, the peripheral district of the Kars region⁶⁶.

Soon, in connection with the uprising raised in Akhaltsikhe and Akhalkalaki by Server Bek Atabekov on behalf of the so-called “Southwestern Republic of the Caucasus” created in the Kars region and the territory of Ardahan, the Georgians moved around 5,000 troops into the territory, which provoked an inadequate reaction

⁶³ Zohrabyan 2011: 36.

⁶⁴ Vracian 1958: 219-221.

⁶⁵ Hovannisian 1971: 210-213.

⁶⁶ Borba, April 27, 29, 1919; Hovannisian 1971: 241.

from the Armenian side⁶⁷. Taking advantage of the occasion, the Armenian side presented a protest to the British representative in Yerevan, General Cl. Temperley, stating that Georgian troops had entered Akhalkalaki and headed toward the borders of Alexandropol. The Armenian side argued that, according to a temporary agreement, the parties should have small detachments in the specified locations, and that the danger to the borders in that area arose from the presence of a large number of armed forces, which was included in the January tractate⁶⁸. It was then added that Colonel R. N. Stewart had given guarantees that the Allies would consider any attack *ante bellum*, and that a British detachment would be stationed in Akhalkalaki. The Armenian side reminded that it should be clarified whether the Muslims of Western Transcaucasia were informed about the results of the Paris Peace Conference, about which the Commander of the British Armed Forces in Transcaucasia, His Excellency General J. Forestier-Walker, had informed the RA Prime Minister in a letter dated January 19, 1919: "Possessing the disputed territory by force will have serious consequences for the attacker. All issues must be resolved at the Peace Conference"⁶⁹.

The British military mission in Transcaucasia and their field commanders, who suffered from a pronounced traditional Russophobia, did not trust the Armenians due to their pro-Russian sentiments. The British could in no way reconcile with the fact that Russia could revive and return to Transcaucasia, as predicted by H. Qajaznuni, who, experiencing a certain disappointment with the shift in British policy, appealed to General Forestier-Walker as early as January 25, 1919, requesting him not to cancel his recent order hindering repatriation and instead to honor his own promise to supervise the speedy resettlement of refugees. He found that the sharp British turn had left his government and people in a defenseless state, confined to that part of their territory which had been completely plundered and stripped bare by the Ottoman armies, who back in January 1919, under Colonel Cl. Temperley, had moved huge supplies of grain and plunder from Kars to Erzurum, whereby the last supplies of grain were exhausted—something that the British general, Forestier-Walker, had also significantly and practically contributed to⁷⁰. For the British, this applied to all kinds of Russias—be it Tsarist, Communist, or Republican Russia. This was precisely what the RA Foreign Minister, S. Tigranyan, also meant when he considered British policy disastrous for Armenia, believing that the British factor was an obstacle for Armenia to gather its lands. Believing that the Turks were capable of becoming a powerful barrier against Russia, and according to which the Muslim population of Kars held an anti-Russian sentiment, the British military-political authorities immediately withdrew from the agreement to establish an Armenian civilian administration in the Kars region. This

⁶⁷ <http://www.conflicts.rem33.com/images/Georgia/Armeno-Georgian> War18 R. html; Kvinitadze 1985: 89; Denikin 1925: 266-267.

⁶⁸ NAA, fund 275, list 5, file 96, sheets 115-116.

⁶⁹ <http://www.conflicts.rem33.com/images/Georgia/Armeno-Georgian> War18 R. html

⁷⁰ Hovannisian 1971: 223; Mnatsakanyan *et al.* 1957: 254-255.

expressed a lack of trust toward the Armenians, whom the British considered “more Russian than the Russians,” thereby damaging the interests of Armenia. This was a warning message from the Minister of Foreign Affairs to European countries, with the expectation that the latter would understand that Pan-Turkism threatened Armenia, and that contributing to it meant supporting the Ittihadist criminal conspiracy to wipe the Armenian people off the face of the earth, getting rid of the Armenian wedge that was driven between Turkey and Europe⁷¹.

The fact that the RA government was relatively well-informed about the events taking place in the Kars region in June–July 1919, including the intelligence-gathering, politically oriented activities carried out by Colonel G. D. Leslie⁷², representing Denikin’s Volunteer Army, aimed at consolidating the influence of the Russian Volunteer Army in the region, clearly testifies to the sufficient activity carried out by the Intelligence and Counter-Intelligence Department of the General Staff and its corresponding subdivision on the spot, no matter how covertly Leslie operated, maintaining the rules of confidentiality as a military intelligence officer. It became clear to the Armenian side that, under instructions from the so-called “Special Council” attached to the Volunteer Army, Leslie, as its military and political representative to the RA government, was conducting negotiations in Kars with Muslim representatives and the command of the Turkish 12th Army so that after their departure, the region would be handed over to the Russians, bringing facts about the interest he showed in the prevailing relations between the Armenians, the English, and the Russians⁷³. This, we believe, should not be taken very seriously, since by that time it was already obvious both that Great Bolshevik Russia was occupied with internal problems and that the Volunteer Army, General P. Wrangel, and all of them taken together were not in a position to emerge victorious from that conflict. Be that as it may, Colonel Leslie’s meeting in mid-January 1919 with the “Shura” and the Turkish command, of which the RA military authorities, government, and intelligence bodies were again informed, provoked the dissatisfaction of Armenian public-political circles. In this regard, on January 21, S. Tigranyan, in a written communication addressed to Colonel Leslie, demanded an explanation regarding his negotiations with the English governor of Kars, Cl. Temperley, as to whether there was an intention “to establish not an Armenian, but a Muslim administration headed by a Russian governor”⁷⁴. To this, Colonel Leslie replied on January 22 that: “I have held no official conversation on political issues in Kars; however, I advised the English military governor, Colonel Cl. Temperley, that to get out of this difficult situation, it is necessary to appoint a governor of Russian nationality, who will be in immediate contact with the Government of Armenia. For my part, the establishment of a Muslim government in the province has never been demanded”⁷⁵.

⁷¹ Vracyan 1958: 219-221.

⁷² Petrosyan 2005: 156.

⁷³ Petrosyan 2005: 87-88, 156.

⁷⁴ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 164, sheets 4, 10.

⁷⁵ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 164, sheets 5, 11.

This all, however, deepened the dissatisfaction with Leslie's activities, and the Yerevan newspaper "Zhoghovurd", in 1919, No. 10, simply wrote that "General Denikin's representative, Colonel Leslie, has entered into unauthorized negotiations with the English Colonel Cl. Temperley and has conducted anti-Armenian propaganda in Yerevan and Ejmiatsin, and aims to pit the English against us. His goal is to create a Russian-Tatar administration in the Kars province"⁷⁶. Accordingly, the Populist faction of the RA Parliament demanded that the Presidency of the Council of Armenia make an inquiry to the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Military Affairs as to whether they were aware that "the representative of the Volunteer Army, Col. Leslie, is overtly conducting agitation against the Armenian people and the Republic of Armenia, and whether it is true that Col. Leslie receives 1,000 rubles per month from the Ministry of Military Affairs, and if he does, from what funds"⁷⁷.

Naturally, the session of the RA Parliament on February 11, 1919, addressed this problem and expressed its attitude, bringing forward facts and trying to reveal who Leslie was, whom he represented, and what position he held⁷⁸, but many questions were still not made public under the justification of inexpediency. Why this was so, becomes apparent from the residues accumulated in the deep folds of the activities of the RA government and military authorities. It was clearly understandable that the RA government, the military department, and the relevant structures, including the intelligence service, were trying to maintain secret ties with the non-Soviet state and other formations of the South of Russia, which could give rise to various parliamentary and political speculations and misunderstandings. Based on this, the heads of the RA Foreign Affairs and military departments assured that the Colonel of the Volunteer Army had not abused his position and had not engaged in specific anti-Armenian activity. The fact of cooperation between the special services of both sides is clearly visible, but it is quite another matter to find out through what negligence this important information leaked to the press and into the sphere of parliamentary gossip, giving rise to the inflammation of passions and the creation of new complications around the RA, which was undergoing processes of formation.

At that same moment, military-political and diplomatic tensions kept the RA government in a state of alarm regarding the processes unfolding in the Ardahan area as well. This is directly evidenced by the letter of the RA Minister of Foreign Affairs dated April 7, 1919 (No. 1107) addressed to the RA Diplomatic Plenipotentiary in Tiflis, which reported the protest of the Governor-General of Kars and the telegram sent from Akhaltsikhe to General G. Kvinitadze by the Georgian Minister of Military Affairs regarding unprecedented movements carried out by Georgian military units in the Ardahan area. On this occasion, a protest had been expressed to the British representation by the English officer Breton regarding the actions undertaken by the

⁷⁶ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 164, sheets 6, 14.

⁷⁷ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 164, sheet 17.

⁷⁸ NAA, fund 198, list 1, file 15, sheet 133.

Georgians, based on which the British officer had paid a visit to General Artmeladze regarding the dissatisfaction handed over to him by the Armenians, which had found its reflection in a number of Tiflis newspapers. In this connection, the task had been set to form a mixed Anglo-Georgian committee to determine the temporary border between Akhaltsikhe and Ardahan, as well as to permit the entry of Georgian troops into the Ardahan district for defensive purposes only, authorizing Colonel R. N. Stewart to accompany the Georgian troops entering the Ardahan district for the implementation of this task. The RA Minister of Foreign Affairs requested the diplomatic representative to clarify the circumstances of the conclusion of the reached agreement and, along with it, its cancellation by General J. Forester-Walker, as well as the demonstrative concessionary step made by him toward the local Muslim population, which was allegedly justified by the threat expressed by the Muslims. At the same time, the RA Minister of Foreign Affairs declared the irrevocable rights of the Republic of Armenia over the Ardahan district, finding that the line of extension of those rights was yet to be determined, requesting to clarify the viewpoint and forthcoming intentions held by the Government of Georgia⁷⁹.

Interesting details regarding the perception of these British calculations and dilemma are revealed in an official dispatch addressed to the Minister of Foreign Affairs as early as April 9, 1919 (No. 553) by the Chief of the General Staff of the RA, Major General A. Dolukhanyan: "Straight from Paris to Kars has come Colonel A. Rawlinson (Intelligence Corps), the brother of the commander of one of the British armies. He has arrived in the Caucasus specifically to clarify the political situation..."

In a private conversation with the officer for Special Assignments attached to the British Military Governor, Lieutenant Bekzadov, during a visit to Kars on April 7, 1919, Colonel Alfred Rawlinson—brother of the commander of one of the British military units and a well-known intelligence officer in the East—stated the following: "We would have thrown our troops into the Caucasus long ago and settled life here, if only the Paris Conference permitted it. We are not allowed to govern this country; in other words, we were denied one of our previously due colonies, which we, of course, cannot do (ourselves), as it was costing us far too much.

At one time, we suggested to America and France that they assume the protectorate over the Caucasus, but they did not agree. America has promised to help the Caucasus with money and food supplies. And so, we have been sent here only for temporary military occupation. For that reason, we will likely leave here soon, unless, of course, something unusual happens at the Peace Conference.

In general, the war is far from over, and great misunderstandings are possible precisely among the Allies themselves"⁸⁰.

⁷⁹ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 92, part 1, sheet 191; Borba, March 22, 1919, No. 5, March 23, 1919, No. 6; Kavkazskoe Slovo, April 24, 1919.

⁸⁰ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 92, part I, sheet 200-201.

The Minister of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Armenia (RA), Al. Khatisyan, was dispatched to Tiflis from April 4 to 11, 1919, to meet with U. Thomson, the Commander-in-Chief of the British Armed Forces in the Caucasus. During this trip, from April 6 to 8, he participated in a consultation attended by General W. Beach, Head of the Political Department of the British Command in the Caucasus; General Brough, Head of Railways for the British Command; Colonel P. Chardigny; Smith, the American Consul; Colonel Benjamin Burgess Moore⁸¹, the US military-political representative in Transcaucasia; and Captain Poidebard. The center of gravity of the discussed issues focused both on transferring the Kars region to the Republic of Armenia, and on resolving the disputed issues concerning the Borchalu and Akhalkalaki districts through a peaceful agreement with the Government of Georgia, as well as matters relating to the provinces in Georgia⁸².

On April 6, Thomson sent the following note to RA Prime Minister Qajaznuni, who was in Tiflis:

1. The return of the population to the villages of the Kars and Nakhichevan provinces constitutes the most vital issue. Wherever it is not possible to return them to their own villages, they must be allocated a place of residence and must also be given the opportunity to engage in agriculture...

2. Following the return of the refugees, which I hope will be completed by the end of this month, British troops will be withdrawn from Kars and Nakhichevan, but the British mission will remain. Therefore, by May 1, an administration must be organized in every district and maintained by the necessary number of Armenian troops..."⁸³.

General Thomson emphasized the importance of organizing the return of refugees without violence, bloodshed, or religious and national discrimination. He simultaneously added that General Edmund L. Dalie was in Kars conducting preparatory work to ensure the unhindered entry of Armenian troops into Kars and to neutralize the Kars "Shura" (Council). With this proposal, Thomson was essentially drawing a temporary border line between Armenia and Azerbaijan, since it also mentioned that Karabakh-Zangezur would be administered by Azerbaijan. Despite this, the RA Government approved Thomson's proposal during its April 12 session and also found it desirable for British troops to remain in the region for a longer period. The decision also discussed allocating 5 million rubles to the Ministry of Military Affairs for "military needs" in Kars, Sharur, and Nakhichevan; organizing five new companies (composed of individuals free from service, providing a monthly salary of 300 rubles); establishing a commandant position for the Kars district upon whom the duties of governor would also be placed;

⁸¹ From March 17 to October 20, 1919, he served as the US military-political representative, with his seat in Tiflis. He prepared reports on Transcaucasia for the American delegation in Paris. Ghambaryan 2017: 331, 473.

⁸² NAA, fund 199, list 1, file 11, sheet 153.

⁸³ Ghazakhetsyan1993: 89.

organizing a civil administration in Kars, and so forth⁸⁴. On April 12, 1919, the RA Government, having heard the report of A. Khatisyan's mission, decided to occupy Kars and return the refugees there. The Kars and Kağızman districts of the Kars province were to pass to the RA. The region of the Ardahan district lying northwest of the Kura River was handed over to Georgia, while the remaining part, along with the Olti district, was to be administered by the British command⁸⁵.

Upon receiving this decision from the Armenian government, Thomson handed a note on April 14 in Tiflis to the diplomatic representative of Armenia (with a copy to the President of the Government of Georgia), in which he communicated his ruling regarding the territorial demarcation between Georgia and Armenia. Along with other matters, it placed the Kars and Kağızman provinces and the Nakhichevan district—bounded by northern and southern watersheds right up to the Julfa station—under the administration of Armenia, while placing the Olti okrug (district) and the part of Ardahan on the right bank of the Kura River under the Military Governor of Batum⁸⁶. As we can see, of the Kars province, only the Kars and Kağızman districts were given to Armenia, while Olti and Ardahan were not. This caused dissatisfaction within the RA Government. However, the extremely grave condition of the refugees and the necessity of settling them quickly in their native hearths—and despite protesting against the demarcation—the government was forced to accept the temporary borders drawn by Thomson. By these borders, apart from Olti and Ardahan, Karabakh and Zangezur, as well as the Alaverdi and Akhalkalaki regions, remained outside the borders of Armenia. Thomson declared that his demarcation bore a temporary character until the decision of the Paris Conference, that administration in the these provinces must be introduced from May 1, that it must carry an exclusively civil character, and that only a minimum number of troops should be kept in those places to maintain law and order, etc.⁸⁷

Thus, Armenia was preparing to establish its authority in the province, which Azerbaijan and the Shura categorically opposed. On April 18, Khan Tekinski, Azerbaijan's diplomatic representative in Yerevan, reported in a secret telegram to his government: "According to rumors, the English have given Kars to the Armenians and are preparing to hand over Sharur and Nakhichevan to them as well. I request that you verify this and inquire with the English, and if it is true, then I believe it is necessary to protest before the entire Muslim world—India, Turkestan, Afghanistan, the Malayan islands, and the Caucasus—as well as before the peace conference, against the desire of the English to subject several million Muslims to half a million Armenians"⁸⁸. The Government of Azerbaijan instructed Tekinski as follows: "It is necessary to urgently

⁸⁴ NAA, fund 199, list 1, file 43, sheet 65.

⁸⁵ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 92, part II, sheet 230.

⁸⁶ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 191, sheet 311; NAA, fund 275, list 5, file 183, sheet 36-37.

⁸⁷ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 191, sheet 34.

⁸⁸ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 358, sheet 6.

establish contact with the Kars authorities, render every type of assistance, find out what they need, and telegraph us so that we can take the necessary measures”⁸⁹.

Such was the course of the issue regarding creating an administration for the districts of the Kars province handed over to Armenia and the return of the refugees. In this manner, the British Command in the Caucasus severed Armenia’s rights in the matter of the Olti district and Ardahan on the right-bank of the Kura River, annexing them to the General-Governorship of Batum, thereby paying tribute to the anti-Armenian aspirations of the Muslim population of those districts.

W. Beach informed that the issue of the borders between Georgia and Armenia remained pending until the arrival of General J. Milne in Tiflis on April 15, about which General W. Thomson had informed Al. Khatisyan⁹⁰. At the center of the discussed issues were both the transfer of the Kars region to the Republic of Armenia and the resolution, through a peaceful agreement, of the disputed issues with the Georgian Government concerning Borchalu and Akhalkalaki, and the provinces in Georgia⁹¹. On April 10, a meeting took place between Al. Khatisyan and the members of the Georgian Government in full composition, which was also attended by General G. Ghorghanyan and Evangulyan. During this meeting, N. Ramishvili spoke about the close unity between Georgia and Armenia against the Muslim government of the Kars Shura and the intrigues of Azerbaijan, as well as about the satisfaction of services rendered by Georgia to the Republic of Armenia—such as military equipment, railway rolling stock, the removal of Armenian property from Tiflis, and so forth. The following day, Ramishvili met with the Armenian delegation and expressed readiness to give Armenia 3,000 sets of military uniforms, as well as to provide rolling stock and locomotives for the necessary occupation of Kars and Nakhichevan⁹².

As for the Batum province, it and a part of the Olti province remained within the zone of British occupation. In Kars proper, parallel to the Armenian regime, there was also a strong British garrison. Back in mid-March 1919, when a tense military-political situation had arisen in the Kars province and stubborn battles were underway, General W. Thomson established new demarcation lines in the competitive demarcation zone that was the object of the Armenian-Georgian conflict, and attempted to establish terms of peace between the Armenians and Georgians in his own way, striving to smooth over the differences between them. According to Thomson, until a just and final arbitral decision was rendered by the Paris Peace Conference, only the Kars and Kağızman provinces passed into the jurisdiction of the RA, while Georgia took under its subordination the northern part of the Ardahan province, including the village of Alaverdi and its mines. Moreover, the demarcation line passed approximately along the Kura River, while the Olti province and the remaining part of the Ardahan province were

⁸⁹ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 358, sheet 16.

⁹⁰ NAA, fund 199, list 1, file 100, sheet 72.

⁹¹ NAA, fund 199, list 1, file 11, sheet 153.

⁹² NAA, fund 199, list 1, file 11, sheet 162-163.

handed over to the subordination of the British administration stationed in Batum, under the jurisdiction of the British Military Governor of Batum⁹³.

Regarding the South-Western Muslim Republic of Kars, the government of Khan-Khoyski continued its support until the very end to make the South-Western Republic a political reality in Transcaucasia, even suggesting in the spring of 1919 to invite its representatives to the Transcaucasian Conference. In a note addressed to the RA Ministry of Foreign Affairs on April 2, 1919, Azerbaijan's ambassador to the RA, M. Khan-Tekinski, directly stated that a "5th republic" had emerged in the Kars and Batum provinces, whose interests were closely intertwined with the interests of the other Caucasian republics⁹⁴. Therefore, the government of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (ADR) found the participation of that republic in the conference desirable, which the Armenian side categorically rejected. A similar proposal was made to the Georgians, which was also rejected⁹⁵. Ultimately Azerbaijan issued a statement on April 3 that it would refrain from inviting the South-Western Republic to the conference⁹⁶, not wishing to aggravate the situation and become isolated in the region.

During that period, the Shura reached a dead end, because at that stage of the development of events, the Allies, and specifically the British, based on certain considerations of expediency, began to discourage the leaders of the South-Western Muslim Republic or Shura. Having decided to hand over the Kars province to the Republic of Armenia, the Muslim insurgency and anti-Armenian sentiments began to wane. It was decided to turn over the Kars province to the disposal of the RA authorities by May 1, 1919, with the deployment of Armenian troops⁹⁷. This had its justification: first and foremost, it was due to the fact that the Muslim leaders of the Kars province were obstructing the export of grain from the province, launching attacks on the militia composed of local Russians, and even daring to attack British military detachments while maintaining ties with the command of the Turkish 9th Army⁹⁸.

The authorities of Azerbaijan took military and political measures to disrupt the unification of Kars with Armenia. Instigated by Shevki Pasha, the Shura attempted to resist the RA authorities, but in vain. All members of the Shura government and many members of parliament were arrested and sent to Batum⁹⁹.

On April 12, 1919, the members of the Kars Muslim Shura and Majlis were arrested and deported from the province; it was simply abolished. By order of the British command, a temporary council was created under the leadership of Esad Oktay. Included within the composition of the established council were 4 Turks, 2 Greeks, 1

⁹³ Hovannisian 1971: 213.

⁹⁴ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 149, sheet 15.

⁹⁵ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 149, sheet 34.

⁹⁶ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 149, sheet 35.

⁹⁷ Ghazakhetsyan 1993: 88-89.

⁹⁸ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 243, sheet 99; Borba, 1919, April 15, N 77; Hovannisian 1971: 216-217.

⁹⁹ NAA, list 2, file 55, sheet 3-4; Vracyan 1993: 261.

Kurd, 1 Russian, and 1 Molokan, and General W. Thomson informed the General Staff in Constantinople about this¹⁰⁰. In the created situation, the Muslim population of the Kars province was compelled to declare submission to the RA authorities and even outwardly welcomed the arrival of the RA administration, requesting Governor St. Ghorghanyan to also allocate places for Muslims in the administration formed by him¹⁰¹.

On April 17, 1919, Armenian troops arrived in the Kars province, and on April 23, they entered Kars city. The following day, members of the Armenian civil administration arrived in Kars and entered upon the execution of their duties; however, the military control of the province, until the arrival of the Armenian military units, remained under the control of the English. On April 28, both civil and military authority passed entirely to the RA Government. On May 2, the Alexandropol–Sarıkamış railway line was handed over to the RA authorities; on May 9, the Armenian army captured Merdenek; and on May 12, it captured Kağızman. Armenian refugees began to return to the Kars province. On May 5, 1919, the Muslim National Council of Kars telegraphed the RA Prime Minister and, on behalf of the Muslims of the Kars province, welcomed the RA Government. Assuming the governance of the region, the RA authorities endeavored to demonstrate equal treatment toward both the Armenian and Muslim populations of the province, avoiding the deepening of inter-ethnic tension when forming local bodies of authority¹⁰².

Be that as it may, Azerbaijan's attempt to establish Muslim influence in the Kars and Batum provinces failed; the desire of the Khan-Khoyski government to bring the region under the subordination of Azerbaijan yielded no results, even though British policy possessed shades of tolerance or connivance in a certain sense. Azerbaijani calculations came to naught, a result furthered by the joint counteraction of Georgia and Armenia; consequently, Baku's attempts to consolidate the Muslims of the Kars and Batum regions did not lead to the desired results.

A certain role in this issue was also played by the firm stance of the President of the Government of Georgia, N. Zhordania, who back on February 15 simply demanded that General Forestier-Walker, Commander of the British forces in Transcaucasia, abandon the idea of any possible support for a South-Western Muslim Republic, and even more so the intention of handing it over to Turkey or subjecting it to a British general-governorship; practically, no clash of Armenian-Georgian interests took place here. At Forestier-Walker's demand, Denikin's representation was removed from Armenia, and more or less favorable conditions were created for the political decision of uniting the Kars province with the Republic of Armenia. Most of the Kars and Kağızman provinces were occupied by Armenian troops, with the exception of separate parts of

¹⁰⁰ Makhmouryan 2002: 64; Hovannisian 1971: 319-320; Kavkazskoe Slovo, 1919, April 15, 25, 30, May 12, 18, 28, N 70, 75, 79, 89, 94, 101.

