**Western Azerbaijan in Ancient Times**

After the fall of the Urartu kingdom in the early 6th century BC, a new phase began in the history of the population living in the territories of Azerbaijan around Irevan. This period, spanning from the 6th to the 4th centuries BC, covers the time from the decline of the Urartu kingdom to the eastern campaign of Alexander the Great. During this era emerged several new settlements of the ancient tribes living in the regions around Irevan. In the western part of Azerbaijan, particularly in the areas around Irevan, a considerable number of material and cultural artifacts related to the Scythian tribes, primarily engaged in seasonal nomadic animal pastoralism, have been discovered. Archaeological investigations have led to the discovery of their traces around Irevan, in the Lake Goycha basin, and in the highlands of Aghbaba, Pempek, and Shoryel.

The presence of abundant fresh water sources, rich flora and fauna, and natural resources in the areas around Irevan were the main factors that facilitated human habitation in this region since ancient times. Dolichocephalic skulls related to the ancestors of modern Azerbaijani Turks have been discovered in various regions such as Goycha, Shoryel, Irevan, Deraliyez, Gernibasar, and others in Western Azerbaijan. Many of the ancient settlement areas around Lake Goycha have an age of over four thousand years. In Shoryel, the discovery of dolichocephalic skulls in burial monuments from the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age confirms their affiliation with local Turkic tribes, rather than brachycephalic Armenoids. Information from ancient sources about the settlement of the Scythians in the modern Armenian territory finds its confirmation in the material and cultural artifacts discovered through archaeological excavations, as well as anthropological evidence.

In the Sirak Plain of Shoryel, many kurgans belonging to the Early Iron Age have been discovered, including those in the area of Qara Qala, near Lori Castle, and in the vicinity of Deliqardash village on the right bank of Ayricay River, as well as near Nereduz village. These areas were summer pastures for the productive tribes that laid the foundation of the Kura-Araxes civilization. Numerous dolichocephalic skulls related to the ancient ancestors of Azerbaijani Turks have been found in the burial monuments of this region. Research into the discovered dolichocephalic skulls from various locations across the present-day territory of Armenia confirms that the ancient Turkic tribes were the autochthonous population of the region. Notably, the Armenians, who call themselves “Hay,” possess the brachycephalic (round-headed) skull formation characteristic of the “Armenoid type.” However, the archaeological excavations in Armenia have revealed the presence of dolichocephalic skull formations among the most ancient inhabitants.

While Armenians might have migrated from Anatolia to the Caucasus, they were not the indigenous population of Anatolia either. The prominent Turkish anthropologist M.S. Şenyürek, through extensive research, concluded that Armenians were not the ancient inhabitants of Anatolia. In the 1930s, German researchers conducted studies in the Indus River basin, discovering skull formations related to the Armenoid type. This indicates that the Hays, whose homeland is Northern India, settled in Western Asia at a later stage. Hays did not live in South Caucasus, including around Irevan, either in the pre-BC millenniums or during the early centuries of the AD. From the west of the Caspian Sea to various regions of Azerbaijan, as well as in Kultəpə in Nakhchivan related to the VI-II millennia BCE, in the Xachbulaq highland in Dashkesen dating to the middle of the II millennium BCE, in Qarabagh mounds, and in Mingachevir dating to the early I millennium BCE, dolichocephalic skulls have been discovered. These skulls belong to the ancient Azerbaijani Turks who were the indigenous population of the regions around Irevan. Their anthropological characteristics and genetic makeup align with the same ethnic type. Strongholds such as Senger, Berk Qala, Dashlı Qala, Kolagiren, Yeridar, and Atamkhan in Western Azerbaijan were the most reliable locations where the local Turkic tribes defended against foreign attacks.

The Scythians occupy a prominent place among the ancient Turkic tribes living in the vicinity of Irevan. Archaeological excavations conducted here confirm that the Scythians were the most powerful factor in the military and political sphere in this region during the 7th-6th centuries BCE. In the area of Shamshadin, the discovery of burial monuments dating back to the 5th-4th centuries BCE, located 300 meters west of the Tovuzgala cyclopean fortress, and the findings of monuments in the northern-western part of the Azerbaijan Republic help us to define the borders of a unique cultural area in the region. In the Shorayel region, cultural examples found in the graves from the Post-Urartu period in the village of Chiragli share similarities with materials discovered in various places, including Kirmizitepe (Teishebaini Fortress) near Irevan, the village of Bash Gerni in the north of Irevan, the village of Beshdash (Barmaqsiz) in Borchali, as well as materials found in the areas of Ganja and Mingachevir. These findings, dating back to the 6th-4th centuries BCE, offer insight into the history of ancient Turkic tribes, particularly the Scythian-Sak tribes.

The distortion of the ancient history of the western region of Azerbaijan has been a primary focus of Armenian researchers. Their activities in this field are numerous and often misleading. The real historical facts can be revealed through cultural artifacts uncovered during archaeological excavations or information provided in written sources. Even the Urartian inscriptions from the 8th century BCE, upon careful examination, reveal that there is no connection between the ancient toponyms of Armenia and the region of Irevan and Lake Goycha (Sevan) in Azerbaijan. Irevan and the surrounding territories in Azerbaijan were part of the Scythian-Sak state, particularly the Ishquz and Inner Oghuz, around the middle of the 1st millennium BCE. Prominent scholar of ancient Eastern history, I.M. Dyakonov, shows that the northern border of the Median Empire passed through the north of the Araz River, which he refers to as the “territory of the former Scythian state.” He notes that the name Sakasena, associated with this region, means “Homeland of the Scythians” in Iranian languages. The discovery of numerous cultural artifacts related to the Scythian-Sak tribes in Azerbaijan and Eastern Anatolia region confirms their dominance in the military and political sphere.

Ancient sources contain a considerable amount of information about the place names related to the Scythian-Sak tribes in the territory of Azerbaijan. Strabo noted that Sakasena derived its name from the Sak tribe. Herodotus and Pliny the Elder mentioned that the Persians referred to the Scythians as Sak. In the 1st century, Pliny the Elder’s work “Natural History” mentioned that the country of the Sakasena (Sak) covered a large geographical area south of the Cyrus River (Kura River). He noted that the way of life, culture, and customs of eleven out of the eighteen provinces of the Parthian Empire, ruled by the Arsacid dynasty, were similar to those of the Scythian tribes.

Arrian, the author of a work about Alexander the Great’s campaigns, used the term “sakasenlar” or “those from the Sak country” to distinguish the Sak tribes living in the South Caucasus from the Scythian-Sak tribes around the Caspian Sea and Aral Sea. Many researchers suggest that the term “sakasen” means “similar to Sak.” Arrian also mentions the Albanians alongside the sakasenlar: “ἐπὶ δὲ Ἀλβανοὶ καὶ Σακεσ[ε]ῖναι”. This indicates their geographical proximity. The Sak Turkic tribes were primarily spread across the region until the Sak Plain, especially from Eastern Anatolia to the confluence of the Kura and Aras rivers. The Sak Plain, known as Balasakan in some sources, covered the flat part of modern-day Karabakh, including the Mil Plain. Arrian also records that the Medes fought alongside the Cadusi, Albanians and Sakasenes at the Battle of Gavgamela in October 331 BC: “Μήδων δὲ ἡγεῖτο Ἀτροπάτης ξυνετάττοντο δὲ Μήδοις Καδούσιοί τε καὶ Ἀλβανοὶ καὶ Σακεσῖναι” (The Medes were led by Atropates and were accompanied by kadusils, Albanians, and sakasens).

After the fall of the Achaemenid Empire, its territory became part of Alexander the Great’s empire. Following Alexander’s death, a struggle for central power emerged among his Diadochi, creating conditions for the revival of ancient state traditions in the region. During this time, the Scythian-Sak tribes played a crucial role in the restoration of statehood traditions both in the South Caucasus and Eastern Anatolia.

It’s important to note that the information about the Arsacid dynasty’s Turkic origins was first presented by M.J. Sen-Martin, a member of the “Société Asiatique” in France, in his book “Fragments on the History of the Arsacids,” published in Paris in 1850. He referred to sources that mentioned the Scythian-Sak tribes as Turanians and their lands as Turan. The name “Arsak” is mentioned in Armenian sources as “Arshakuni.” M. Horenatsi, considered the founder of “Armenian history,” wrote that this name was connected to the founder of the Parthian state, Arsak.

In April of 224, in the Battle of Hormozgan, the last ruler of the Parthian Empire, Vardanes V, was defeated by the Sasanian ruler I Ardeshir, who belonged to the Sasanian Persian dynasty. Prior to this, in the northern part of Azerbaijan, the state of Albania existed, and in the south, the region of Adurbadagan was ruled by the Arsacid dynasty. In the second half of the 3rd century, Sasanian sources mention not only states like Albania, Adurbadagan (Atropatene), and Iberia in the South Caucasus but also Sakan and Balasakan territories.

In the 1st century AD, M. Kalankatlı and M. Horenatsi wrote that the Albanian state extended from the south of the Aras River to the north, encompassing vast mountainous and flat lands up to the Hunan fortress. According to their information, the country of Albania was ruled by Aran, descendant of the Great Sak lineage and his brave successors. From 2nd century BC until the 3rd century AD, the coins of the Arsacid dynasty were widely spread in the territories of Azerbaijan and Eastern Anatolia. XIII-century Albanian historian Kirakos of Ganja and Byzantine historian L. Diakon in their works entitled “History” noted that Turkic tribes were known as Scythians in the Middle Ages as well as in ancient times.

Starting from the early 18th century, members of the Armenian Mechitarists movement, who had converted to Catholicism and aimed to promote anti-Turkish propaganda in Europe, began altering grabar sources and publishing them in Venice. From that period onwards, the works of authors like M. Horenatsi, L. Parples, Yeghishe, Koryun, and others were altered by the Mechitarists and published under the title “Hayos patmutyun” (“History of the Armenians”), which was then propagated in European countries as “Armenian history.” The ancient toponyms such as Sakasena, Balasakan (Sak Plain), and Maskut (Massagetae), mentioned in historical sources, have been associated with the Sak tribes, and currently, they correspond to regions like Sheki, Zakatala, the Sisakan (Qarakilsa) district in Zangezur, and the town of Sheki.

Thus, according to the cultural artifacts and written sources discovered as a result of archaeological excavations in the vicinity of Iravan, the western lands of Azerbaijan were part of the Scythian-Sak (Inner Oghuz) state, which was established in the 1st millennium BC, and after the fall of this state, its territory was called “Sakasena country”, as is known from ancient sources. Both written sources and cultural artifacts discovered as a result of archaeological excavations show that the ancient population of the Iravan suburbs, which is an important part of the history and geography of Azerbaijan, was made up of local Azerbaijani ethnic groups.

**Western Azerbaijan in the Middle Ages**

The events that took place in the Middle East region during the first half of the 3rd century had a significant impact on Western Azerbaijan as well. In the year 226, I Ardeshir, a member of the Sasanian dynasty, declared himself Shahanshah in the city of Ctesiphon, establishing the foundation of the Sasanian Empire. During his reign, the region of Adurbadagan (the southern part of historical Azerbaijani territories) and some territories inhabited by Scythian-Sak Turkic tribes were occupied. It should be noted that during the reign of I Ardeshir and his son I Shapur, the territory of the Turkic tribes was extended eastward to include Balochistan and was referred to as “Tūrān.” During this period, the ancient traditions of statehood among the local Turkic tribes continued to persist in a significant part of Azerbaijan. In the northern part of Azerbaijan, the population of the Albanian state and the Sak country mainly consisted of local Turkic tribes. The names of the territories that were part of Azerbaijan’s historical and geographical makeup were mentioned in I Shapur’s Ka’ba-ye Zartosht trilingual inscription as “Āδurbāyagān” (Ἀτροπατηνή), “Sagān,” “Arrān” (Ἀλβανίαν), and “Balāsagān.” It’s worth noting that the name of the Albanian state was mentioned as “Ardān” in the Aramaic text of I Shapur’s inscription, “Albania” in the Greek text, and “Arrān” in the Pahlavi text. The name of the country “Sagān” (=Segān) was only mentioned as “Μαχελονίαν” (Maxelonia) in the Greek text of the inscription.

In the 3rd century, the Sak country mentioned in Aramaic and Pahlavi texts encompassed the western territories of Azerbaijan, including the present-day territory of the Republic of Armenia. The name “Sakan” or “Sak country” used for this region in historical sources once again confirms that its indigenous population consisted of the Scythian-Sak Turkic tribes. Later, Armenians distorted the name of the southern part of the Sak country to Syunik or Sisakan. The inhabitants of Sakasena were Turkic tribes engaged in seasonal pastoralism, including the Scythian-Sak Turkic tribes. The region of Sakasena extended from the Mil Plain in the east, to Eastern Anatolia in the west, from the Goycha Lake basin in the north to the Araz River in the south. This region, known as Sakasena in ancient sources, was referred to as “Sakan” or the land of Sak from the 3rd century in Pahlavi texts. Anthropological evidence from the skulls discovered in the burial monuments of the early centuries AD around Iravan, the Goycha Lake area, Zangezur, and Derelyaz suggests that these regions were inhabited by the descendants of the earlier populations.

The ancient belief system of the indigenous Turkic tribes living in the areas around Iravan was paganism. Notably, the earliest Christian churches in the region were built on the sites of ancient indigenous worship places. It’s worth noting that Armenians still preserved remnants of the polytheistic era in the 3rd-4th centuries. In the early centuries of our era, when Christianity spread, Armenians not only accepted this religion but also engaged in acts of terror against Christian clergy.

After a portion of the indigenous Turkic tribes in the areas around Iravan embraced Christianity, they constructed numerous churches. It’s important to mention that the significant part of the Azerbaijani Turks’ historical traces- the Azman Oghuz and Kipchak graves, was later destroyed and distorted by Armenian vandals, with the remaining parts being used in various construction projects. The written stones of an early medieval Albanian-Kipchak church near the village of Jil close to Goycha Lake was destroyed by Armenians. In the east of Goycha Lake, a large Turkic cemetery from the early medieval period near the village of Naraduz is currently in a deteriorated state. Here, along with tombstones belonging to Kipchak Turkic Christian tribes, there are numerous memorial stones bearing evidence of the ancient history of the Oghuz tribes. The oldest monuments in the Naraduz tombs date back to the 5th century. In the vicinity of Iravan and its surrounding plateaus, the Shoreyel Plain, and the Goycha Lake basin, the depictions on memorial stones—horses, migrating to pastures, women weaving carpets—provide insights into the lifestyle and ethnic identity of these people.

In the early Middle Ages, the Albanian state was able to increase its military power with the support of the newly arrived Hun tribes. In 359, during the battle against the Romans near the Amid fortress (Diyarbakir), the Albanian ruler Urnair spoke together with the Sasanian Shah Shapur II and the White Huns Khagan Grumbat: “Ibi morati integrum biduum, cum sol tertius adfulsisset, cernebamus terrarum omnes ambitus subiectos, quos ὁριστένος appellamus, agminibus oppletos innumeris et antegressum regem vestis claritudine rutilantem. Quem iuxta laevus incedebat Grumbates Chionitarum rex novus aetate quidem media rugosisque membris sed mente quadam grandifica multisque victoriarum insignibus nobilis; dextra rex Albanorum pari loco atque honore sublimis; post duces varii auctoritate et potestatibus eminentes, quos ordinum omnium multitudo sequebatur ex vicinarum gentium roboribus lecta, ad tolerandam rerum asperitatem diuturnis casibus erudita” (“Having stayed there for two whole days, when the sun had risen for the third time, we saw in the lands around us (the horizon we call ὁρισκονάτων) the innumerable army of the king, marching forward and wearing bright clothes. Next to him on the left walked Grumbates, the new king of the Huns, indeed of middle age and of wrinkled limbs, but of a certain magnificence of mind, and of many noble victories; on the right, the king of the Albans, equal in rank and exalted in honor; after the various leaders, eminent in authority and power, who were followed by multitudes of all orders, chosen from the strength of the neighboring nations, trained to endure the roughness”).

It is known from history that Shapur II was defeated by the Huns long before this event, concluded a treaty with them and entered into an alliance. The Albanian ruler Urnair declared Christianity the official religion of his state. Armenians were known for their acts of terror against Christian clergy. In the IV-VI centuries, a large part of the western lands of Azerbaijan was part of the Albanian state. The integrity of Albanian history-geography is once again confirmed by the letter sent by the Armenian Catholicos Iohannes II (557-574 years) to the Albanian Catholicos Abbas (551-595). This letter shows that the provinces of Big Kogman (Kuman=Qipchak), Amaras, Girdiman, Balasakan (Beylagan), Sheki and Bahalat were not only internal territories of the Albanian country, but it even proved that it was officially recognized by Armenians.

Both the architectural style and the epigraphic texts of the Albanian religious monuments in the west of Azerbaijan have been seriously destroyed. It should be noted that the main goal of Armenian vandalism in the west of Azerbaijan (now Armenia) was to destroy the historical and cultural monuments belonging to the local Turkic clans. Here, the name of the Kipchak tribes can be found in a number of place names, historical and cultural monuments in the form of “archi”, “archu” (aruch), “hartes” and “hartesh”. Mainly, in Hamamli (Ashtarek) and Shoreyel districts, starting from the early medieval period Kipchak churches were widespread. The monastery known as “Kpchakaveng” (Qipchak church) in Shoreyel for centuries was named “Harichavank” by Armenians. This word originates from the pronunciation of the Turkish word “brother” in the form of “khartich/artich” in Armenian. In Hamamli (Ashtarek) district, the name of Aruch church is explained by the name of Kipchak Turks.