¹⁰¹ Makhmouryan 2002: 64; Hovannisian 1971: 319-320.

¹⁰² NAA fund 200, list 1, file 231, part I, sheet 64, 274; file 131, sheet 99a; fund 200, list 2, file 36, sheet 1; list 1, file 242, part II, sheet 234.

these territories that remained under the influence of Kurdish-Tatar-Turkish marauding bands, while the entire Ardahan province was occupied by Georgian troops. On April 23, the military unit of General Hovsepyants, accompanied by a British detachment, crossed the border and moved toward Kars, and on April 24, the administration headed by St. Ghorghanyan also arrived in Kars. Prior to that, General Davie, executing Thomson's order, had arrested the members of the Muslim "Shura" and sent them to Tiflis. Thanks to the presence of Armenian troops, the return of the refugees also proceeded in an essentially peaceful manner¹⁰³.

The Kars province was at the epicenter of events. The formation of Kurdish bands by Turkish instructors in the villages of Kyalpinkar and Mehkerek south of Merdenek, and their concentration west of the village of Agu Dar, is discussed in General Hovsepyants's telegram of May 15, 1919, sent to General Silikyan. Their goal was an attack on the Derbinsky district, taking advantage of the small numbers of the Merdenek detachment. To reinforce it, two detachments (90 soldiers) were sent from Sarıkamış, which did not neutralize the pending danger to Sarıkamış, in the direction of which Eyub Pasha's marauding band of 1,500 men was operating. Taking this into account, on June 12, a part of the Merdenek detachment was sent to Sarıkamış, considering this sufficient to crush Eyub Pasha's band, which operated in a highly coordinated manner with other bands, continuously gathering information about the movements of Armenian troops and communicating them to one another, etc. This is evidenced by the circumstance that on June 13, a detachment consisting of 200 people launched an attack in the direction of Merdenek upon the village of Kayli Ogrdara, and on June 15, in the direction of the village of Muzarat, both of which the Armenian detachment of Merdenek succeeded in repulsing¹⁰⁴.

From the operational summary of General H. Hakhverdyan dated June 18, 1919, we learn about the activation of Kurds and their attacks on the Armenian population of the Kağızman, Sarıkamış, and Merdenek regions; the slaughter on June 6 of 5 militiamen returning to Kars in the Kağızman gorge; and anti-Armenian propaganda conducted by Turkish officers among Muslims. It also documents the activities and preparations of Kurdish bands hidden in Gechevan, Gyumushhana, Olukhlu, and other mountainous villages, as well as their refusal to negotiate with the Armenian authorities. Furthermore, it details the subversive work of Turkish agents in the Muslim villages of the Ardahan-Olti, Bardus, and Sarıkamış-Kağızman regions, and in the Kurdish-inhabited parts of the Bartoghian mountain range—acts which were in many cases prevented by the counterintelligence bodies of the RA, with the Allies being duly informed of these unlawful steps¹⁰⁵.

The British command was repeatedly informed of the Turkish-Tatar and Kurdish activation, and the Armenian government expected real support. In the end, however,

¹⁰³ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 191, sheet 34.

¹⁰⁴ NAA, fund 199, list 1, file 50, sheet 15, 18, 48-49.

¹⁰⁵ NAA, fund 199, list 1, file 50, sheet 48-49; Vracian 1993: 314.

the Allies confined themselves to feeble reassurances or affirmations. A vivid reflection of this is General Cory's briefing of June 19, 1919, to Al. Khatisyan, stating that he would report the matter to the High Command, while simultaneously openly misleading him by asserting that there was no need for alarm, since the great Turkish nation was fundamentally defeated, possessed neither an army, nor ammunition, nor any power, and would decisively achieve nothing¹⁰⁶. This did not correspond to the realities and caused significant harm, contributing to the weakening of the Armenian potential.

In the summary of the Intelligence Department of the General Staff of the RA Troops dated June 26, 1919, Lieutenant Colonel Shneur, noting the Kurdish attack on the Armenian and Greek population of the Merdenek region, provides facts regarding the movement of Tatars in the Nakhichevan region (about 400 people), also reporting that the latter possessed a machine gun purchased from Armenians in Yerevan¹⁰⁷. In the military overviews compiled by Shneur, and the Chief of the Operational Department, Captain Medvedev—which concern the military situation of the Republic of Armenia during the period leading up to September 20, 1919—mention is made of the noticeably intensified activity of Turkish agent-officers and soldiers in Sharur-Nakhichevan, as well as in the Kars province and elsewhere, aiming to organize armed forces and propagandizing to raise a rebellion against the Armenian government¹⁰⁸.

During this time, preparatory work was underway in Azerbaijan to unite with Turkey, striving to encircle Armenia in a tight ring by instigating Muslim uprisings in Nakhichevan, Zangezur, Vedibasar, and the Kars region¹⁰⁹.

From August 7, 1919, battles with alternating success also unfolded in the Koghb and Dashburun regions¹¹⁰. The situation became even more critical when official news arrived from Paris that British troops would evacuate Transcaucasia on August 15¹¹¹. In a telegram sent on August 8 to the President of the Paris Conference, Georges Clemenceau, protesting against the decision to withdraw British troops, Prime Minister Al. Khatisyan wrote: "The Turkish-Tatar movement is already beginning to threaten the very existence of the Armenian people. The presence of British forces partially restrains this movement. With their departure, an inevitable catastrophe will begin. In the name of human justice and the existence of Armenia, I demand that urgent and energetic measures be taken to avoid disaster"¹¹².

On August 15, 1919, this time it was an extraordinary session of the RA Parliament that addressed a similar appeal to the Paris Conference and the parliaments of the Allied powers, describing the miserable state of the country and the lack of

¹⁰⁶ NAA, fund 275, list 1, file 120, sheet 134.

¹⁰⁷ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 155, sheet 60a.

¹⁰⁸ NAA, fund 204, list 1, file 133, sheet 2.

¹⁰⁹ Haraj, May 9, 1920, N 95.

¹¹⁰ Zohrabyan 2012: 7.

¹¹¹ Virabyan 2024: 185-195.

¹¹² NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 201, sheet 72.

military force, alongside the incursions of Kurdish-Tatar marauding bands and local Muslims in the provinces of Sharur, Nakhichevan, Surmalu, Yerevan, and Kars. However, all of this remained unanswered, and the British decision to withdraw troops stood. Neither Azerbaijani nor Turkish agents ceased their anti-Armenian actions; on August 18, Kurds captured the heights around Kağızman, and it was only in the morning, with great difficulty and the help of artillery, that the forces succeeded in driving the Kurds away.

Nevertheless, toward the end of August, Kağızman was once again exposed to danger, where the Kurds even intended to establish their own government¹¹³, about which the British Captain Prosser, passing through Kağızman to Surmalu, had reported, and the Governor of Kars, St. Ghorghanyan, in his turn, had telegraphed the RA Minister of Internal Affairs¹¹⁴. It is noteworthy that Captain Gross, in a telegram sent to the Commander of the Armenian troops dated June 12, 1919, documented that Turkish provocateurs were spreading rumors that the Armenians were allegedly slaughtering Muslims, thereby rendering the occupation of our territories more difficult¹¹⁵. This was undoubtedly further abetted by the mutual distrust existing between General D. Bek-Pirumyan—who headed the military administration of Kars and enjoyed the confidence of R. Ter-Minasyan—and the head of the civil administration, Governor St. Ghorghanyan. As E. Zohrabyan concludes, the looting widespread in that environment and the self-enrichment carried out under an official mask resulted in the violation of state foundations, radically disrupting the legal order¹¹⁶.

The alarm over Muslim insurgencies was even more perceptible in a region serving as the focus of such a clash of diverse interests as the Ardahan district, where the Turkish factor had become a real threat to the Armenian authorities. Local Armenian authorities complained extremely about this, attempting to counter the Tatar-Turkish, Georgian, and other aspirations with the altogether limited capabilities of the local administration, Internal Affairs bodies, and the militia. To understand this, let us cite just one example. Thus, in a report (No. 16) sent to the Governor of Kars on August 16, 1919, the chief of militia of the Ardahan region reported that the general political situation tied to inter-ethnic relations was in an extremely alarming state and inspired serious anxiety. The author of the note reported that the territorial interests of the governments of Armenia, Georgia, and Turkey clashed extremely sharply in the Ardahan-Olti region, and that intensive propaganda was being conducted by the Georgian government and the Muslims of the Olti region, while a widespread concentration of troops was simultaneously taking place in the border areas. The report also noted that diplomatic negotiations were being conducted with Erzurum, and that representatives from Azerbaijan were also present at the congress of representatives of

¹¹³ NAA, fund 199, list 1, file 50, sheet 123, 138-139, 141.

¹¹⁴ NAA, fund 201, list 1, file 2, sheet 16.

¹¹⁵ NAA, fund 199, list 1, file 50, sheet 43.

¹¹⁶ Zohrabyan 2012: 13.

the Turkish vilayets. The author further informed the Governor of Kars that military units continuously continued to arrive from Erzurum, the initiation of operations by whom the latter linked to the outcome of the conclusion of the Peace Conference. It was also noted that besides the 9th Turkish Division stationed in Erzurum and executing border service, volunteer military units—consisting of about 10,000 bayonets, complete with artillery and cavalry—were also deployed. The report stated that the mobilization encompassed those aged 20 to 60, which enabled achieving maximum results. The report also documented that all these formations were headed by Shevki Pasha, whose headquarters was located in Erzurum, while the commander of the leading vanguard detachment on the Olti front was Binbashi Jafer Bey, whose headquarters was in Olti. The chief of militia of the Ardahan region concluded his report with a summary deduction regarding the political situation, according to which, in order to prevent a possible uprising of the local Muslim population, the government had to take decisive measures to reinforce the rear and the Armenian military unit operating in the direction of Merdenek, and carry out a decisive operation in the region¹¹⁷.

Of interest is also the operational-intelligence summary of the Commander of the RA Troops, which provides data on the situation prevailing in the Kars province up to August 23, reporting that the temporary government formed in Erzurum had decided to capture the Kars province right up to the Arpachay River. It noted that all uprisings of Muslims on the territory of Armenia took place under the instructions of Turkish agents, who had organized widespread espionage in the Republic of Armenia by relying on the local Muslim population. It further reported that, having been thrown out by Armenian military units from the Nakhichevan and Sharur regions, the leaders of the Tatar bands had transferred their activities to the Kars province. The summary was sent to the RA Diplomatic Plenipotentiary in Georgia for delivery to the Supreme Commissioner of the Allies in Transcaucasia, Colonel W. Haskell¹¹⁸.

While the press was occupied with spreading misinformation, the Erzurum government under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal, together with Rauf Bey, was moving its forces into the Kars province, while Azerbaijani and Turkish agents called upon the Muslims to rebel against the RA. The Armenian-Muslim commission, established for the purpose of investigating the events, having gathered information from prominent local Muslims, presented a report in which they placed the entire responsibility for the organization of the uprisings upon spies and agents arriving from the outside, who, while raising the local Muslims to rebellion, threatened to punish all those who should evade it.

At the end of August and beginning of September 1919, the Third Armenian-Georgian Conference opened in Tiflis. Participating from the Armenian side were St. Mamikonyan (president of the delegation), S. Khachatryan, the RA Diplomatic Plenipotentiary in Tiflis L. Evangulyan, and the military representative and advisor on

¹¹⁷ NAA, fund 201, list 1, file 62, sheet 63.

¹¹⁸ NAA, fund 200, file 427, part II, sheet 387.

military affairs of Armenia in Georgia, General H. A. Kishmishyan (Kishmishev). From the Georgian side, participants included Minister of Internal Affairs N. Ramishvili, K. Sabakhtarashvili, member of the Constituent Assembly S. Mdivani, and the Assistant to the Military Minister, General Gedevanov (Gedevanashvili). The representative of the Allied Command, General W. Beach, intended to preside over the conference; however, General J. Milne's headquarters, located in Constantinople, had advised him to participate only as an observer¹¹⁹.

The main problems of the conference became the management of the Neutral Zone after the withdrawal of British troops. At the conference, W. Beach declared, among other matters, that the British troops were prepared for final evacuation, and that in this contingency, the territorial aspirations of the Armenian and Georgian republics in the western direction up to the 1914 Russian-Turkish border line had encountered a categorically negative opposition from the side of the so-called "South-Western Caucasian Republic" in the Kars province, which had published its declaration of independence on January 18, 1919, at the initiative of the Muslim National Council and the Turkish 9th Army¹²⁰.

The suppression of the Muslim uprising in the Kars region coincided with the arrival of US Colonel W. Haskell, appointed Supreme Commissioner for Armenia by the Council of Five of the Peace Conference. In this connection, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan addressed an official protest on September 26, 1919, to T. Bekzadyan, the diplomatic representative of the RA in Baku, asserting that the RA government was obliged to assume the entire responsibility for the events. In response, T. Bekzadyan replied that national discrimination and persecutions against other nationalities did not exist in the RA, that they were convinced that all these events were instigated from the outside by various agents, and that the RA had taken appropriate measures for the purpose of maintaining internal law and order in its country¹²¹. However, the government of Azerbaijan was not satisfied with this; the diplomatic representative of Azerbaijan in Tiflis also turned to General J. Cory, requesting him to halt the "massacre being carried out against Muslims" in Armenia. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Azerbaijani government, Jafarov, addressed a remonstrance to Colonel W. Haskell, complaining of the persecutions being implemented against the Tatar population in Yerevan, and requested that an investigatory commission be sent and influence exerted upon the Armenian government to organize an impartial inquiry, including within the composition of the commission representatives of neutral states as well¹²². M. Tumanyan, the counselor of the RA diplomatic representation in Georgia, informing RA Minister of Foreign Affairs AI. Khatisyan about the application addressed by the government of Azerbaijan to Colonel Haskell, reports the latter's reply that he

¹¹⁹ Hovannisian 1982: 334.

¹²⁰ Hovannisian 1982: 2; Hovannisian 1971: 205.

¹²¹ Hovannisian 1982: 180.

¹²² Haraj, October 19, 1919.

“does not recognize the right of one state to interfere in the internal affairs of another state” and expresses the hope that the rights of citizens will be secured both in Armenia and in Azerbaijan, while requesting the RA government to carry out an investigation, punish the guilty, and communicate the results¹²³.

In any case, there were expectations toward the Allies that were illusory, yet lacked any alternative. The Governor of Kars, St. Ghorghanyan, vividly described this moment of illusion:

*“...recognized by Europe, by the great ‘Allied’ allies, we believed that one way or another, we were under the pan-European mantle. And all these conditions compelled us to believe that those exploding bombs, the nervous comings and goings, the panic, and the rattle of weapons everywhere were but a sweet dream. This threatening and feverish atmosphere predisposed people to be charmed anew by native ideals, and all of us, in high spirits toward right and truth, followed that current which was so easy and so merciless”*¹²⁴.

Nevertheless, the Armenians cherished hopes that “against the allied forces of our internal and external enemies, we had to counterpose our nationally educated and predisposed army, and we had to steer our state sails in that same direction”¹²⁵.

In the summer of 1919, the Turkish-Kurdish anti-Armenian uprisings in the southern districts of the Kars province—namely in the Kağızman, Sarıkamış, and Merdenek regions—were largely quieted by the RA armed forces. The province as a whole remained under the control of the Armenian administration. However, the situation was more complicated in the Zarushat, Shoragyal, Aghbaba, and Childır regions, where RA authority was virtually nominal, and where Turkish-Tatar agents operated actively among the Muslim population, keeping the Alexandropol-Kars railway under their surveillance.

The greatest danger to the RA was posed by the predominantly Tatar-inhabited districts of the Kars province—Aghbaba, Zarushat, and Childır—which were well-armed and subject to the propaganda of Turkish, Azerbaijani, and partly Georgian agents. On October 4, 1919, Captain V. Muradyants of the Intelligence Department reported that in the Aghbaba, Shoragyal, and Zarushat regions, the Tatars continued to organize and thoroughly defend themselves against a sudden Armenian attack. He noted that emissaries arriving from Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Georgia were inciting the Tatar masses against the Government of Armenia, while qualifying that there were also those asserting the opposite view. For instance, Yalbala Mamed oğlu (a resident of the village of Ibigi), an influential figure among the Tatars of Aghbaba, was allegedly a proponent of peaceful coexistence with the Armenians and had advised the Tatars not to submit to the influence of various emissaries. During a meeting with the district commissioner, he reassured him that the Tatars were not thinking of rebellion and were armed solely for

¹²³ Ghulyan 2011: 119.

¹²⁴ Harutyunyan 2018: 442.

¹²⁵ Harutyunyan 2018: 101-102.

self-defense¹²⁶. General Pirumyan's November 1919 telegram to the Commander of the RA Troops also clearly testifies to the aggressive aspirations of the leader of the Aghbaba Tatars, Kerbalai Mamed. After staying in Azerbaijan for two months, Mamed arrived in the Aghbaba, Childir, and Zarushat regions with a large bodyguard, compiled lists of those capable of bearing arms, and prepared gendarmes and local regiments. Notably, those registered were to wear shoulder straps featuring the crescent moon¹²⁷.

Undoubtedly, the weakness of the RA in terms of military, energy, food, and other issues left its mark on the country's entire course, affecting both the successes and failures of the steps taken by the RA government. Difficulties in territorial delimitation and any potential positive developments remained dependent on the military-political missions and the High Command of the British and other powers. Operating as advisors, they played a dual role in shaping and directing the foreign-policy calculations and expectations of the RA, frequently contributing to the rendering of decisions unfavorable to the RA—a pattern that has undergone no substantial change throughout the entire past century. During those years, one of the main pillars for the rulers in Yerevan became not a flexible, far-sighted diplomatic activity and a desire to maneuver, but rather, partially and insufficiently, a military force. This force was deficient in both quality and quantity and was poorly armed, including with British-Canadian firearms that were inadequate for use and, in many cases, defective. These and other factors and circumstances did not allow for a firm establishment in Kars, Nakhichevan, Karabakh, Sotk-Basargechar, and elsewhere. The British and other allies demonstrated no practical, vested interest here, since their primary concern was Baku oil and the partition of Russia—be it Tsarist or Bolshevik. All of this prevented the RA government from being able to counter, even occasionally, the frequently non-Armenophile British dictates, or to overcome a servile devotion to the Allies.

It was evident that following the end of the First World War and the forced withdrawal of Turkish troops from Transcaucasia, the anticipated conditions for the realization of Armenian plans were not created. Nevertheless, although the narrow borders imposed on the newly created Republic of Armenia by the Treaty of Batum were incomparably expanded to include several sectors of the Ararat plain, the districts of Surmalu and Alexandropol, and parts of the Kars province—increasing the RA territory from 10–12 thousand sq. km to around 45 thousand sq. km—it still proved impossible to restore the ethnic-territorial integrity of the RA to any reasonable degree. Chiefly through British efforts, Akhalkalak-Javakhk, the Lori Neutral Zone, Nagorno-Karabakh, and Sharur-Nakhichevan remained excluded. All of this took place with the assistance and connivance of the Allies, whose arrival in Transcaucasia had been so eagerly awaited. Great Britain and the other allies, looking after the creation of a large and powerful Azerbaijan that would act as a barrier against Bolshevik Russia, had no practical interest in a strong Armenia. On the contrary, they predisposed Armenia to

¹²⁶ NAA, fund 199, list 1, file 50, sheet 164.

¹²⁷ NAA, fund 199, list 1, file 110, sheet 21.

stand against the danger coming from the north until the very end, but at the moment of peril, they abandoned it and subordinated its interests to an Azerbaijan bolshevized on the advice of M. Kemal, an act which would also enhance Great Britain's prestige in the Muslim world. Throughout their entire stay in Transcaucasia, the military-political representatives and generals of Britain and other countries, with certain reservations, only encouraged the separatist sentiments of the rebellious Muslim districts. This undermined the positions of the RA in the region, causing immense material and moral harm to the Armenian people, who, thus weakened, were unable to withstand the cruel trials of the future. By and large, the Azerbaijanis understood this well and endeavored to exploit the loopholes in the British position, an interesting observation of which is found in the work of S. Safarov. According to Safarov, through the use of diplomatic and military means, Great Britain sought to control the conflicts existing between the independent republics as much as possible, using cunning to convince them that it was loyal to national-democratic ideas and would support their independent course. Citing a British correspondent in Tiflis, Safarov notes:

*“An Armenian bureau operates in London, and there are similar offices in France and the USA. The use of the word ‘Christian’ as a cheap advertising tool, of course, led to a pro-Armenian tendency in British foreign policy conducted in favor of Armenia. However, the growing aggression of the Ararat Republic against sovereign Azerbaijan weakened Great Britain’s position among its allies and led to an increase in the demands of the American government. In July 1919, the American Colonel Haskell was appointed Supreme Commissioner for Armenia by the Allies, though prior to this appointment, the US had been conducting behind-the-scenes negotiations with the Armenian side”*¹²⁸.

All of this was vividly manifested in the events that unfolded in Kars in June 1919, which are also attested by the British military representative in Kars, Captain H. R. Prosser. Describing their desperate situation, he noted that by August 30, when he intended to depart, the Armenians attempted to block his departure:

*“The Armenians are depressed by the departure of the British, whom, despite frequent assurances to the contrary, they viewed until the end as providers of tangible assistance from the Allies. They speak of fighting to the end and so forth, but I believe that most of the fighting spirit among them vanished with our departure. On the whole, the position of the Armenians in the Kars province at the present moment is not favorable... They are surrounded by a hostile population, and with the arrival of the Turks, Kars as a part of Armenia will, in all probability, cease to exist”*¹²⁹.

Colonel John Plowden, the British military representative in Yerevan, finding that the Armenians as a people were greatly slandered, noted that being virtually barefoot and without uniforms, they had fought alongside the best European troops who

¹²⁸ Safarov 2020: 6-7.

¹²⁹ Hovannisian 1982: 100.

surpassed them in number; he maintained that if weapons and ammunition were available, Armenia would be able to keep the Turks and Tatars away from its borders¹³⁰.

In June 1919, the British Governor-General of Baku, D. Shuttleworth, “unburdened himself” in a conversation with high-ranking Russian generals:

“We shall soon leave here, and the Italians will replace us. The picture will change; their main goal will be the exploitation of the country, since Italy is a poor country and they need to improve their financial affairs. I do not know for certain, but it is possible that Italy may even receive a mandate over Transcaucasia. In that case, obviously, the burden of the occupying troops will be placed on local resources. The Italians are extracting oil at a rapid pace on profitable terms.”

In his zeal to discredit Italy, Shuttleworth “forgot” that the British had already done all of this on a much more significant scale—plundering Kars and Transcaucasia, particularly the oil and the rest of Azerbaijan’s goods on “profitable terms,” even though England was not a poor country¹³¹.

In the opinion of E. Andersen and G. Egge, a large-scale anti-Armenian campaign based on a pan-Islamic and pan-Turanian agenda, initiated in July 1919 by Turkish nationalists and numerous delegates of the Azerbaijani government, was coupled with massive supplies of weapons arriving from Erzurum through Barduz and from Baku through Northern Persia into the predominantly Muslim-populated Yerevan province (in the districts of Surmalu, Sharur, Nakhichevan, and Yerevan) and throughout the territory of Kars¹³².

According to data from the same authors, the fierce battles that took place during July and August in the Kars territory—around Karaorgan, Karakurt, and Bashköy to the west of Kağızman, and in the area of Merdenek - Novo-Selim - Begli Ahmed to the west of Kars—led to a series of Armenian successes against Kurdish and Turkish-Tatar tribes. These tribes were directed by regular Turkish troops and were often led by Turkish officers acting as commanders. According to E. Andersen and G. Egge, by September 1919, Armenian control was restored over most of the Kars territory, with the exception of the northern part of the Ardahan district under Georgian control and the Olti district under British control, which was still dominated by the Muslim militias of Ayyub Khan and Server Bek. At the same time, as E. Andersen and G. Egge conclude, Armenian control in Surmalu was limited to the Ararat plain, while the strategic heights around Kulp, Orgov, and Aralik remained in the hands of the Kurdish-Tatars¹³³.

In January 1920, the RA government was recognized de facto by the concert of Great Powers, and a comparative peace prevailed on the borders. The government had succeeded in quieting the uprisings of the Muslims of Zangibasar, Kars-Aghbaba, Sotk-Zod-Basargechar, and other districts that had kept the region in a state of alarm. This

¹³⁰ Hovannisian 1982: 100.

¹³¹ The US and Allied Supreme Commissioner in Armenia William Haskell. Ohanyan 2010.

¹³² Andersen and Egge 2018.

¹³³ Hovannisian 1982: 77, 79, 85, 104-105.

was a temporary and unstable calm on the eve of catastrophic developments, which relaxed the attention of the RA government and weakened its analytical capacity to perceive the anxieties accumulating from within.

On January 24, 1920, an uprising broke out in Kars. Its instigators were the Muslim notables of Aghbaba and Zarushat who had met earlier on January 12 in the village of Gegharchin—namely Kurd Selim, Kerbalai Mahmed Aghababekov, and an Azerbaijani officer named Nazaraliev. As a result of this rebellion, officials and police of the RA were expelled from Childır (the Ardahan region of Kars province) and from the greater part of Zarushat and Aghbaba. The Muslims captured the strategically important Zurzuna pass and dispatched 500 armed men to Ardahan with the objective of capturing it. In response, Armenian military units led by Colonel Hovhannes Mazmanian advanced from Merdenek toward Ardahan to defend it, even though the district governor, Kadimov, sent a delegation to the mutineers to persuade the rebels to lay down their arms. Nevertheless, military operations flared up across the Kars province. This drew the attention of the Allies, and Zeynal Abdal Zeynalov—a member of the Kars Council or Shura, which had been dissolved back in May 1919—appealed to the Allied representatives, and particularly to the British High Commissioner Oliver Wardrop, requesting that immediate measures be taken. Furthermore, from February 8 onward, Fatali Khan Khoyski addressed the RA government with a call to put an end to the offensive¹³⁴.

This state of affairs could not be tolerated for long; therefore, in early 1920, the RA government decided to suppress the insurgent movements by force in the Muslim settlements of Zarushat, Aghbaba (Amasia), and Shaynalyar within the Kars province, compelling them to recognize RA authority. Initially, however, they attempted a peaceful resolution to the confrontational situation by appealing to the mediation of representatives of the American Committee. Following this, a Muslim commissioner was appointed in that region as a compromise. However, the latter took advantage of the overt support of the Azerbaijani diplomatic mission in Yerevan and relied on an armed insurgent band of more than 3,000 men trained with the help of Turkish instructors. This presented a real threat to Armenia and its capital, Yerevan, forcing the Armenian troops to remain in a constant state of readiness. This entire situation initially left an impression on Wardrop when Zeynalov first publicly presented the complaints. Upon reviewing them, Wardrop came to conclusion that the accusations were greatly exaggerated and reported that the main cause of the unrest was visibly Turkish instigators¹³⁵.

George Gracie, who possessed a certain sympathy toward the Armenians, believed that a coalition government should be established to reduce the influence of the militant Dashnaks—who were distrusted in European and particularly British diplomatic circles—and that no additional steps should be taken to disarm or otherwise suppress the Muslim population until the Supreme Council in Paris made a decision

¹³⁴ Hovannisian 1996a: 150-151.

¹³⁵ Hovannisian 1996a: 150-153.

regarding the borders of the Transcaucasian republics¹³⁶. In a report sent to the British Foreign Office on March 4, 1920, the head of the mission, Wardrop, noted that the unrest in Kars had caused deep resentment in Azerbaijan, placing the blame on Armenia:

*“I think it my duty to inform Your Lordship strictly confidentially that if the agreement signed between Armenia and Azerbaijan on November 23, 1919, fails to serve its purpose, the blame lies with the Government of Armenia, whose behavior within its own territory and in Zangezur at least to some extent justifies the countermeasures taken by the Government of Azerbaijan. Without hesitation, I can say that from a humanitarian standpoint, it seems inadvisable to entrust the Dashnak government of Armenia with authority over the lives and property of Muslims, and I believe that the Armenians would be much safer under Muslim authority than the Muslims under the Armenian Dashnaks”*¹³⁷.

In January 1920, the Deputy Governor of Kars, Chalkhushyan, in a communication addressed to the RA Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, Malkhasyan, reported that Zarushat was the most restless area, where Azerbaijani agents were operating under the leadership of Ismayil Bek Nazaraliev, Kasum Halilbekov, and Aghali Bek Kaziev¹³⁸. The situation escalated further when a January 1920 consultation of the Muslims of Zarushat and Aghbaba decided to sever commercial and other ties with the RA authorities, expel the Armenian administration, and declare a mobilization. As a result, on January 24, the Armenian administration was driven out of the district, several Armenians were killed, and General Hovsepian's punitive detachment was forced to enter the region. The detachment restored law and order and compelled the population to declare their submission to the RA authorities¹³⁹, while those who refused to reconcile, primarily the ringleaders, departed for Tiflis and Baku.

In January 1920, the RA military launched punitive operations in the districts of Shoragyal, Zarushat, and Childır—which had fallen under the influence of Azerbaijani propaganda—in order to suppress the anti-government rebellions of the Kars Muslims. This caused a major uproar in Azerbaijan¹⁴⁰. In this connection, the newspaper “Azerbaijan”, touching upon the events in Kars, protested against the violence toward Muslims and petitioned European countries to direct their attention “upon this small, dark corner of Transcaucasia”¹⁴¹.

The British position carried double standards and preconditions, regarding which the conclusion of General Anton Denikin, Commander of the Volunteer Army of the South of Russia, is highly significant:

¹³⁶ Hovannisian 1996a: 154.

¹³⁷ Hovannisian 1996a: 154.

¹³⁸ NAA, fund 201, list 1, file 281, sheets 20-21.

¹³⁹ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 249, sheet 79; Ruben 1982: 248.

¹⁴⁰ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 486, part 1, sheets 20, 49-51.

¹⁴¹ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 486, part 1, sheet 113.

*“Regarding the Kars issue, the English command generally had no policy of its own, or else it was excessively Machiavellian. Toward Russia, in any case, this policy was quite definite: for the return of Russian refugees to the provinces of Kars and Batum, General Walker set a condition that the returning refugees must not conduct propaganda for Bolshevik ideas or toward reunification with Russia...”*¹⁴².

However, peace was not established. The representative of the National Council of Kars Muslims in Tiflis presented a protest memorandum to the Allies regarding the Armenian side's policy of exterminating the Muslims of the Kars province. Azerbaijan reacted to this, and on February 8, 1920, a protest note was presented to the RA Ministry of Foreign Affairs stating that Azerbaijan could not remain indifferent to the violence perpetrated against Muslims in Kars¹⁴³. Replying to Azerbaijan, the RA Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that this constituted an interference in the internal affairs of the RA. As evidence, it cited a telegram from the Chairman of the Muslim National Council, Meshadi Mamed Hajiev, to Al. Khatisyan, in which the former testified to the instigation of disorders and the looting of Muslim villages by outside newcomer elements, and welcomed the dispatch of troops by the RA government to restore order¹⁴⁴.

Azerbaijan went deeper, raising the issue during the March 8–9, 1920 sessions of its parliament regarding “the destruction of 10 thousand Muslims in the Kars province by the RA authorities under the pretext of disarmament,” and deciding to voice a protest to the entire world against the actions of the RA. In this regard, Ruben wrote: “The Zarishat issue was digested; despite the protests from Azerbaijan, it was digested because Haskell was partly responsible, and during that period, the Allied plenipotentiary Haskell still represented a force and prestige for Turkey and Azerbaijan”¹⁴⁵.

Azerbaijan also brought up the issue of the Kars Muslims at the conference of Transcaucasian republics convened in early April 1920, wishing to place the Kars issue on the agenda alongside the Karabakh issue. Accordingly, at the session of April 19, the delegation of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic presented telegrams from the Yerevan-Kars Compatriotic Union regarding the unceasing violence, arrests, and killings perpetrated against Muslims in the Kars province, as well as the confiscation of one million rubles from Muslim residents, demanding that the Armenian authorities pay two million rubles as an indemnity. The Azerbaijani delegation succeeded in having the investigation of the clashes in the Kars province included in the scope of the commission's activities, though this did not affect the political situation in the province¹⁴⁶. Desiring Allied intervention, the Azerbaijani government demanded the creation of an international commission to investigate the events in Kars, but received a

¹⁴² Denikin 1925: 147.

¹⁴³ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 249, sheet 221; Ashkhatavor, February 13-14, 1920, N 35-36; March 2, N 49.

¹⁴⁴ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 427, sheets 64, 81.

¹⁴⁵ Slovo, March 12, 1920, N 58; Ruben 1982: 250.

¹⁴⁶ NAA, fund 441, list 1, file 94, sheet 106; Virabyan 2004.

refusal on the grounds that the Allies did not have free representatives available to form such a commission¹⁴⁷.

This intelligence operational report dated March 20, 1920, reported on Muslim activity in Surmalu, noting that in Kulp, alongside local outlaw bands, Shamil-bek Ayrumlinsky had 200 Turkish soldiers and 2 cannons. It added that ammunition had been dispatched to Kulp from Bayazet using 7 camels¹⁴⁸. Valuable information regarding the Kars province is contained in the summary (No. 14) of the Intelligence Department dated April 5, 1920, in which T. Devoyants and M. Dodokhyan reported that on the eve of the Childır rebellion, a Turkish regiment of 700 men was dispatched toward Merdenek, 300 of whom left for Olti. However, the events in Dersim forced them to be redirected toward Erzinka (Erzincan). It also reported that on the eve of the Childır movement, Eyub Pasha was summoned to Erzurum and instructed to organize a *chetnik* (irregular fighter) group to operate toward Sarıkamış. Furthermore, Khalil Bey, the former commander of the 3rd Caucasian Rifle Division, along with several Turkish officers and soldiers, was conducting a mobilization of men aged 18 to 40 in the Olti region, training them and sending the prepared detachments to border villages¹⁴⁹.

In a telegram (No. 00322) sent from Kars to the Commander-in-Chief and the Minister of Internal Affairs on April 14, 1920, Major General Hovsepyants reported that following the battles in Childır, he had arrested the leaders of the rebellion, Kyamil Abdul Oğli and Veysal Yusup Oğli. At the request of the governor, they were handed over to the latter. Valuable information was extracted from the detainees regarding the participation of Azerbaijani and Turkish agents in organizing the rebellion, prompting Hovsepyants to demand that they be subjected to severe judicial punishment¹⁵⁰. An intelligence report dated June 3, 1920, testified to coordinated actions between local Muslims of the Kars province, and even Molokans, with the army of the Turkish Kyamil Pasha. For this purpose, 4 Turkish officers and 15 soldiers arrived in Bashköy and Bekköy, while a consultation was held in Nor Selim with representatives of the Molokans of the Kars province¹⁵¹.

In response, however, Azerbaijan—once again shifting the blame onto Armenia and emphasizing its own political stance toward a peaceful resolution of disputed issues—welcomed the formation of the Allied Commission. It proposed that the commission had to investigate the root causes of the mutual Armenian-Muslim massacres and clashes in Transcaucasia chronologically, starting from 1918, arguing that separating the Karabakh events from previous Transcaucasian developments would misdirect the investigation. It should be noted that the Allies hypocritically

¹⁴⁷ Knyazyan 2008: 144.

¹⁴⁸ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 486, part 1, sheet 113.

¹⁴⁹ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 427, part II, sheet 249.

¹⁵⁰ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 271, sheets 172-173.

¹⁵¹ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 33, sheet 33.

rejected Azerbaijan's request to send a commission to investigate the issue of the massacre of Muslims in the Kars province on February 29, 1920¹⁵².

On April 4, 1920, Tigran Bekzadyan, the diplomatic representative of the Republic of Armenia in Tiflis, reported in a telegram sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that a meeting had taken place with M. Garbaccio (Gabba) on April 2. During the meeting, the Italian High Commissioner expressed regret that the Armenians had rebelled in Karabakh at a time when the borders of Armenia were being drawn, stating that such a step made no sense, just as Azerbaijan's intervention in the situation in the Kars province lacked justification¹⁵³. Simultaneously, a special commission was established in Baku under the leadership of Mahmed Khan-Tekinski—the Assistant to the Minister of Foreign Affairs who had been accused of espionage in Armenia—which was tasked with presenting a comprehensive conclusion summarizing all the territorial demands of the Azerbaijani Democratic Republic within a short period¹⁵⁴.

During the years 1918–1920, the Republic of Armenia exerted immense efforts to prevent hostile forces and intrigues in Kars and other regions, which were fundamentally aimed against the territorial integrity of the RA. Colonel P. Chardigny, representing the French mission in Transcaucasia, displayed a critical attitude toward the British, accusing them of being so heavily invested in opening routes to the East and establishing profitable markets, as well as creating stable Georgian and Azerbaijani states, that they turned a blind eye when Turkish-Azerbaijani agents provoked rebellions in Kars and Nakhichevan. Chardigny assessed these events as part of a larger movement, expressing regret that General J. Cory had ignored his advice to transfer two British battalions to Armenia, and emphasizing that the Armenians were in dire need of weapons and ammunition¹⁵⁵.

There was an impression that Haskell might create yet another neutral zone in the Kars province, yielding to the wishes of Muslim beks and agents, and that the Allied powers were simply allowing the richest lands of Russian Armenia to be torn away from the RA¹⁵⁶.

Nonetheless, attacks and border violations by Turkish-Azerbaijani and Kurdish Muslim predatory bands intensified in the regions of Kars and Surmalu. The task of subjugating the rebellious Muslim-populated regions served as a pretext for intervention by external forces who exploited the circumstance—particularly Azerbaijan and Turkey, closely followed by Soviet Russia.

Almost the same outcome resulted from the Georgian-Soviet Moscow Treaty of May 7, 1920, which made reservations regarding the de facto borders of Georgia, particularly in the Ardahan region of the Kars province, which was disputed with

¹⁵² NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 563, sheets 66, 80–84, 89; Ashkhataavor, April 9, 1920.

¹⁵³ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 563, sheet 62.

¹⁵⁴ Mshak, March 14, 1920.

¹⁵⁵ Hovannisian 1982: 107.

¹⁵⁶ Nor Ashkhataavor, September 11, 1919; Hayreniq, November 23, 1919.

Armenia. The treaty ignored the border between Georgia and Armenia, which at the time of signing did not coincide with the southern boundary of the Tiflis Governorate in the Borchalu district¹⁵⁷. This was ultimately resolved at the height of the Turkish-Armenian war in November 1920, when, as the leading contemporary researcher V. M. Mukhanov justly notes, none of the Great Powers had the desire to intervene in the conflict, and Armenia was left to the mercy of fate¹⁵⁸.

Retrospectively, these nuances of the political process were generally correctly observed by Al. Khatisyan:

*“On the other hand, the Paris Conference delayed dealing with the issues of Turkey for far too long, giving the Kemalists time to grow stronger. And later, when Russia concluded its internal civil strife, the Allies feared complications and withdrew, leaving the newly formed republics to their own fate”*¹⁵⁹.

He stated that he had:

*“...come to the unshakeable conviction that the Allies abandoned Armenia, and the Turks took wide advantage of this. However, the main allies of the Turks were the Bolsheviks, who provided the Turks with the strength and opportunity to attack Armenia. This is an indisputable fact. It is likewise a fact that after helping each other, they divided Armenia between themselves. And the Bolsheviks did this not out of distinct hostility toward Armenia, but driven by their ‘world’ policy, for which they felt the need to win the friendship of the Turks by sacrificing Armenia. And the Bolsheviks gave the Turks what they wanted—Kars, Surmalu, Ardahan—and the remaining part, what the Turks did not need, i.e., the regions populated by Armenians, the Russians took”*¹⁶⁰.

It all culminated in the fact that, as recorded in the official reports of the diplomatic representative of Armenia in Tiflis dated November 7 and 12, 1920, the extremely grave situation created for Armenia—and specifically the facts of the rebellion of the Muslim population in the rear, in the Aghbaba region of Kars province—initially forced the command to transfer a part of the Armenian troops located at the approaches of Aleksandropol to the Kars province to suppress the Muslim revolt. Ultimately, they were compelled to abandon even this option, as a result of which the military command proceeded to accept the ultimatum presented by the Turks on November 8¹⁶¹. T. Bekzadyan’s efforts did not yield the anticipated results in practice, nor could they have.

The government of Armenia and its political leaders also failed in army-building, proving unable to create a combat-ready army, within which the *fedayee* commanders were in deep antagonism with the generals who favored a regular army. They were “forced” to solve tasks beyond their strength using a powerless and unreliable army, and found themselves incapable of restraining the anti-Armenian actions of the massive

¹⁵⁷ Andersen 2020: 1, 6-8, 11, 14, 22.

¹⁵⁸ Mukhanov 2019: 142.

¹⁵⁹ Khatisyan 1968: 193.

¹⁶⁰ Khatisyan 1968: 293.

¹⁶¹ Galoyan 2000: 333, 338.

Muslim population within the republic's borders—in the Kars province, Zangibasar-Vedibasar, Sotk-Basargechar, and other regions—who were patronized and received significant military-material support from Turkey. Moreover, as a result of subjugating the Muslim regions, the Armenian army became weakened and exhausted.

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Translated from Armenian by Gevorg Harutyunyan

LAW

**THE LEGAL FOUNDATIONS OF REGULATING FAMILY RELATIONS
AND THE ORDER OF SUCCESSION IN SMBAT SPARAPET'S
"DATASTANAGIRK" (BOOK OF JUDGMENTS)**

Lilit Sarvazyan¹

Abstract

In all historical periods, a special order for regulating marriage and family relations has existed in Armenia. Family law is the totality of legal norms that regulate personal non-property and related property relations arising from marriage, kinship, and other grounds provided by law. The institutions of family law and the principles of property inheritance have been preserved—with certain changes and revisions—within Armenian legal-philosophical culture. In this context, we emphasize the study of national sources of law, including Smbat Sparapet's "Datastanagirk" (Book of Judgments), which contains ideas of modern resonance. These include marriage based on love, mutual consent, and free choice; the legal equality of spouses; the exclusion of violence against women and children; the prevention of immoral relations; and the protection of ancestral property and hereditary rights.

Keywords: Datastanagirk, family law, free choice, moral virtues, legal policy, order of succession, property relations

Smbat Sparapet (1208–1276) is known as the renowned sparapet (constable/commander-in-chief) of the Cilician Armenian kingdom, a socio-political figure, diplomat, legislator, and historian. He was honored with titles such as "Subtle Philosopher," "Smbat the Brave," "The Wise Sparapet of the Armenians," and "The Great Prince."²

Smbat made a significant contribution to the history of Armenian law through his translational and legislative activities. He translated the "Assizes of Antioch" from Old French.³ These rules were applied in Armenian courts to resolve disputes between Armenians and the Crusaders of Antioch, as well as to settle commercial and political issues. It is worth noting that this code became known to the scientific world thanks to Smbat Sparapet's Armenian translation, as the original Old French text has not been preserved. Ghevont Alishan re-translated the Armenian text back into French in 1876, ensuring its preservation as a global legal monument⁴.

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² See: Catholikos Garegin I 1951: 951-952.

³ Assises D'Antioche 1876.

⁴ See: Alishan 1901: 111.

As a chronicler, Smbat wrote the “Chronicle” (Taregirk)⁵, which covers history from 951 to 1272. He provides detailed interpretations of Armenian-Byzantine, Armenian-Arab, Armenian-Georgian, Armenian-Turkish, and Armenian-Persian relations, as well as the Crusades and the nature of expansionist policies.

Smbat Sparapet’s masterpiece is the “Datastanagirk” (Book of Judgments)⁶, compiled over many years and completed in 1265 for the purpose of regulating socio-political relations in Cilician Armenia. It consists of eight chapters comprising 202 articles. The sources of the “Datastanagirk” are Armenian customary and canon law, the canons of Sahak Parthev, Mkhitar Gosh’s “Armenian Datastanagirk,” and certain Greco-Byzantine and Latin legal norms.

Smbat utilized all previous legislative acts creatively. He was creating a code for the Armenian State, and naturally, he had to base it primarily on Armenian primary sources of law. According to Arsen Gltchyan: “Customary law... powerfully influenced the nature of Smbat’s Datastanagirk, giving it immense importance.” He rejects the opinion of J. Karst, who, “...being unfamiliar or little acquainted with the older sources of Armenian law, considers Armenian law... a borrowing, inspired and produced by external influence.”⁷ Meanwhile, another European legal scholar, J. Kohler, emphasizes Armenian customary law and the national roots of the law, affirming: “There is no doubt at all that the Armenian nation was, from the beginning... a nation possessing legislation... A nation whose racial affinity is Aryan.”⁸

The “Datastanagirk” is based on the ideas of state sovereignty, the supremacy of law, the priority of state interests, and the protection of the rights and freedoms of citizens. Therefore, Smbat prioritized the problems of improving internal state life and regulating social relations, including family relations. He sought to maintain the stability of the Armenian family as the foundation of the state, uphold ancient national traditions, and prevent groundless divorces.

According to national legal consciousness, marriage is a divine institution—an eternal union of man and woman: “...the two shall become one flesh... what God has joined, let no man separate” (Matthew 19:6). This idea permeated both Armenian canonical and secular legislation.

According to Smbat’s “Datastanagirk,” the union of a woman and a man is validated through betrothal and coronation (the marriage rite). Betrothal is a promise to marry subject to certain conditions. The crucial stage of marriage is the coronation. The “crown” is a combination of canonical rites and specific behaviors defined by legal norms, through which the marriage is legalized. As G. Safaryan affirms: “The order of coronation was a progressive phenomenon in Armenian reality and legal history.

⁵ Smbat Sparapet 1956.

⁶ Law Code of Smbat 1918.

⁷ Law Code of Smbat 1918: 7-8. See also: Sukiasyan 1978: 230-231.

⁸ Kohler 1963: 11.

Coronation is indisputable proof of marriage. By the blessing of the crown, the married couple was under the protection of the law and the clergy.”⁹

Smbat Sparapet defined the following conditions for marriage:

- **Gender:** The persons marrying must belong to different genders. Relations between persons of the same gender are illegal and criminal. In almost all sources of Armenian law, punishment is defined for “men-seekers” and “women-seekers,” and in such cases, divorce is not prohibited.
- **Monogamy:** A married person cannot marry again. Bigamy and the keeping of concubines are prohibited by both canonical and secular laws.¹⁰ Based on Armenian canon law, Smbat even forbade the king from having extramarital relations: “The law does not allow the king to live with a mistress without marriage, for since he establishes laws with God and the Patriarch, let him marry legally.”¹¹
- **Voluntary Consent of the Spouses:** Punishment is established for those clergy and parents who force young people to marry against their will.¹² Such a marriage is considered invalid. A union through the abduction of a girl is likewise illegal, and children born without a “church crown” are considered “illegitimate.”
- **Marital Maturity:** Smbat considers the marriageable age for a boy to be 15 years. M. Gosh defined the marriage age for boys at 14 and for girls at 11–12.¹³ Smbat does not specify the bride’s age in his “Datastanagirk,” although the 7th canon of the 1243 Church Council of Sis set the minimum age at 14 for boys and 12 for girls.¹⁴ It is likely the Council used Mkhitar Gosh’s definitions as a basis.
- **Confessional Unity:** Both Gosh and Smbat attached great importance to the condition of common faith, prohibiting the marriage of Christians with those of other faiths or heretics. The law permits marriage with a slave or servant on the condition that the man converts her to the Christian faith, baptizes her, and marries her as a legal wife.

⁹ Safaryan 2010: 171.

¹⁰ It is known that rejecting incest and double marriage, Hovhannes Odznetsi established a specific penalty, requiring that those marrying affirm their mutual consent through mediators and guarantors and receive the seal of their legal marriage from the church. Otherwise, they must do penance for ten years. See: Canons of John 2001: 173.

¹¹ Smbat Sparapet 2001: 564.

¹² Earlier, Catholicos Nerses II, in Canon 23 of his Constitution, commanded: “They shall not dare to bless the crown of children, nor of those who have reached maturity, without both seeing each other.” See: Canons of Nerses II 1905: 24. See also: Canons of St. Sahak 1964: 382.

¹³ See: Mkhitar Gosh 2001: 403.

¹⁴ In Cilician Armenia, for political or other reasons, the condition of marital maturity was sometimes violated. For example, Levon II married the 11-year-old daughter of the King of Cyprus at age 60. Levon II’s 11-year-old daughter, Zabel, was married to Prince Philip, and 12-year-old Levon IV was married to a 7-year-old princess of the Lusignan dynasty. See: Ormanian 1913: 1080, 1102, 1213.