In the Hamamly (Astara) region located at the western border of Azerbaijan, most of the ancient churches were built by Christian clergies of Turkic origin. Here, the Alban-Kipchak temple, known as the Kazakh basilica, proves the existence of the Kazakh tribe, a branch of the Qipchak clan, from ancient times. Among the main Christian religious monuments of Hamamly (Ashtarek) we can mention the Church of the Holy Cross built in the 4th century, the Ashtarek monuments of the 7th-13th centuries (Ashtarek village), the Karmvravor church built by the Kipchak priests named Manas and Grigori in the 7th century, the Aruch church of the 7th century, V century church in the village of Ovanaveng, V century Kazakh basilica in the town of Abaran, V century church in the villlage of Ashnak. In most of these monuments, Armenian cross-stones (khachkars) have been placed later and inscriptions have been erased. A.L. Yakobson, who explored the early Christian monuments of the South Caucasus, noted that “the monumental early medieval architecture of Caucasian Albania held a prominent position in the Armenian territory.” The Holy Cross Church in Abaran city was significantly altered in 1877 under the pretext of restoration, and its inscriptions were destroyed. In the highlands of Hamamly (Astara), there are numerous statues of horses related to Turkic tribes. One of the ancient names encountered in the historical sources of the Goycha (Gegarkuni) region of Western Azerbaijan can be explained by the old Turkic word “Gögarku” (Göy arx) meaning “blu aryk”. Among the Alban-Kipchak churches in the Goycha area we can mention the Qizilvank church from the 9th-10th centuries (Qizilvank village), Qamishly (Qamishly/Qanly/Qanly Allahverdi village), Dashkend (Dashkend village), Kichik Mezre (Bala Mezre village), Eyrivank (Eyrivank village), Khudavank (Yukhari Adiyaman village), and Shogakavank (Choragyuk village) churches.

In Zangibasar region, the historical and cultural monuments depicting Kipchak cross-stones have been destroyed and their inscriptions scattered. The forgeries of the Armenian Gregorian Church here are more open and clear compared to other places. Among the Alban-Kipchak Christian monuments in Zangibasar we can mention a church from the 7th century (Shahab village), the Avujdar Monastery from the 10th-13th centuries, a church and a fortress from the 10th-13th centuries (Ursazor village), and the Aghca Monastery built in the 13th century (near Gilanlar village). Among the scattered Alban religious monuments in Sardarabad region, especially noteworthy are the basilica from the 5th century and the Blue Angels church from the 7th century. Like many other places in Western Azerbaijan, the so-called “Armenian religious monuments” here actually reflect the religious worldview of the Alban population before the spread of Christianity. Armenian historian N. Adonts mentions that there is limited information about the military, religious, and political life of the Albanians. There is no serious written source about the Armenians’ ownership of the Christian monuments in Zangezur. Armenians have converted some of these monuments into the Gregorian churches by making significant alterations and have completely destroyed the rest. As a result of Armenian vandalism, one of the Christian churches in such a deteriorated state is the Qizil (Red) Church. The widely spread Armenian name “Tanaat” actually originates from the Turkic word “Tanri Ata” (God Father) in accordance with Christian beliefs.

The historical account of the construction of the Qizil Church is only found in the 13th century book “Syunik History” written by Stefan Orbelian. As known, Alban ruler III Movses Vachagan initiated extensive construction works to promote Christianity. In the “Albanian History”, it is reported that he built as many churches as the number of the days in a year. Only the ruins of this Albanian temple, called the “Red Church” and visited by the local Turkish population near the villages of Jomardli and Arafsa, remain today. The monument was severely damaged by Armenians twice. However, due to the Armenian massacres committed by the Dasnak Andranik’s forces in July 1918, the local population was displaced, and the church fell into a ruinous state. This bloody event is known in our history as the Jomardli Massacre. In 1975, Armenians destroyed the walls of the temple, tore out the cuneiform inscription of Urartu ruler Argishti II and took it to the Iravan museum. It’s worth mentioning the “special contributions” of Armenian Urartologists like N. Arutyunyan in this regard. Representing Urartian monuments as ancient Armenian cultural samples by Armenian scholars, including N. Arutyunyan, has not held serious scientific value; it has only served to fuel chauvinistic tendencies. Serious scholarly research confirms that the mentioned inscriptions have no connection to Armenians but relate to a certain ruler’s attack on the region. It’s essential to note that there is no linguistic affiliation between the Urartian language and Armenian and no evidence of any level of inheritance between the two. Neither the Qizil Church nor the Urartian inscription found there has any connection to Armenians. The text of the inscription found in the Qizil Church reveals that this written source speaks of Urartian King II Argishti’s (714-680 BC) attack on the KURshu-lu-qu-ú region (Sünik/Zangezur).

At the beginning of the 7th century, there was a fierce struggle for hegemony between the Sassanids and the Eastern Roman Empire (Byzantium) in the South Caucasus, Near and Middle East regions. In this struggle, the fate of the battles was decided in many cases by the strength of the allies of the parties. As a result, the allies who joined the struggle themselves became the owners of the region, the Sassanids and Eastern Rome (Byzantium) were forced to make concessions to them in the region. In the mentioned period, one of the hot spots of the region was Iravan and its surrounding areas. In the sources, these areas are mentioned in different ways. In Arab sources, Iravan and its surrounding areas can be included mainly as Dabil (or Duvin) and Sisajan, and in Christian sources as Dvin and Syunik/Sisakan.

In the battles of 602-629, the region becomes a war zone between the Sassanids and Byzantium. In the first phase of the war, the Sassanid ruler Khosrow II (591-628) gained the upper hand and even managed to besiege Constantinople. Undoubtedly, Iravan and its surroundings had an important position in these battles. In 623, Irakli II captured Dabil and its surroundings, but he could not strengthen himself there. However, the Byzantine emperor Irakli II (610-641), who managed to establish an alliance with the Goyturk state, was able to gain an upper hand in the fight against the Sassanids. According to the peace agreement signed by Irakli with Jebu (Yabgu) Khan in 625/26, Turkish troops entered Albania in 627. Although Tiflis and its surroundings were not captured by the combined troops of Irakli II and Jebu during the first attack, later, Jebu Khan captured Tiflis, Iravan and its surroundings, and all of Albania during the second campaign. At that time, according to the peace treaty signed between the son of Jebu khagan Shad and Catholicos Viro, Albania was included in the borders of the Goyturk empire.

During the 30s of the 7th century, a new force that emerged in the Near and Middle East – the Caliphate – overturned the balance of all forces in the region. The Sassanids and Byzantium were extremely weakened as a result of their wars with each other. Especially the Sassanids could not last for a long time in front of this force. Thus, as a result of this struggle, the Sasanian state completely lost its existence, and Byzantium was deprived of its southern and eastern provinces.

The first marches of the caliphate to historical areas around Irevan were expeditionary. In the attack of Iyad bin Ghanem in 640/641, the Christian troops in and around Dabil were defeated, after this victory, the Caliphate troops returned to their positions.

As a result of Habib ibn Maslama’s campaigns, Dabil was peacefully brought under the control of the Caliphate during the reign of Caliph Osman (644-656). According to Belazuri, Habib signed an agreement with them on the condition that they pay certain taxes, treat Muslims kindly, and help them against the enemy. The lives, property, churches, monasteries, cities, and fortresses of the population were secured by this treaty. On the same terms, the people of Nakhchivan submitted peacefully to Habib, while the people of Sisajan first fought against Habib, and after being defeated, they signed a peace treaty with similar conditions.

During the reign of the Caliphate, famous generals such as Khuzayma ibn Hazim, Yazid ibn Mazyad, Muhammad ibn Yazid al-Sheybani ruled the region as governors. For the first time, Khuzeyma measured the lands between Nakhchivan and Dabil in order to collect taxes. It should be noted that Yazid ibn Mazyad and Muhammad ibn Yazid al-Sheybani left a great track in the history of Azerbaijan statehood and were representatives of the Mazyadis, the ruling dynasty of the Shirvanshahs state.

During the Caliphate administration, Dabil and its surroundings were combined into one administrative unit together with Shirak (Shoreyel) and Nakhchivan. In Arabic sources, the region of Sisajan (Syunik) is indicated in many cases as a part of the region of Arran. Belazuri stated that these lands belonged to the Khazar Turks before the Arabs. Yaqubi noted that the Khazars ruled the South Caucasus before the Arabs, and that they had a caliph named Yezid Balash in Arran, Georgia, Busfurrajan and Sisajan.

At the beginning of the 9th century, Iravan and its surrounding regions were closely involved in Babak’s freedom struggle against Arab oppression. The Albanian noble families here, especially Syunik governer Sahl ibn Sunbat from the Albanian Mehran dynasty, became his close allies. Later, in order to protect his public position, Sahl ibn Sunbat decided to part ways with Babek. In the later period, Sahl ibn Sunbat arrested Babek and handed him over to the Arabs, and in return he became the administrator of the South Caucasus for a period of time.

The Babak movement weakened the power of the Abbasid caliphate in the region and restored the traditions of statehood in Azerbaijan. It was the result of this that from the 9th century, dynasties such as the Sajoguls, Shirvanshahs, Salaris, Shaddadis, and Ravvadis began to rule Azerbaijan as a whole, and sometimes certain regions of Azerbaijan.

It is known from Tabari that in 893, a big earthquake occurred in Dabil, near Iravan, and a large part of the city’s population died in this earthquake.

Sacogullari from these states successfully fought against the invasion marches of the neighboring Christian rulers and crushed their usurping policies. Although the ruler Yusuf ibn Abu Saj (901–928) warned Sumbat (890–914), who occupied Dabil at that time, to submit to the central authority, it had no effect. Finally, in 908, he defeated Sumbat in Yusif Nig area, took his son Musheg to Dvin and poisoned him to death. In 915, he executed Sumbat by hanging in Dabil.

Even after this period, the Christian feudal lords in the western borders of the Sajogul family posed a threat, tried to become independent by calling the Byzantine state for help, and wanted to get rid of the dependency. In one such attempt, the ruler of Sacoglu, Muflih, destroyed the Byzantine forces near Khilat in 931 and restored the security of the western borders of Azerbaijan.

After the fall of the Saji state, Irean and the surrounding regions came under the rule of the Shaddadis in 951. During the captivity of Salari Marzban ibn Muhammad (941-957), the people of Dabil invited Muhammad ibn Shaddad to the city to fight against the Christians and the surrounding pagans, and entrusted him with the defense of the city. Muhammad became famous in a short time due to his victories over the Christians, and built a new fortress called Tell-Fazli around Dabil. But later, when the Salaris regained their power here, the Shaddadis were forced to leave Dabil.

In 971, the Shaddadis were invited to Ganja, where they strengthened themselves and succeeded in subduing the surrounding regions. During the reign of Fazl I (985–1031), Irevan and its surroundings, as well as the city of Dabil, which was the ancestral home of the Shaddadis, were again included under the rule of the Shaddadis. With Dabil as the center, it is estimated that Irevan and its surroundings were ruled semi-independently until Abulasvar Shavur came to power on the Shaddadi throne (1022–1049). During his administration, he successfully defended that region from the usurping policy of Christian feudal lords in the west. This dual power in Shaddad continued even after Shavur seized the main throne. Thus, after Shavur ascended the throne in Ganja, he entrusted the administration of Dabil to his son Abanesr Iskandar in 1053/54.

Starting from the 11th century, the Seljuk Oghuz tribes began to move into Azerbaijan. The arrival of the Seljuk Oghuz tribes was warmly welcomed by the Azerbaijani population. For them, the Oghuz were reliable allies against the Byzantine Empire and its allies, which constantly threatened the region. Therefore, Azerbaijani rulers had sermons read in the name of Seljuk sultan Tughril. The prolonged rule of Shahrukh in and around Iravan and his resistance against the Byzantine and allied forces did not escape from the attention of Seljuk Sultan Alp Arslan. This is why Alp Arslan, in 1065, granted the territories he captured during his campaign against the Byzantine Empire to Shahrukh’s son, Shahvar.

From this time until the establishment of the Atabeg state, Irevan and its surroundings remained under the control of the Shaddadids. Later, Oghuz emirs began to rule the region. It is known that the region was under the rule of Amir Qaraja in 1177. He ruled these lands under the leadership of Atabeg ruler Qizil Arslan (1186-1191) and pacified the disputes in the region. Amir Qaraja was later defeated and killed in a battle against a Muslim emir. Taking advantage of this, Christian feudal lords attacked Dabil in 1182, committing a massacre among the Muslim population. As a result of this massacre, the ruler of Dabil, Alişir, lost both his son and his wife.

Despite the treacherous attacks on Dabil, the Atabeg state quickly regained control over Iravan and its surroundings. However, after the death of Atabeg Qizil Arslan, internal conflicts weakened central authority. As a result, Iravan and its surroundings came under the rule of the Mkharqrdzeli brothers from Abkhazia-Kartli in 1203. In 1225, Khwarezmshah Jalal ad-Din liberated the region from the occupation forces, but the emergence of a new power, the Mongols, prevented his rule from lasting long in the region.

With the establishment of the Ilkhanate in the mid-13th century, the territories around Iravan in Azerbaijan remained within the sphere of influence of this state. During this period, the name “Azerbaijan” referred to a central province of this state, covering a vast area. The territories around Iravan were administratively part of the Nakhchivan sanjak, according to sources. According to Hafiz Abru, the Nakhchivan sanjak became one of the nine sanjaks of Azerbaijan (considering South Azerbaijan) at that time. Its eastern borders extended from Ganja to Surmeli. According to information provided by Hafiz Abru and Dovletshah Samarqandi, the Nakhchivan sanjak covered a vast area. It bordered the Armenian province in the west and encompassed a large area from Makudan to Qapan mountains in the east. In fact, the Nakhchivan sanjak united the territories on both sides of the Araz River, including Dabil (Dvin) city, and encompassed a wide area. Arab geographer Yaqut al-Hamawi wrote: “Dvin is located in the Arran province, at the far borders of Azerbaijan.”

Based on the information provided by Abu Bakr al-Qutbi al-Ahrari in 1338, V.Z. Piriyev writes that in 1338, the regions of Sharur and Dabil were ruled by Nacibey, the son of Akanji. Due to the fact that the territories up to Surmali in the west were included in the Nakhchivan district, the areas around Irevan were part of the Nakhchivan district during the Elkhanis and Jalairis periods.

In the last quarter of the 14th century, the Karagoyunlu tribe began to rise in the western region of Azerbaijan in Nakhchivan, Surmeli and Khoi regions. The Sadli tribe was one of the 13 tribes included in the Karagoyunlu tribe union. The Sadli tribe had a great role in the Karagoyunlu tribe union. This tribe got its name from the name of a gentleman named Saad in the 14th century. Hafiz Ebru noted that the Sadli tribe, one of the main tribes of the Karagoyun people, lived in Nakhchivan and the Surmeli region from ancient times. Foma Metsopski also reported about a brave Turkmen gentleman named Saad at the end of the 14th century. According to the information provided by Hafiz Abru and Dovlatshah Samarkandi, the Sadli people were cousins with the rulers of Garagoyunlu. Therefore, emirs from this tribe played an important role in the creation and strengthening of the Karagoyunlu state of Azerbaijan.

In the late 14th century and the beginning of the 15th century, the ancient homeland of the Sadi tribe- the territory of Nakhchivan and Surmeli, came under the rule of the Sadi tribe, led by Amir Sadi. This is why the territory where the Sadi tribe lived is known as “Chukhursad.” All scholarly views about the name of the Chukhursad region confirm that the name of the region was derived from the names of the ancient Azerbaijani Turkic tribes. This undeniable historical fact highlights that one of the Azerbaijani tribes, the Sadi tribe, was part of the Akkoyunlu tribal union. In the source of the period, when talking about Amir Teymur’s campaigns, it is mentioned that Amir Saad was the ruler of Chukhursad.

Sadli ruler Amir Saad, who died in 1411, was buried near Irevan. After the death of Amir Saad, the ruler of Chukhursad province was his son Pir Huseyn. On October 11, 1413, his son Pir Huseyn erected a mausoleum over his father’s grave and wrote an Arabic text. During the time of Pir Huseyn, the administrative center of Sadi was Irevan. L. Bretanitsky called the Amir Saad mausoleum a unique form of “transition” from the brick architecture form of Momina-khatun mausoleum to stone architecture.

The first part of the inscription in the Arabic language of the mausoleum begins with the name of the Merciful God and the 255th verse of Surah al-Baqara of the “Quran”, which is found in many tombs. Then the names of a number of historical figures of the Karagoyunlu state of Azerbaijan are mentioned. It is written in the inscription: “This sacred vault was built by the order of Pir Huseyn, the son of Amir Saad, who is the greatest, the most beautiful, the most noble, the supporter of good-natured kings and sultans, the defender of the poor and the needed, the protege of the intelligent and those who are thirsty for knowledge, the protecter of the impoverished and the sufferers. Let him have a fair way of governing. May Amir Saad rest in peace. May God perpetuate the reign of the great king, the noble khagan, the king of kings of the East and the West, the pillar of the state and religion, Pir Budag Khan and Yusif Noya. Hijri 816, 15th of the Rajab month.” This date coincides with October 11, 1413 according to the Christian calendar.

Armenian sources confirm that Chukhursad is the historical land of Azerbaijan. Armenian sources call this place “Sahata pos” – “Hollow of the Sahad” or “Yerkin Sahar” – “Country of the Sahar”.

The toponym Chukhursad was mentioned in official documents for the first time in 1428 in an Arabic-language document related to the ownership of the village of Uchkilsa. From the purchase and sale document dated November 18, 1428, it can be seen that the said village was sold to Bishop Grigor by Sheikh Muhammad ibn-Dehkhuda on behalf of Muluk Khatun, the daughter of Pir Huseyn Sadli. In that document, written in Arabic, the witnesses also called themselves “Sadli”. In the Persian-language sources, the name of Chukhursad was found for the first time in the work “Kitabi-Diyarbakriya” by Abu Bakr Tehrani. Faruk Sumer writes about this: “… According to my conclusion after long research, the area called Chukhursad by Iranian authors was a region in the western and southwestern part of Irevan. In Ottoman sources, it is named as “Saad hollow”. This area extended to the confluence of Araz and Arpachay in the west, and to Araz in the south.”

As mentioned above, Surmeli, which covers the areas from the confluence of Arpachay with Araz to Nakhchivan and the right bank of Araz to Aghridagh, was the ancient home of the Sadli tribe. In the 15th century, the valley surrounding the bank of Araz and between the Aghridagh and Alagoz mountains was also under the control of the Sadli. The Teymuri historian Hafiz Ebru Sultan, while talking about Shahrukh’s marches to Azerbaijan, noted that Nakhchivan and Surmali region were the ancient home of the Sadli tribe. This fact is confirmed by Timurid historian Abdurrazzaq Samarkandi in his work “Matlus-saadeyn wa majmaul-bahrain”.

It should be noted that the village of Jafarabad, where the tomb of Amir Saad is located, was later separated from the ancient village of Goykumbat, which is adjacent to it. Therefore, the tomb of Amir Saad fell on the territory of the newly formed Jafarabad village. The name of Goykumbat village was related to the blue dome of Amir Saad’s mausoleum located in its territory. The name of this village is mentioned as Goygunbez in some sources. The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Armenian SSR changed the name of Jafarabad village, which is included in the administrative-territorial division of Zangibasar (Masis) district, to “Argavand” by the decision dated April 4, 1946, and the name of Goykumbat village was changed to “Gekhanist” on December 1, 1949.

In the village of Goykumbat, there was a cemetery of the leaders of the Sadli tribe, which was part of the Garagoyunlu tribe. There were several tombs in that cemetery, only one of which – the tomb of Amir Saad has survived to this day.

A year after the death of Amir Teymur, the leader of the Karagoyunlu tribe, Gara Yusif, in October 1406, defeated Abu Bakr in the territory of Chukhursad, west of Nakhchivan, on the banks of the Araz River and forced him to flee. Pir Huseyn Sadli led the right wing of Gara Yusif’s army in that battle. As a result of the victory, the rule of Timurids in the region was ended. Gara Yusif entrusted the management of the region to Pir Huseyn, the head of the Sadli tribe and the son of Amir Saad, who ruled the region since the end of the 14th century. On April 21, 1408, Pir Huseyn Sadli led the left wing of the Gara Yusif’s army in a decisive battle against the Timurids in Sarrud near Tabriz. His brother Pir Muhammad was also in that wing. Gara Yusif’s great victory in the battle with the Timurids led to the end of the Timurid rule in Azerbaijan and the creation of the Karagoyunlu state of Azerbaijan with Tabriz as its capital. In 1410, Pir Huseyn Sadli led the right wing of Gara Yusif’s army in the battle with Sultan Ahmad Jalairi in Asad village near Tabriz. His brother, Pir Muhammad Sadli, along with other Karagoyunlu emirs, also took part in that wing.

In 1410, when the Karagoyunlus, an Azerbaijani dynasty, came to power in Tabriz, the Sadlis were the owners of the territories around Irevan and became the main support of the newly formed state.

Pir Huseyn Sadli and his brother Pir Muhammad Sadli played an important role in the creation and strengthening of the Karagoyunlu state of Azerbaijan. In November 1420, Sultan Shahrukh took advantage of the death of Kara Yusif and strengthened himself in Azerbaijan. Abubakr Tehrani writes that it was at this time that “Isfahan Bey (son of Gara Yusif) was put on the throne of the Sadli community in Azerbaijan. He captured the treasury and the Bayazid fortress. He wintered in Chukhursad.” As it can be seen, the Sadli tribe, which played a fundamental role in the creation of the Karagoyunlu state, formed its main support even in the most difficult times of the state. The areas surrounding Irevan, including the administration of Chukhursad province, were entrusted to them by the central government as the hereditary property of the Sadli tribe for a long time.

Iskandar, who came to the throne of Garagoyunlu in 1420, removed the successors of Amir Pir Huseyn from the administration of the province because they sided with his rival for the throne, his brother Abu Said, and directly subordinated Chukhursad’s administration to the central government. At that time, Chukhursad province bordered Georgia in the north (Kartli kingdom after Georgia was divided in 1469), Nakhchivan, Gafan and Karabakh provinces in the east, Samskhe-Saatabago, Pasin, Alashgird and Bayazid in the west, and Maku in the south.

At the end of July 1421, in the battle between Karagoyunlu Kara Iskandar and the Timurid ruler Shahrukh, Pir Huseyn Sadli led the right wing of the Karagoyunlu army, and his son Pir Ghaib, his brothers Pir Uweis and Pir Muhammad took part in that wing. As the battle ended with the defeat of the Karagoyunlu, Pir Muhammad Sadli, Pir Uweis and Pir Ghayib were captured. Hasan Bey Rumlu writes that “Amir Ibrahim Jahanshah showed bravery on the left flank and captured Pir Huseyn Bey Sadli, one of Mirza Iskandar’s great amirs.” According to the author of “History of the Qizilbash”, Pir Huseyn Sadli was killed by the servants of Timurid ruler Shahrukh in the Battle of Alashgird.

After the assassination of Pir Hussain Sadli, his sons (Pir Qaib and Abdul) were still closely involved in the management of their hereditary estates. During the second march of Timurid ruler Shahrukh to Azerbaijan in 1429, Karagoyunlu ruler Kara Iskander was defeated in the battle of Salmas and had to retreat to Eastern Anatolia. Sultan Shahrukh returned by giving the Karagoyunlu throne to Abu Said, the youngest son of Kara Yusif, and Abu Said began to rule the state as a vassal of Sultan Shahrukh. Because he was weak-willed, a serious struggle arose between the Karagoyunlu emirs. Taking advantage of the situation, Kara Iskander killed his brother Abu Said in 1431 and regained power with the help of dissatisfied emirs.

It seems that it was during this period that Kara Iskander punished one of the Sadli emirs, Pir Qaib Abdul, who had defended his brother Abu Said when he supressed the rebellious emirs. Kara Iskander tried to limit their rights and strengthen the central authority by punishing the rebellious emirs. The Sadli emirs were removed from Chukhursad’s administration, and the province was directly administered by the central Diwan. B. A. Budagov and G. A. Geibullayev, among the researchers, point out that there are settlements called Saatli in Borchali and Karabakh, and write that in 1431, after Kara Iskander broke the authority of the Sadli emirs in Chukhursad, a part of the Sadli people moved to Gazakh district, and later to Karabakh.

Although the measures taken by Kara Iskander to strengthen the central authority weakened the position of the Sadli in Chukhursad, the Sadli emirs were closely involved in the management of other provinces of the state. Huseyn Sadli was the ruler of Astrabad during Jahanshah’s reign. It is interesting that during the time of Kara Iskander, the priests of the Uchkilsa monastery located in Chukhursad started to buy the surrounding villages from the Sadli community. It can be seen from the purchase and sale documents that Amir Rustam, who converted to Islam, had a great role in strengthening the central power of Kara Iskander. Emir Rustam became Gara Iskander’s closest comrade-in-arms after the victory over his brother Abu Said, so he gave him large retinues in Chukhursad. It seems that it was during this period that Amir Rustam took advantage of the situation and bought certain villages located in the Karpi district of Chukhursad province of Azerbaijan and endowed the Uchkilsa monastery, as stated in the sales documents.

The killing of Kara Iskandar’s brother Abu Said and the restoration of the former glory of the Karagoyunlu state led to the next march of Shahrukh, the ruler of Timurid, to Azerbaijan. When he left Karabakh and came to Ujan in May 1436, he gave the rulership of Azerbaijan to Jahanshah under the condition of accepting vassalage.

When Timurid Sultan left Azerbaijan, Iskandar returned to Azerbaijan from the Ottoman lands where he had taken refuge. Abu Bakr Tehrani writes that “as a result of Iskander’s oppression of the army and the population, the leaders of the Azerbaijani fortresses, who hated him, gave all other fortresses to Jahanshah Mirza, except the Alinja fortress.” But at that time Alinja fortress and Nakhchivan remained under the control of forces loyal to Iskander.

When Iskandar was in Alinja fortress, his son Shah Gubad decided to kill his father, entered Iskander’s bedroom with forty people and killed him, captured the treasure and distributed some of it to the army and told this event to his uncle Jahanshah. Half of the treasury, Avnik fortress and Pasin province were given to him by Jahanshah. With that, the Alinja fortress came under the control of Jahanshah.

During the reign of Jahanshah, an event took place in the history of Chukhursad province, which later caused extremely serious problems for all of Azerbaijan: with the permission of Jahanshah, in 1441, the seat of the Armenian Catholicos was moved from Sis in Cilicia to Uchkilsa monastery near Iravan. This created favorable conditions for Armenian missionaries spreading Gregorianism in the South Caucasus. The Karagoyunlu rulers protected the Armenian Catholicos and gave them freedom. Since then, Uchkilsa monastery, located in Chukhursad region of Azerbaijan, has become the religious center of all Armenians.

After Karagoyunlu, the position of Uchkilsa Catholicos, who sided with Aggoyunlu, became stronger. Thus, with the permission of the rulers of Garagoyunlu and Aggoyunlu, Armenian churches were built in Azerbaijan.

**Beylerbeylik of Chukhursaad**

**The formation of the city of Iravan and the Chukhursad beylerbeylik of the Safavid state**

At the beginning of the 16th century, the centralized Safavid state of Azerbaijan (1501-1736) was established with the city of Tabriz as its center. Like other regions of Azerbaijan, Chukhursad was included in the Safavid state. In the 30s of the 16th century, the territory of the Safavid state of Azerbaijan was administratively divided into 13 provinces – beylerbeyliks. One of them was Chukhursad, whose center was the city of Iravan (Ravan). It included the provinces of Maku, Sadarak, Nakhchivan (from the beginning of the 17th century), Zaruzbila, Bayazid Castle, lands belonging to the Shadili and Dumbuli tribes, and Magazberd.

**Iravan city, the center of Chukhursad province**

The formation and development of Iravan as a city is mentioned by sources at the beginning of the 16th century. One of the most important factors that determined this historical event and led to Iravan gaining the status of the central city of Chukhursad province was the construction of a strong fortress here. Among the Ottoman sources, which contain valuable information on various aspects of the city’s structure and history, Evliya Chelebi’s “Book of Travel” recorded information about the construction of the Iravan Castle, beginning with the words “A description of the Ravan Castle of Azerbaijan – Khoja Can city”: “In the year 810 (1407/1408), a merchant named Timuri-binur Khan, Khoja Jani-Lahicani, set foot on this land of Ravan, settled in this fertile land with the smell of pure amber, planted various kinds of rice and collected the harvest, and eventually it became a big settlement. After that, in the year 915 (1509/1510), Shah of Iran (Azerbaijani Safavid – ed.) Ismail Shah ordered the construction of a fortress to a khan named Ravangulu, who completed the fortress in seven years, which is called Ravan.”

The fortress built by Ravangulu Khan was originally intended to strengthen the city of Iravan as the center of Chukhursad Beylerbey, one of the administrative units of the Safavid state of Azerbaijan. Since the city of Iravan is located in a favorable geographical position, it became the main attack target of the Ottoman army during the Safavid-Ottoman wars. Shah Ismail paid special attention to its strengthening and agreed to build a stone and brick fortress on the banks of the Zangi River.

At the beginning of the 16th century, the existence of Chukhursad Beylerbey as one of the administrative territorial units of the Safavid state of Azerbaijan is confirmed by the decree of Shah Ismail I dated August 26, 1505. In the decree, the ruler, darga and kalantar of Chukhursad were given an instruction prohibiting the divan officials from collecting various taxes and duties from the Kyzilvang monastery in the Garni district.

**The city of Iravan during the Safavid-Ottoman wars**

Starting from the beginning of the 16th century, the most difficult period in the history of Chukhursad Beylerbey located on the Safavid-Ottoman border began. The territory of Beylerbey and its central city, Iravan, became a battlefield between two brother Turkish empires, the Safavids and the Ottomans, who fought bloody wars with each other, and changed hands many times.

Heydar Chalabi, a participant in the Chaldiran War of 1514, described the looting of the city of Iravan and its surroundings by the Ottoman army under the leadership of Sultan Selim in his diary “Chaldiran Ruznamesi”. The author writes: “On Wednesday, Rajab 29 (September 20, 1514), the Araz River was crossed and Kasik Kunbez on the upper side of Alinja Castle was reached. The city of Nakhchivan was entered on Thursday, its inhabitants were looted because they were kizilbash, on Friday 1st Shaban (September 22) they reached the ruins of the city of Karabakh (also called Western Karabakh or Nakhchivan Karabakh). On the next day, they went to “Ahmadbey-Zaviyasi” of Nakhchivan, and on the next day, they passed by “Haji Lalali” in Chukhursad (Ravan) on the next day, and settled between “Big Vedi” and “Kichik Vedi” villages. On September 26, crossing the Zangi River (flowing from Iravan) in the vicinity of Chukhursad, leaving the village of Devali Omar and the village of Kechi Veli behind, they reached the vicinity of the city of Iravan. They stayed here the next day, and the city of Iravan was attacked and looted at midnight. On the 7th of Shaban, a camp was set up in “Eight apartments” passing through Uchkilsa located in Chukhursad. Aghrıdag was visible both on the left and behind. Another Ottoman source confirms the mentioned event – the capture and plundering of the city of Iravan, the center of Chukhursad Beylerbey by the Ottoman sultan, and the razing of the fortress.

The administration of Chukhursad Beylerbey, which is the central city of Iravan, was entrusted to Rumlu, Ustajli and Qajar emirs for a long time. Shah Ismail I entrusted the collection of tiyuldar fee of Chukhursad province to the influential Rumlu family. One of the famous emirs of this generation was Div Sultan Rumlu. During the reign of Shah Ismail I, he was the tutor and guardian of Tahmasib Mirza, the son of the Shah. In 1515, Div Sultan Rumlu, who was appointed the ruler of Chukhursad by the Shah’s decree, carried out remarkable construction works in Iravan. J. Charden writes that in front of the city of Iravan there is a big bazaar, and near it there is an ancient mosque built of bricks and currently (1673 – ed.) in ruins. That mosque is called “Div Sultan Mosque” after the person who laid its foundation.

Apparently, during the reign of Shah Ismail I, special attention was paid to the improvement and strengthening of Iravan, which is important from a military and strategic point of view. However, the city and fortress of Iravan were later repeatedly attacked by the Ottomans. All this led to the construction of two weapons manufacturing facilities in the Iravan province by order of the Shah to resist the Ottomans and carry out operations. Beylerbey of Iravan also had the right to issue coins.

As mentioned above, the region of Chukhursad (Iravan) was considered the tiyul (not hereditory) estates of Div Sultan Rumlu, and due to his personal ability, he was promoted to the position of emir-ul-umra. Shah I Tahmasib, who came to power at the age of 10 in 1524, wrote in his tazkira: “Div Sultan Rumlu was my tutor. I made Sultan Mustafa, known as Kopek Sultan, who came to power instead of his brother Chayan sultan, commander in chief along with Div Sultan.” Hasan Bey Rumlu also confirms that when Shah Tahmasib I came to power, he entrusted the state affairs to Div Sultan Rumlu. Referring to Ottoman sources, F. Sumer writes that Shah Ismail I bequeathed to the emirs on the eve of his death that they must obey the Div sultan and not break his word. Despite this, Shah I Tahmasib, under the pressure of the ustajs, made Kopek Sultan commander in chief, and Div sultan was dissatisfied with this. This dissatisfaction led to an armed struggle between them. As a result, Köpek sultan Ustajli and his supporters were defeated and took refuge in the residence of Rasht ruler in Gilan. They moved on Ardabil the following year with the help of the ruler of Rasht.

In June 1527, when Shah Tahmasib I started a campaign to defeat the attack of the Uzbeks on Khorasan, the ustajli emirs marched from Rasht to Ardabil, defeated and killed the ruler Badincan sultan Rumlu. They went from Ardabil to “Chukhursad, where the army of Div Sultan was stationed and the Rumlu tribe settled. When Div sultan and Chukha sultan heard this news, they gave up going to Khorasan, and on Friday, the 8th of Ramadan (June 8, 1527), attacked from Savujbulak and went to Azerbaijan… On Friday, the 29th of Ramadan (June 29, 1527) in Arpachay district of Nakhchivan they reached them and fought fiercely. Ustajs were defeated, Kopek sultan was killed.”

When Shah I Tahmasib’s army moved from Savujbulag and reached Sultaniya waiting for the emirs to join, Div Sultan Rumlu and Chukha Sultan also joined him, and on July 26, 1527, Div Sultan Rumlu was killed by the order of Chukha Sultan. His army and provincial officials were assigned to Suleyman bey Rumlu and he was given the nickname Suleyman Sultan. Thus, since 1527, Chukhursad Beylerbey was placed under the administration of Suleyman Sultan Rumlu.

Apparently, in the first half of the 16th century, Beylerbeylik of Chukhursad, the center of which was the city of Iravan, was ruled by well-known emirs from the Rum tribe. After Div sultan Rumlu, Beylerbeylik was ruled by Suleyman sultan Rumlu, and then Huseynkhan sultan Rumlu. During the campaigns of the Ottoman sultan Suleiman the Magnificent to Azerbaijan in 1534-1535, the ruler of Chukhursad was Suleiman Sultan Rumlu. In the sources of that period, it is mentioned that during the rebellion of Algas Mirza against Shah I Tahmasib in 1547 and during the march of Ottoman Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent to Azerbaijan in 1548, the ruler of Chukhursad was Huseynkhan Sultan Rumlu.

In 1548, , the ruler of Van, “a rebellious and seditious person, Iskender Pasha gathered his troops in Kurdistan and marched to Chukhursad. The ruler of Chukhursad Huseynkhan sultan did not want to fight due to the fact that Rumlu’s mulazims (corresponding to the current rank of lieutenant – ed.) were in small numbers and scattered. Only his emir Tabat Aga was sent with 20 people for intelligence assessment. They were defeated in the battle with Iskender Pasha and 5 people were killed. Tabat Aga returned. Iskander Pasha entered Iravan and burned the bazaar, then retreated to Van fortress. Huseynkhan Sultan followed them and killed 10 people. When this news reached the king, who is the savior of religion, Charandab Sultan Shamli was sent to Chukhursad to help him.”

At the beginning of 1552, Iskender Pasha, who was the ruler of Erzurum, entered the borders of the Safavids from the territory of Khoy, and then came back to Chukhursad, burned the Iravan city bazaar, and returned. Erzurum pasha proudly called himself “the ruler of Shirvan and Georgia” in his threatening letters to the emirs of Qilzilbash.

In such a situation, Shah Tahmasib I “decided to punish Iskender Pasha, the proud and headstrong ruler of Erzurum.” The Shah sent an army against him under the leadership of his son Ismail Mirza. Amirs such as Karabakh ruler Shahverdi Sultan Ziyad oglu, Chukhursad ruler Shahgulu Sultan Ustajli, Badr Khan Ustajli and Muhammad Khan Mosullu participated in this march. Qizilbash army won an important victory in the battle for Erzurum. Prominent Ottoman nobles, Trabzon ruler Mustafa Bey, Marash ruler Kabir Isa, Sultan’s servant Muhammad Bey, Iskender Pasha’s brother Ramazan Bey, Malatya ruler Kheyraddin Bey and many others were captured. The Safavid army’s destruction of of the Ottoman citis – Bitlis, Vostan, Adiljavaz, Archish, Mush and Pasi – was the excuse for the Ottoman sultan’s next march to Azerbaijan.