- **Absence of Blood or Affinal Relation:** An essential condition of marriage is the absence of certain ties of kinship or affinity between the couple. Smbat mentions nothing specific about marriage between relatives; however, this condition was emphasized in Armenian canon law and the codes of David of Alavik and M. Gosh.¹⁵ We believe that in this matter, too, the Sparapet took the national tradition—which had become law—as his basis.

The “Datastanagirk” defines certain principles for the married couple. The husband’s authority in the family and the wife’s obedience to her husband are considered the norm. Those marrying must be healthy in order to bear and raise children. The blood of a healthy person must not be mixed with the blood of an incurably ill person, so that the nation has healthy generations: “The law commands judges and all secular lords that those who are infected with leprosy or vitiligo from father to son or by race... shall not be allowed to marry; never give them a wife or take a wife from them,” because “...the disease... is passed on by inheritance.”¹⁶ The marriage of the blind or the mute is also discouraged, as they cannot raise children.

Based on Mosaic Law, the “Datastanagirk” exempts newlyweds from going to war: “A newly married man should not go to war, so that there is no untimely mourning for the wife.”¹⁷

Smbat defines the following conditions for **divorce**:

- **Disobedience of the Wife:** According to the Sparapet, traditional rules did not allow divorce due to disobedience, but “...when they saw that because of impossibility a greater misfortune might happen, they softened that law,” and divorce was permitted. In this case, the husband must give the wife everything she brought with her, “...so that she can marry someone else.”¹⁸
- **Serious Illness:** Serious physical and mental illnesses—such as epilepsy, leprosy, “pain-sickness,” mange, etc.—make the shared life of the spouses impossible. But Smbat requires the illness to be confirmed by a special examination. If cured, the wife may return to her husband; if uncured, the husband must return all the property she brought—except for the marital gift—and he may marry again. If the parents prove the illness originated in the husband’s house, the husband must wait seven years, and if the wife is not cured, “...he has the right to separate and take another wife.” The conditions are the same in the case of the husband’s illness. Divorce is not allowed if the spouses were aware of the illness but married regardless.¹⁹

¹⁵ See: Canons attributed to the Council of Ashtishat, Ch. I; Canons of Shahapivan, Ch. XII; Canonical Constitution of King Vachagan of Albania, Ch. X-XI; Code of David of Alavik, Art. 70; Mkhitar Gosh 2001, Art. 192.

¹⁶ Smbat Sparapet 2001: 613-614.

¹⁷ Smbat Sparapet 2001: 612.

¹⁸ Smbat Sparapet 2001: 602.

¹⁹ See: Smbat Sparapet 2001: 612, Art. 80, 89, 104.

- **Captivity, Long Absence, or Death:** The captivity, prolonged absence, or death of one of the spouses can serve as grounds for the dissolution of the marriage. If a wife is taken into slavery from the husband's house, the husband must pay her ransom; if from the parents' or brothers' house, they must pay. If after seven years the wife is not ransomed, her dowry and marital gift must be returned. "But if a child remains, in that case, the dowry belongs to the child."²⁰ Thus, the property rights of the child are protected. In the case of the husband's captivity or absence for trade, if word is received that he has died, the wife may marry after waiting seven years. If the husband returns, he may "take the wife back" only by her own will.
- **Mutual Hatred and Antipathy Between Spouses:** Incompatible relations or antipathy sometimes arise within a family. If the reason is not immoral behavior, the law commands an investigation to determine who is at fault. If the husband is at fault, the wife may take her dowry and marry someone else. In the case of the wife's fault, the husband has the right to give her nothing and remarry. Regarding children, if the father is at fault, they are given to the mother; otherwise, they are given to the father.
- **Marital Infidelity:** A husband has the right to separate from an immoral wife: "The law always considers separation correct from women who have committed the following sins: fornication, witchcraft, and other similar sins." However, the husband "...must be compelled to repent."²¹ If a wife flees from her husband without church permission or serious reasons convincing to a judge, she must be apprehended and returned to the husband as a servant. He has the right to treat her as he wishes, but he cannot sell her, kill her, or divorce her. Only in the case of infidelity does he have the right to sell her. However, if it is revealed that the wife left "...because of the husband's foul behavior... the husband must be seriously admonished with the punishments of the court and the church."²² Divorce is permitted if both parties are at fault. Thus, in cases of infidelity, a wife's right to divorce is more limited than a man's. However, Smbat does not leave the wife entirely without rights.²³ For example, a wife is permitted to divorce if the husband leads an immoral life, does not work, and lacks the means to provide for her. Effectively, the issue of the wife's welfare is prioritized in this context.
- **Female Sterility and Male Impotence:** These also serve as grounds for divorce, although by Christian law, sterility is not a cause for separation. Therefore, the "Datastanagirk" commands: "Physicians must examine and determine whether the cause of infertility lies with the husband or the wife." If sterility is the result of an illness, it should be treated. If it is incurable, both spouses must be examined. If

²⁰ Smbat Sparapet 2001: 603, Art. 81.

²¹ Smbat Sparapet 2001: 610, Art. 100.

²² Smbat Sparapet 2001: 612-613, Art. 112.

²³ Cf. Sukiasyan 1978: 208.

the husband married knowing about it, divorce is excluded. Only with the wife's permission can the husband separate, provided he provides her with a house and necessary property. The age of the spouses must also be considered, and "...in all cases, the bishop must find a solution, for no one else has the right."²⁴ In this case, the condition is to wait seven years; if the wife no longer wishes to marry, the husband is obliged to return her dowry and provide for her throughout her life. Regarding male impotence, the law again proposes various solutions: if a man cannot fulfill his marital duty, "...it is not fitting for the wife to separate and leave him." Otherwise, she cannot remarry without proving through the church that the husband is incapable. If someone marries through deception, hiding sexual weakness, the wife may resolve the issue through the church, after which "...it is legal to give her half of the husband's property so she may go and take another husband for herself."²⁵

- **Sodomy and Bestiality:** These also grant the wife the right to divorce: "If the husband breaks his fidelity to his wife through sodomy with another, which is revealed, or if he engages in bestiality... he must be divorced by law and... receive half the dowry,"²⁶ while physical punishment—mutilation—is prescribed for the husband.
- **Renunciation of Faith:** Maintaining the Christian faith and common confession are among the most important conditions of family life. Spouses are punished for apostasy. An orthodox (faithful) wife can: a) divorce, or b) strive to "convert" her husband, for which she shall be rewarded. If the offender is the wife, the husband may divorce.
- **Wife's Lack of Cleanliness and Quarrelsomeness:** Smbat considers it a misfortune for a man to be married to an "incurably filthy" or unrestrained woman. In this case, he commands that witnesses be invited, and if the husband can no longer tolerate the wife's flaws or quarrelsomeness, he may grant a written divorce. Upon leaving, the wife has the right to take her dowry and remarry. The husband, however, cannot remarry as long as the wife is alive.
- **Slandering the Wife and Violence Against Her:** The law protects the dignity and safety of the wife from the husband's violence. Spreading unnecessary rumors about the wife and acts of violence—unjust beating or persecution—are prohibited.

It should be noted that the laws defined by Smbat Sparapet clearly bear the influence of the corresponding laws in M. Gosh's "Datastanagirk."²⁷

Smbat also interprets the rights and responsibilities of parents and children. He commands parents to care for their children. The father is obliged to educate his children, provide for them materially, and prepare them for independent living. Children

²⁴ Smbat Sparapet 2001: 613-614, Art. 116; see also: 605, Art. 84.

²⁵ Smbat Sparapet 2001: 611, Art. 102-103.

²⁶ Smbat Sparapet 2001: 605, Art. 85, p. 605.

²⁷ See: Mkhitar Gosh 2001, Art. 10-11, 14, 17-18, 28, 53, 111, 169, 172, 190, 192.

are obliged to obey their parents and care for them: “And that son who denies the father who fed and cared for him, and leaving him... goes to others, God and the law have cursed him more severely.”²⁸ Guardians are responsible for the suicide of relatives in a grave mental state. In such cases, the punishment must be decided based on the circumstances of the death. However, a parent is not responsible for the son’s crime: “If a son is sentenced to death by law, his father should not be imprisoned, nor his brother.”²⁹

The issues of children’s education and upbringing are not ignored in the “Datastanagirk.” Free education was established. Special care is required for orphans and the poor so that “...many of them may strive to go and study”; their needs must be cared for by monasteries. A student may give a gift to a poor teacher only of his own will; otherwise, the teacher will be appropriately punished by the court. Violence against students is prohibited. Just as a father, a teacher has no right to strike a child for the purpose of admonition: “If a master strikes a student during teaching in such a way that the latter dies, he is a murderer” and “...can no longer be a clergyman.”³⁰ Thus, the “Datastanagirk” protects children’s right to education and safety, commanding a humanitarian treatment toward them.

In the “Datastanagirk,” Smbat defined the order of property succession, which directly relates to family law. Inheritance law is a combination of legal norms regulating the succession of a deceased person’s property. In Armenia, inheritance law regulated marriage and family issues, property, divorce fines, dowries, the inheritance rights of daughters, and other fundamental matters.

The study of traditional Armenian inheritance law substantiates that principles of legal equality and division of labor, as well as the protection of the rights of women and children, operated within the Armenian family. Adult children had equal inheritance rights—unlike in Islamic legal conceptions, where inheritance rights differ significantly for daughters and sons. In feudal Armenia, not only the father but also the Armenian woman, as a subject of property rights, could pass both movable and immovable property to her children.

According to the “Datastanagirk,” inheritance is passed by will or by law. Smbat Sparapet viewed the right of the will as the dominant form of inheritance in Cilician Armenia. He defines the legal conditions for drafting a will. Every legally capable person has the right to make a will. The will is made orally or in writing, in the presence of a notary and witnesses. The law states: “As long as the sick person’s consciousness is fully present, let him call his acquaintances and the notary—or if in a village, the village priest—and in the presence of three witnesses, command an inventory of his property and, according to his will, decide what to give for the salvation of his soul and what to give to his heirs.”³¹

²⁸ Smbat Sparapet 2001: 616, Art. 121.

²⁹ Smbat Sparapet 2001: 617, Art. 124.

³⁰ Smbat Sparapet 2001: 576-577, Art. 29.

³¹ Smbat Sparapet 2001: 624, Art. 144.

If the sick person recovers, he is not bound by it, as a will has legal force only after death. However, the recovered person must unconditionally fulfill what was promised in the will; if he dies, the executors must carry out the requirements written in the will. Moreover, "...the will cannot be diminished; it is a vow before God—it must not be diminished."³²

When drafting a will, the "soul-portion" to be given to the church is emphasized: the dying person "...must first of all care for his church under which he belongs, where he was baptized, where his parish is, because that is a debt and it must be paid first to his priests. And after that, if other things remain, he may give to whom he wishes."³³ Furthermore, the priests must also donate a portion of what they receive to the church.

The testator's will is law for the heirs. A father has the right to bequeath his property not only to his heirs but also to a servant. He has the right to disinherit his disobedient sons and give the property to his servant by his own wish. In fact, a father can only disinherit disobedient and unworthy children, and even then, only if the secular authorities do not oppose the father's decision: "...the kings, who first wrote and established the laws, wrote them to respect the lord, so that it may be done with the lord's knowledge and consent."³⁴ Another article states: "...besides the lord and the church, no one can make a servant either an heir or a clergyman."³⁵ Apart from this partial restriction on the testator's rights regarding legal heirs, in all other cases, the law gives the testator full right to divide his property among the heirs at his discretion. In this sense, the will is law for the heirs, and no one has the right to make any correction or change to the provisions of the will.

It should be noted that inheritance by will played a significant role not only for Cilician Armenian society but also for the Royal House. The "Datastanagirk" defines that the king has the right to write a will whether in health or on his deathbed and "...give mountains and fields, and all his landed estates, to whomever he wishes; neither his son nor any other person has the right to oppose him."³⁶ Although heirs through the female line did not have equal rights to heirs through the male line, the father still had the right to leave any part of his property to his daughters by will.

Smbat also interprets the property rights of spouses. If the spouses are together and their entire property is undivided, the husband may also bequeath from the common property. However, if the wife's property is separate, it "...shall belong to her followers (heirs) whom she herself appoints as heirs." In the absence of children, everything must be decided by will. If the joint marital life is short-lived and there are no children, everything is returned to the wife, and the husband has no share in it. But if they had a child, the entire property belongs to the husband. In defining these legal

³² Smbat Sparapet 2001: 624, Art. 144.

³³ Smbat Sparapet 2001: 583, Art. 37.

³⁴ Smbat Sparapet 2001: 615, Art. 118.

³⁵ Smbat Sparapet 2001: 625, Art. 146.

³⁶ Smbat Sparapet 2001: 564, Art. 1.

norms, Smbat also considers national customary law, commanding: "...judges must carefully study the existing conditions and the customs of the land, and act accordingly to fill any deficiencies."³⁷

Thus, in each individual case of property division, the principles of Armenian customary law and regional traditions must be taken as a basis. Furthermore, as Kh. Samuelyan rightly observes: "Not every custom without exception can be a source of law, but only those customs that are applied and maintained in social coexistence as certain norms having mandatory significance."³⁸

In the absence of a will, inheritance is divided according to the law. The "Datastanagirk" establishes a unified order for both the nobility and other classes of society. According to the degree of kinship, heirs are classified in the following order:

1. Children
2. Brothers
3. Paternal uncles
4. Other male relatives up to the fourth generation.

"And the law commands that this order of inheritance on the father's side be preserved until the fourth generation."³⁹ A wife can be an heir if the testator has children by her. Female-line heirs include children and other blood relatives up to the fourth degree, and a husband can be an heir if he has a child from his marriage with the deceased wife.

Children are the first legal heirs whose presence excludes the rights of other heirs. Among children, preference is given to sons, who receive equal shares, except for the eldest and the youngest. The eldest son receives a double share because "...God Himself gave preference to the firstborn child, and it is fitting that he replace the father and receive two portions." If a brother sells his share, the brothers must "...divide it among themselves according to the price, so that one does not seize it, but they must do this with love."⁴⁰ It is evident that Smbat rejects both the absolute monopoly of the firstborn son and any violent actions by brothers when dividing inherited property.

The youngest son inherits the father's house. If brothers decide to separate from one another, they must first "...separate their wives' portion (marital gift) from their property and income, and then divide what belongs to them."⁴¹

According to the "Datastanagirk," a wife receives half of the share due to the husband, because "...the wife is considered half of the husband." Two unmarried girls receive as much as one boy, "...because two girls are considered as one boy."⁴² Meanwhile, two married girls receive the equivalent of one unmarried sister's share.

³⁷ Smbat Sparapet 2001: 624-625, Art. 145.

³⁸ Samuelyan 1939: 26.

³⁹ Smbat Sparapet 2001: Art. 118, p. 615. This article is consistent with the law defined by Mkhitar Gosh.

⁴⁰ Smbat Sparapet 2001: 616, Art. 120.

⁴¹ Smbat Sparapet 2001: 616, Art. 120.

⁴² Smbat Sparapet 2001: 614, Art. 118.

As an exception, only the king's married daughter receives half of a brother's share: "Regarding daughters, the established order is that they be wed into the houses of patriarchs, that is, married to a king, a prince, a marquis, and the like. And the girl must be given a dowry from the paternal property in the amount of half of a brother's share."⁴³ This rule also applies to the daughters of princes. If the king's sons are deceased, the throne is inherited by the sons' sons, not the daughters' sons. If the king has no son but a daughter, "...the father has the right to crown his daughter, but on the condition that after the daughter's death, the royal throne shall not be inherited by the sons of the crowned daughter, but by one of the sons of the king's brother, whom the loyal nobility seats on the throne as a royal descendant."⁴⁴

The king also has the right to write a will and give his estates to whomever he wishes; no person has the right to oppose him. If the king has no heir but only nephews (brother's sons), Smbat defines: "With the approval of the Patriarch, other representatives of the ecclesiastical authority, the princes, and the people, let them choose the worthiest among them and educate him in the palace (court), and whomever they deem worthy, let them raise him to the throne after the king's death, crowning him by the hand of the Patriarch."⁴⁵

In effect, according to the order of succession legalized by Smbat Sparapet in Cilician Armenia, the king's unilateral decision is excluded in the process of throne succession. Taking into account national-state interests, the issue is resolved on a collegial principle—that is, by the mutual agreement of the secular and spiritual authorities and the people.

Smbat also reinterprets the "House-Son-in-Law" system characteristic of ancient Armenian inheritance law,⁴⁶ which is by no means identical to matriarchy. The relationship existing between the son-in-law who lives in the bride's home and the wife has no connection to matriarchy and even contradicts it. In the legal understanding of this system, a daughter without brothers is the legally capable heir of her father. The application of this right in both Ancient Armenia and Cilicia had political significance in the sense of protecting the property of families without male offspring and preventing its division among outsiders. Through the inheritance rights of daughters, Smbat protected Armenian estates to prevent their alienation in the case of mixed marriages. It should be noted that the law regarding the *tnpesa* exists only in Smbat's "Datastanagirk"; it is not present in Canon law, the Code of David of Alavik, or the Datastanagirk of Mkhitar Gosh.

According to Smbat, if there is no son in the family and "...a house-son-in-law has been brought, in that case, the son-in-law, along with his wife, shall be counted in place of a son and must receive two sisters' portions from the movable and immovable property." The *tnpesa* can use the family property and multiply it, but he has no right to

⁴³ Smbat Sparapet 2001: 563, Art. 1.

⁴⁴ Smbat Sparapet 2001: 564, Art. 1.

⁴⁵ Smbat Sparapet 2001: 564, Art. 1.

⁴⁶ For the interpretation of Armenian inheritance law, see: Glitchyan 1913.

sell or gift it. The wife's property is inviolable. The Sparapet also explains that "...the legal inheritance of daughters will be in that form only if the father has not left a will,"⁴⁷ otherwise, everything must be done according to the father's will.

If the daughters have children, then the son-in-law or anyone not descended from the father's lineage, as well as the daughter's grandson, cannot be heirs because they are of a "foreign race" (lineage). The same applies to the maternal uncle and the sister's son. Paternal uncles and their sons also have no share in the daughters' inheritance if there is an unmarried daughter in the house. In the case of a married and separated daughter, the paternal uncle may receive a quarter share, but not his sons.

According to the law, this order of inheritance along the male (paternal) line must be preserved until the fourth generation; that is, if there are no sons, daughters, or grandchildren born of them, then the brothers, nephews, and their grandchildren up to the fourth generation become heirs. If there are no brothers, the paternal inheritance must be given to the paternal uncle and his sons, again up to the fourth generation. In the absence of blood relatives, the property is considered heirless and passes to the state treasury.

Smbat also defines the order of succession along the female (maternal) line, which is consistent with the male line. According to the Datastanagirk: "If a woman leaving an inheritance has a grandson from a son, and the father of that grandson is not alive, or if she has a grandson from a daughter and the mother is not alive, in that case, the grandchildren must inherit."⁴⁸ This does not contradict the earlier mention that a daughter's grandson cannot be an heir; it simply clarifies that if the parents of the grandchildren are alive, the parents are the heirs because "...they are closer to the inheritance." In the event of the death of grandchildren, the heir is the father, as the father is the undisputed heir of his sons just as sons are of the father, but this does not apply to the mother.

Thus, although according to the Datastanagirk male-line heirs have more rights than female-line heirs, the rights of women are not ignored. This is evidenced by the fact that in Cilician Armenia, women were gradually gaining inheritance rights equal to men.

Smbat Sparapet also addressed the issue of adoption. The law allows adoption if there are no children or relatives up to the fourth degree. Although the jurist defines only the right of a clergyman to adopt, one can infer the existence of the institution of adoption. The right of the adopted child ("soul-son") extends to the movable property of the adopter, but not to immovable property: "if the heir is not a kinsman but only an adoptee, he may be given only movable property by choice, while the house and ancestral estates belong to the church." However, if the adoptee is a dedicated clergyman from a priestly or other known lineage "...who is not an illegitimate child, he may legally receive half of the house and estate."⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Smbat Sparapet 2001, Art. 118.

⁴⁸ Smbat Sparapet 2001: 615-616, Art. 119.

⁴⁹ Smbat Sparapet 2001: 615-616, Art. 119.

In this way, based on the principle of the natural equality of humans, Smbat Sparapet considers it legal not to separate the rights of sons and daughters. At the same time, he distinguishes between the rights of division and the rights of preservation of inheritance. Daughters are heirs to paternal property, but they are not the preservers of the inheritance if they have brothers.

Conclusion

This article substantiates that in the 13th century, through Smbat Sparapet's "Datastanagirk," family relations in the Cilician Armenian state were regulated for the welfare of the Armenian family and the protection of national property. Basing his work on Armenian canon and customary law, as well as Mkhitar Gosh's "Armenian Datastanagirk," Smbat sought to maintain the stability of the Armenian family as the foundation of the state and prevent divorce. The regulation of family relations was subject to both secular-state and spiritual-ecclesiastical jurisdiction.

In numerous articles of the "Datastanagirk," violence against women and children and extramarital relations are condemned, and the personal and property rights of spouses are protected. The necessity of children's education is established, prescribing free schooling for poor and orphaned children.

Smbat Sparapet viewed the right of the will as the dominant form of inheritance in Cilician Armenia. In the absence of a will, inheritance was divided according to the law. A unified order was established for both the nobility and other classes, ensuring social harmony. The inheritance rights of Armenian girls are protected in the "Datastanagirk." The application of this law in Cilicia had a political purpose: to protect the property and ancestral estates of families without male heirs and to prevent their alienation in the case of mixed marriages.

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Translated from Armenian by Gevorg Harutyunyan

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

THE NORMALIZATION PROCESS OF ARMENIAN-TURKISH RELATIONS AND ITS IMPACT ON HOMELAND-DIASPORA RELATIONS (Contemporary Period)

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Abstract

In the article are discussed the normalization processes of Armenian-Turkish relations in the contemporary period. It presents in detail the attempts made to normalize these relations within the specified period. An effort is made to understand the real motives behind initiating the normalization process of Armenian-Turkish relations. Special attention is given to the impact of this process on Homeland-Diaspora relations. The article reveals the prevailing approaches in the Diaspora and mainly negative attitude toward these processes. It also outlines the reasons for certain tensions in Homeland-Diaspora relations. In particular, through specific examples, the article shows how the adversaries of the Armenian people attempted to drive a wedge between the Homeland and the Diaspora.

Keywords: Armenian-Turkish relations, normalization process, Homeland-Diaspora relations, Armenian Diaspora, preconditions, Pan-Armenian interests, counteraction

Homeland-Diaspora relations have always held a central place in the Pan-Armenian agenda. These relations became more active and gained greater opportunities for development after the collapse of the Soviet Union. With the removal of the “Iron Curtain”, there were no longer any obstacles preventing normal communication and the development of relations among all segments of the Armenian people.

It should be noted, however, that within Homeland-Diaspora relations there were several issues that were very sensitive and formed part of the Pan-Armenian agenda. Developments around these issues sometimes led to disagreements among certain circles on both sides. These issues mainly concern the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the policy regarding recognition of the Armenian Genocide, as well as Armenian-Turkish relations.

Following the 44-day war of 2020, a new phase of the Armenian-Turkish relations was launched at the end of 2021². Special representatives appointed by the two countries held several meetings aimed at improving bilateral relations.

However, this process has been met with deep concern across the Diaspora. Many hold the view that Armenia, given its weakened position and inability to fully

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² Bilateral Relations: Türkiye.

defend its national interests, may engage in negotiations leading to harmful concessions rather than a genuinely precondition-free dialogue. These fears are largely rooted in Armenia's fragile geopolitical situation following the devastating losses of the 2020 war, which left the country in a highly vulnerable state.

In mid-January 2022, a week after the first meeting between the special representatives of Yerevan and Ankara in Moscow, the Turkish newspaper “Hürriyet” reported that steps toward normalization had been welcomed by the Armenian community of Türkiye³. The initiative was commented on by Patriarch Sahak Mashalian of the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople and other community representatives. The newspaper cited several perspectives regarding this issue. Patriarch Mashalian emphasized that for the Turkish citizens who are loyal to the Armenian Apostolic Church it is important to improve relations and fostering mutual recognition and cooperation between the two peoples. Eduard Dantsikian, editor of the bilingual newspaper “Agos”, also expressed optimism regarding the reopening of borders between Armenia and Türkiye. The most striking statement came from the head of the Karagyozyan Foundation, who declared that Türkiye should henceforth support Armenia in every possible way and act as its “elder brother”⁴.