During Sultan Suleiman’s IV march to Azerbaijan – on July 10, 1554, the Ottoman army plundered the region of Shoreyel and Sharabkhana and approached Iravan. The Ottoman army, which captured the city on July 18, completely looted it, the palaces belonging to Shah Tahmasib, his son and the emirs were destroyed, gardens were razed to the ground. In the city, the “Sultaniyya Garden” belonging to the Shah was completely destroyed.

This march of Sultan Suleiman, known as Nakhchivan trip, did not bring any result like the previous marches. Despite all the threats of the Ottoman sultan, the Safavid Shah refrained from entering into an open battle with him, he prevented the Ottoman army from advancing into the interior of the country with the “devastated territory” tactic he implemented. Faced with acute food shortage, the Ottoman sultan left Nakhchivan, which he had set fire to in advance, on July 30 and returned to Erzurum. Qizilbash troops followed the retreating Ottomans into Ottoman territory.

After making sure that the attempts to invade Azerbaijan did not work, Sultan Suleiman agreed to start peace negotiations with the Safavids. According to the peace treaty signed in Amasya on June 1, 1555, Chukhursad Beylerbey, including the city of Iravan, remained part of the Safavid state of Azerbaijan.

It should be noted that Chukhursad Beylerbeylik was ruled by Shahgulu Sultan Ustajli, who had great influence in the Safavid court in 1551-1573. Shahgulu Sultan’s trip to Istanbul in 1567 as an envoy of Shah Tahmasib I to congratulate Sultan Selim II’s accession to the throne with valuable gifts and a thousand-person delegation shows that he was closely involved in important state affairs. The delegation was welcomed by Piyale Pasha in Istanbul and placed in Khanjarli Sultan palace. In February 1568, Shahgulu Sultan Ustajli was brought to the palace of Sultan Selim II, who was wintering in Edirne. The Safavid envoy was received by the Sultan after meeting with Shamsi Ahmed Pasha and the ministers. After a banquet was given in honor of the envoy, he was presented with a letter confirming the peace previously concluded between the parties and allowed to return, thereby preserving the relations between the two states.

At the end of the reign of Shah I Tahmasib, Muhammad Khan Tohmaq Ustacli, the son of Shahgulu Sultan Ustajli became the beylerbey of Chukhursad. In 1576, a large delegation was sent to Istanbul under his leadership. Iskender Bey Munshi writes about this: “… Since the king of Rum, Selim Khan, died and his son Sultan Murad sat on the throne, the Shah wanted to send one of the wise and visionary great emirs to the embassy of Rum to express his condolences on the death of Sultan Selim and to congratulate Sultan Murad on accession to the throne… The honorable ruler…sent Chukhursad ruler Muhammad Khan Tohmaq, one of the respected emirs of the Ustajli tribe, to perform this service.”

After the death of Shah I Tahmasib in May 1576, his son Ismayil Mirza, who was imprisoned in the Qahgaha fortress, was released from prison and was proclaimed king in Qazvin in August of the same year. After consolidating his power, Shah Ismail II with the help of his cousin Abu Turab Mirza got killed Sarı Lachin and Allahgulu Bey, the brothers of Tohmaq Khan, who had been ambassadors in Istanbul since the time of Shah Tahmasib. These murders were continued with the removal of ustajli emirs. At that time, Tohmaq Khan, returning from Istanbul, saw that his property in Chukhursad was confiscated by Abu Turab Mirza (the murderer of his cousin and brothers). After the murder of Prince Mustafa Sultan, Ismail II pardoned the ustajli and Tohmaq Khan was returned to his former position. After he returned to the governorship of the Chukhursad region, he became a trusted person of the center and began to control all issues again. Even after Mohammad Khudabanda came to power in in 1578, Mohammad Khan Tohmaq remained the ruler of Chukhursad. During this period, serious work was done in the field of improvement of Iravan, a beautiful Khan’s palace and Khan’s garden were built. In those years, new water channels were built and large lakes were created to irrigate agricultural fields.

**The city of Iravan under Ottoman rule (1583–1604)**

During the course of the new stage of the Ottoman-Safavid wars (1578-1590), the city of Iravan was once again attacked by the Ottoman army. In August 1583, Farhad Pasha, the new leader of the Eastern campaign, left Erzurum with 70,000-80,000 troops and crossed Kars and entered Chukhursad province. Seeing the superior power of the Ottomans in front of him, Chukhursad Beylerbey Mohammad Khan Tohmaq turned to the Beylerbeys of Karabakh and Tabriz – Imamgulu Khan Qajar and Amir Khan Turkman – for help. Those emirs had left the call of Mohammad Khan unanswered because they considered it beyond their power to resist the Ottoman army without the help of the Shah who was still in Khorasan. Therefore, Mohammad Khan left Iravan and went to Nakhchivan, Farhad Pasha captured Iravan.

Farhad Pasha built a small castle and an outer castle on the east bank of the Zangi river, which included the palace of Mohammad Khan Tohmak in the city of Iravan. The small castle with eight towers, five iron gates, a mosque, a bath, and forty three-towered outer forts were built in 45 days. The palace of Mohammad Khan Tokhmak was demolished and its stones were used in the construction of the Iravan Castle. Due to the lack of material for the construction of the castle walls, emirs and soldiers were sent to collect stone and wood materials from the surrounding areas.

According to the sources, “the outer fortress of Iravan passed through places called Zangi bridge, Demirbulag, Abbasdarı (Abbasdarı – ed.), Köşeli, Abagayat (Abıhayat – ed.), Karabakh and Zogalgala, turned to the Zangi river and stretched along the river and joined at the Zangi bridge. There were 50-60 towers on the fortress walls, which were about 30 km long. Dense trees were planted in front of the castle walls to strengthen the defense. The construction of fortress walls around the city of Iravan shows that the Ottomans paid special attention to its defense. Because the lack of rocks and stones around the city made it difficult to build strong fortress walls, a ditch was dug in front of the fortress walls. Farhad Pasha appointed Khizir Pasha the beylerbey of Iravan and he was equipped with the necessary ammunition and military equipment. According to Evliya Chelebi, 70,000 Ottoman soldiers were placed at the disposal of Khizir Pasha.

Thus, as a result of the Safavid-Ottoman war of 1578-1590, the Kizilbash were defeated and the Istanbul peace treaty of 1590 was signed between the parties. Like most areas of Azerbaijan, Chukhursad Beylerbey, whose center is Iravan, remained under Ottoman rule for a long time – 20 years.

**Demographic situation of Iravan region during Ottoman rule**

The Ottoman Empire, which won the war, started censuses in the captured Safavid lands, including in the Iravan region, immediately after the peace of Istanbul. In the “Detailed Notebook of Iravan Province” compiled in 1590, the history of the Azerbaijani Turks, the oldest local population of this land, is reflected in all its subtleties, as well as the socio-economic situation of the region, including the city of Iravan, its historical geography, existing toponyms, and very valuable materials about it have been reflected.

The Ottoman sultans, unable to assess the future threat to the history of the whole Turks, settled Armenians in the Western Azerbaijani lands they captured, especially in the Iravan region, and showed them special “care”. In the course of the Safavid-Ottoman wars, the immunity of the Armenians who were transferred to the Azerbaijani lands was ensured by the sultan’s decrees and special instructions sent from Istanbul. However, the course of the war changed in favor of the Safavids, and Azerbaijani Turks returned to their native land, the traditional demographic situation was restored. In order to illuminate the real ethnic picture of the population living in the Iravan region, it is necessary to take into account the information of the historical chronicles that were compiled in these books and those written in the previous period.

As a result of the ongoing Safavid-Ottoman wars starting from the beginning of the 16th century, a large part of the Shiite population of the western region of Azerbaijan was forced to leave their homeland. The sources of the period indicate that no one lived in Abaran, Sharabkhana, Bazarchayi, Zar and Zabil areas. On October 4, 1579, the 40,000-strong Ottoman army, moving from Kars, crossed Arpachay from the side of the Shoreyel plain and entered Sharabkhana area of Sharur district and took up to 20,000 prisoners from there. Although the chronicles of the time did not provide information about the ethnicity of the captives, Sultan Murad III’s decree dated April 28, 1578 gives grounds for saying that they were Muslim (Turkish) population. In this decree issued on the eve of the war with the Safavids, it was ordered “not to harm the property and lives of the tribute-paying Armenian tribes”. Also, in August 1583, when the Ottoman army under the leadership of Farhad Pasha entered Iravan province from the side of Shoreyel and Talin (Talin), the Muslim (Turkish) population of Iravan city and the province of the same name left the area and retreated to Aghrıdag and the plains.

In order to create a social base for himself in the captured Chukhursad region, the Ottoman sultan moved the Sunni Kurds along with the Christian population to the lands that were forcibly abandoned by the Turkish-Muslim population. According to the “Muhimma notebook” of the Ottoman Archives of the Prime Minister’s Office (Başbakanlık Ottoman Archives) of the end of the 16th century, by the order of Sultan Murad III, “from Diyarbakır… the Tigris Kurds, called Kurmac who are from the Sunni sect… were brought to the regions of Maku, Iravan and Nakhchivan and settled in the villages and towns vacated by the Turkmens and the Oirat people.”

After 1590, the favorable living conditions created by the Ottoman sultan in Iravan province compared to the Safavid era, and especially the law they drafted to govern the province with justice, made it possible for the Turkish-Muslim population of Iravan province, who had left their native land, to return to their ancestral lands. It can be seen from the detailed notebook that the Turkish-Muslim population returned and settled in Iravan, Karbi, Karni, Vedi, Talin (Talin) and Ermavi districts, and pre-Ottomans settled in Karni, Vedi, Ermavi, Nakhchivan, Mulki-Arslanli, Karabakh, Sharur, Azadjiran, Shorlut districts. Even after some time, the first sources confirm that the population living permanently in the city of Iravan still consisted entirely of Azerbaijani Turks. When Chardin, a French traveler of the 17th century, was in Iravan (1673), Safigulu Khan Chukhursad was the beylerbey and the ruler of Iravan. Chardin shows that he loves art and science, and everyone respects him. According to the traveler, “…Iravan Castle consists of about eight hundred houses. Only pure-blooded qizilbash (i.e. Azerbaijani Turks – ed.) live there.” Thus, in the mentioned period, the vast majority of the population living in the ancient Chukhursad (Iravan) region of Azerbaijan and the city of Iravan consisted of Azerbaijani Turks.

During the Safavid-Ottoman wars in the 16th century, the city of Iravan was repeatedly attacked by the Ottoman army, but life continued in the city. According to the Ottoman source of 1590, the city of Iravan was a Muslim-Turkish city with mosques, a khan’s palace, baths and a bazaar. Naringala was divided into 6 districts called Dereköy, Mardiros, Mazara (Marza), Kichik Kayıgh (Kıçık Kayığı), Ayali (Isaly) and Borkchu Ohan. In Bayır Qala, the city’s neighborhoods were named Derekoy, Baghlar, Haji Ilyas, Yenije and Oxcabert.

At the end of the 16th century, Shah Abbas made serious preparations for the war in order to restore the historical borders of the Safavid state, especially to liberate the territory of Azerbaijan, which was of great economic importance. All the economic, political and military reforms he implemented were aimed at this goal. During the mentioned period, the internal and external situation of the Ottoman state was difficult and the Ottoman power in Azerbaijan was significantly weakened.

Taking advantage of the uprisings against the Ottoman rule in Azerbaijan, Shah Abbas started a march to Azerbaijan on September 14, 1603, from Mazandaran with a force of 2-3 thousand men. The Safavid army besieged Tabriz on September 27 and liberated the city on October 21. This event made it possible for the Safavid army to advance westward.

**Liberation and strengthening of the city of Iravan**

After liberating Julfa and Nakhchivan, Shah Abbas decided to capture the Iravan fortress. At that time, the Iravan castle complex consisted of three important castles: “One is the Atig castle built by Sardar Farhad Pasha in 1583… The second is a small castle called Gozchu located on the hill in the southwest of the castle, the distance between these two castles is two-three arrow speed…The third one is the New Castle, which was built quite solidly next to the Atiq Castle in a few days, but they still did not have the opportunity to build a wall and dig a trench there.”

On October 18, 1603, the Safavid army appeared southeast of the Iravan fortress. In the fortress, Sharif Pasha’s 10,000-strong Ottoman garrison was defended by three fortified lines. Therefore, the siege of the city lasted for a long time. Shah Abbas mobilized the people of Nakhchivan and Julfa to build fortifications around the Iravan fortress and advised them to participate in the military operation. Shah Abbas I divided his troops into several groups. He ordered the leader of the Azerbaijani army, Zulfugar Khan, to capture Gozchu Castle, another famous general, Kirchigai Bey, together with his special guards was stationed in front of the Old Castle (Atiq Castle). At that time, the Ottoman artillerymen had bombarded the soldiers of Shah I Abbas from the fortress walls. Seeing that the situation was getting tense, Shah Abbas took urgent measures.

After Gozchu Castle was captured, Shah Abbas I ordered Kirchigai Bey to capture the “New Castle”. He also put a group of Khorasan riflemen and his own special guards under his command. Zulfugar Khan was sent to besiege the Old Fort and was given one of the newly made cannons. On June 8, 1604, the Iravan fortress was liberated, and the Ottoman garrison headed by Sharif Pasha surrendered. Considering the request of Sharif Pasha, Shah Abbas appointed him as trustee of Imam Reza’s tomb in Mashhad, and a captured group of 500 people under the leadership of Mehmed Pasha was allowed to travel to Kars. Shah Abbas I appointed Amirguna Khan Qajar, who received the nickname “Yellow Lion” due to his bravery in these battles, Chukhursad (Iravan) beylerbey. After the death of Amirguna Khan in 1625, his son, Tahmasibgulu Bey Qajar, the most famous general of Shah Abbas I, was appointed to this position.

Thus, the city of Iravan, which remained under the control of the Ottoman state for more than twenty years, was liberated and returned to the control of the Safavid state of Azerbaijan, and during the 17th century, the administration of this region remained in the hands of the Agjagoyunlu Gajars, an ancient tribe of Azerbaijan.

Since the Safavid-Ottoman wars continued in the first half of the 17th century, the city of Iravan was attacked by the Ottoman sultan Murad IV in 1635. The Ottoman army besieged the city of Iravan on July 27 of that year, and Tahmasibgulu Khan Qajar, the ruler of Iravan, was forced to surrender despite resisting until August 8.

After the Ottoman army left Tabriz, the Shah’s military council decided to immediately recapture the city of Iravan. On December 25, 1635, the Safavid army under the command of Rustam Khan surrounded the fortress. On April 2, 1636, the city of Iravan was freed from the occupation by the Safavid army.

The Safavid-Ottoman wars, which lasted more than 100 years, ended in 1639 with the Treaty of Kasri-Shirin, and a long period of peace between the two empires, which lasted until 1723, began. The peace had a positive effect on social and economic development in Chukhursad.

The analysis of the historical sources and scientific literature of the period shows that the city of Iravan, one of the main provincial centers of the Safavid state of Azerbaijan, for having great importance due to its strategic position was intermittently occupied by the Ottomans during the long-lasting Safavid-Ottoman wars. It has influenced the future development of this city. Although the city of Iravan was destroyed during the attacks of the Ottoman army in different periods, the structure of the city and its fortification by the fortress walls were ensured precisely when it was under the Ottoman rule. In order to defend the city of Iravan from the attack of the Safavid army, the Ottoman commander Farhad Pasha built a magnificent fortress in the city and built fortress walls around the city. The city of Iravan was further fortified by the Safavids after it was freed from the Ottoman occupation in April 1636.

In 1663, Shah Abbas II appointed Abbasgulu Khan, the son of Amirguna Khan, the former ruler of Chukhursad, as the ruler of Iravan, and he ruled Chukhursad Beylerbey until 1666. He was replaced by Safigulu Khan (1666-1674).

Safigulu Khan built a large canal from the Garasu river to one of the waterless deserts, built a village there and named it Safiabad after himself. Safigulu Khan’s wife also acted likewise and built a canal from this canal to the other side and named it Khatinarkhi. After that, the couple allowed the public to use the water of this canal and Khatinarkhi, which they built for charity, without paying taxes.

After the death of Safigulu Khan, Chukhursad Beylerbey was ruled by Rustam oglu Safigulu Khan (1674-1679). During his time, the situation of the population became much worse. As a result, the servicemen from the Qajar and Bayat tribes, who were left unpaid for two years, revolted against Safiqulu Khan in 1677. Taking into account the situation, Shah Suleyman (1666-1694) appointed Zal Khan (1679-1688), one of his trusted men, to the governorship of Chukhursad. During his reign – in the last quarter of the 17th century, the Safavid state, like all Middle Eastern countries, was experiencing a period of deep decline. Chukhursad Beylerbeylik wasn’t left unaffected.

However, as in many parts of Azerbaijan, traditional economic life continued in Chukhursad. The city of Iravan, was located at the junction of trade routes connecting the trading centers of the Ottoman Empire, Tiflis, Ganja, Shamakhi and Isfahan. Iravan had wider trade relations with other Azerbaijani cities. Merchants came to Iravan from all over the region.

**Iravan city in travelers’ descriptions**

Travelers who have been here at different times have given interesting information about the city of Iravan, one of the administrative units of the Safavid state, and the center of the Chukhursad Beylerbey.

J.B. Tavarnier, a French traveler who visited Iravan in the mid-50s of the 17th century, while describing the city of Iravan, noted that it consists of two parts – the inner city and the outer city. Khan’s mansion overlooks the river. Khan is very powerful and he has an army capable of guarding the border at all times. …in the outer city, located in the northwestern part, the population is 20 times higher than in the inner city.”

J. Chardin, another French traveler who visited Iravan in the early 70s of the 17th century, gave a general description of the city and wrote: “Although Iravan is a big city, it is not beautiful and it is a dirty city. …Most of it consists of gardens and vineyards. …It is located on a plain surrounded by mountains on all sides. Zangi rivers flow from the north-west side, and Kirkhbulag rivers flow from the south-west side.” J. Charden later described the inner city, that is, the castle: “The castle is bigger than a small town. It is oval in shape, four thousand paces in circumference, and contains about eight hundred houses. … Two thousand soldiers have been allocated for the defense of the fortress. The ruler’s palace is inside the fort. … There are many baths and caravanserais in the city and the castle.”

Evliya Çelebi, an Ottoman traveler who visited Iravan in the 17th century, gave interesting information about the fortress-city of Iravan: “It has three gates made of solid iron. Tabriz gate opens to the south, Meydan gate or Yayla gate to the north. Çovken Square is located here. The bridge gate opening to the west is called “Darvazeyi-Pul” in Ajam language. There are 700 large and small cannons left over from the Ottoman Empire. There are countless other ammunition and armories. …Here there are 3 thousand fortress guards, 3 thousand Khan’s army and 7 thousand provincial soldiers. This place was the khanate of khans several times. Here there are a kadi, a mullah, a sheikh-sharif, a kalantar, a darga, a munshi, a yasavul agha, a guard, a eshikaghasi, 7 innkeepers and shehbandars.”

The city of Iravan, described by Evliya Çelebi, was divided into three important parts – Eskishehir, Naringala and Korpubashi. Eskishehir and Naringala were located to the east of the Zangi River, while Korpubashi was located on the west bank of the river. E. Çelebi notes: “In Naringala there is a palace of Beylerbey, a mosque, a mint and 2,600 covered earthen houses. The most beautiful of them is the Khan Palace, which was improved by Amirguna Khan. Near this palace, on the left, is the royal mint. Abbasi and bisti were minted here. In the north of the castle, Eskishehir is located in front of Yayla gate. There is Chovgan square, Friday mosque, caravanserai, covered and open bazaars. Korpubashi is located at the head of the bridge that opens from the castle to the west bank of the river. Khan’s garden was built here. There is also a Friday mosque, a caravanserai, a bathhouse, and a covered bazaar. It is a kind of city. After this place passed into the hands of Ajam (Safavids – ed.), they built a three-layer thick wall outside the eastern side of the castle and added it to the original wall.”

The French traveler Joseph de Tournefort, who was in Iravan in the summer of 1701, also gave interesting information about the city: “The city of Iravan, located on the top of a hill on the edge of the plain, is full of vineyards and other gardens. Even the houses are surrounded by meadows, fruit trees and vineyards in one of the most beautiful valleys in the country. …The houses of Iravan, as in other cities of the country, are one-story, built of clay bricks and mud. Each house is square, rectangular or circular in shape and is surrounded by a wall about 2 meters high. The city walls are in many places double-layered, but they are not more than 4 feet high, and are only defended by circular ditches 4 or 5 feet wide. All these buildings and even the walls were built with sun-dried bricks. The fortress walls on the upper side of the city are not in good condition, although they are three-layered. There are more than 800 houses in oval-shaped fortress, where Muslims live, Armenians who work here during the day go to the city to sleep. The number of fortress guards is said to be 2,500. It is impossible to capture the fortress from the north: but this is not due to the brick walls, but the work of nature, which equips the fortress with a terrible cliff through which the river flows. The gate of the castle is covered with sheet metal. The iron railings of the gate and the castle guards complement each other quite well.”

The traveler who “crosses the Zangi River over the three-arched bridge” to go to Iravan city, when the weather is very hot, the provincial ruler comes to cool down in the rooms built under these arches, on the hill in the south of the city, about 1000 paces from the fortress, there is the Kechigala, protected by double walls, and all the posts in the Iravan walls are quite reported that it has a specific structure.

**The city of Iravan at the beginning of the 18th century**

At the beginning of the 18th century, the central authority in the Safavid state was very weak. As well as other areas of the state, the rulers who ruled separate regions of Azerbaijan, including Chukhursad beylerbeys, alienated from the central government and became independent rulers.

Local rulers used popular uprisings to achieve their goals. Taking advantage of the weakening of the Safavids, the Afghans captured the capital city of Isfahan in 1722, Russia occupied the Caspian coast provinces of the Safavid state in 1722-1723. Worried about this, the Ottoman state sent its troops to Azerbaijan in 1723 to get ahead of Russia.

Russia refrained from going to war with the Ottoman state, and as a result, a treaty was signed between Russia and the Ottoman states in Istanbul in 1724. According to the terms of the agreement, Russia was satisfied with keeping the provinces of the Caspian coast that it occupied. The Ottoman state ensured Russia’s neutrality in order to occupy the remaining territories of the South Caucasus, including Azerbaijan.

In the spring of 1724, the Ottoman commander Arifi Ahmed Pasha moved from Tiflis to the city of Iravan with more than 60,000 troops and reached the Arpachay valley on May 29 and took a position here. The Ottoman army faced serious resistance around the Iravan fortress. The people of Chukhursad, led by Beylerbey Aligulu Khan (in some sources Allahgulu Khan), fiercely resisted the Ottoman troops. During the defense of Iravan, the population of the city consisted entirely of Azerbaijanis. L. Lockhart reported that the fierce attacks of the Ottoman army were met with heroic resistance by the defenders of Iravan, the Ottomans suffered a large number of losses, and in connection with this, “Arif Ahmed Pasha proposed a temporary truce to bury the dead.

The Armenians who settled in Uchkilsa and its surroundings, mainly consisting of Gregorian missionaries, were not interested in the fate of Chukhursad and Iravan Castle because it was not their homeland. On the contrary, in order to gain a foothold in these lands they were ready to make a deal with any foreign power that attacked the country. Therefore, neither Catholicos nor Armenian missionaries participated in the defense of Iravan. On the contrary, the Armenians established contact with the Ottoman military units and impatiently waited for the surrender of the Iravan fortress and the victory of the Ottoman troops who intervened in Azerbaijan.

As the siege of Iravan extended, the lack of food and ammunition in the fortress began to be felt more and more. Since no forces came to help the defenders of the city, the Iravan command was forced to enter into negotiations with Arif Ahmed Pasha. The Ottoman troops, who received continuous help from the center, were able to capture the Iravan fortress with great difficulty, which they had besieged for 92 days.

After the capture of the Iravan fortress, Osman Pasha, governor of Anatolia, was appointed as the ruler of Iravan.

After the loss of the city of Iravan, Chukhursad Beylerbey remained under the rule of the Ottomans for more than 10 years. The Ottomans applied their administrative management system in the territories of Azerbaijan and divided the provinces into sanjaks and nahiyahs.

According to the “Detailed Book of Iravan Province” dated 1728 compiled by Ottoman officials, the territory of the former Chukhursad Beylerbey was divided into two sanjaks – Iravan and Nakhchivan. Iravan sanjak included 10 nahiyahs: Iravan, Karbi, Garni, Vedi, Aralik, Talin (Talin), Ermus, Abnik, Abaran, Sharabkhana. Nakhchivan sanjak consisted of 16 nahiyahs (Aghjagala, Mavaziyi-Khatun, Mulki-Arslanli, Karabakh, Daresham, Daranurgut, Dareshahbuz, Bazarchayi, Sharur, Shorlu, Zar, Zabil, Alinja, Sisyan, Azadjiran, Ordubad) and one kaza – Nakhchivan. At this time, along with Maku, Igdir, Surmeli nahiyahs, Zar, Zabil and Sharur nahiyahs were removed from the Nakhchivan sanjak and merged into Iravan sanjak. At the same time, Goycha, Mazraa, Khinzirak, Kirkhbulag, Derachichak, Sadarak nahiyahs and Shurayel sanjak were created in the territory of Iravan sanjak. Talin (Talın), Ermus, Abnik, Sharabkhana nahiyahs, which existed at the end of the 16th century, as well as Bazarchay and Agjagala nahiyahs in the territory of Nakhchivan sanjak were abolished. In the mentioned period, the city of Irevan consisted of 4 quarters – Old Town, Demirbulag, Derekend and Tepebashi.

At the beginning of the 30s of the 18th century, the Ottoman military forces began to leave the territory of Azerbaijan under the attacks of the Safavid troops led by a prominent Azerbaijani general Nadir Khan Afshar. When the turn came to Iravan, the Ottoman garrison in the fortress preferred to defend itself rather than engage in a battle. Soon, the Ottoman garrison entered into negotiations with Nadir Khan, considering that this was also pointless, the Ottomans left the fortress on October 3, 1735 without any loss.

Seeing that Nadir’s success was inevitable, the Armenian Catholicos turned his back on the Ottomans and took Nadir’s side. Victories in the war against foreign invaders increased the prestige of Nadir Khan in the army and throughout the country and ensured that he was elected king at the Mughan Congress.

**The Iravan Khanate**

**Administrative Territory of the Khanate**

The Iravan Khanate, which emerged in the mid-18th century on historical Azerbaijani territories, encompassed an area between Mount Ararat and Mount Alagoz, located on both sides of the Aras River. The Iravan Khanate bordered the Pambak Province, Shamshaddil, Kazakh Sultanates, and Ganja Khanate to the north, Karabakh and Nakhchivan Khanates to the east, Hoi and Maku Khanates and the Bayazid Pashalik to the south, and the Qars Pashalik to the west and northwest. The territory of the Iravan Khanate was approximately 23,800 square kilometers.

This region began its history in the early 15th century when it was administered by the leaders of the Sa’adlu tribe, who joined the Qara Qoyunlu confederation, until the establishment of the Iravan Khanate. Due to its geographical location, Saadlu’s settlement was called Chukhursaad, meaning Saadlu’s Chukhur. Some sources also refer to Chukhursaad as the Iravan region. The ruler of Chukhursaad, Amir Saad, passed away, and after his death, his son Pir Husayn built a family mausoleum in 1413, which is currently located in the vicinity of the city of Iravan, specifically in the village of Jafarabad (known as Arqavand since 1946). Nowadays, Armenians try to present this monument as the “Turkmen monument.”

After the establishment of the Safavid state in 1501, the Azerbaijani province was divided into four administrative regions, and Chukhursaad was one of them. The center of this beylerbeylik (province) was the city of Iravan, and it was also known as the Iravan beylerbeylik. Chukhursaad beylerbeylik had periods when it was part of the Ottoman Empire and recognized as an Iravan province. According to the “Summary of the Iravan Province” compiled by the Ottomans in 1728, the province was divided into the following districts in terms of administrative-territorial divisions: the city of Iravan, Qirkhbulaq, Karbi, Maku, Khinzirak, Garni, Vedi, Derechichek, Abaran, Goycha, Dereleyez, Mezre, Sürmeli, Ighdir, Araliq, Sharur nahiyahs, Shorayel and Nakhchivan sanjaks.

During the rule of Nadir Shah (from 1736), the Iravan province was part of the Azerbaijani beylerbeylik. After Nadir Shah’s assassination in 1747, the Afsharid Empire dissolved, and independent khanates were established. Similar to other khanates in Azerbaijan, the territory of the Iravan Khanate was divided into regions, and these regions were further divided into villages.

The city of Iravan was also considered a separate administrative unit. The city, serving as the center of the Khanate, witnessed significant development and architectural achievements, including the construction of several mosques, caravanserais, and baths, which were renowned architectural landmarks. The Iravan Fortress itself was a magnificent architectural complex. In 1795, Agha Mohammad Khan Qajar incorporated the Iravan Khanate into his dominions, and he specifically granted the Sharur and Pambak territories to the Khan of Iravan, Mohammad Khan. The Russian historian Ivan Chopin, who conducted a census in the territory of the former Iravan Khanate in 1829-1832, gave detailed information about the geographical location and administrative units of the districts, villages destroyed as a result of wars. On the eve of the invasion of the Iravan Khanate by Russian troops in 1827, the administrative-territorial division of the Khanate consisted of 15 districts and the semi-dependent Shurayel Sultanate.

Only two of these regions, Derekgind-Parchenis and Surmeli, were located on the right bank of the Aras River. The presence of irrigation systems and the proximity of towns to river basins were essential criteria during the organization of these regions. For example, villages that used water from the Zangi River were included in the Zangibasar region.

**Qirkhbulaq district** was situated between the Derecichek and Zangibasar districts. It was bordered by mountains to the east, which separated it from Lake Goycha, to the north by Derecichek district, to the south by the city of Iravan, the Zangi River, and to the south-west by Gernibasar, and to the west by Korpubasar district. The springs of Qirkhbulaq plateau provided drinking water to the city of Iravan. Of the 48 villages that existed in the district, 26 were destroyed due to the Russian occupation. The territory of Qirkhbulaq district corresponds to part of the present-day Kotayk province and the former Eller (Kotayk, Abovyan) district.

**Zangibasar district** was located south of the city of Iravan. This district was bordered by Korpubasar and Qirkhbulaq districts to the north and north-west, the Araz River to the south, Gernibasar to the east, and Sardarabad to the west. Of the 33 villages in the district, 7 were destroyed due to the Russian occupation. The territory of Zangibasar district corresponds to part of the present-day Ararat province, formerly known as the Zangibasar (Masis) district.

**Gernibasar district** was situated on the left bank of the Araz River. It bordered Qirkhbulaq district to the north, Vedibasar district to the south, Goycha district to the east, and Zangibasar district and the Araz River to the west. Of the 95 villages that existed in the district, 43 were destroyed due to the Russian occupation. The territory of Gernibasar district corresponds to part of the present-day Ararat province, formerly known as the Qamurli (Artaşat) district.

**Vedibasar district** was located along the left bank of the Araz River. Vedibasar was bordered by Gernibasar district to the north, Sharur district to the south and south-east, Goycha district to the east, and the Araz River to the west. This district consisted of mountains and plains covered by the Vedi and Qafan rivers. Of the 54 villages in the district, 33 were destroyed due to the Russian occupation. The territory of Vedibasar district corresponds to part of the present-day Ararat province, formerly known as the Vedi (Ararat) district.

**Korpubasar district,** also known as Karbibasar in some sources, was bordered by Seyidli-Aghsaqqalli to the north, Zangibasar to the south, Sardarabad to the west, Zangi River to the east, and Derecichek to the north-east. Of the 49 villages in the district, 9 were destroyed due to the Russian occupation. The territory of Korpubasar district corresponds to the present-day Armavir province’s former Echmiadzin district and part of the Ararat province’s former Qamurli (Artaşat) district.

**Sardarabad district** was situated on the northern bank of the Araz River, across from Surmeli district. It was bordered by Talin to the north, Sardarabad and Seyidli to the west, Araz River to the south, Körpübasar and Zangibasar to the east. This district was founded by the last Khan of Iravan, Hussein Ali Khan. The famous Sardarabad fortress, completed in 1817 was located in this district. Of the 30 villages in the district, 8 were destroyed due to the Russian occupation. The territory of Sardarabad district corresponds to part of the present-day Armavir province.

**Talin district** was situated in the northern-western part of the Iravan Khanate, at the southern slopes of Mount Alagoz (Aleyez). The Arpachay River separated it from the Qars Pashalik. Talin district was bordered by Shoreyel Sultanate to the north, Qars Pashalik to the west, Sardarabad and Seyidli to the south, and Korpubasar and Zangi River to the east. The famous Talin caravanserai and Talin fortress were located in this area. Of the 47 villages that existed in the district, 27 were destroyed due to the Russian occupation. The territory of Talin district corresponds to part of the present-day Aragatsotn province.

**Saadli district** was the smallest district in the Iravan Khanate and it was situated in the westernmost part. The Arpachay River flowed to Araz river in this area. Seyidli district was bordered by Talin to the north, Qars Pashalik to the west, Derekend-Parchenis to the south, and Sardarabad to the east. In some sources, the district is erroneously referred to as “Saatli district.” Of the 14 villages that existed in the district, 5 were destroyed due to the Russian occupation. The territory of Seyidli district corresponds to part of the present-day Armavir province.

**Abaran district** was situated at the foothills of Mount Alagöz, in the northern part of the Khanate. It bordered Pambak province to the north, Seyidli-Agsaqqalli to the south, Korpubasar to the west, and Derecichek to the east. Of the 61 villages in the district, 22 were destroyed due to the Russian occupation. The territory of Abaran district corresponds to part of the present-day Aragatsotn province.

**Seyidli-Agsaqqalli district** was bordered by Abaran to the north, Talin to the west, Korpubasar to the east, and Sardarabad to the south and south-east. Out of the 20 villages in the district, 11 belonged to the Seyidli tribe, and 9 to the Agsaqqalli tribe. In some sources, the Agsaqqalli tribe is incorrectly referred to as “Axsaxlı.” This district’s villages were not affected by the war. The territory of Seyidli-Agsaqqalli district corresponds to parts of the present-day Aragatsotn and Ararat provinces.

**Derecichek district** was situated between Pambak to the north, Qirkhbulaq to the south, Abaran to the west, and Goycha to the east. Of the 53 villages in the district, 16 were destroyed due to the Russian occupation. The territory of Derecichek district corresponds to part of the present-day Kotayk province.

**Goycha district** was located to the north of Shamseddil Sultanate, Ganja Khanate, to the north-west of Derecichek, to the south of Nakhchivan Khanate, to the east of Karabakh Khanate, and bordered Qirkhbulaq, Gernibasar, and Vedibasar districts to the south-west. This district encompassed the entire basin of Lake Goycha. Of the 126 villages in the district, 67 were destroyed due to the Russian occupation. According to I. Shopen, only 59 villages had populations, and 37 village names were forgotten. The territory of Goycha district corresponds to the present-day Gegharkunik province, formerly known as the Qaranlıq (Martuni), Yelenovka (Sevan), Basarkecher (Vardenis), and Chambarak (Krasnoselo) (part of it) districts.

**Sharur district** was bordered by Vedibasar district to the north, Araz River to the west, Nakhchivan Khanate to the south and south-east. The Arpa River divided the district into two parts. Of the 61 villages in the district, 11 were destroyed due to the Russian occupation. The territory of Sharur district corresponds to the present-day Sadarak district of Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic.

**Derekend-Parchenis** **district** was located on the right bank of the Araz River in the south-western part of the Khanate. It is currently within the territory of Türkiye. This district was bordered by Seyidli district to the north, Bayazid Pashalik to the west, Surmeli district to the south, and Sharur district to the east. Of the 88 villages in the district, 8 were destroyed due to the Russian occupation. Parchenis Valley had 26 settlements, while Derekend Valley had 54 villages. The territory of Derekend-Parchenis district corresponds to the part of the Kars province of Türkiye.

**Surmeli district** extended along the right bank of the Araz River, in the southern and eastern directions. It was bordered by Talin and Seyidli to the north, Mountain Ağri and Maku Khanate to the south, and Derekend-Parchenis district to the west. Of the 78 villages in the district, 28 were destroyed due to the Russian occupation. The territory of Surmeli district corresponds to the present-day Iğdır province of Türkiye.