According to the publication, while some members of the Turkish-Armenian community were already defining roles in “brotherly relations”⁵, circles oriented toward the Cilician Patriarchate remained cautious and were dissatisfied that Yerevan neglects them.

Earlier, in December 2021, the leader of the Armenian Catholic Church, Patriarch Raphael Bedros XXI Minassian, had also expressed his views on the process. While generally supportive of normalization, he underscored the importance of ensuring that any peace agreement between Yerevan and Ankara had to be signed without preconditions⁶.

On April 14, 2022, the Bureau of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF), one of the most influential organizations in the Diaspora, issued a statement expressing its serious concerns regarding both the Armenian-Turkish normalization and the Nagorno-Karabakh settlement processes. The Bureau noted that official Ankara had not abandoned its well-known three preconditions for establishing relations with Armenia—namely, Armenia's renunciation of support for international recognition of the Armenian Genocide, Artsakh's subordination to Azerbaijan, and the legal confirmation of the existing *de facto* border between Armenia and Türkiye. Moreover, a fourth precondition had been added—the so-called “Zangezur Corridor.” Moreover, the statements of representatives of the highest Turkish authorities on the comparison of the process of the settlement of Armenia-Türkiye relations with Azerbaijan prove that this is not about

³ Yerkramas 2022, January 24.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

Armenia–Türkiye interstate negotiations, but about a new concession being forced on Armenia by a hostile tandem⁷.

From the very beginning, this latest normalization process has been inherently unhealthy and extremely dangerous. It is being done in an international political and security situation created around the Republic of Armenia, when the government that had led country to defeat, for objective and subjective reasons, lacks the ability to effectively protect the vital interests of the Armenian people. It is obvious that under the current circumstances, the normalization process is fraught with numerous geopolitical, security, political, economic, and spiritual-cultural challenges and will inevitably lead to irreversible, dangerous consequences and loss of sovereignty⁸.

The ARF Bureau, in its statement, demanded that the Armenian authorities immediately disclose the guiding principles of the Armenia–Türkiye normalization process, explicitly and entirely reject the Turkish preconditions, and emphasize, as a matter of political principle, that the normalization of interstate relations between Armenia and Türkiye cannot, under any circumstances, be linked to any third party.

The normalization of Armenia–Türkiye relations and the determination of the rights of the Armenian people cannot be the monopoly of any single government. The establishment of Armenian–Turkish relations can only be achieved through the unity and consensus of the Armenian people worldwide, without Turkish preconditions and without violating the rights of future generations⁹.

In July 2022, the editorial of “Paykar”, the official weekly publication of the Ramgavar Azatakan Party in the United States, reflected the Diaspora’s prevailing view that the slow progress of the negotiations was due to Türkiye’s preconditions¹⁰. It was evident that those talks could not yield tangible results so long as Armenia had not yet committed to signing a humiliating “peace treaty” with Azerbaijan. Moreover, it suggested that even after such a treaty, Ankara would advance its own political agenda and expect Armenia to accommodate it, exploiting the country’s weakened state. That agenda would inevitably include the re-affirmation of the 1921 Treaty of Kars by Armenia, thereby solidifying the current Armenia–Türkiye border. The struggle for the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide had already been left to the Diaspora. However, Türkiye would not stop there—it would also insist that the Armenian authorities restrain the Diaspora’s political activism concerning the Genocide, a move that would inevitably drive a wedge between Armenians in Armenia and the Diaspora¹¹.

The editorial recalled that during the many years when Armenia was under blockade, Türkiye’s sole condition had been the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh issue in favor of Azerbaijan. Now that this condition has effectively been met, the border

⁷ Aztag 2021, December 27.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Payqar 2022, July 10.

¹¹ Ibid.

remains closed, while Ankara presents new demands, despite its claims of participating in “talks without preconditions.” It is evident that Türkiye continues to negotiate on the basis of preconditions, consulting every step with Azerbaijan’s authorities and imposing extremely harsh terms. In essence, Türkiye is either negotiating or merely pretending to negotiate in order to extract further concessions from Armenia¹².

In September 24-27, 2022, the Social Democratic Hunchakian Party (SDHP) held its Congress in Yerevan that coincides with the 135th anniversary of its founding¹³. More than seventy delegates representing party organizations from Armenia and fourteen other countries discussed the current challenges facing the Armenian nation, as well as issues related to the internal life of the party.

Addressing the topic of Armenia–Türkiye relations, the Congress assessed the ongoing negotiation process between the two countries in a generally positive light. It underscored the importance of establishing normal and predictable relations between two neighboring and sovereign states, provided that negotiations are conducted without preconditions. As an act of goodwill, the Congress called on Türkiye to first re-open the border it had closed. At the same time, it emphasized that the negotiation process must by no means imply a renunciation of the Armenian people’s legitimate demands toward Türkiye, and that this issue can never become a subject of political bargaining¹⁴.

According to Mourad Papazian, President of the Coordinating Council of Armenian Organizations of France, the Diaspora has historically opposed the normalization of Armenian–Turkish relations. In his view, it is evident that Armenia is not prepared for a process led by Türkiye¹⁵. “Today, the defeated Armenia is unfortunately incapable of signing any agreement with Türkiye or Azerbaijan, because under current conditions any document drafted by them will inevitably turn against us—since they hold the pen, while Armenia, regrettably, does not,” he stated. This is precisely why the Diaspora, and particularly the Armenian community in France, opposes the ongoing developments.

That is why Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Mevlut Çavuşoğlu is again worried about the Armenian Diaspora. This time he is concerned about the activities of the Armenian community in France, which, according to him, hinders the process of normalizing relations between Armenia and Türkiye and Azerbaijan.

Most likely, according to Papazian, the start of Armenian-Turkish relations may be related to the ban on entry into Armenia, since they have been against the normalization of relations with preconditions since 2009 and have not changed their position in this regard, which is not well regarded by the authorities, since the latter are not only for it, but also positively relate to all of it. We should not forget the statement made by Turkish

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Statement of the SDHP 22nd Congress.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Turkish leaders have realized that Pashinyan is already in their pocket, and now the problem is the Diaspora.

Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu that the main culprit in the delay in the normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations is the Diaspora¹⁶.

The decision to resume the normalization process should not have been made hastily or unilaterally, as was the case. Such a critical and highly sensitive issue bears national and Pan-Armenian significance. Therefore, before initiating the process, a broad Pan-Armenian discussion should have taken place, followed by a collective decision on whether or not to proceed.

Armenia entered the talks from a position of weakness, which could naturally result in further concessions. Instead, Armenia should use the Diaspora's influence and resources as a strong card to overcome its current difficulties. Papazian clarified that the Diaspora doesn't categorically reject the normalization of relations with Türkiye, as is sometimes assumed. However, such normalization must take place on a reciprocal basis and without preconditions. The Turkish side, however, has ignored this principle, imposing its own preconditions, which Armenia has surprisingly accepted, thereby placing itself in an extremely vulnerable position. It is precisely this approach and haste, that are being rejected¹⁷. Armenia is simply not yet ready to appear at the negotiating table from a position of strength.

His Holiness Aram I, Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia, also expressed concern about the recent developments in Armenia–Türkiye relations, particularly regarding the ongoing negotiations and the entry ban imposed on ARF Bureau member Mourad Papazian¹⁸. He warned that such developments could have adverse consequences, especially for Armenia–Diaspora relations, and called for transparent and comprehensive information to be provided to the public¹⁹.

With regret, Catholicos Aram I observed that current Armenia–Diaspora relations are, in essence, stagnating and require revitalization, particularly amid the uncertainty and disillusionment that have prevailed since the 44-day war²⁰. Meanwhile, Ibrahim Kalın, spokesperson and senior adviser to the President of Türkiye, also commented on the normalization process, criticizing the Armenian Diaspora and claiming that the benefits of Armenian–Turkish normalization would be “understood last” by the Armenian communities in the United States and France, which he referred to as the largest Armenian communities in the world. Recently, similar rhetoric has become increasingly frequent in the statements of Turkish and Azerbaijani officials, who attempt to portray the Armenian Diaspora as acting against Armenia's national interests²¹.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ “The Armenia–Türkiye Negotiations and the Ban on Mourad Papazian's Entry to Armenia Are Concerning,” Says Aram I.

¹⁹ “The Armenia–Türkiye Negotiations and the Ban on Mourad Papazian's Entry to Armenia Are Concerning,” Says Aram I. 16.07. 2022.

²⁰ Yerkramas 2022, January 24.

²¹ Is the Armenian Diaspora the Nightmare of Turkish Statesmen? Kantsasar, 11.11. 2022.

Within the Diaspora, there is a prevailing belief that although Türkiye may not explicitly mention the Armenian Genocide in the framework of normalization, its political strategy nonetheless seeks to eliminate any possibility of addressing or acknowledging the issue. To achieve this, Türkiye aims to set Armenia's interests against those of the organized Diaspora communities, exploiting every possible means to create divisions within Armenia–Diaspora relations. Every opportunity will be used to criticize the Diaspora and to weaken its ties with Armenia²².

The organized Armenian Diaspora has become a principal target of Turkish and Azerbaijani state officials, as they are well aware that a strong and united Diaspora serves as the most vocal advocate against Turkish–Azerbaijani aggression. The Diaspora continues to be the bearer and witness of the consequences of the Armenian Genocide, and is the one that supports Armenia with its economic and political capabilities.

The decision to hold a World Summit in Yerevan (October 28–31, 2022) without inviting long-established Diaspora organizations that have sustained the existence of Armenian communities abroad for over a century, and, moreover, to restrict the entry of Diaspora Armenians into Armenia, has caused serious concern. Many in the Diaspora have begun to question whether the defense of Pan-Armenian interests become unrealistic or secondary for the current authorities in Armenia²³.

There is also a growing perception that these developments are occurring under Turkish–Azerbaijani pressure and under the guise of “Armenian–Turkish normalization.” This once again reinforces the widespread belief that such a process may carry grave and costly consequences for the entire Armenian nation.

According to Hakob Ter-Khachaturian, a representative of the ARF Bureau, the war of Autumn 2020 brought about an immense national shock. The resulting despair and disappointment created, to some extent, a rupture between the Homeland and the Diaspora. It is necessary to close the gap that has arisen between the homeland and the Diaspora²⁴.

In Ter-Khachaturian's view, it was a strategic mistake for the Prime Minister of Armenia to open an additional front of negotiations with Türkiye during such a turbulent period, when the country continues to face severe security threats and unresolved issues with Azerbaijan. All of this occurs under the misleading narrative of promoting “regional peace,” even though Armenia's adversaries have by no means renounced their aggressive ambitions or their predatory behavior toward Armenia.

Türkiye has closed the Armenia–Türkiye border and can open it without any preconditions. Any concessions or preconditions from Armenia are unacceptable. Yet in reality, the situation is quite the opposite: Türkiye has already advanced numerous

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ More than ever, a solid Pan-Armenian unity based on national ideology is necessary, Kantsasar Weekly, 22.11.2022.

preconditions, linking normalization with Armenia to the fulfillment of Azerbaijan's demands. In any case, Armenia must prepare the necessary legislative framework that will allow it to prevent a possible Turkish invasion if the borders are opened one day²⁵.

As we can observe, the dominant attitudes within the Diaspora toward the normalization of Armenian–Turkish relations are largely negative. However, this does not mean that the Diaspora rejects the idea of normalization. The problem is that the Diaspora wants Armenian-Turkish relations to be normalized without preconditions. The Diaspora strongly opposes any outcome that could lead to painful national losses for Armenia or the wider Armenian world and rejects the inclusion of Pan-Armenian issues of vital significance within the agenda of Armenian-Turkish negotiations.

It is certainly not possible to present all the viewpoints on the current situation. However, the approaches presented almost entirely reflect the moods that exist in the Diaspora regarding the process of normalizing Armenian-Turkish relations at the current stage.

If we attempt to compare this normalization process with the most active previous attempt at establishing relations, the so-called “football diplomacy”, we can observe that Armenia at that time was in a far more advantageous position and had significantly greater opportunities. Although the 2009 protocols were subject to sharp criticism, especially from the Diaspora, they nevertheless contained certain positive elements. In particular, the initiated process began to unsettle Azerbaijan, and some tensions emerged between it and the Republic of Türkiye. In contrast, today Armenia's opportunities at the negotiating table are extremely limited, and the country is facing serious challenges, as Azerbaijan and Türkiye are now acting jointly against Armenia. If previously we had a unified Armenia–Artsakh–Diaspora triad that largely managed to act with a common front against shared adversaries and withstand difficulties and challenges, today the Republic of Artsakh practically no longer exists, and relations between the Republic of Armenia and the Diaspora are not at a desirable level. If we also take into account the losses suffered during the war and the grave situation Armenia currently finds itself in, we can better understand why our positions at the negotiation table are so weak, and why the Diaspora criticizes the authorities of the Homeland for initiating the Armenian-Turkish process under such circumstances. At the same time, it should be acknowledged that under such conditions, the Armenian authorities are not always able to withstand external pressure. Otherwise, it is possible that rejecting negotiations and the normalization process might have led to another war, the consequences of which could have been even more disastrous. For this reason, fully understanding and sharing the concerns and apprehensions present within the Diaspora, the prerequisites for the initiation of the negotiation process are also understandable. It may be aimed at gaining time and prolonging the process until a

²⁵ More than ever, a solid Pan-Armenian unity based on national ideology is necessary, 19.11.2022.

moment when it will be possible to overcome the current difficult situation through joint efforts and to act from more favorable positions collectively.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be stated that the process of normalizing Armenian-Turkish relations has had a profound impact on Homeland–Diaspora relations and hinders their smooth development. This has considerably weakened the Armenian nation, preventing it from acting as a united front against common adversaries and from effectively addressing existing challenges. We can also observe that the opposing side, through its political strategy, is deliberately attempting to create divisions within Homeland–Diaspora relations, manifestations of which can be seen from time to time. In fact, we are witnessing a situation in which, as the process of Armenian-Turkish normalization develops, certain complications and problems simultaneously emerge in Homeland–Diaspora relations. The more progress is made in the first process, the more complex the situation becomes in the second.

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ECONOMICS

MARKETING OF GASTRONOMIC TOURISM IN ARMENIA WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Harutyun Grigoryan¹

Abstract

To clarify the development trends of gastronomic tourism in Armenia, digital marketing strategies and PR tools were examined. Through a quantitative analysis of the opportunities and threats facing Armenia's gastronomic tourism sector, it was demonstrated that the country possesses significant potential, as reflected in the ratio between the overall scores of its strengths and weaknesses. The sector is supported by a competitive foundation, including rich culinary heritage, high-quality raw materials, and longstanding winemaking traditions. The high score assigned to opportunities further indicates the strong growth potential of gastronomic tourism, particularly due to increasing international interest, digital promotion, and rising demand for organic food products. The identified threats are comparatively less significant, suggesting that external risks are driven mainly by demographic and political factors that remain manageable.

Keywords: gastronomic tourism, digital marketing, territorial marketing, tourist, service.

Introduction

Armenia is a relatively new participant in the global tourism industry; however, the tourism sector possesses significant potential and may create unique opportunities for the country's economic development.

Marketing in the tourism sector requires a thorough understanding of urgent market demands and current trends, the alignment of tourism product offerings with the volume and structure of demand, the development of pricing and pricing strategies, the selection of distribution platforms, the application of effective tourism promotion tools, as well as the forecasting of seasonal sales opportunities.

The tourism market consists of a network of diverse segments that include specific groups of consumers characterized by their preferences, expectations, demands, and motivations. Therefore, the tourism market may be differentiated into numerous categories of tourism for the purpose of developing appropriate marketing strategies.

In studies devoted to tourism, when referring to its various forms, including historical-cultural tourism, health tourism, sports tourism, commercial tourism, industrial tourism, nature tourism, and ecotourism², gastronomic tourism, which constitutes the

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² Musliha 2022: 132.

subject of the present article, is generally not addressed. In this article, the aforementioned concept of digital marketing will be examined in order to present the issues related to the development of gastronomic tourism in Armenia.

The development of gastronomic tourism is influenced by a number of positive and negative factors. The positive factors include:

- 1) the enhancement of the competitiveness of gastronomic products and the region's competitive potential,
- 2) benefits for local farmers and food producers, as well as for small business owners operating in the hospitality sector and related industries,
- 3) advantages for settlements that lack other significant tourism resources and attractions,
- 4) the improvement of the living standards of the local population, the creation of additional employment opportunities, the increase of revenues within the local economy, and the preservation of natural and cultural heritage.

The factors hindering the development of gastronomic tourism include:

- 1) the absence or insufficiency of experience among local tour operators in the organization and promotion of gastronomic tours,
- 2) the low quality of services provided to tourists within tourism establishments,
- 3) the inadequate development of tourism infrastructure in settlements,
- 4) the high cost of culinary tours³.

Types of Gastronomic Events	Organizers
Festival	Non-governmental organizations
	Food service establishments
Tour	Tour operators
Excursion	
Master classes	Food service establishments
	Development centers
	Culinary studios
	Non-governmental organizations
Tasting	Food service establishments
Gastronomic dinner	
Culinary quest	Culinary studios

1. Transition from Traditional to Digital Marketing

The most important tool for the promotion of gastronomic tourism services, marketing, has today transformed into digital marketing. Digital marketing first gained recognition in the early 1990s and, beginning in 2014, started to become one of the principal strategies widely applied in the business world. Since then, companies seeking

³ Khesina 2020: 18–24.

to remain competitive and achieve success in the market have been compelled to reconsider their customer engagement technologies and transition from traditional forms of marketing to digital marketing.

Digital marketing refers to the analysis and promotion of products and services through digital channels. The principal difference between digital and traditional marketing lies in the fact that digital marketing campaigns are implemented exclusively through digital channels, thereby providing marketers with greater control, a wider range of tools, and more extensive data for analyzing the effectiveness of marketing campaigns⁴.

The application of digital technologies significantly increases competition in the national and international tourism services market. However, at the same time, the condition must be satisfied that old methods of service promotion should lose their significance. The creation of effective technologies for the processing and use of information should increase efficiency, but only if traditional methods “yield their positions.”

Agreeing with the necessity of replacing outdated technologies for working with information, it should be noted that only the existence of competition in the market stimulates market participants to seek and find new, more modern, and effective methods of conducting business, which ultimately ensure the development of the economy in general. Moreover, digital marketing is more accessible than traditional marketing.

The application of digital marketing may yield tangible results in the field of tourism, and particularly in gastronomic tourism. It has become a necessity, as the present generation frequently relies on it, both consciously and unconsciously.

Tour operator services, airline tickets or tickets for other forms of transportation, hotel reservations through websites or by telephone—all of these are independently purchased and arranged by the majority of travelers. Consequently, there are no significant obstacles to the application of digital technologies within the tourism sector. Tourism companies utilize digital technologies, including online sales systems, booking platforms, GIS systems, blockchain technologies, and other digital tools.

Through these technologies, tour operators present tourists with traditional and regional dishes, the rituals and beliefs associated with them, methods of preparation, as well as the territorial and seasonal diversity involved in obtaining ingredients. Digital marketing has become one of the principal instruments of gastronomic tourism strategy. For its effective application, the following factors are important:

1. the selection of a target market, which will help focus on the market segment interested in Armenian gastronomy,
2. maintaining continuous awareness of technological innovations and developments in order to utilize all possible forms of product presentation,

⁴ See Tyshchuk and Ilyina 2023: 38–49; Awad and Alharthi 2025: 14–26.

3. ensuring distinctive content in terms of design and style,
4. maintaining an active and effective online presence.

1.1 Digital Marketing and the Development of Tourism Personnel Capacities

The issue of personnel training is particularly significant in organizations operating within the service and tourism sectors.

It cannot be stated that insufficient importance is attached to personnel training in the tourism sector or that no investments are made in this sphere of tourism company operations. Training programs are conducted both at the local level and abroad. Nevertheless, it should be noted that it is often very difficult to cultivate genuine interest in the needs of customers within the tourism services sector. A customer-oriented approach, however, constitutes a fundamental principle of the modern concept of services marketing, directing organizations toward the provision of the highest quality services, the establishment of long-term partnerships with customers, and the maximization of managerial flexibility.

Scientific and technological progress, the development of information and communication technologies, and the implementation of digitalization all lead to the necessity for a higher level of personnel education and training. The introduction of advanced technologies requires the provision of higher-quality tourism services by more knowledgeable personnel. In practice, personnel constitute the primary implementers of digital marketing, as it is through them that communication with customers is maintained and the effective use of social networks is ensured⁵.

Trained personnel implement digital marketing strategies, including digital campaign planning, market analytics, and ethical tourism management, while simultaneously building strong foundations in leadership and business operations. The distinctive feature of personnel organizing gastronomic tourism lies in their knowledge of local cuisine in both synchronic and diachronic dimensions. The historical-cultural context and digital marketing, as well as their successful integration, constitute some of the most important competencies of contemporary organizers of gastronomic tourism.

1.2 Digital Territorial Marketing

Digital technologies have found broad application in territorial marketing, creating numerous new opportunities for its development. The purpose of this form of marketing is to increase the recognition of a territory's brand, promote the territory, ensure the growth of its competitiveness through the attraction of additional investments, develop domestic and inbound tourism, increase the export of goods and services produced within the territory, expand the territory's participation in the implementation of international and regional programs, and consequently maximize the satisfaction of the needs and demands of the population.

⁵ Berenyte 2021: 147-153; Flint 2025: 143-150.

At present, territorial promotion is carried out through both traditional (offline) tools—such as advertising, public relations activities, including through various media channels, as well as the organization of and participation in cultural, sports, and business events—and rapidly developing digital (online) tools, including social media marketing (SMM) and blogs, internet forums, video advertising, search engine marketing (SEM), search engine optimization (SEO), digital content marketing, email marketing, press releases in online media, mobile applications, crowdsourcing platforms, and others.

The success of digital marketing depends on the rapid consideration of emerging trends in the tourism sector, including:

- 1) the growth in the volume of information and the use of large-scale databases (Big Data), which makes it possible to encompass a significant number of potential consumers;
- 2) the increasing personalization and concentration of marketing, including advertising targeting through the segmentation of target audiences, the identification of those segments corresponding to specified criteria, and the creation and implementation of advertising campaigns specifically designed for them;
- 3) the development of content and advertising across various digital platforms (Instagram, Facebook, and others), due to the growing share of internet traffic in comparison with television, which enables the attraction of new users and the utilization of the opportunities provided by social media;
- 4) the leading role of video marketing within the digital environment.

2. Marketing Policy of Gastronomic Tourism in Armenia Based on Enotourism Data

Armenia has identified the promotion of wine and gastronomic tourism as one of its priorities. Within this framework, various thematic events are organized, including the UN International Conference on Wine Tourism, held on September 11–13, 2024, “Yerevan Wine Days,” the “Dilijan Wine Festival,” and “Yerevan Cocktail Week,” among others. In parallel, favorable conditions are being created for the development of gastronomy and the restaurant business.

2.1 Enotourism

Wine tourism, which is also known as enotourism⁶ (from the Greek word *oinos* meaning “wine”), occupies a significant place within gastronomic tourism and has become an important and rapidly developing sector of global tourism since the beginning of the 21st century.

⁶ The term “enotourism [enozbosashrjutyun]” is a newly coined concept in the Armenian language, for which the equivalent expression “wine tourism” is also used; see Mkrtumyan 2023: 43–66.

This is due to the possibility of combining natural elements with traditions and folklore, as well as to the development of local entrepreneurship, which leads to the sustainable use of land and the increase of incomes among the rural population. The economic significance of wine tourism is conditioned by the necessity of employing a larger number of people in the sectors of viticulture and winemaking, as well as in the distribution and sale of wine.

Wine tourism is particularly important in rural areas located far from major urban centers and characterized by a low level of socio-economic development. Wine production and the related sphere of wine tourism may contribute to the creation of new jobs, reduce youth outmigration, and increase rural incomes⁷.

In recent years, wine tourism in Armenia has begun to develop actively. This sector is becoming increasingly important for both local producers and tourists. People travel to Armenia specifically to become acquainted with its wine culture; they seek not only to taste wine, but also to see vineyards, communicate with winemakers, and visit each wine-producing region.