**Shoreyel (Shuregel) Sultanate** was situated in the north-western part of the Iravan Khanate , at the foothills of Mount Alagoz. The Sultanate was surrounded by Kartli-Kakheti Kingdom to the north, Talin and Seyidli-Agsaqqalli districts to the south, Pambak province to the east, and mountains separating it from Abaran district. The Arpachay River separated the Sultanate from Qars Pashalik. The central town of the Sultanate was Artik. According to the ” The Iravan Province Review Book,” there were 172 villages in the Sultanate of Shoreyel (together with Pambak province). According to information provided during Nadir Shah’s reign, the Sultanate of Shoreyel, which became part of the Iravan Khanate, had 109 villages. After the Russian occupation of Shoreyel Sultanate in 1804, except for a few villages, the remaining villages were settled by Armenians brought from Türkiye.

**Pambak province** was bordered by Kartli-Kakheti Kingdom to the north, Abaran and Derecichek districts to the south, Shoreyel (Shuregel) to the east, and Qazakh Sultanates to the west. In 1801, 14 out of 44 villages in Pambak were abandoned due to Russian occupation. With the exceptions of Derekend-Parchenis and Surmeli districts, the territories of Pambak province, as described earlier, now constitute the majority of the Republic of Armenia’s territory.

**Population of the Khanate**

The ethnic composition of the population of the Iravan Khanate was primarily made up of Oghuz Turkic tribes. Historical sources indicate that the main ethnic groups in the Khanate included the Bayat, Afshar, Saadli, Baharlu, Bayandur, Qajar, Shamli, Rumi, Ustajlu, Tekelu, Ayrımli, Muganlu, and others. Also, in 1441, during the reign of Jahanshah, the ruler of Qara Qoyunlu, after the transfer of the Armenian Catholicosate from Cilicia to the Uchkilsa (Echmiadzin) monastery in the village of Vagarshabad, Chukhursaad, a small number of Armenians who came from different places gradually settled in the territory of the khanate.

The Armenian Catholicosate of Echmiadzin and their emissaries, taking advantage of the protection of the Qara Qoyunlu, Aq Qoyunlu, and Safavid states, played a leading role in the settlement of Armenians in this fertile area of Azerbaijan. Armenian churches acquired land from local Muslim rulers, often with funds from Christian states and missionaries. Documents kept in Matenadaran show that as early as 1432, during the reign of Aq Qoyunlu Sultan Yaqub, an influential landowner named Amir Rustam Khan sold seven villages – including Vagharshabad, where the Echmiadzin Monastery was located, as well as Echmiadzin, Batrinc, Norakavit, Aghunatun, Kiradjli, and Mughni – to Gregory Makuluya. In return, he donated these villages to the Echmiadzin Monastery. Later, the Echmiadzin Monastery acquired an additional 16 villages and other properties and lands. Through these means, Armenians created new settlements for themselves in Azerbaijani territories.

The lack of accurate information about the population of the Iravan Khanate can be attributed to the numerous wars that took place in the region. The wars fought by the Ottoman Empire against the Safavids and Afsharids for control of the Iravan Khanate significantly impacted the ethnic composition of the population. Decrees issued by the Ottoman sultans concerning the persecution of Shia Qizilbash Turks led to the forced departure of local Qizilbash populations before the arrival of Turkish forces. However, these decrees did not include Kurdish Qizilbash populations, which in turn led to the influx of Kurds into the Iravan Khanate.

Armenians benefited more from the wars in the Iravan Khanate. For example, during the war with the Safavids, the Ottoman sultan Murad III’s decree dated April 28, 1578 stated that the goods and lives of the Armenians, which were subjects and taxpayers, should not be harmed. In September 1579, before the Ottoman army’s attack on Iravan, 3,000 families from the Abaran district were transferred to the Erzurum province. In October of that year, the Ottoman army took 20,000 captives from the Sharabkhane nahiyah. In 1583, when the Ottoman army entered the Iravan province, the Muslim population of Iravan city and villages withdrew to the Aghri Dagh highlands, leaving only Armenians in the city and villages.

To further strengthen Armenian communities in the territories surrounding Echmiadzin, Safavid ruler Shah Abbas created more favorable conditions. In 1605, he allocated special areas for the Armenian communities to live in one place who were scattered across the Safavid state. At that time, the city of New Julfa was built near the capital city of Isfahan, a church and a monastery were built for the Armenians who moved here, and they were given wide privileges to engage in foreign trade. Even Shah Abbas I allocated funds from the treasury for these buildings. Shah Abbas even entrusted the Armenian advisor Khoja Sefer to deal with foreign policy matters and diplomatic negotiations with European countries on behalf of the Safavid state. In 1608, Shah Abbas I sent letters to the Pope of Rome, the King of Spain, the Duke of Tuscany and the Doge of Venice through a delegation to Europe led by Khoja Safar. In these letters, Christian European countries were requested to take under their protection Christian Armenians living in Muslim countries.

In 1629, Shah Safi, the successor of Shah Abbas I issued a decree in the name of Catholicos Movses, to exempt the Etchmiadz Catholicosate from the tax of 100 tumens that it paid to the royal treasury. With another decree issued by Shah Safi in 1638, he ordered the officials of the Shah and Khan not to interfere in the internal affairs of Etchmiadzin, any taxes, duties, etc. were forbidden to be demanded. Shah Abbas II (1642-1667) and Shah Suleyman (1667-1694) also conducted a benevolent policy towards the Church of Etchmiadzin.

The church of Etchmiadzin skillfully benefited from the good relations of the Safavid rulers towards the Armenians. Catholicos Philip I addressing to Shah Abbas II wrote in 1650: “I submit obediently that many of the local Armenians currently live in the capital Isfahan, and many in our province, who came here from different provinces thanks to Your Majesty’s inexhaustible care and love. Your Majesty Ruler, three hundred believers – let a hundred thousand believers like this be the sacrifice of your holy horse’s hooves – spend their days and nights praying to you in the Three Churches, because they owe their lives to the mercy of His Majesty the ruler.”

On the other hand, the Catholic missionaries asked the Safavid rulers for taking the Armenians under protection as a Christian minority on behalf of the Vatican and the heads of European states. For example, in 1688, King Louis XIV of France appealed to Shah Sultan Hussein with a letter and request to open a church and a school for Jesuits (missionaries of the Roman Catholic Church) in Shamakhi and Iravan. According to researchers, deeper economic and political issues, as well as intelligence purposes, were hidden behind these missions. In one of the clauses of the trade agreement concluded between the Safavids and France in 1708, it was stated that the Christian missionaries who took root in the territory of the Safavid state can live wherever they want, and all Armenians and Christians, their children, can visit the missionaries, learn from them and listen to their sermons, no one can stop and prevent them.

In 1723, during the next attack of the Ottoman troops on Iravan, an Armenian named Segbos, who served in the palace in Istanbul, asked Sultan Ahmed III to give instructions that the troops should not touch the church of Echmiadzin and the Armenians. The commander of the Ottoman troops, Abdulla Pasha, did not allow the troops to attack Etchmiadzin according to the decree given by the sultan, moreover, he allocated a regiment for its defense. On February 22, 1726, Empress Ekaterina I decreed that Armenians should be given high mercy and protection. All this made the Armenians, who were a minority among the Muslims, a special privileged group, gradually affecting the ethno-demographic situation of the region. At the beginning of the 19th century, Armenians had been living in more than 50 ancient Oghuz-Turkish settlements in the territory of the Iravan Khanate.

In 1801, after the Russian troops occupied Pambak province, located on the northern border of the Iravan Khanate, and in 1804, the Shoreyel Sultanate, the deportation of Azerbaijanis and the mass influx of Armenians to those areas began. 190 of the 200 Azerbaijani settlements that existed in the region before the occupation of Pambak and Shoreyel provinces by Russian troops were cleared of Azerbaijanis at the beginning of the 19th century. Armenians settled in the territories transferred from the Iravan Khanate to Russia under the Gulustan Treaty signed in 1813, especially in the Azerbaijani villages that were vacated as a result of the war. During that period, more than 32,000 Armenians were moved from Türkiye to the Pambak-Shoreyel region alone.

James Morier, the secretary of the British embassy in Qajar Iran, visited Iravan in 1813 and showed that approximately 100,000 people lived in the territory of the khanate. This information is also confirmed in the works of Russian authors. At the beginning of the 19th century, according to Semyon Bronevsky, who was the director of the Asian Department of the Russian Foreign Ministry, 18,000 families lived in the Iravan Khanate. As a result of the attack of the Russian troops on the Iravan Khanate in 1827, a part of the Muslim population left their homeland and sought refuge in neighboring Iran and Türkiye. The commander of the Russian troops, General Paskevich, in his letter sent to Count Nesselor on July 27, 1827, stated that of Turkish tribes living in the Iravan Khanate, 900 Karapaks, 300 Ayrims, 600 Ulukhans, 200 Chobankerelis, and 2,600 Muslim Kurd families fled to different parts of Türkiye.

Information close to the truth about the population of the Iravan Khanate can be obtained from the book “Historical monument of the state of the Armenian region during the era of its annexation to the Russian Empire” published in Saint Petersburg in 1852, by Ivan Chopin, who conducted a census in the territory of the Khanate in 1829-1832. The fact that the interpreter who accompanied I. Chopin was an Armenian affected the registration of the ethnic composition of the population in favor of the Armenians. Also, at the beginning of the book, the historical summary given by I. Shopen was mainly written with reference to the works of Armenian authors, which prevented the author from drawing objective conclusions at some points. However, I. Chopin’s work should be considered as the work that provides the most detailed information about the Iravan Khanate. According to the author’s information, on the eve of the invasion, there were 831 villages in the territory of the Iravan Khanate, of which 310 were destroyed as a result of the war. Taking an average of 25 families in each village and 5-6 people in each family, it can be determined that more than 43 thousand people lived in 310 destroyed villages. According to I. Chopin, after the occupation, 7,331 Muslims were registered in the city of Iravan, and 57,364 Muslims were registered in the districts. In fact, 16 thousand Muslims lived in the city of Iravan before the occupation. If we add the 43,000 people who lived in the destroyed villages to these figures, then it becomes clear that at least 116,000 Muslims lived in the Iravan Khanate before the occupation.

As for Armenians, I. Chopin writes that 20,073 local Armenians live in the districts, and 2,369 in the city of Iravan: a total of 22,442 people. In fact, many of those 22,442 Armenians were not local residents, but Armenians who came from Türkiye and settled in the region after the wars in the territory of the khanate since 1804. However, if we express it as a percentage, before the occupation, Armenians made up approximately 19 percent of the total population of the khanate. George Burnoutyan, a US researcher of Armenian descent, analyzed the results of I. Chopin’s census and came to the conclusion that before the occupation, about 20,000 Armenians lived in the territory of the Iravan Khanate, which was 20 percent of the total population.

I. Chopin’s information about the different social classes of the Iravan khanate reveals who were the indigenous population of the khanate. The results of the census show that 270 noble Muslim families of Khans and Beys, 30 Armenian families of Maliks and Aghas were registered in the territory of the Iravan Khanate. So, the Armenian nobles made up 10 percent of the nobility in the territory of the khanate, but after the occupation of the Iravan Khanate by Russian troops in 1827, Azerbaijanis outnumbered Armenians in that area for a while. Only after the mass transfer of Armenians from Iran and Türkiye to the territory of the Iravan Khanate based on the agreements of Turkmenchay (1828) and Edirne (1829), the demographic situation changed in favor of the Armenians.

As a result of the resettlement policy of Tsarist Russia, Armenians were settled compactly, mainly in Azerbaijani settlements. As a result, although the Armenians outnumbered Azerbaijanis, Azerbaijani settlements were more in quantity than Armenian settlements. According to the data of 1865, Muslims lived in 694 of the 1198 villages in Iravan province, Armenians in 413, Russians in 10 villages, and Armenians and Muslims lived as a mixed population in 91 villages. Even after the occupation, Azerbaijanis were the majority in Iravan district, which surrounds the city of Iravan like a ring and is considered the core of the governorate.

In 1865, 46,617 Azerbaijanis (Tatars) and 26,709 Armenians made up the population of 79,661 registered in the city. In other words, 58.5 percent of the population were Azerbaijanis, and 33.5 percent were Armenians. At the beginning of the 20th century, Azerbaijanis still constituted the majority of the population in Iravan district. At that time, 65,871 Azerbaijanis, 45,624 Armenians, 7,865 Kurds, and 869 Russians made up the population of 121,809 people living in Iravan District. By percentage, 54.1 percent of the population were Azerbaijanis, 37.5 percent were Armenians, 6.5 percent were Kurds, and 0.7 percent were Russians. As a result of the genocides and deportations against Azerbaijanis in 1905-1906, 1918-1920, 1948-1953, 1988-1989, which we will talk about separately in the future, there is not a single Azerbaijani left in the territory of the former Iravan Khanate – the current Republic of Armenia.

The facts listed above once again prove that the local population of the Iravan Khanate consisted only of Azerbaijani Turks, while Armenians came and settled in that area in different ways since the Middle Ages. It is clear from the above figures that the claims of Armenian historians about the territory of the Iravan Khanate being an ancient Armenian land and the majority of its population being Armenians are nothing but nonsense.

**The fall of the Iravan Khanate**

Among the North Azerbaijani khanates occupied by Russia at the beginning of the 19th century, the Iravan khanate was the last to fall. It should be noted that for more than 150 years before the occupation, Armenians appealed to the Russian tsars for the establishment of an Armenian state in the lands surrounding the Echmiadzin church, tempting them with various promises to start military operations. Realizing that the European states could not provide real help, the Armenians tried to attract the attention of the Russian tsars by presenting them valuable gifts. In 1660, Khoja Zakar Sarhadov, an Armenian living in Yeni Julfa who was engaged in silk trade, gave Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich a “Diamond throne” made of ivory. 897 diamonds, 1298 rubies, and 18030 turquoise stones were used to decorate that throne, which is currently kept in the “Armoury Chamber” of the Moscow Kremlin.

In 1666, merchants from New Julfa, led by Grigor Lusikov, came to Moscow with valuable gifts and presented them to the tsar. A little later – in May 1667, a trade agreement was signed that opened great opportunities for the relations of Armenian merchants with Russia. In 1677, an Armenian named Israel Ori, who joined the delegation sent to Europe by the Church of Etchmiadzin, was convinced that European countries would not provide real help, and in 1701 he came to the reception of Tsar Peter I. He also brought dazzling gifts to the tsar. I. Ori presented the program for the establishment of an Armenian state in the territory of the Safavid empire to the tsar. On February 22, 1726, Empress Ekaterina I issued a decree that Armenians should be given high mercy and protection.

In the second half of the 18th century, Armenians became active again. In 1760, Iosif Emin, an Indian Armenian, negotiated with the Russian government and the Georgian Tsar, and offered the help of Armenians in the war against Iran and Türkiye. In 1769, Movses Safarov, an Armenian from Astrakhan, presented a project to the Russian court. In the project, he proposed to “liberate Armenia” with the help of the Russian army and establish a state under Russian protection. In 1780, Iosif Argutinsky (Hovsep Argutyan), the head of the Armenian diocese in Russia, and a wealthy Armenian living in Moscow Ivan Lazarev (Hovhannes Lazaryan – his father, Yeghiazar Lazaryanhis, stole valuable jewels from the treasury and fled to Moscow after the assassination of Nadir Shah in 1747. The largest of these diamonds was later presented to Catherine II and is currently kept in the “Armoury Chamber” in Moscow) proposed to the representatives of the Russian government to create an independent Armenian monarchy under the protectorate of Russia in the areas where the borders of Ottoman Türkiye and Iran intersect. The capital of the desired Armenian kingdom was supposed to be Vagarshabad or Ani.

After some time, Russia planned a military campaign to the Caucasus, and in order to negotiate with Catherine II for the purpose of establishing an Armenian state, Count Grigory Potemkin and the Russian general Alexander Suvorov, whose mother was allegedly Armenian, were involved in the negotiations as mediators. The Armenians assured Suvorov that local Armenians will actively help the Russian troops during the march to the South Caucasus.

In Valentin Pikul’s “Favorite” novel-chronicle, a dialogue between Grigory Potemkin and Catherine II is noteworthy. He tells the empress that they will discuss the issue of Armenians together with Suvorov, Lazarev and Argutinsky. Potemkin adds that Armenians are smart, they have already liked Iravan as their capital. To Catherine II’s question, “Armenians don’t have a country, what is the use of a capital?” Potemkin answered: “It doesn’t exist now, it will after us.”

From the second half of the 18th century, the constant quarrels and clashes between the Azerbaijani khanates made the Iravan khanate partially dependent on the Kartli-Kakhetian kingdom and created conditions for its interference in its internal affairs. The acceptance of the Kartli-Kakheti kingdom as a Russian protectorate by the treaty signed in Georgiyevsk in July 1783 further strengthened Russia’s position in the South Caucasus. After that, the ruling circles of Russia sent letters and gifts to all the khanates of Azerbaijan to accept the protectorate of Russia. In November of the same year, Count Apraksin presented the letter of the Russian government to the Khan of Iravan Huseynali Khan. In the letter, Huseynali Khan was offered to obey Irakli II, the king of Kartli-Kakhetia. These steps of Russia seriously disturbed Ottoman Türkiye, and the Ottoman sultan began to pursue a policy of inciting the Azerbaijani khanates against Russia.

In the early 90s of the 18th century, the intention of Agha Muhammad Khan, who subjugated the South Azerbaijani khanates, was to restore the Safavid empire. He marched to the South Caucasus in 1795 to subjugate all the Northern Azerbaijan khanates and the Kartli-Kakheti kingdom. His attack disrupted Russia’s plans to seize the South Caucasus. In April 1796, Russian troops under the command of General Valerian Zubov attacked the South Caucasus. Russian troops occupied Derbend, Shamakhi, Ganja, and Baku in a short period of time. The next target was the Iravan Khanate, but after the death of Catherine II in November of the same year, the march of the Russian troops was stopped and they retreated.

As a result of the annexation of Eastern Georgia to Russia in February 1801, the sultanates of Pambak, Borchali, Gazakh and Shamshaddil, located on the northern borders of the Iravan Khanate and dependent on the Kartli-Kakheti kingdom, also came under Russian control. Iravan Khan’s attempts to return the Pambak province were unsuccessful. After the appointment of General Pavel Sisianov (a descendant of the Georgian princes Chichishvilis who moved to Russia from the Kartli-Kakheti kingdom in 1724, was killed and beheaded by the nephew of the Baku Khan during his second attack on Baku in February 1806, his head was sent to Fatali Shah. His headless body was buried in Tiflis), who became famous for his cruelty in September 1802 as the commander-in-chief of the Russian army in the Caucasus, the Sultanate of Shoreyel was also occupied.