Winemakers themselves demonstrate considerable initiative and creativity. They organize festivals, vineyard dinners, musical evenings, tasting tours, and various related events through which every visitor may discover something new. As the global market has become increasingly saturated with standard flavors, consumers are showing growing interest in trying new products, discovering lesser-known regions, and exploring distinctive styles.

In this respect, Armenia is becoming progressively more attractive. Armenia possesses indigenous grape varieties such as *Areni*, *Voskehat*, *Kharji*, *Garandmak*, and *Kakhet*, each of which reflects the characteristics of the land, climate, history, and culture from which it originates.

These are the wines that generate the greatest interest among international sommeliers, wine critics, and consumers. They are unique wines distinguished by depth of flavor and excellent aging potential. Owing to its unique grape varieties and longstanding traditions, Armenia possesses all the prerequisites necessary to occupy its rightful place on the global wine map.

Armenian wine tourism is not merely a form of excursion tourism, but rather a living experience and an opportunity to discover the country through its land, flavors, traditions, and people. Wine festivals serve as bridges between winemakers and consumers, providing an opportunity not only to taste wines, but also to hear their stories and meet the individuals who create them. Such events bring wine closer to people and create an atmosphere of open dialogue in which individuals may communicate, acquire new knowledge, and discover different flavors and regions. This is particularly important for young wineries and small producers, for whom such

⁷ Jezierska-Thöle; Gonia; Podgórski and Gwiaździńska-Goraj 2025.

platforms provide greater opportunities for self-presentation and for identifying their consumers.

The Areni Wine Festival possesses particular significance. First, it takes place in one of Armenia's principal winemaking regions. Second, winemakers present their wines within the context of nature, traditions, and local cultural identity. This creates a unique connection between terroir and the glass.

Festivals play an important role in the development of wine tourism by attracting not only local visitors, but also an increasing number of foreign tourists. They provide an excellent opportunity to present Armenia as a country with a rich wine history and a dynamic contemporary wine industry. Such events should be supported and further developed, particularly in the regions where wine production originates.

However, there are also existing challenges related to the development of wine tourism in Armenia. It is necessary to develop a wine tourism development program in order to organize cooperation with stakeholders in a more systematic manner. Correspondingly, there is a need to develop wine tourism maps in order to increase the visibility and accessibility of the locations where wine festivals are held. It should be noted that, at present, wine festivals are conducted primarily in Areni and Yerevan. There is also a need to increase the number of such festivals.

The development of wine tourism also requires addressing branding-related issues. The internationalization of the brand should contribute to solving the following key objectives: increasing sales volumes, enhancing profitability, and improving brand recognition. The development of gastronomic tourism in particular regions of the country is based on the cultivation of specific grape varieties, including *Areni*, *Lalvar*, *Kangun*, and *Voskehat*.

Wine and wine-based products have always held significant importance for Armenia. In regional markets, the Armenian wine brand is recognizable to consumers. Armenian wine remains in demand among consumers in regional markets due to its distinctive qualitative characteristics, as well as the strong reputation established during the Soviet period. It is necessary to develop appropriate state support programs for the proper cultivation of vineyards of these grape varieties, as well as for the development of winemaking based on traditional methods, such as the use of *karas* winemaking techniques.

Armenian wine has a need for market diversification. The Government of the Republic of Armenia and various state agencies have developed and implemented a number of measures aimed at ensuring the international recognition of Armenian wine. In particular, the Vine and Wine Foundation of Armenia, established by the Government of the Republic of Armenia, carries out activities directed toward increasing the competitiveness of Armenian wine in international markets. With state support, Armenian winemakers participate in prestigious international exhibitions held in Moscow, Shanghai, Prague, Madrid, and other cities. Nevertheless, Armenia's level of recognition in the international market remains relatively low and, consequently, cannot

support the formation of international branding for wine-producing commercial organizations to the same extent as countries such as Spain, Italy, France, Greece, and the United States. For this reason, the coordinated efforts of various state institutions aimed at enhancing the country's international reputation are of particular importance⁸.

Each bottle of Armenian wine represents a unique "visiting card" of Armenia. Armenia is a land of grapevines and a cradle of winemaking. Armenian wine is not merely a beverage; it is history, land, and traditions expressed through taste.

Wine tourism serves as a cultural bridge between traditions and the modern world and is expected to play an important role in the sustainable development of rural areas and in strengthening Armenia's international image as a winemaking country. In addition, the sector has become more open to the world. Armenian producers participate in international exhibitions, organize tastings and wine tours, and cooperate with critics, sommeliers, and journalists. Armenian wine is gradually becoming recognized and appreciated not as an exotic product, but as a constituent part of the global wine map.

The application of artificial intelligence is also of particular importance in the development of gastronomic tourism. The artificial intelligence-powered tool *Travelinsights* contributes to the development of Armenia's growing tourism sector by collecting and analyzing, in real time, reviews concerning various services from popular online platforms. *Travelinsights* functions as a platform for businesses, including restaurants, hotels, and museums, seeking to monitor key trends in the tourism sector and improve the quality of their services⁹.

Today, QR codes are becoming an integral tool in marketing, enabling brands to connect with consumers at a new and modern level. One of the principal advantages of using QR codes in marketing is their ability to link offline and online channels. By placing QR codes on product packaging, advertising materials, or display windows, companies can direct consumers to their websites or special offers, thereby increasing the level of customer interaction. For example, links to social media platforms, including videos and reviews, strengthen the connection between brands and customers.

In the context of increasing competition, the use of QR codes not only attracts attention, but also creates a unique user experience, which ultimately contributes to the growth of customer loyalty and sales. In addition, QR codes make it possible to collect data regarding consumer preferences, which significantly contributes to the further targeting of advertisements.

Brands are able to monitor code usage data in order to analyze consumer behavior and adapt their strategies accordingly. Such analysis allows companies to improve marketing campaigns and enhance their effectiveness. QR codes also provide opportunities for content personalization, which has become one of the most important elements of contemporary marketing strategies.

⁸ Iskajyan 2023: 94-105.

⁹ Travelinsights, <https://www.travelinsights.am/>

At the same time, there are a number of challenges associated with the use of QR codes. The first challenge is the lack of awareness among target audiences. Many consumers still do not know how to properly scan QR codes or do not understand why such actions are necessary. To address this issue, companies should conduct educational campaigns and include explanatory information within their promotional materials. The second challenge is the low level of consumer trust toward QR codes¹⁰.

Tourists are becoming increasingly educated, experienced, knowledgeable, and demanding with regard to the quality of services and offerings. Consequently, within the changing environment of the tourism business, marketing knowledge and skills are becoming increasingly essential for long-term survival and growth.

3. SWOT¹¹ analysis

A combined qualitative and quantitative was conducted SWOT analysis to assess the current state of development of the gastronomic tourism market in the Republic of Armenia and to identify the existing opportunities and threats affecting the sector.

To ensure the scientific reliability and objectivity of the methodology, the Internal Factor Evaluation (IFE) and External Factor Evaluation (EFE) matrix models proposed by Fred R. David were applied.

According to David's model, the total weighted score of both the internal and external matrices ranges from 1.0 to 4.0, with 2.5 serving as the benchmark value. A score above 2.5 in the IFE matrix indicates a strong internal position, whereas a score below 2.5 reflects internal weaknesses. Similarly, an EFE score above 2.5 suggests that the sector effectively responds to external opportunities while mitigating potential threats.

Following David's methodology, a weighting process (W) was conducted. Each factor was assigned a relative weight ranging from 0.0 (not important) to 1.0 (extremely important), depending on its degree of influence on the sector. The sum of all factor weights within each matrix equals 1.0 ($\Sigma W = 1.0$).

A rating score (R) was subsequently assigned to each factor:

For the Internal Factor Evaluation (IFE) matrix:

- 4 = major strength;
- 3 = minor strength;
- 2 = minor weakness;
- 1 = major weakness.

For the External Factor Evaluation (EFE) matrix:

- 4 = superior response;
- 3 = above-average response;
- 2 = average response;
- 1 = poor response.

¹⁰ How to Use QR Codes for Marketing Strategy and Advertising [Electronic resource]. Available at [[Как использовать QR-коды для маркетинговой стратегии и рекламы на мобильных устройствах: 8 идей • BYDD](#)] (30.11.2025).

¹¹ Puyt, Lie, De Graaf, Wilderom s2023.

The weighted score (AW) for each factor was calculated using the following formula:

$$AW = W \times R$$

The sum of the weighted scores constitutes the final matrix score. Analysis of the internal environment makes it possible to assess the extent to which the competitive advantages of Armenian gastronomy outweigh its structural weaknesses.

Table 1. Internal Factor Evaluation (IFE) Matrix

No.	Strengths	Weight (W)	Rating (R)	Weighted Score (AW)
1	Rich culinary heritage and centuries-old traditions	0.09	4	0.36
2	Environmentally friendly and high-quality local agricultural products	0.08	4	0.32
3	Dynamic development of the wine industry and international recognition	0.07	4	0.28
4	High frequency of gastronomic festivals (Wine Days, Barbecue Festival, etc.)	0.06	3	0.18
5	Strong culture and tradition of hospitality	0.05	4	0.20
6	Potential of the Armenian diaspora and international presence of Armenian cuisine	0.05	3	0.15
No.	Weaknesses	Weight (W)	Rating (R)	Weighted Score (AW)
7	Uneven distribution of tourism infrastructure (concentration in Yerevan)	0.09	1	0.09
8	Weak international branding of Armenian gastronomic assets	0.08	1	0.08
9	Low quality of services and hospitality in the regions	0.08	2	0.16
10	Lack of well-structured gastronomic tourism packages	0.07	2	0.14
11	Absence of a unified sectoral marketing strategy	0.07	1	0.07
12	Insufficient targeted public investment and subsidies	0.06	1	0.06
13	Shortage of specialized professionals (gastro-guides, sommeliers)	0.05	2	0.10
14	Underestimation of the sector by local self-government bodies	0.05	2	0.10
	Total	1.00	-	2.29

Based on the internal factor analysis, the calculated total weighted score is 2.29. As this value is below the equilibrium benchmark of 2.5 established by Fred R. David, it indicates that the internal weaknesses of Armenia's gastronomic tourism sector outweigh its strengths. Although the sector possesses exceptional natural and cultural assets, including a rich culinary heritage and centuries-old traditions, environmentally friendly and high-quality local agricultural products, as well as the dynamic development and international recognition of the wine industry (all rated at 4 points), structural challenges limit its ability to fully capitalize on these advantages. In particular, the absence of a coordinated marketing strategy and the uneven distribution of tourism infrastructure significantly constrain the sector's development potential.

The analysis of the external environment, in turn, provides insight into the extent to which the current system is prepared to capitalize on global trends and opportunities while effectively responding to geopolitical uncertainties and increasing competitive pressures.

Table 2. External Factor Evaluation (EFE) Matrix

No.	Opportunities	Weight (W)	Rating (R)	Weighted Score (AW)
1	Rapid growth in global demand for gastronomic tourism	0.09	3	0.27
2	Targeted marketing through digital platforms (SMM, TikTok, TripAdvisor)	0.08	3	0.24
3	Regional development opportunities resulting from decentralized governance and municipal consolidation	0.08	2	0.16
4	Funding opportunities from international donor organizations (UNDP, USAID, etc.)	0.07	3	0.21
5	Integration of global gastronomic trends (Organic Food, Slow Food)	0.06	2	0.12
6	Collaboration with internationally influential platforms (Michelin, World's 50 Best Restaurants)	0.06	1	0.06
No.	Threats	Weight (W)	Rating (R)	Weighted Score (AW)
7	Aggressive appropriation of culinary heritage by neighboring countries	0.10	2	0.20
8	Regional security challenges and geopolitical instability	0.09	2	0.18
9	Demographic decline and outmigration from	0.08	1	0.08

	rural communities			
10	Economic fluctuations, inflation, and currency-related risks	0.07	2	0.14
11	Spread of negative online reviews due to service quality issues	0.07	2	0.14
12	Strong state-supported promotion and public relations campaigns by competing destinations (e.g., Georgia)	0.06	2	0.12
13	Total	1.00	-	2.09

Fred R. David's nine-cell matrix, commonly known as the Internal–External (IE) Matrix, is one of the most important strategic tools for assessing the current position of a sector and determining its future strategic direction. According to David's nine-cell matrix framework, when the Internal Factor Evaluation (IFE) score falls within the medium range (2.0–2.99) and the External Factor Evaluation (EFE) score is also within the medium range (2.0–2.99), the sector is positioned in Cell V, the central cell of the matrix.

The IE Matrix consists of two axes: the horizontal (X) axis represents internal factors, while the vertical (Y) axis represents external factors. Based on these dimensions, the matrix is divided into nine cells, which are further grouped into three major strategic regions. These regions provide guidance regarding the most appropriate strategic actions to be pursued in response to the sector's internal capabilities and external environment.

Table 3. Fred R. David's Nine-Cell Matrica

		Internal–External (IE) Evaluation		
		Strong (3.0–4.0)	Medium (2.0–2.99)	Weak (1.0–1.99)
External Factor Evaluation (EFE)	High (3.0–4.0)	Cell I Grow and Build	Cell II Grow and Build	Cell III Hold and Maintain
	Medium (2.0–2.99)	Cell IV Grow and Build	Cell V Hold and Maintain	Cell VI Harvest or Divest
	Low (1.0–1.99)	Cell VII Hold and Maintain	Cell VIII Harvest or Divest	Cell IX Harvest or Divest

Horizontal axis: Internal Factor Evaluation (IFE) Vertical axis: External Factor Evaluation (EFE)

Based on the calculated scores (IFE = 2.29; EFE = 2.09), Armenia's gastronomic tourism sector is positioned in Cell V of the IE Matrix. This position corresponds to the "Hold and Maintain" strategic region. Scientifically, this finding indicates that while the sector remains in a developmental and consolidation phase, the external environment offers sufficient opportunities for growth. However, internal structural weaknesses, reflected in the IFE score of 2.29, constrain the sector's ability to pursue an aggressive expansion strategy. Therefore, the current priority should be the preservation of existing resources and the strengthening of institutional and organizational foundations.

The gastronomic tourism sector of the Republic of Armenia is in a central strategic position in the matrix. Based on this, the roadmap for the development of gastronomic tourism in the Republic of Armenia for 2027–2029 has been developed, which includes four strategic targets. Within each direction, specific measures to be implemented, responsible bodies, implementation deadlines and expected results have been defined.

The following target areas and the strategic steps arising from them are highlighted:

Step 1: Gastro-territorial decentralization

Step 2: Comprehensive digitalization and targeted digital marketing

Step 3: Consolidation of public-private partnerships and diversification of markets.

Step 4. Raising the educational level and customer centricity

As a result of combining these steps, the following prospective strategic directions for the development of gastronomic tourism in RA are proposed:

- Conceptual shift from "Simple Travel" to "Experiential Gastronomy".
- Development of Terroir Marketing.
- Stabilizing the national gastro brand through digital technologies

Marketing strategy should not focus on blindly increasing market volume, but on protecting existing resources, eliminating internal structural shortcomings (digitalization, education) and strengthening positions. Below is presented the marketing toolkit necessary for the roadmap.

- ✓ Application of AI and Big Data
- ✓ "Four-Hands Dinner" concept
- ✓ Terroir Marketing and Endemic Varieties
- ✓ "Gastro Yards" and the "Farm-to-Table" model.

Table 4. Comprehensive Action Plan for the Gastrotourism Roadmap of the Republic of Armenia for 2027-2029

Target direction	Specific action	Responsible persons	Implementation period	Expected results
1. Territorial diversification	• Development of integrated interactive maps of gastronomy and enotourism. • Increasing the number of “Gastro Yards” and “Farm-to-Table” points in the regions. • Creation of micro-brands based on local endemic grape varieties.	RA Tourism Committee, local authorities, private sector, NGOs	2027-2028	Increase in the number of regional gastro-houses by 30%, equal distribution of tourist flows, increase in income of the rural population
2. Digital marketing	• Implementation of AI-based Travelinsights and Big Data tools to analyze consumer behavior. • Implementation of targeted SMM, SEO and video marketing campaigns in the restaurant and wine tourism sector.	Marketing companies, HoReCa portals, tour operators	(starting January 2027, onward)	Increasing proportion of tourists engaged through digital channels, growth in online bookings.
3. International promotion	• High-level organization and holding of the EXPO 2027 international wine exhibition in the Republic of Armenia. • Organization of international familiarization visits (Fam Trips) for famous bloggers and Forbes, IL Gusto journalists.	Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Armenia, Viticulture and Winemaking Foundation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs	2027 (EXPO period and beyond)	Increasing the recognition of Armenia as a gastro-industry in the international market, acquiring new export markets.
4. Education and service	• Strengthening the connection between educational institutions (EVN Wine Academy, etc.) and HoReCa entities. • Development of special “customer-centric” and digital skills training courses for staff.	EVN Wine Academy, HoReCa associations	2027-2029	Bringing the quality of services into line with global standards, increasing the tourist satisfaction index.

To enhance the development of gastronomic tourism in Armenia, a transition is required from a passive, extensive development model toward an active and targeted territorial marketing approach. In this regard, the implementation of decentralized governance is recommended, whereby local authorities of consolidated municipalities recognize gastronomic tourism as an instrument of community branding and local economic development. This can be achieved through the promotion of local festivals, food-related events, and cultural activities using Event Marketing strategies.

Furthermore, considering the relatively high significance of external opportunities identified in the EFE analysis, greater emphasis should be placed on the application of digital marketing tools. The systematic use of social media marketing (SMM), influencer marketing, and food and travel blogging can significantly increase the international visibility of Armenian cuisine, strengthen Armenia's gastronomic brand, and contribute to counteracting cultural appropriation and misrepresentation of Armenian culinary heritage in international markets.

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ARTS

ALEXANDER KULEBYAKIN AND HOVHANNES TUMANYAN

Anushavan Zakaryan¹**Abstract**

The Russian Major General and Terek Cossack, Alexander Parfenyevich Kulebyakin was a striking personality who combined the talents of a military officer, a poet, and a public figure. His multifaceted activities hold significant historical and documentary value for completing the picture of Armenian reality at the beginning of the last century. This article discusses in detail his relations specifically with the great Armenian poet Hovhannes Tumanyan, demonstrating that they represent an interesting chapter in the history of Russian-Armenian cultural ties during the 1910s.

Keywords: Alexander Parfenyevich Kulebyakin, Hovhannes Tumanyan, Tiflis, Guild of Poets

Russian Major General and Terek Cossack Alexander Parfenyevich Kulebyakin (1871–?) was a vibrant personality who combined the talents of a military man, a poet, and a public figure. Kulebyakin's multifaceted activities represent great historical and factual value; the pages of his life also enrich the Armenian reality of the 1910s².

A. Kulebyakin maintained friendly relations and worked with many prominent Armenian military leaders, representatives of Armenian culture and literature, and socio-political figures. He developed particularly close relations with the great Armenian poet Hovhannes Tumanyan. In his memoirs "About Hovhannes Tumanyan," the famous Armenian writer Derenik Demirchyan wrote: "His (Tumanyan's – A.Z.) house was a meeting place even on those days when he was absent from home or the city. Political and cultural figures, and businessmen had friendly or other ties with him, not to mention representatives of art and literature. In recent years, there were enough military men too. He was approached by a colonel, or perhaps a general, Kulebyakin, who on the Van front began to familiarize himself with Armenian antiquities and with Armenians, and started writing poems about the life of Van"³.

In all probability, the friendship between A. Kulebyakin and Hovhannes Tumanyan starts as early as November-December 1914, when Hovhannes Tumanyan, together with the writer Alexander Shirvanzade and other figures, departed for the front. The purpose of their trip to the theater of military operations was to meet with Armenian volunteers fighting at the front and to familiarize themselves with the general state of affairs. Tumanyan was in Van with a similar mission in June 1915 as well⁴.

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² For details, see: Zakaryan 2001: 99–129; Zakaryan 2002a.

³ Zakaryan 2002: 37.

⁴ Karapetyan 1992: 113–155.

A handwritten “interlinear” and “literal” translation of Tumanyan’s work “The Last Day” has reached us⁵. With a high degree of probability, it can be assumed that the translation was made either by A. Kulebyakin himself or at his request, as the text is located in a general folder of his materials, which the poet’s daughter, Tamar Tumanyan, donated to the Hovhannes Tumanyan Museum on June 20, 1986. On January 10, 1917, the commander presented Hovhannes Tumanyan with his book *Grebenichka in Captivity: Cossack Antiquity* (Vladikavkaz, 1913)⁶ with a dedicatory inscription: “To Hovhannes Tumanyan, the poet of Armenia, from the heart of the author Alexander Kulebyakin. 10/1 1917 Tiflis.”

A. Kulebyakin was apparently aware of everything happening in the socio-political and cultural life of Tiflis. This is evidenced, in particular, by his correspondence with Hovhannes Tumanyan. Thus, on January 29, 1917, in a letter to Hovhannes Tumanyan, the Russian general writes: “I would see you with pleasure, but, unfortunately, I cannot find the time yet. Tomorrow I want to go to the last evening of Igor Severyanin to have my own impression of him...⁷ It seems I will not be able to listen to V. Bryusov, which is a pity”⁸. On February 28 of the same year, he notes: “I regret that we had little chance to see each other. Today I am leaving for Igdir. The book of poems about Van will be out soon. I would like to personally meet V. Ya. Bryusov, but I don’t know if I will manage to come by Easter: it depends on our military affairs...”⁹.

During this same period, Kulebyakin wrote a six-part work titled “The Cross of Massis: Two Legends” with a dedication to the Armenian poet: “For a kind memory to the sincerely respected poet of Armenia Hovhannes Tadeyevich Tumanyan from the devoted author. A. Kulebyakin. 9. IV. 1917 Tiflis”¹⁰.

Having settled in Tiflis from mid-1917, A. Kulebyakin began to visit the great Armenian poet more frequently. Jalal Ter-Grigoryan (Sallumyan) left interesting memoirs of this period for future generations. In his memoirs, he wrote: “At Tumanyan’s, I also often saw Major General A. P. Kulebyakin, who was a division commander, then a corps commander, on the Caucasian front in the Van region. He was simultaneously a poet. He wrote the poem ‘Mher’s Door,’ a series of poems under the general title ‘Echoes of Van,’ which were published as a separate collection. He was often at Tumanyan’s, of course, not as a general, but as a poet. He highly valued our poet, treated him with warm respect, and dedicated his poem ‘Nane’ (‘The Akhlat Poem,’ which was printed in the collection *Jeyran* published in Batumi) to Tumanyan. Conversations with Alexander Kulebyakin were also of a purely literary nature. Once Tumanyan read his translation of ‘The Drowned Man,’ without mentioning that it was

⁵ AB No. 1073/2751.

⁶ AB No. 8/767. See also: *Personal Library* 1989, p. 380.

⁷ For details on the Tiflis “poetry-evenings” of I. Severyanin, see: Zakaryan 1984: 16–20.

⁸ AB No. 1072 / 2740.

⁹ AB No. 1072 / 2742.

¹⁰ AB No. 1072 / 2748.

Pushkin's 'The Drowned Man.' Kulebyakin, who did not know Armenian, after listening to 2–3 stanzas, immediately said: — This is Pushkin's 'The Drowned Man.' He, of course, understood this by the meter, rhythm, and corresponding pronunciation. Then the conversation continued around Pushkin. Tumanyan said that the Russians had not had a more talented poet than him until now. Kulebyakin agreed that Pushkin was indeed a great poet, but there was also one greater than him, and he seemed to wait for us to name a poet greater than Pushkin. We did not guess whom Kulebyakin was hinting at, and he pointed to the unknown author of the 12th-century poem "The Tale of Igor's Campaign". I forgot to say that Kulebyakin, for his part, masterfully declaimed a poem dedicated to the 'Kamarinskaya' or 'Trepak' dance, which in their rhythm and beat resembled the melody of that dance: while reading, through his facial expressions and movements, he seemed to be dancing while sitting"¹¹.

We also recall the testimony of the poet's daughter Nvard Tumanyan: "In the morning (January 13, 1919 – A.Z.), the French consul Paul Dubois and General Kulebyakin visited father"¹².