After the invasion of the Ganja Khanate in January 1804, the next target of the Russian troops was the Iravan Khanate. Because by capturing the Khanate of Iravan, Russia not only gained a military-strategic battlefield, but also strengthened itself on the borders of Iran and Türkiye. On May 10 of the same year, P. Sisianov sent a letter to the Khan of Iravan, Muhammad Khan, requesting him to send a letter stating his agreement to the following conditions: the Russian army should be stationed in the fortress of Iravan, the khan should accept the Russian emperor as his king and swear allegiance to him, and finally, he must pay tribute to the emperor in the amount of 80,000 rubles a year. If these conditions were accepted, Sisianov promised that the Khan’s life and power will be inviolable forever, but Muhammad Khan did not accept Sisianov’s proposals. He took serious measures to further strengthen the Iravan fortress. The number of defenders of the fortress was increased to 7 thousand warriors, the number of ready-to-fire cannons in the towers of the fortress was increased to 22, and a large supply of food was stored.

The first march of Russian troops on the Iravan Khanate began on June 12, 1804, under the command of Sisianov, by capturing Gyumri and attacking the Iravan fortress from the direction of Abaran. Qajar Iran, in turn, under the command of Abbas Mirza, the crown prince of Fatali Shah, wanted to get ahead of the Russians by sending troops to the territory of the Iravan Khanate. On June 19, when the Russian troops reached Uchkilsa (Echmiadzin), Abbas Mirza’s army had already stationed there. Sisianov’s attacks to capture Uchkilsa did not bring any results. The Russians were retreating with heavy losses. On June 25, Sisianov gave the order to attack the Iravan fortress. At the same time, the Russians forced Abbas Mirza’s army to retreat to the opposite side of the Araz River. The Russians besieged the Iravan fortress. Muhammad Khan tried to earn some time by diplomatically responding to Sisianov’s letters full of threats to surrender the fortress. The attacks of the Russians on the fortress and the help of the treacherous Armenians did not bring any results. Muhammad Khan was sure that as time went on, the food supply of the Russian troops would run out, and the siege of the fort would not bring any results. And so it was. On August 31, Sisianov called a meeting of the military council. At the meeting, it was decided to end the siege of the castle. The failed war, which resulted in the loss of 2000 Russian soldiers, ended. Sisianov’s dream of conquest was wasted. Russian troops retreated and returned to Georgia on September 4

During the first march of the Russians to the Iravan fortress, the Armenians showed their treachery again. When the fortress was under siege, Armenian spies sent a message to Sisianov that the defense of the fortress from the eastern side was weak and that they should attack from that direction first. During the tense days of the siege of the fortress, the Georgian Armenian Rostam Bey’s group carried weapons and ammunition to the Russian troops from Tiflis on the Pambak-Abaran road twice, and was captured the third time. The traitor Rostam Bey was executed in Tabriz to serve as a lesson to others.

One of the tasks assigned to Field Marshal Ivan Gudovich, who was appointed the commander-in-chief of the Russian troops in the Caucasus in July 1806, was to occupy the Khanate of Iravan and add its territory to Russian lands, but the policy of aggression carried out by Russia in the Caucasus was primarily a concern of France. France wanted to use Iran and Türkiye against Russia. In December 1806, France sent many officers and engineers to those countries to solve the problems of rebuilding the armies and providing them with modern equipment. Huseyngulu Khan Qajar, who was the Khan of Iravan since December 1807, used the services of French engineers to strengthen the fortress of Iravan. Cannon and gunpowder plants were built in the Iravan fortress, additional troops were gathered, and the fortress walls were strengthened. Gudovich described the Iravan fortress as follows: “The fortress is fortified according to all European military regulations, it has two walls, trenches are dug in front of the walls, and hills of earth and sand are formed in front of the trench, on which cannons are installed, and there are fugas bombs that did not exist in the fortress before.”

The second march of Russian troops on the Iravan Khanate took place on September 25, 1808. Gudovich attacked Iravan with 6,000 troops and 12 cannons. Huseyngulu Khan wanted to stop the Russians in Abarand with 5 thousand troops the next day, but he could not succeed and retreated. On September 27, the Russians captured the Uchkilsa (Echmiadzin) monastery and then set up a camp around Iravan. Huseyngulu Khan left two thousand troops in the fortress and entrusted its defense to his brother Hasan Khan. He himself left the fortress with 5,000 troops and camped around the Geder river in order to attack the Russian troops from behind. Hasan Khan rejected all the ultimatums and tempting promises of General Gudovich, who captured Bayir city and besieged the fortress from all sides, declaring that the garrison in the fortress will fight to the last breath.

After a long time of preparation, the next attack of the Russian troops on the Iravan fortress, which began on November 17, lasted for two weeks and was still unsuccessful. The detachments organized by Gudovich were forced to retreat under the blows of the fortress defenders, having suffered heavy losses. About 300 soldiers and officers of the Russian army died, and up to 600 soldiers and officers were seriously injured. Winter was approaching, the Russian troops besieging the Iravan fortress was running out of ammunition and food. Finally, on November 30, the siege of the fortress was ended. Under the command of General Gudovich, who was proud and arrogant like Sisianov, the Russian army returned to Georgia with the loss of more than a thousand people in the snowy and frosty weather. With that, the second march of the Russians to the Iravan fortress ended in disgrace.

Huseyngulu Khan, who knew well that Russia did not give up its intention to occupy the Iravan Khanate, in addition to strengthening the Iravan Castle, built a magnificent military-fortification complex called Sardarabad Castle in 1815-1817 with the participation of French engineers. According to the Gulustan Treaty concluded between Russia and Iran on October 12, 1813, the provinces of Ganja, Karabakh, Sheki, Shirvan, Baku, Guba, Darbend, Talysh and Dagestan permanently joined Russia, but stability in the region was not provided.

Russia wanted to further expand its borders by seizing the Iravan and Nakhchivan khanates, but Britain, which played an active role in the region instead of France, by providing military aid to Iran and Türkiye, wanted to push Russia out of the South Caucasus, which intended to reach the warm seas. Crown Prince Abbas Mirza, who was satisfied with the level of preparation of his army, was confident that he would win the war with Russia, and he first attacked on July 16, 1826, to liberate the Karabakh Khanate from occupation. Iravan Khan Huseyngulu Khan also seriously prepared for the war in order to return the lost territories of the Khanate with the Gulustan Treaty and on July 16, he attacked the post of Russian soldiers in Mirak village of Abaran district. Hasan Khan, the brother of Huseyngulu Khan, attacked the Boyuk Qarakilsa (later Kirovakan, the present-day city of Vanadzor), the headquarters of the Russian troops, and captured it on August 9. After that, Gyumri also fell into the hands of the Khan’s forces. With this, the provinces of Shoreyel and Pambak were again included in the territory of the Iravan khanate.

Tsar Nicholas I ordered Yermolov, the commander-in-chief of the Russian troops in the Caucasus, to seize the Khanate of Iravan in a short time. In the first half of September, after the defeat of Abbas Mirza’s troops in the battles of Shamkir, Ganja and Karabakh, the troops of the Iravan khan were forced to retreat from Pambak and Shoreyel, and until the spring of 1827, the Russian troops were preparing to march on Iravan. Tsar Nicholas I instructed Yermolov to march on the Iravan Khanate by April 1, and therefore sent Dibich, the chief of the general staff of the Russian army, to Tiflis for help. According to the emperor’s order dated March 27, Yermolov was replaced by adjutant-general Ivan Paskevich.

On March 30, a parade of Armenian volunteer units was held in Tbilisi who prepared to participate in the attack on the Iravan Khanate. At the beginning of April, under the command of Adjutant-General Konstantin Benkendorf, accompanied by Archbishop Nerses Ashtarakesi, the third march of Russian troops over Borchali to Iravan Khanate began. Benkendorf’s vanguard group included about 5,000 infantry, up to a thousand Cossack warriors and 12 cannons. After reaching Uchkilsa (Echmiadzin) monastery on April 13 without encountering serious resistance, the Russian troops faced a shortage of food. Nerses Ashtarakesi’s promises that the Armenians would supply the Russian troops with food turned out to be false. Because there were not enough Armenians living in the territory of the khanate to supply the Russian troops with food even for a few days. The Azerbaijani population was moved to the opposite side of Araz by the khan before the fighting started. On the 16th of the month, Benkendorf attacked the fortress of Sardarabad. Fatali Khan, the 16-year-old grandson of Hasan Khan, commanded the fortress garrison. Hasan Khan’s cavalry chased the Russians and prevented them from approaching the fortress. However, the superiority of the Russians in the number of cannons was an obsatcle for Hasan Khan’s victory. Fatali Khan gave a sharp rejection to Benkendorff’s letter about surrendering Sardarabad fortress. After the 10-day food supply sent by Paskevich from Tiflis reached Echmiadzin, Benkendorf ordered an attack on the Iravan fortress.

The siege of the Iravan fortress began on April 25. Benkendorff’s attempts to capture the fortress were unsuccessful. The castle was defended bravely. 26 cannons were placed in the fortress, the number of the garrison was increased to 5 thousand fighters, sufficient food reserves were collected. The positions of the Russians were heavily bombarded from inside the fortress. Khan’s warriors came out of the fortress in small groups, attacked the Russians suddenly and quickly retreated. The ultimatums and tempting promises sent by Benkendorf about the surrender of the fortress to the Huseyngulu khan did not work either. Hasan Khan, after strengthening his army in his camp on the other side of Araz, helped his brother Huseyngulu Khan by continuously attacking Benkendorf’s army from behind. Increasingly intense heat and spreading diseases weakened Benkendorf’s army day by day, making the occupation of the fortress impossible.

On June 1, Paskevich, who set off from Tiflis with about 5,000 infantry, 800 cavalry, 3,000 irregular horsemen and 26 cannons, reached Uchkilsa on June 8. Pachkevich, who inspected the siege of Iravan, was convinced that it would not be possible to capture Iravan under the command of coward Benkendorf. On June 19, Pachkevich entrusted the siege of Iravan to the division commanded by General Athanasius Krasovski. The goal of Paskevich, who left for Nakhchivan on the same day, was to capture Nakhchivan and the Abbasabad fortress and cut off the connection between Abbas Mirza’s army and the Iravan khanate. Russian troops captured Nakhchivan on June 26, and Abbasabad fortress on July 7. Seeing that the continuation of the siege of the Iravan fortress did not bring any results, Krasovsky ordered on June 22 to lift the siege and withdraw the army to the camp located in Abaran until the weather cools down and the heavy weapons sent from Tiflis arrive.

Huseyngulu Khan knew that the Russian troops were temporarily leaving and that Paskevich’s army would attack the Iravan fortress again after returning from Nakhchivan. Taking advantage of the opportunity, Huseyngulu Khan took serious measures to further strengthen the fortress. The fortifications around the castle were improved, all the buildings within rifle range of the castle were destroyed, the earthen fortifications were raised considerably to better observe the surroundings of the castle, and the trees of the garden belonging to the khan’s harem, located between the castle and the city, were completely cut down so that it was possible to observe the surroundings better. 52 cannons were placed on the walls of the fortress. 18,000 people from the outer city and surrounding regions were transferred and placed in the fortress. The issue of their food supply for several months was solved.

On August 4, Abbas Mirza’s approximately 30,000 troops took a position around Uchkilsa (Echmiadzin). The Crown Prince’s army and Krasovsky’s army faced each other on August 17 around the village of Ushayan (now Oshakan) located between Ashtarek and Uchkilsa. Russian troops suffered heavy losses. After the battle, Abbas Mirza’s army camped on the bank of Zangi river. Hearing the news of the defeat of the Russians, Paskevich left a detachment in Nakhchivan and returned to Uchkilsa (Echmiadzin) with the army. Abbas Mirza’s army retreated to the opposite side of Araz. Before attacking the Iravan fortress, Paskevich wanted to capture the Sardarabad fortress and the food stock collected there. On September 13, the troops of Paskevich and Krasovsky attacked the Sardarabad fortress from two directions. There were 2,000 warriors and 14 cannons in the fortress garrison. On the night of September 15, Hasan Khan, the brother of Iravan Khan, entered the fortress unnoticed with his group and led its defense, but after the Russian cannons destroyed the southern walls of the fortress, its defense became impossible, and on the night of September 20, Hasan Khan and his group left the fortress and headed towards Iravan and the Sardarabad castle fell. Paskevich entered the castle early in the morning. The Russians captured from the fort 6 months’ supply of food, 13 copper cannons, and a large amount of gunpowder and ammunition.

According to the Armenian historian V. Parsamyan, after Hasan Khan left the fortress, the Armenians opened the gates of the fortress to the Russian troops. After the fall of the Sardarabad fortress, Huseyngulu Khan left the fortress with 1200 warriors and entrusted the defense of the Iravan fortress to his brother Hasan Khan, who was awarded the title of “Saraslan” (ie “Head of Lions “) by Fatali Shah for his bravery in the battles. Abbas Mirza directed a part of his army to Nakhchivan to distract the Russian troops from attacking Iravan.

On September 23, Paskevich arrived two versts from the Iravan fortress and took a position on a height called Mukhannattape. The next day, it was decided to begin the siege of the fortress from the southeast. On the 25th of the month, shells were fired at the fortress from Mukhannattape. From the morning of the next day, the positions of the Russians were hit by heavy blows from the cannons placed in the towers of the castle. One of the shells fired from the Russian cannons pierced one of the minarets of the large mosque in the fortress, and another shell fell into the Sardar’s palace. The Russians shelled the fortress all night until morning. On September 27, 18 cannons fired the rest of the day. At the end of the day, the defenders of the fortress restored the parts of the fortification damaged by Russian shells. The next day, the cannons fired at the fort again. On the morning of the 29th of the month, the eastern tower of the fortress and the walls adjacent to it collapsed after the heavy fire from the cannons. Paskevich gave Hasan Khan 6 hours and demanded to surrender the castle, but Hasan Khan wanted to gain time by not giving any answer to Paskevich. He expected that the troops of Abbas Mirza and his brother Huseyngulu Khan would attack the Russians from behind, thereby ending the siege of the fortress, but Paskevich took a preventive measure and blocked their way to the Iravan fortress.

On September 30, new artillery batteries were brought to the positions of the Russians. The defenders of the fortress were constantly responding to Russian cannon fire. The Russians wanted to enter the fortress at night by expanding the blown-up areas. 40 cannons of the Russians shelled the fort all night. Although Hasan Khan tried to break through the siege of the Russians and leave the fortress, he did not succeed.

Early in the morning of October 1, the people of the fortress saw the Russians crowding into the trenches dug along the walls of the fortress. The Russians captured the southwest tower of the fort under a hail of bullets. At this time, another group of Russians took a position in front of the northern gate of the fortress (Shirvan gate). The people of the castle, who wanted to escape from the blows of the Russian cannons, gathered in front of the gate, but the gate was filled with stones and covered with earth. Shortly after General Krasovsky’s demand to open the gate, the gates were broken and the Russian troops entered the fortress. After the occupation of the fortress, Paskevich wrote in his report to Nicholas I that the emperor’s flag was already flying on the walls of the Iravan fortress, the keys to the very famous fortress were in his hands, the entire garrison was captured, Hasan Khan did not manage to break through the siege and escape this time, 4 flags (two of these flags are currently stored in the National History Museum of Azerbaijan), 37 cannons, 2 howitzers (short-barreled heavy cannons), 9 mortars (short-barreled cannons), up to 50 falconets (small-caliber cannons) were captured as booty.

After the Russians entered the fortress, Hasan Khan retreated to one of the mosques in the fortress with his warriors. Entering the mosque, General Krasovsky ordered the Russians not to fire. He took Hasan Khan’s weapon and disarmed him. Hasan Khan asked Krasovsky to find and return the sword he had lost when he wanted to leave the fortress. This sword, which belonged to Amir Teymur and later decorated the palace of the Safavid rulers, was given to Hasan Khan by Fatali Shah for his bravery in battles. Krasovski bought that sword in exchange for a valuable gift and returned it to Hasan Khan. But the hilt of the sword, decorated with precious stones, had broken off and disappeared. After the hilt made of gold was restored, at the request of Hasan Khan, Krasovsky described the sword as the mighty sword of Amir Teymur, the conqueror of the East, and sent it as a gift to Emperor Nicholas I.

The Russian generals behaved very politely with Hasan Khan, an outstanding general who shook the Russian army for about 23 years, and whose heroism was well-known. Paskevich could not come to any conclusions about his future fate. Therefore, it was decided to send Hasan Khan to the presence of Nicholas I and let the Emperor himself make the final decision. On the instructions of Paskevich, Hasan Khan was sent to Tiflis in a special carriage, and then to Petersburg. According to the Russian military historian V. Potto, the political conditions did not allow Hasan Khan to reach Petersburg, he was delayed in the city of Yekaterinograd on the Terek River. After that, the author did not give any information about the fate of Hasan Khan. According to other information, according to the thirteenth article of the Treaty of Turkmenchay (February 1828), which was signed after the occupation of the Iravan Khanate, the captives from both sides were returned to their countries, including Hasan Khan. Hasan Khan, who belonged to the Govanli-Qajar dynasty, returned to Iran. In 1828, Fatali Shah sent Qajar Hasan Khan to quell the riots in Khorasan and ruled it until 1830. Then Fatali Shah called General Hasan Khan to Tehran. Hasan Khan was the ruler of Yazd, Kerman and Baluchistan provinces in 1848. He died in Kerman in 1856 and was buried in Najaf.

There is conflicting information about the fate of Huseyngulu Khan, Khan of Iravan. According to the information provided by I. Chopin, Huseyngulu Khan Qajar, died in poverty in South Azerbaijan in 1834. Huseyngulu Khan and Fatali Shah were related by marriges. Fatali Shah married Huseyngulu Khan’s sister and Abbas Mirza married Huseyngulu Khan’s daughter. George Burnoutian, an American researcher of Armenian descent, quoting Iranian researcher M. Bamda, informs that even after the occupation of the khanate, Huseyngulu Khan was appointed to various positions by Fatali Shah and died in 1831 as a rich man at the age of 90.