In February-March 1919, the 50th anniversary of Hovhannes Tumanyan's birth was solemnly celebrated¹³. A. Kulebyakin took a very active part in the festivities. The jubilee celebrations began on February 20. On that day, figures of literature and art, teachers, and students headed to the poet's apartment on Voznesenskaya Street. Among them was a delegation from the "Guild of Poets" (Tsekh Poetov in Russian - A.Z.) — S. Gorodetsky, A. Kulebyakin¹⁴, Yu. Danziger, and N. Bel-Kon-Lyubomirskaya, who presented the jubilee with a congratulatory address¹⁵.

On February 26, the 24th meeting of the "Guild of Poets" took place, dedicated to the 50th anniversary of Hovhannes Tumanyan. A. Kulebyakin dedicated a touching poem to Tumanyan— "To Hovhannes Tumanyan. February 20, 1919. An Acrostic Sonnet." Addressing Tumanyan, Kulebyakin asks:

Why are you sad, pensive poet? In your eyes, we see a shadow of reproach.
Armenian bard! You are sad that not soon Will God send the peoples rest from woes.

The poem is permeated with faith in the future of the Armenian people:

¹¹ Memoirs of Contemporaries 1969: 409.

¹² Tumanyan 1987: 173.

¹³ See: Hovhannisyan 1998: 125–143.

¹⁴ A. Kulebyakin took an active part in the activities of the "Guild of Poets" created and headed by the famous Russian poet S. Gorodetsky, who lived in Tiflis in those years. The Guild was one of the branches of the "Artisterium" association created in late March 1918 at the journal Ars. Participants met every Wednesday. Interesting information about Tumanyan's participation has been preserved. The poetess R. Poghosyan writes about Kulebyakin: "During a regular meeting... the poet-general Alexander Kulebyakin—a very respected man—spoke with a reading of his poem about Armenia." For more on the Guild, see: Zakaryan 1982: 44–56.

¹⁵ Zakavkazskoe Slovo, February 22, 1919.

No! the sun of Hayastan shall not fade! — The horizon clears: do you see, Hovhannes? ... Do not fall silent: we need Tumanyan!!¹⁶

On March 4, at a literary and artistic evening organized by the Cultural Society of Armenian Students in the Artistic Club in honor of Tumanyan, S. Gorodetsky read his poem “The Angel of Armenia” and an ode by A. Kulebyakin dedicated to Tumanyan¹⁷.

Nvard Tumanyan wrote: “In the evening (December 24, 1919 – A.Z.) there were many guests—Prof. Totomyan, Lisitsyan, Gorodetsky with his wife, Kulebyakin, and others. That evening father read several of his new quatrains. The impression was strong; everyone liked it. Then he himself began to speak about the quatrains”¹⁸. It is possible that precisely such meetings and conversations of Kulebyakin with Tumanyan contributed to the manifestation of a sincere, genuine interest in small poetic forms—quatrains, the translation of which he later took up seriously¹⁹.

Under the editorship of S. Gorodetsky in 1919, the Batumi Armenian publishing house released the collection “Jeyran”, which included poems by Hovhannes Tumanyan (“To the Poets of Georgia”) and Daniel Varoujan (“The First Sin”) in translations by S. Gorodetsky, as well as A. Kulebyakin’s work “Nane (The Akhlat Poem),” dedicated to Hovhannes Tumanyan²⁰.

A. Kulebyakin was engaged not only in literary activities. He took a most active part in the work of the “Bureau for Establishing Armenian Losses from the World War,” formed at a general meeting of the Council of the Union of the Central Council of Armenian Compatriotic Unions on November 21, 1918, and headed by Hovhannes Tumanyan. The Bureau also collected materials on the participation of the Armenian people in the war. It had four departments. The second department—military-historical—was headed by Major General A. Kulebyakin. The heads of the other departments were famous Armenian socio-political figures: Leo (Historical-Political Department), T. Ioannisyan (Criminal-Investigative Department), and Khristapor Vermishyan, who was replaced by Ashot Atanasyan (Economic Department); the head of the office was Tigran Begzadyan²¹.

On January 22, 1919, a letter signed by the Bureau Chairman Hovhannes Tumanyan was sent to A. Kulebyakin: “The ‘BUREAU for Investigating Armenian Losses from the World War’ hereby informs you that, according to the decision of the named Bureau, you are entrusted with the leadership of the military-historical

¹⁶ AB No. 1072 / 2744; MLA, fund of Hovhannes Tumanyan, No. 1299.

¹⁷ Mshak, March 6, 1919; Zakavkazskoe Slovo, March 6, 1919; Haraj, March 8, 1919.

¹⁸ Tumanyan 1987: 216.

¹⁹ A. Kulebyakin was also active in translation. In the first issue of the monthly *Ars*, his translation of Niko Baratashvili’s poem “The Horse” was published, along with seven quatrains of Omar Khayyam (*Ars*, 1918, No. 1, pp. 30–31). It is interesting to note that Kulebyakin translated 66 quatrains of the Persian poet as early as 1917.

²⁰ *Jeyran* 1919: 13–31.

²¹ For details on the Bureau, see: Zakaryan 2002b: 271–304.

department for the preparation of an essay on the participation of Armenians in the World War. In the performance of your work, you are to be guided by the budget submitted by you and approved by the Bureau's decision. According to the decision, you invite three assistants and six employees at your discretion, with remuneration within the limits of the approved budget. Informing you of this, the BUREAU requests that you proceed to work immediately"²².

Both the Bureau as a whole and A. Kulebyakin performed an enormous amount of work. In the shortest time, Kulebyakin's department prepared material on the formation and combat operations of Armenian volunteer detachments and rifle battalions under the title "Participation of Armenians in the First World War of 1914–1918." Starting in January, wrote Hovhannes Tumanyan, among other materials, the BUREAU handed over to M. Papajanyan, a member of the Armenian delegation at the Paris Peace Conference, "a part (314 pages) of that report prepared by the head of the military part of the commission, General Kulebyakin, on the participation of Armenians in the World War"²³. However, financial resources in general did not allow for the completion of the Bureau's planned work. Regarding the scarcity of material means, A. Kulebyakin writes in a letter to Hovhannes Tumanyan dated March 31, 1919: "I very much regret that I am troubling you again with a request for my historical commission. I wanted to talk personally but did not find you. Today Valadyan gave me a written refusal of further work from April 1 due to non-payment of money, and all the other employees are in the same position, which they urgently ask me to bring to your attention. The matter cannot continue like this. In fact, I am now left almost without employees... The money issue stalls all the work. I sincerely ask you to help us all in this regard as soon as possible, for my position is heavy both materially and even more morally, as I head the commission. Please do everything possible tomorrow and notify me through Lisitsyan; I will be waiting for an answer. Besides satisfying the employees, there are other no less urgent payments that suffer no delay. The situation is critical. Forgive the trouble caused, but your constant long-standing responsiveness gives me hope for success in your efforts for us. I know that other commissions are in the same position, but by my duty, I cannot fail to petition for my employees"²⁴.

Regarding the subsequent relationship between A. Kulebyakin and Hovhannes Tumanyan, the following is known. From a letter by A. Kulebyakin to Hovhannes Tumanyan dated May 11, 1921, the fate of the Russian general becomes clear. "You probably already know that I was arrested on April 28, 1920, in Baku," Kulebyakin writes to the Armenian poet, "and since October 24, I have been in Moscow. Until April 23, 1921, I sat in the Kozhukhov camp... Everyone promises release, but for now, I sit..."²⁵.

²² NAA, fund 428, inventory 1, file 38, leaf 3.

²³ Hovhannes Tumanyan 1999: 324.

²⁴ AB No. 1072 / 2743.

²⁵ MLA, fund of Hovhannes Tumanyan, No. 760.

After his release, the general left for Tiflis to his family, where he continued to live and create.

...It was precisely at this time that A. Kulebyakin “translated from Armenian” the quatrains of Hovhannes Tumanyan. On April 12, 1923, twenty days after the death of the Armenian poet, he presented it to Hovhannes Tumanyan’s family with the inscription: “For the kind memory of the family, dear to me, of the person I sincerely loved, the poet of Armenia Hovhannes Fadeyevich Tumanyan. A. Kulebyakin. 12/IV.1923, Tiflis”²⁶. It is also interesting that in the poem “To the Memory of Hovhannes Tumanyan,” the Russian poet-general “reproduces the image of the national poet who, processing the creations of the people in his poetic furnace, returns them to them, marked with the seal of his genius”²⁷.

The friendship of the illustrious commander, the poet-general A. Kulebyakin, and the great son of the Armenian people Hovhannes Tumanyan is a remarkable page in the chronicle of Russian-Armenian cultural ties at the beginning of the 20th century.

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²⁶ AB No. 1072 / 2750.

²⁷ Ghanalanyan 1988: 24.

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Translated from Armenian by Gevorg Harutyunyan

MILITARY HISTORY

THE IMPACT OF MILITARY SCHOOLS ON THE IRAQI ARMY AT THE EVE OF OF THE FIRST GULF WAR

Arkadi Grigoryan¹

Abstract

The article examines the origins, development, and consequences of the influence of Western and Soviet military schools on the formation of the Iraqi Armed Forces. Using a historical-comparative approach, the author analyzes the reasons behind the failure of the decision-making freedoms theoretically granted to commanders through British and French military traditions.

At the same time, the problems of the officer corps operating under the rigid vertical of Soviet rule in the Iran-Iraq War are analyzed, and it is documented that in the first Gulf War, that officer corps, having the fourth most massive army in the world, suffered a crushing defeat not only in the technological field, but first of all in the culture of military management.

Through the influence of military schools on the Iraqi army, the author highlights the negative consequences of the rigid Soviet-style vertical management during the army-building phase of the RA Armed Forces during the 4-day and 44-day military operations in Artsakh.

Keywords: military schools, Middle East, Iran-Iraq War, Gulf War, vertical governance, authoritarian governance, officer corps, RA Armed Forces, 44-day war

Prologue

The Army of the Kingdom of Iraq emerged following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire after the First World War and was officially established in 1921, when Iraq was still under British mandate administration. Most of the officer corps consisted of former Ottoman military personnel, while the structure, command system, and combat standards of the Iraqi Army were shaped almost entirely by British military doctrine until the July Revolution of 1958. As a result, the Iraqi officer corps remained intellectually divided for decades. Before the introduction of Soviet military influence, the Iraqi Armed Forces were fundamentally grounded in British military thought.

In 1924, a military academy was established in Baghdad, followed by the creation of a staff college in 1928 in response to the growing need for trained officers. The curricula and instructional methods of these institutions closely followed British models. Officers were expected to write essays, analyze historical campaigns, and participate in discussions, all of which reflected the traditions of British military education.

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The influence of British and French military schools on the Iraqi officer corps

The military coup of 1958 fundamentally changed Iraq's geopolitical orientation, redirecting the country toward the Soviet Union. This transformation intensified under the rule of the Ba'ath Party. The military command system gradually evolved into a rigid vertical hierarchy in which dissent was discouraged, orders were not questioned, and the belief that "the commander is always right" became deeply embedded from the cadet level onward.

In such an environment, creative thinking and independent initiative were systematically suppressed. Commanders often withheld information from their subordinates, who were frequently viewed as uneducated or incapable of independent judgment. Military education increasingly relied on rote memorization and mechanical transcription rather than analytical thinking.² Consequently, mutual distrust developed between officers and enlisted personnel: subordinates resented officers, officers distrusted subordinates, and commanders avoided independent decision-making. An atmosphere of fear permeated the Iraqi military establishment. Much like the Soviet system, where military discipline was reinforced through political supervision and punishment,³ Saddam Hussein constructed an even more restrictive network of surveillance and control within Iraq.⁴

Nevertheless, the institutional "genetics" of the British military tradition remained remarkably resilient. Even the large-scale Sovietization of the Iraqi military during the 1970s and 1980s could not entirely eliminate British influence from the thinking of many officers, particularly among the junior officer corps, which retained a limited degree of tactical flexibility.

One of the most enduring legacies of the British military school was the organizational culture of the Iraqi Army. Unlike the Soviet model, which was structured around divisions and corps composed primarily of numbered formations, the Iraqi Army retained elements of the British regimental system until 2003.⁵ The British regimental tradition was built around the concept of *esprit de corps*, where a regiment functioned not merely as a tactical unit but as a "family" with its own history, symbols, and traditions.⁶ Graduates of the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst carried this ethos into the Iraqi military. For many Iraqi officers, the regiment became a symbolic "home" rather than simply an administrative formation. However, an important contradiction emerged: whereas British regiments were historically linked to specific geographic regions, Iraqi regiments were organized on a generalized national basis, weakening the social cohesion characteristic of the British model.

² De Atkine 1999.

³ Grechko 1975: 65.

⁴ Krivoruchko, Roshchupkin 2008. 125.

⁵ Malovany 2017: 3–8.

⁶ Stork 2025: 21–22.

British military influence also manifested itself in the Iraqi officer corps' preference for tactical independence. British doctrine encouraged junior officers to adapt to battlefield conditions and exercise initiative — an approach later conceptualized by the United States military as mission command. By contrast, Soviet doctrine emphasized the strict execution of centralized orders.⁷ This coexistence of incompatible command philosophies created a persistent internal contradiction within the Iraqi military establishment. Although the Iraqi Army remained fundamentally British in structure, from the mid-1970s onward it also came under significant French military influence. This shift reflected Saddam Hussein's strategy of diversifying Iraq's sources of armaments and military expertise.⁸ There is very conflicting information in open sources about how many soldiers have been trained in France, but considering the total volume and range of purchases, which was estimated at about \$15 billion, it can be assumed that Iraqi soldiers have received training in the areas of use and maintenance of the following weapons:⁹ Mirage F1 fighters, missile armament: anti-ship, antiaircraft, anti-tank, air-to-air missiles, and other military equipment. In addition, senior Iraqi officers attended military academies in Paris for advanced command education, while Iraqi scientists and military engineers underwent training in French nuclear research institutions. French influence became particularly significant within the Iraqi Air Force and air defense forces. A notable example of this influence could be observed during the Iran-Iraq War, particularly in Iraqi aviation operations in the Persian Gulf during the so-called "Tanker War." Iraqi operations in this theater were conducted largely according to French tactical concepts, which required a high degree of technical proficiency and individual decision-making — characteristics largely foreign to the Soviet "land-centric" approach to airpower.

The influence of the Soviet school on the Iraqi officer corps

On the one hand, for a large cadre of officers who had passed the Soviet school, the Soviet T-72 tanks were intended for mass attacks and deep breakthroughs, on the other hand, for supporters of the Western school, tanks were a tool for flexible tactics.

Iraq was the largest carrier of Soviet military thought in the Middle East in the 1960s-1980s. This influence was not just about selling weapons, but copying the entire military system. The Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation signed in 1972¹⁰ laid the foundation for massive rearmament and training of personnel. One of the significant results of this agreement was to be Iraq's nuclear enrichment and use in the military sphere, which, however, remained fruitless¹¹ and Saddam Hussein was forced to turn to the French.

From 1960 to 1990, more than 8,000 Soviet military specialists and soldiers visited Iraq, and more than 6,000 Iraqi servicemen of various branches of the Armed Forces

⁷ Grechko 1975: 32.

⁸ Krivoruchko, Roshchupkin 2008:130-131.

⁹ Garden 2023: La cooperation militaire entre Paris et Baghdad. analyze perspectives:

¹⁰ Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation 1974.

¹¹ Okorokov 2017: 13-15.

received education in the military educational institutions of the Soviet Union.¹² A significant part of the Iraqi senior officer corps, including the general staff, had studied at both the Frunze Military Academy and the General Staff Academy.

Simultaneously, a significant part of the Iraqi officer corps was educated at the Al-Bakr University for Higher Military Studies in Baghdad, which was founded in the 1970s and was in fact a copy of the British Staff College (Staff College, Camberley), but already modified according to the logic of Soviet teaching. At the same time, the Soviet Union spent huge funds on the introduction and dissemination of the Russian language and literature in Iraq.¹³

The Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988) became a practical testing ground for these competing military traditions. During the initial phase of the conflict (1980–1982), Iraq attempted to implement the Soviet concept of the “armored fist,” which emphasized rapid breakthroughs, deep penetration into enemy territory, and destruction of rear-area infrastructure. However, the Iraqi command failed to maintain operational momentum or achieve effective operational breakthroughs.¹⁴ Although Iraqi artillery doctrine largely followed Soviet principles of concentrated fire support, Iraqi armored formations did not operate according to Soviet deep operations theory. Instead of being employed as maneuver forces for penetrating defensive lines, T-62 and T-72 tanks were frequently used from static firing positions in support of infantry operations.

In Soviet military works, many of which were based on the experience of World War II, the emphasis was largely the same: in the future, in the context of the development of the “Main Strike” theory, to use armored forces as a rapid strike force, forming Operational Maneuverable Groups to operate behind enemy lines with a rapid breakthrough. This is evidenced by the works of both Western military theorists devoted to the above problem,¹⁵ as well as the 1982 US Army regulation FM 100-5 “OPERATIONS”, which was based on the “Air-Ground Battle” theory.¹⁶ This approach contradicted Soviet military views on the use of armored formations and units in combined arms combat.

Stephen R. Ward, a retired Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) analyst and expert on Iran and Middle East security issues, has studied Iraqi military history and culture for more than 25 years, notes: “The Iraqi officer corps in the 1980s was a ‘hybrid’ one. They had mastered Soviet operational art, but their tactical language and administration remained British. It created a unique ‘Iraqi military school’ that was far more dangerous than a mere Soviet copy”.¹⁷ Nevertheless, the Iraqi experience demonstrated that traditions of tactical freedom could not function effectively within a rigid authoritarian command structure.

¹² Grigoryan 2025: 80-97.

¹³ Mosaki 2014: 79-84.

¹⁴ Cordesman, Wagner 1990: 102-110.

¹⁵ Donnelly 1982: 1177–1186; Glantz 1991: 544–581.

¹⁶ Hovhannisyan 2020: 637.

¹⁷ Ward 2009: 242.

In the memoirs of Iraqi officers, there are often episodes in which they speak disparagingly of Soviet advisers, considering them "tasteless" or "rude." This tension reflected not merely political disagreement but also a deeper cultural divide. Iraqi officers generally perceived themselves as members of an aristocratic professional class, whereas Soviet officers presented themselves as representatives of a worker-peasant military tradition.¹⁸ The British free-thinking officer corps, climbing the service ladder, with each successive position and rank, realized that they were becoming more servile. A significant part of the Iraqi generals, although having an excellent education, regardless of school, were deprived of the authority to make decisions, since they were close to the head of the regime, and at the top almost everything was decided by Saddam Hussein himself. His idol was the Soviet leader Joseph Stalin, and it is natural that in an authoritarian state there can be no dissent in governance other than a rigid vertical one. This model of governance was common for the officer corps that had passed through Soviet military schools, and those who were carriers of Western culture could not perceive it. A similar phenomenon was also observed in the Armenian Armed Forces, in particular, many of the newly graduated officers who had graduated from Western military educational institutions were unable to integrate into the service, seeing the service as a distorted version of the already vertical Soviet management model. Officers demonstrating independent thinking or alternative professional perspectives were often marginalized, denied promotion opportunities, or forced out of military service altogether.¹⁹

During the Iran-Iraq War, General Nizar al-Khazraj, Chief of the General Staff, noted in his memoirs: "For our officers, the Frunze Academy in Moscow was considered the Mecca of military knowledge. We learned to break through defenses with tank wedges and organize fire strikes according to Soviet standards. Our task was to adapt this power to desert conditions".²⁰

The Iran-Iraq war showed some successful examples of the Soviet school of standards. In 1988, the "Ramadan Mubarak" operation to liberate the Fao Peninsula was carried out according to the rules of classical Soviet operational art. Iraq used powerful artillery preparation, airborne assaults, and rapid advance of armored forces. However, the Iraqi command was dogmatic. Although Soviet doctrine theoretically allowed subordinate initiative within operational depth,²¹ officers under Saddam Hussein's regime feared making independent decisions without direct authorization from Baghdad.

¹⁸ Woods, Murray, Nathan, Sabatier, Venegas 2011: 45.

¹⁹ Amirkhanyan 2022: 119-134.

²⁰ Al-Khazraji 2014: 89.

²¹ In our opinion, this was not so much a deliberate permission for autonomy as a theory, as in the West the principle of command by task, but rather a purely military-technical issue. Not being able to ensure the functioning of the control system in operational depth, according to the strict Soviet vertical, in the event of a failure of the operation, the superior would absolve himself of responsibility in the future.

Conclusions

The battlefield ultimately serves as the most objective measure of military effectiveness. The influence of competing military schools on the Iraqi Army before the First Gulf War can be assessed through the structural and operational problems revealed during the Iran-Iraq War and repeated in later conflicts.

1. The Iraqi command lacked operational flexibility and was reluctant to employ armored forces according to the principles of Soviet deep operations doctrine.
2. Despite the large number of personnel educated in Western military institutions, command authority remained highly centralized and strictly controlled from Baghdad.
3. Relations between officers and enlisted personnel frequently resembled those of master and servant rather than professional military cohesion.
4. Although many senior General Staff positions were occupied by Saddam Hussein's relatives or trusted associates, even they possessed limited operational decision-making authority.
5. Successes on the battlefield were systematically attributed to Saddam Hussein personally, while failures were blamed on subordinate commanders, who were often punished regardless of the objective circumstances. This atmosphere of fear discouraged initiative and encouraged passivity.

The fundamental cause of these problems was political. The authoritarian nature of Saddam Hussein's regime required a centralized and vertically controlled command structure in order to preserve political stability and personal rule.

As a result, the more liberal traditions associated with British and French military culture could not fully function within the Iraqi military environment, as they conflicted with authoritarian governance and individual initiative. By contrast, the Stalinist-Soviet command model proved more compatible with Saddam Hussein's political system.

Ultimately, the Iraqi military absorbed some of the most negative characteristics of the Soviet military tradition: the dehumanization of subordinates, mutual distrust between ranks, and the punishment of independent initiative.

Unfortunately, similar patterns could also be observed after the collapse of the Soviet Union within the Armed Forces of the newly independent Republic of Armenia. Although Armenian forces achieved victory during the First Artsakh War through comparatively flexible command practices despite institutional weaknesses, the military later increasingly adopted Soviet/Russian traditions of rigid vertical management and micromanagement.

The painful consequences of this transformation became evident during both the April 2016 Four-Day War and the 2020 Forty-Four-Day War in Artsakh.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Gagik Sargsyan, Artak Gnuni, Levon Mkrtchyan
The Fortresses of Qashatagh Region of the Artsakh Republic, Yerevan,
Publication of the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography,
NAS RA, 2022, 235 p.

The monograph “The Fortresses of the Qashatagh Region of the Artsakh Republic” by G. Sargsyan, A. Gnuni, and L. Mkrtchyan represents a major scholarly contribution to the archaeology and historical geography of the Caucasus. Dedicated to the study of 37 fortresses in the Qashatagh region, the work synthesizes decades of fieldwork, archival research, and historiographical engagement. It is situated at the intersection of fortification studies, landscape archaeology, and Armenian historical studies, and aims to provide a systematic account of fortified sites within a strategically significant yet historically understudied region.

Written in Armenian language the volume is structured as follows: an Introduction; Chapter I, *A History of Research on Qashatagh*; Chapter II, *The Natural and Geographical Conditions of the Qashatagh Region*; and Chapter III, *Research Methods*. These are followed by a comprehensive *Catalogue of Sites*, as well as *Conclusions*, *Summaries*, *References*, *Abbreviations*, and indices of *Proper Names*, *Toponyms*, and *Objects*. The main body of the work consists of detailed descriptions and analyses of individual fortresses, organized into chapters authored by the three contributors. The division of authorship is clearly stated: G. Sargsyan is responsible for the preface, conclusion, and the first group of fortresses; A. Gnuni contributes the first and second chapters and a second group of sites; and L. Mkrtchyan authors the third chapter and the remaining fortresses.

The research was conducted with the support of a grant from the All-Armenian Foundation Financing Armenological Studies and was published under the auspices of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada.

The volume is particularly important in light of recent geopolitical developments, which have rendered many of the documented sites inaccessible. As the authors note, the data collected during the 2016–2020 research program has effectively assumed the status of primary documentation. This circumstance underscores both the urgency and the enduring value of the publication.

Beyond its empirical contribution, the monograph also proposes a methodological framework for the study of fortifications as components of broader cultural landscapes. By integrating architectural analysis, spatial relationships, and historical context, the authors seek to move beyond descriptive cataloguing toward a more holistic understanding of fortified systems.

Chronologically, the study spans an impressive temporal range, from the Bronze and Iron Ages (ca. 3rd–1st millennia BC) through the Urartian period and into the medieval and early modern eras (up to the 17th–18th centuries). This diachronic perspective enables the authors to trace long-term developments in fortification practices and regional organization.

One of the most commendable aspects of the monograph is its comprehensive and systematic treatment of sources. The authors classify the available evidence into several categories: oral traditions, written historical sources, statistical records, toponymic studies, historical-geographical works, travel accounts, and archaeological data.

This typological approach reflects a mature historiographical awareness and allows the authors to critically evaluate the strengths and limitations of each category. For example, oral traditions - while valuable for understanding local perceptions of the landscape - are treated with appropriate caution. Written sources, including medieval Armenian historiography (e.g., Movses Kaghankatvatsi and Stepanos Orbelyan), are integrated with archaeological evidence to reconstruct the historical development of the region.

The discussion of toponymy is another highlight. By presenting multiple interpretative frameworks - linking place names to personal names, ethnonyms, or linguistic developments - the authors demonstrate the complexity of reconstructing historical geography. This nuanced approach avoids reductionist explanations and underscores the importance of interdisciplinary analysis.

The methodological framework articulated in the introduction is one of the most significant contributions of the monograph. The authors propose a three-tiered approach to the study of fortifications:

1. Micro-level (site-specific analysis): This includes the study of internal structures, architectural features, construction techniques, and surface finds within individual fortresses;
2. Meso-level (regional analysis): At this level, the focus shifts to the relationships between fortresses, including their spatial distribution, intervisibility, and connections to natural features such as topography and hydrology;
3. Macro-level (landscape and systemic analysis): This level examines the interaction between defensive, economic, and sacred landscapes, and the formation of multifunctional complexes.

This multi-scalar approach aligns closely with contemporary developments in landscape archaeology and spatial analysis. It reflects a shift away from site-centric studies toward an understanding of archaeological features as components of dynamic and interconnected systems.

The emphasis on intervisibility between fortresses is particularly important, as it suggests the existence of coordinated defensive networks. Similarly, the consideration of natural features highlights the role of environmental factors in shaping human activity.

The empirical foundation of the monograph is exceptionally strong. The authors draw on more than twenty years of fieldwork, including excavations, surveys, and reconnaissance missions conducted between the 1990s and 2020. These include both targeted excavations at specific sites and extensive survey campaigns across the region.

The systematic exploration of the Qashatagh region, particularly after 2008, represents a major achievement. The authors note that many of the sites documented in the monograph had previously been neglected or insufficiently studied. The project therefore constitutes not only an analytical study but also a foundational documentation effort.

The use of modern technologies, such as drone-based aerial photography, is briefly mentioned and suggests an openness to methodological innovation. While the extent of such technologies' application is not fully elaborated in the provided text, their inclusion indicates a forward-looking approach.

The context of the 2020 war adds a poignant dimension to the work. The loss of access to many of the surveyed sites means that the data presented in the monograph may remain the most comprehensive record available for the foreseeable future.

The core of the monograph consists of detailed analyses of 37 fortresses located in Aghavno and Hochants river basins (25 units, among them Spitakajur, Eznagomer, Hak etc.) as well as Vorotan, Hagari and Araxes river basins (12 units, among them Mazra, Setants, Barkushati Berd etc.). Each site is examined according to a consistent set of criteria: planimetric features, construction techniques, topographical setting, and archaeological context.

The authors aim to establish a typology of fortifications, distinguishing between various categories such as fortresses, watchtowers, citadels, and fortified settlements. This classification is based on both architectural and functional criteria.

The emphasis on construction techniques is particularly valuable. Differences in masonry styles, building materials, and structural design provide important clues about chronological phases and cultural influences. For example, the identification of Urartian features or medieval Armenian construction techniques can help situate sites within broader historical frameworks.

The analysis of spatial relationships - such as lines of sight between fortresses - adds a dynamic dimension to the study. This approach suggests that fortifications were not isolated entities but components of coordinated defensive systems.

The monograph goes beyond architectural analysis to situate fortifications within broader historical and cultural contexts. The authors argue that fortresses functioned not only as defensive structures but also as political, economic, and sometimes religious centers.

This multifunctional perspective is consistent with recent scholarship on fortified landscapes, which emphasizes the integration of military, administrative, and symbolic functions. The authors' attention to the relationship between fortresses and surrounding settlements, agricultural zones, and sacred sites is particularly noteworthy.

The long chronological span of the study allows the authors to explore patterns of continuity and change. For instance, the repeated use of certain strategic locations across different periods suggests a degree of landscape continuity. At the same time,

variations in construction techniques and site organization reflect evolving technologies and socio-political structures.

The integration of historical sources with archaeological data enhances the interpretative framework. By correlating textual references with material evidence, the authors are able to reconstruct aspects of regional history that would otherwise remain obscure.

The monograph makes a significant contribution to the archaeology of Armenia and the South Caucasus more broadly. The Qashatagh region, despite its historical importance, has received relatively little scholarly attention. This work therefore fills a major gap in the literature.

Moreover, the study has implications beyond the immediate region. The methodological approach and analytical framework can be applied to other areas of the Caucasus and the Near East. The emphasis on landscape integration and multi-scalar analysis is particularly relevant for comparative studies.

The work also contributes to ongoing debates about the nature of fortified systems, the role of geography in shaping human activity, and the interaction between political and environmental factors.

Despite its many strengths, the monograph is not without limitations.

First, the balance between description and analysis could be improved. While the detailed descriptions of individual sites are invaluable, the synthesis of these data into broader interpretative conclusions is sometimes less fully developed. A more explicit comparative framework - both within the South Caucasus and in relation to neighboring regions - would enhance the analytical depth.

Second, the engagement with international theoretical literature is somewhat limited. Although the methodological framework aligns with contemporary trends, a more explicit dialogue with global scholarship on landscape archaeology and fortification studies would strengthen the theoretical dimension of the work.

Third, chronological issues remain a challenge. As is often the case in survey-based studies, the dating of sites relies heavily on surface finds and architectural features, which may not always provide precise chronological resolution. A more detailed discussion of these uncertainties would be beneficial.

Nevertheless, the significance of the monograph extends beyond its immediate scholarly contributions. In the context of recent geopolitical changes, the documentation of the Qashatagh region's fortifications acquires an added dimension as a record of cultural heritage.

The authors' work serves as both a scholarly resource and a form of preservation. By systematically documenting sites that are no longer accessible, the monograph ensures that they remain part of the academic discourse.

Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of proactive archaeological research and documentation, particularly in regions affected by conflict. It underscores

the role of archaeology not only as a discipline of the past but also as a means of safeguarding cultural memory.

The Fortresses of the Qashatagh Region of the Artsakh Republic is a major scholarly achievement that combines extensive fieldwork, methodological rigor, and interdisciplinary analysis. It provides a comprehensive account of a historically significant region and offers valuable insights into the nature of fortified landscapes.

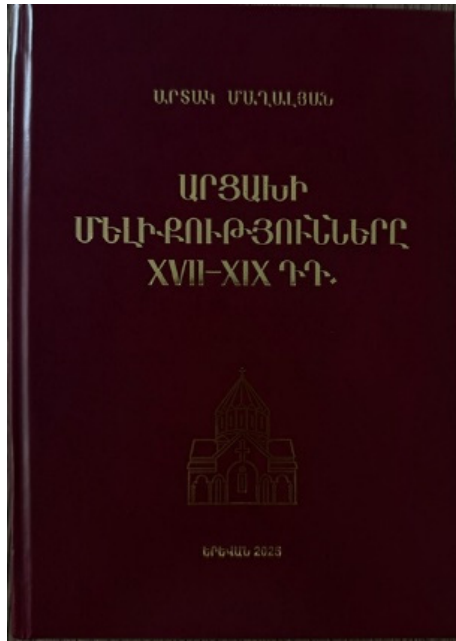
While there is room for further analytical development and broader theoretical engagement, the monograph's strengths far outweigh its limitations. It stands as an essential resource for scholars of Caucasian archaeology, historical geography, and fortification studies.

In light of the current inaccessibility of many of the documented sites, the work also serves as a vital record of cultural heritage. As such, it is likely to remain a foundational reference for future research in the region.

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NEW BOOKS



THE MELIQDOMS OF ARTSAKH (KARABAKH) IN THE 17-19TH CENTURIES, Yerevan, VMV Print, 2025, 400p. (In Armenian).

by **Artak Maghalyan**

This monograph is developed to the study of the Armenian meliqdoms (principalities) of Artsakh. The study covers the period starting from the 17th century through 1828, when the meliqdoms of Artsakh ceased to exist following the incorporation of Eastern Armenia into the Russian Empire. Despite of many works on the late medieval history of Artsakh written by Armenian authors in pre-Soviet and Soviet periods, the history of

the meliqdoms of Artsakh is not sufficiently studied and many aspects of this history still await to be revealed. One of such aspects relates to the detailed realm of activities of the meliqs of Artsakh. Also, the genealogy of the meliq houses of Artsakh has not been studied thoroughly until now. These inter alia are some of the questions examined by this work.

The South Caucasus: Trends and Prospects in the Context of the War in Ukraine, Yerevan, Caucasus Institute, 2025, 224p.

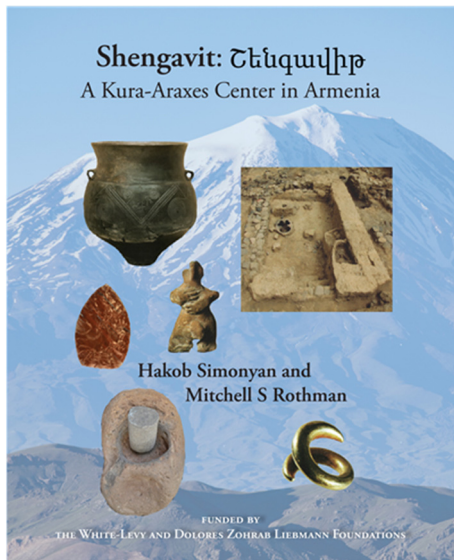
**THE SOUTH CAUCASUS:
TRENDS AND PROSPECTS**

**IN THE CONTEXT OF
THE WAR IN UKRAINE**

Ed. **Alexander Iskandaryan**

This volume is part of the Caucasus Institute's regular series of publications. It contains articles by scholars from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey, Poland, and the United Kingdom. The authors explore political, economic, and security related developments in the South Caucasus in the context of the war in Ukraine. The articles are based on papers presented at an international conference held in

Yerevan in 2024 in the framework of the project on Engaging Society and Government in Armenia in Developing an Agenda for a Secure Region funded by UK International Development from the UK government.

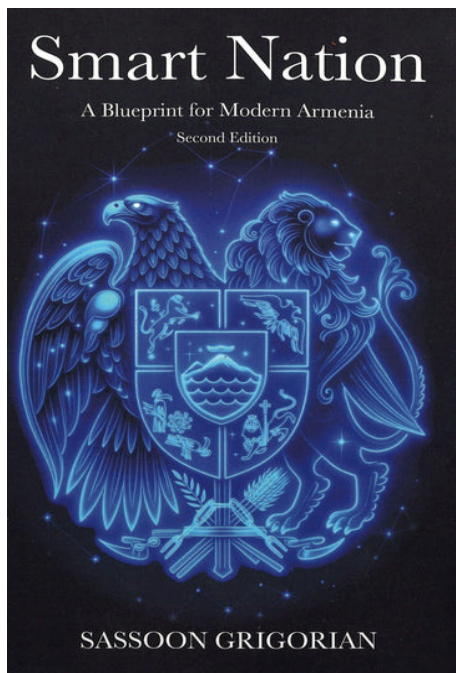


Shengavit: A Kura-Araxes Center in Armenia, Costa Mesa, CA., Mazda, 2023, 298 + xii p. (In Armenian and English).

by **Hakob Simonyan** and **Mitchell S. Rothman**

This book presents a comprehensive examination of Shengavit. The importance of the site of Shengavit, which is located in the neighborhood of the same name within the Armenian capital city of Yerevan, is its relation to the Kura-Araxes cultural tradition and societal form. The Kura-Araxes, which lasted from 3500 to 2500 BCE, is one of the cultural traditions in

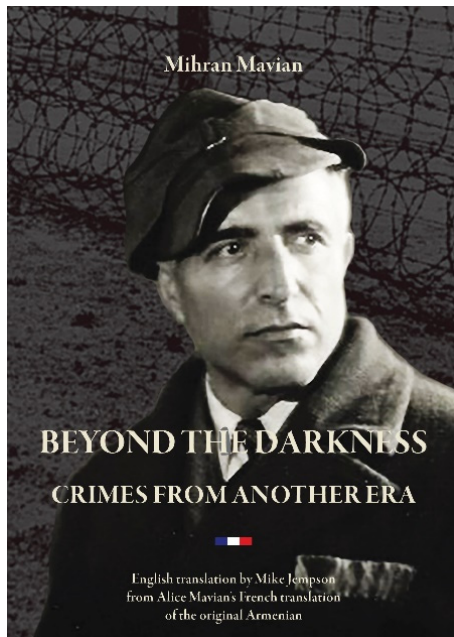
the very dynamic fourth and early third millennia BCE. In a landscape where most settlements were no larger than one hectare, Shengavit appears to have been a small center with some satellite settlements where intensive production of grains, organization to build a stone wall around the settlement that was still visible in the early 20th century CE developed. Excavation began there in the 1930s and continued until the 21st century CE. This volume is the first attempt to provide a complete analysis of the site's remains in light of our broader understanding of cultural and societal evolution at this critical time in human pre- and early history. Accompanied by a web archive on the tDAR site, it can be seen as a critical resource for research on the Kura-Araxes and for those interested in the topic.



Smart Nation: A Blueprint for Modern Armenia, Gomidas Institute Books, 2016, 160p. Second Edition

by **Sassoon Grigorian**

This monograph explores Armenia's future at a critical crossroads. Building on the groundbreaking first edition—where over 70 percent of its recommendations were adopted in full or in part—this new edition goes further, tackling the urgent questions of technology, diplomacy, security, and prosperity in an era of uncertainty with new insights, bold strategies, and visionary ideas that could help shape Armenia's tomorrow.

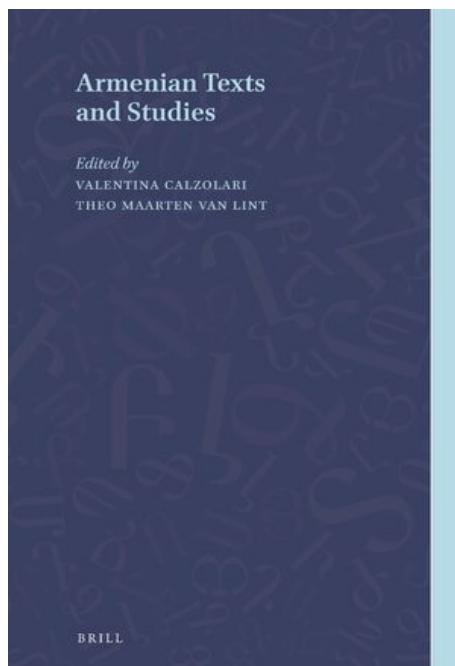


BEYOND THE DARKNESS: CRIMES FROM ANOTHER ERA, Gomidas Institute Books, 2026, 188p.

by **Mihran Mavian** (with English translation by **Mike Jempson**)

A survivor of the Armenian Genocide and the Nazi concentration camps, Mihran Mavian bears witness to some of the darkest chapters of the twentieth century. A French-Armenian communist and resistance fighter, he worked as a liaison agent for the Workers International Movement against Nazi occupation in Paris before his arrest by the Gestapo in 1944. Tortured and starved, as he was transported from

Fresnes prison to Compiègne-Royallieu, Auschwitz, Buchenwald, and Flossenbürg extermination camps, Mavian survived against all odds.

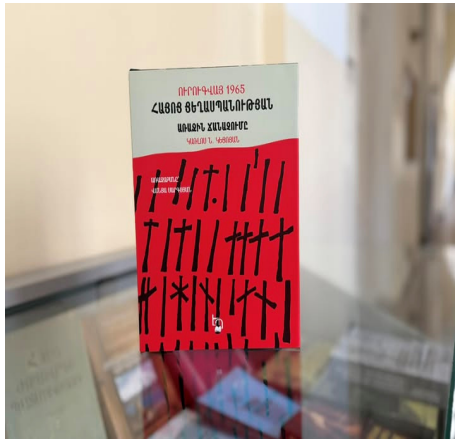


Armenian Texts and Studies

Series Editors: Valentina Calzolari and Theo Maarten van Lint, BRILL, 2017, 230p.

This series combines persisting needs with emerging emphases in Armenian studies. It encourages studies that place Armenian culture in its multifaceted international context, on the Armenian plateau as well as in its historic and current Diaspora. Philological studies containing important critically edited texts, translations and commentaries remain in need as before. Thousands of Armenian manuscripts await disclosure in order to become part of scholarly and popular discourse and take their place in a field that

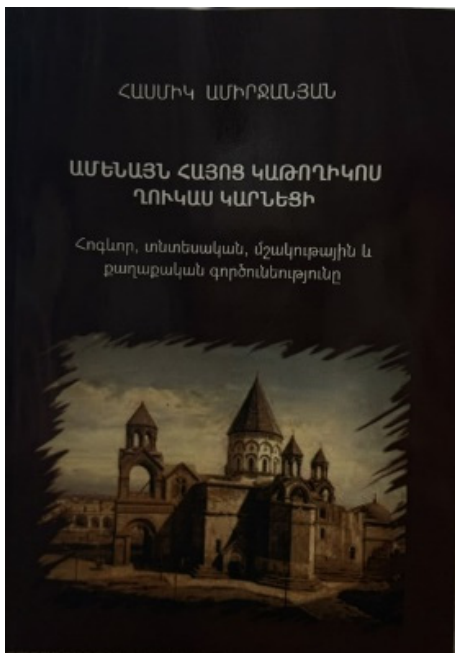
invites an interdisciplinary and pluralistic approach like few others. Armenian literature from the seventeenth century up to the present is understudied and will amply repay scholarly engagement. Armenian Texts and Studies deals with Armenian prehistory up to the modern and contemporary period and promotes research that applies methods current in sociology, anthropology and other social sciences next to those used in literary, linguistic and historical studies, including the study of Armenian cinema and modern media.



Uruguay 1965: The First Recognition of the Armenian Genocide, Yerevan, Edit Print, 2026, 296p. (In Armenian).

by **Carlos Ketzoian**

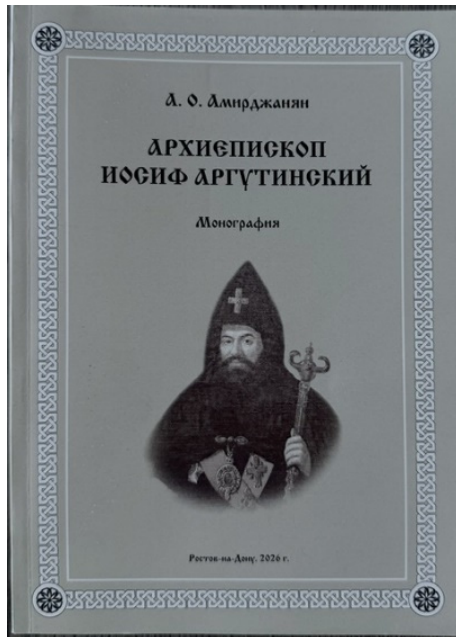
This book was published in Spanish in April 2025, and the Armenian translation was published in March 2026, on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the government of the Oriental Republic of Uruguay. This book is a study of the fact that Uruguay was the first in the world to recognize the Armenian Genocide in April 1965, with Law No. 13.326. Uruguay adopted a law that stands by human rights and acknowledges the importance of this event. The book was published with the recommendation of the scientific committee of the Faculty of Humanities and Educational Sciences of the University of the Republic of Uruguay and the Faculty of History of Yerevan State University.



Catholicos of All Armenians Ghukas Karnetsi Spiritual, economic, cultural and political activities, Yerevan, INFOCOPY, 2026, 300p. (In Armenian).

by **Hasmik Amirjanyan**

The work is dedicated to the activities of the 18th-century spiritual figure, Catholicos of All Armenians Ghukas Karnetsi. Based on archival materials and historical literature, the most important events of the life and activities of Ghukas Karnetsi and his role in Armenian cultural life, national liberation movements, and other spheres are highlighted. From the first days of his election as Catholicos, he managed to establish close economic relations with Armenian dioceses in Iran, Russia, etc. Karnetsi's role in the development of Armenian culture is significant. The book is intended for historians, cultural and spiritual officials, and the general public.

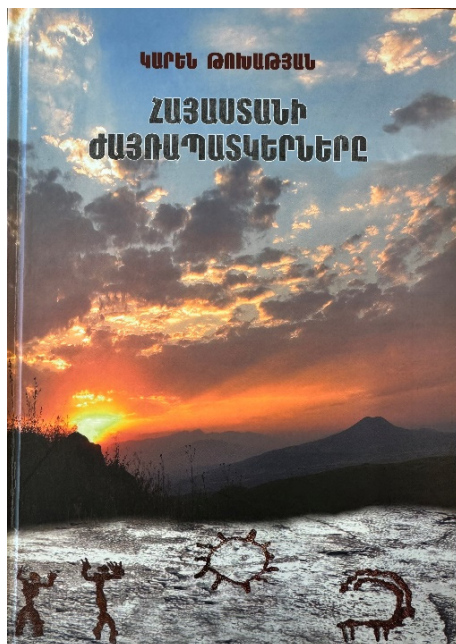


Archbishop Hovsep Arghutyan, Rostov-on Don: Southern Federal University publishing house, 2026, 430 p. (In Russian).

by **Hasmik Amirjanyan**

This book presents the activities of Archbishop Hovsep Arghutyan (Hovsep Arghutinski) a prominent religious figure and the leader of Armenian Eparchy in Russia. The Archbishop played a significant role in resettling Armenians within the borders of the Russian empire and in founding New Nakhijevan and Grigoriopol in the last quarter of the 18th century. Hovsep Arghutyan raised the question of the national

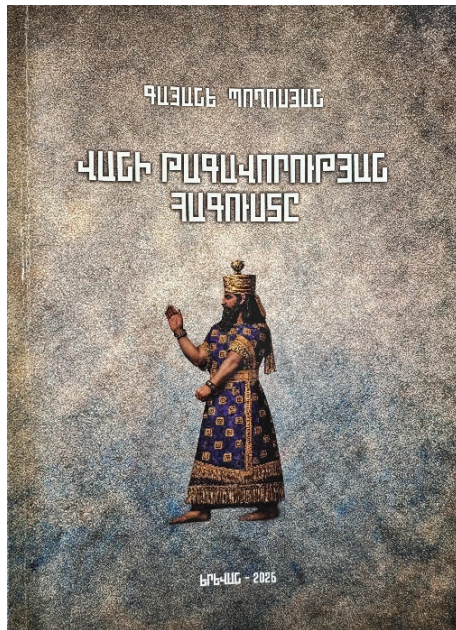
liberation struggle for Armenia from foreign yoke during Russian-Turkish wars. His activities promoted and development of the socio-economic life in New Nakhijevan and the other regions inhabited by Armenians. This work reveals the history of Armenian Apostolic church of Russia through the re-evaluation of the historical role of the Armenian Eparchy in Russia.



Petroglyphs of Armenia, Yerevan: Gitutyun publishing house, 2025, 520 p., 248 Tables, 7 maps (In Armenian).

by **Karen Tokhatyan**

In this monumental volume are collected and thoroughly studied all known petroglyphs from the territory of the Republic of Armenia and those from the historical Armenia. The study of this material is based on the principles of dating and systemizing the data by means of comparative analyses. The book could be useful for the specialists in the fields of archaeology, ethnography, history, calendar, writing systems and related disciplines.



Dress in Urartu, Yerevan: Gitutyun publishing house, 2026, 160 p., 24 photos (In Armenian).

by **Gayane Poghosyan**

In the monograph written by the art historian G.Poghosyan is studied typological and aesthetic peculiarities of the dress that is preserved on different Urartian archaeological artefacts. The author presents all known types of dresses of deities and representatives of various social groups, male and female dresses as well.