As a result of 23 years of intermittent wars, the Iravan fortress, which was called “Impregnable fortress”, was occupied by Russian fighters, and all the Northern Azerbaijani khanates came under Russian occupation. Armenian treachery played an important role in the capture of the Iravan fortress. The Armenians, who were familiar with the terrain of the region, guided the Russian soldiers, pointed out weakly defended areas of the fortress to the Russian soldiers, and performed espionage activities. Armenian volunteer units organized in Tiflis fought against the troops of Iravan Khan as part of Russian forces. On September 27 and 28, Archbishop Nerses Ashtarakesi, seeing that the invasion of the Iravan fortress was delayed, appealed to the Armenians living in the territory of the khanate to immediately come to the aid of the Russian army. The Armenians inside the fortress tried to destroy the fortress by any means. An Armenian with the surname Astvasaturyan, because of his treason was tied to the barrel of a cannon by the command of the Sardar, so that it would be a lesson to other traitorous Armenians.

When the news reached Paskevich, who was in his camp outside the fortress, that the Iravan fortress had been captured, the Russian soldiers had already started looting. All the houses in the fortress were destroyed by cannon balls, and the streets were filled with corpses. On October 2, a victory parade was held in front of the southern gate of the fortress. A victory march was played with salvo discharged from cannons. At that time, part of the damaged fortress walls collapsed and many people died. For the capture of the Iravan fortress, Paskevich was awarded the title of “Count of Iravan” by the emperor and the Order of St. George of the Second Degree. Other generals also received high awards. After some time, a special medal “for the capture of the Iravan fortress” was established. By the order of the emperor, Archbishop Nerses was awarded the Order of “Saint Alexander Nevsky” for his services during the occupation of the Iravan Khanate. The news of the capture of the Iravan fortress was delivered to Russian Emperor Nicholas I while he was in Riga. Hasan Khan’s sword was presented to the tsar. The tsar, in turn, donated that sword to the city hall as a souvenir of his presence in Riga (the sword is now kept in the “Armoury Chamber” of the Kremlin). After returning to Petersburg, on November 8, the Emperor and his family went to the church in the Winter Palace and prayed on the occasion of the capture of the Iravan fortress. The keys and 4 flags taken during the occupation of the Iravan fortress were carried on the streets to the cheers of the capital’s residents.

Encouraged by the fall of the Iravan fortress, the Russian troops captured the cities of Tabriz, Khoy, Urmia, Selmas and Ardabil in South Azerbaijan at the end of 1827 and the beginning of 1828. On February 10, 1828, the annexation of the Khanate of Iravan to Russia was formalized with the agreement signed in the village of Turkmenchay.

**Western Azerbaijan during the Tsarist Russia**

1747–1827 – With the establishment of the Iravan Khanate, the center of which was the city of Iravan, a large part of the Western Azerbaijan became one of the independent states of the khanate period of Azerbaijan. Russian Empire’s struggle for dominance in the South Caucasus during the early 19th century resulted in the occupation of the Iravan Khanate and other regions of the Western Azerbaijan. The plan to carry out this occupation during the 1804–1813 war was not realized, and a new war began after a 13-year hiatus.

**1. Occupation of Iravan and initial armenianization measures (October 1827 – March 1828)**

1826-1828 – New war between Russia and Iran. The central issue of this war was the conflict between the Russian Empire and the Iravan Khanate. Following the decline of the Khanate, Russian forces entered South Azerbaijan by crossing the Araz River.

October 1, 1827 – Occupation of Iravan by the Russian Empire during the course of the Russia-Iran War (1826-1828). Conclusion of the occupation of the Khanate and its dissolution, leading to the creation of the Iravan Province.

October 1827 – October 1917 – Western Azerbaijan within the Russian Empire. As with other Azerbaijani territories previously annexed by the Russian Empire, the historical western Azerbaijani territories came under the rule of a Christian state. The Russian Empire pursued a policy of Christianization and Armenianization symmetrically with the infringement of Azerbaijani rights.

October 6, 1827 – General guidelines for the administration of Iravan Province prepared by General I.F. Paskevich, the commander of Russian troops in the Caucasus. According to the guidelines, a Temporary Administration is established for civil affairs, led by A.I. Krasovski as Chairman, and members including Bishop Nerses and temporary commander of the Iravan fortress, A. Borodin. [4, док. 432, с.480-481]

February 10, 1828 – Treaty of Turkmenchay between Russia and Iran. Formalization of the annexation of the Nakhchivan and Iravan Khanates to the Russian Empire. [11, док.1794, с.123-130] The Treaty marked the conclusion of the division of Azerbaijani territories between Russia and Iran. Colonial system was established in the territories transferred to the Russian Empire, with one of its main indicators being the division of ethnic and national territories into artificially created administrative units. The administrative division established by the Russian Empire in the South Caucasus included five governorates (Tiflis, Iravan, Baku, Kutaisi, and Elisavetpol (Ganja)), and Azerbaijani territories were divided among four governorates except for Kutaisi. The Western Azerbaijani territory was subjected to a more rigid form of colonial rule, which differed in its severity. Armenian historiography, however, attempts to create non-scientific concepts, such as “Eastern Armenia” for the western territories of Azerbaijan and “Western Armenia” or “Turkish Armenia” for the eastern Anatolian territories, aiming to substantiate the progress of “Eastern Armenia” within the Russian Empire. [19 və b.]

1828–1831 – According to the agreements of Turkmenchay and then Edirne (1829), the mass transfer of Armenians to North Azerbaijan, including the territory of the former Iravan Khanate. According to the report of Colonel L. Lazarev (Lazaryan) to Paskevich on June 14, 1828, 3,900 (52.3%) of the 7,458 Armenian families transferred from Iran were settled in Iravan province. According to official statistical information, the number of Armenian families relocated in 1829-1831 was 6,946 (35,560 people). Of them, 366 families (1715 people) were located in the city of Iravan, respectively 4193 (21853 people) were located in 10 districts of Iravan. These figures for Iravan city and districts were 4559 families (65.6%). In fact, these numbers were much higher. The number of Armenian families transferred from the Ottoman Empire under the Treaty of Edirne was 14 thousand or more than 100 thousand people. Together with those transferred from Iran, the total number reached 145 thousand. [18, c. 32-33, 39] Russian batalist artist Moshkov (Mashkov) described this event in his painting “The transfer of 40,000 Armenians to the Russian borders by the personal order of Colonel Lazarev”.

March 21, 1828 – creation of “Armenian Province” on the territories of Iravan and Nakhchivan khanates of Azerbaijan by decree of Nicholas I (1825-1855). [11, док.1888, с.272-273] A certain political line was formed in relation to the captured Azerbaijani khanates during the first period of Russian occupation. Khanates that resisted were abolished and turned into provinces. The khanates annexed through treaties were allowed to maintain khanates system temporarily. In relation to the Khanates of Iravan and Nakhchivan, a sharper anti-Azerbaijani step was taken. Without any basis “Armenian Province” was organized on the historical lands of Azerbaijan. The matter does not end there, unlike other occupied territories of Azerbaijan, this province was included in the emperor’s title.

1829–1873 – Conducting of revision list (tax census) among the population of the “Armenian province”, and later the Iravan uezd and governorate.

1829–1832 – Conducting of revision list by I. Schopen (the famous composer’s relative). The census of the “Armenian Province” provides information about the population and ethnic composition of Iravan after its occupation by Russia. These figures played a fundamental role for subsequent periods, so it’s important to highlight them. The number of Muslims: 1807 families, 3749 males, 3582 females, total 7331 individuals. It’s also worth noting that a certain portion of the Muslim population had left the city during the occupation. Schopen divides the Armenians into two groups: locals (those who were there earlier) and newcomers. The number of “locals” was as follows: 567 families, 1220males, 1149 females, total 2369 individuals. The newcomers were divided into those coming from Iran and those coming from Türkiye. Those from Iran numbered: 366 families, 903 males, 812 females, total 1715 individuals. Those from Türkiye numbered: 11 families, 25 males, 23 females, total 48 individuals. As evident from the figures, if newcomers were not taken into account, the population of Iravan would have been 9700 individuals, of which 75.58% were Muslims and 24.42% were “local” Armenians. Due to migration, the ethnic composition of Iravan’s population began to change. The number of migrated Armenians (1763 individuals) comprised 18.17% of the existing population (9700 individuals). As a result, within the total population (11463 individuals), Muslims constituted 63.95% and Armenians constituted 36.05%. [20, с.543-546] Despite the policies of the Tsarist government, up until 1918, it was not possible to turn Iravan into a political or economic center for Armenians. These territories were not part of the Armenian notion of homeland. Armenian politicians and finances were primarily focused on Baku and Tiflis.

February 27, 1833 – Acceptance of the emblem of the “Armenian Province.” The analysis of the emblems of this province, and later the Iravan uezd (1843) and governorate (1878), demonstrates that Tsar Nicholas I persistently tried to Armenianize and Christianize the Iravan region, and his successors continued this policy.

June 22, 1833 – The 16-article tsar’s decree “On the administrative structure of the Armenian Province, with the addition of the states of this administration”. According to the decree, an administration for the collection of taxes and duties was established in Iravan. The Iravan province, consisting of 10 districts, was divided into Iravan, Sharur, Sardarabad, and Surmeli districts. Colonel Ehsan Khan and Mayor Shikhali Bey remained as governors in Nakhchivan and Ordubad. [12, док.6282, с.374-375]

March 11, 1836 – Adoption of the Statute on the Armenian-Gregorian Church. Important rights were granted to the Armenian Church by the tsarist government. It is no coincidence that this Statute refers to the Armenian Church not of the Transcaucasia (This term reflects the geopolitics of the Russian Empire. The terms South Caucasus or Transcaucasia are also used. When talking about the reality of the time, that term is kept, and in the author’s commentary, the term South Caucasus is preferred.-K.Sh.), but generally referred to as the Armenian-Gregorian Church, it meant the unification of Armenians around the world. According to the statute, 6 dioceses were defined within the borders of Russia. Among them were the dioceses of Iravan, Karabakh and Shirvan, which were within the territories of Azerbaijan. [13, doc. 8970, с.194-209] The Armenian-Gregorian Church, using this Statute, gained a strong position both politically and materially. Although an attempt was made by the tsarist government to weaken this position in 1903, it failed. In addition to the statute, the tsarist government tried to increase the influence of the Armenian-Gregorian Church by other means. Nicholas I met with the Armenian Catholicos during his visit to the Caucasus.

September 20–October 26, 1837 – Emperor Nicholas I’s visit to the Caucasus. The emperor arrives in Gyumri on October 4. He lays the foundations of the church named after St. Alexander and allows the city to be called Alexandropol. On October 5, the tsar arrives in Sardarabad, from there to Etchmiadzin, and then to Iravan. A very interesting event took place at the Sardar Palace in Iravan during a dinner attended by the commander-in-chief of the Russian troops in the Caucasus, Baron Rosen, and representatives of the military and civil administration. There were shouts from the crowd gathered near the palace: “We have complaint, they don’t let us.” From these statements recorded by A. Berge, who dedicated an article to this trip, it can be seen that these people were Azerbaijanis. Tsar’s question “What’s that sound?”, Rosen responded that it was an indication of joy at the arrival of the tsar. The tsar, who did not agree with this, instructs his men to clarify the case. After dinner, the tsar himself approaches the crowd and hears many complaints. The head of the province Armenian V.O. Bebutov is removed from his post due to his abuses. [6, p. 385] The importance of this rare historical fact is that ordinary Azerbaijanis were able to protect their rights even in front of the Russian emperor. After his visit to Iravan, Nicholas I became convinced on the spot that the “Armenian Province” administration method had not proved itself and it should be changed. One fact should be mentioned here. Berge, while talking about the meeting of the tsar with the Catholicos in Etchmiadzin, writes that he was able to explain in Azerbaijani as well as in Armenian. [6, p. 383] This confirms the influence of the Azerbaijani language, its widespread use among Armenians and its common means of communication.

April 10, 1840 – abolition of the “Armenian Province” along the reforms in Transcaucasia. The organization of Iravan uezd (1840–1930) with the city of Iravan as its center within the newly created Georgian-Imeret governorate. [14, dok.13368, p.237] There were a number of reasons for the abolition of the “Armenian province”. Two of them are particularly noteworthy: 1. The struggle of Azerbaijanis against the Russian-Armenian rule (see Nicholas I’s visit to the Caucasus in 1837); 2. Ehsan Khan’s growing influence and activity in Nakhchivan, which was included in the province.

**2. Iravan uezd (1840–1849)**

April 10, 1840 – December 14, 1846 – Iravan uezd became part of the Georgian-Immeret Governorate.

December 27, 1844 – Creation of the Caucasus Viceroyalty (centered in Tiflis city), which also included Western Azerbaijan territories. It existed until 1881 and was re-established in 1905.

December 14, 1846 – According to the decree confirming the division of the Transcaucasus region, Georgian-Immeret Governorate was abolished, Tiflis Governorate was established, and Iravan uezd was included into this governorate.

December 14, 1846 – June 9, 1849 – Iravan uezd was part of the Tiflis Governorate.

June 9, 1849 – A decree by the Tsar on the creation of a governorate with the same name as its center, Iravan, within the Transcaucasian region. According to the decree, the governorate was divided into five uezds: Iravan (with the city of Iravan as its center), Novo-Bayazet (renamed from Kever village, given the status of a district center), Nakhchivan, Ordubad, and Aleksandropol. The administrative division of the governorate’s territory continued in 1867. Based on the decree of December 9, the following uezds were determined: Iravan, Aleksandropol, Erchmiadzin, Novo-Bayazet, and Nakhchivan. In 1875, two more uezds, Sharur-Daralayaz and Surmeli, were created. Thus, the number of uezds reached seven. [16, док.23303, с.311-312] According to the 1917 data about the Caucasus, the area of the Iravan Governorate was 26,210.11 km2. For the Iravan uezd, this figure was 3,078.46; for Aleksandropol, 3826.97; for Etchmiadzin, 3658.26; for Novo-Bayazet, 4658.72; for Nakhchivan, 4451.11; for Sharur-Daralayaz, 2980.37; and for Surmeli, 3556.21 km2.

January 1850 – February 1917 – Iravan Governorate during the reign of the Tsarist government.

1853 – Publication of the volume on the Iravan governorate from the series on the military-statistical overview of the Russian Empire. [7]

May 14, 1870 – Emancipation reform. “Statute of the land structure of the former state peasants living on the lands of Muslim nobles, as well as Armenian landlords in the Transcaucasia governorates: Yelizavetpol, Baku, Iravan and partially Tbilisi governorates.” As the name of the statute suggests, the historical reality is distorted. The Tsarist government strategically applies the concept of “Armenian landlords,” even though such an understanding wasn’t present in legal documents until then.

1877–1878 – Russian-Ottoman war. The Treaty of San Stefano (1878, February), and then the signing of the Treaty of Berlin (1878, July). [21, No. 54, p. 243-270] Annexation of Ardakhan, Kars and Batum to Russia. The emergence of the “Armenian issue”.

October 1, 1879 – In accordance with the city charter of 1870, Iravan City Duma began to function. Iravan duma became one of the main anti-Azerbaijani centers of the city.

November, 1881 – opening of the Iravan Teachers’ Seminary. On December 29, 2021, a decree was signed by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the celebration of the 140th anniversary of the Seminary.

1882 – Creation of the Iravan theater. On July 14, 2022, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan signed a decree “On the celebration of the 140th anniversary of the Iravan State Azerbaijan Dramatic Theater”.

1884–1914 – Reports of the governor of Iravan. It was one of the main official documents about the governorate. [9]

1887 – Organization of the Social-Democratic Gnchak (Bell) party in Geneva. The name “Bell” was taken from “Kolokol” by A. I. Gertsen. Andranik, one of the cruel enemies of Azerbaijan, was once a member of this party.

1890 – organization of Dashnaksutyun party in Tbilisi. At the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, the terms Armenian and Dashnak basically had the same meaning. It was an active organizer of every genocide against the people of Azerbaijan. It established a government during the first Armenian state, the First Republic (1918-1920), created on the lands of the Western Azerbaijan.

January, 1897 – concucting of the first general population census in the Russian Empire. According to the results of the Iravan governorate, there were 29,006 people in the city of Iravan. Among the population, there were 12,359 (42.69%) people whose mother tongue was Tatar (Azerbaijan.-K.Sh.), and 12,153 (41.89%) people who spoke Armenian. The ratio of Muslims and Christians (Armenian-Gregorian and Armenian-Catholics) was 12537 (43.22%) and 12516 (43.15%). [9, p. 2-3] Compared to the 1829-1832 revision list (tax census), it appears that the population increased by 17,543 people (60.49%). There was a more serious change in the ethnic and religious composition of the population. The number of Armenians is almost equal to the number of Muslims.

December 5, 1902 – the opening of the Alexandropol-Iravan railway line. The construction of this and subsequent railway lines increased the strategic importance of Iravan.

June 12, 1903 – Tsar Nicholas II’s decree on the confiscation of the properties of the Armenian-Gregorian Church. Under the Armenian pressure, the property confiscated by the decree was returned on August 1, 1905. [17, doc. 23156, p. 778-779]

1905–1906 – During the “Armenian-Muslim conflict”, Armenians killed hundreds of Azerbaijanis in Iravan province, including the city of Iravan, and expelled them from their historical lands. [2, pp. 31-42, etc.; 5, c. 591-600]

1906 – The Iravan-Julfa railway line was put into operation.

1914–1916 – In the run-up to World War I, the population of Iravan was 29,366, of which 11,500 (39.2%) were Azerbaijanis and 15,531 (52.8%) were Armenians. In 1916, the population of Iravan increased by 51,286 (+21,920) from the 29,366 in 1914. Comparing to 1897, the demographic situation of Azerbaijanis in Iravan worsened sharply in the early 20th century. During the war period, the deliberate relocation of Armenian refugees to Iravan city led to the further pressure on Azerbaijanis.

August 1914 – Russia’s entry into World War I. Expansion of Armenian struggle, with the help of Russia, to create a state on the territory of the Ottoman Empire.

September-November 1914 – Creation of Armenian volunteer units by the Russian Empire. This unit actively participated in the genocide against Turks in Eastern Anatolia and later against Azerbaijanis in the Iravan region. By December 1917, these volunteer units transformed into the Armenian Volunteer Corps. Its leader, Lieutenant General Foma Nazarbekov, later became the Commander-in-Chief of the Republic of Armenia’s army from 1918 to 1920.

February-October 1917 – Western Azerbaijan under the rule of Interim Government.

March 9/22 – November 15/28, 1917 – Special Transcaucasian Committee (Ozakom), a local body of the Provisional Government, headed by V.A. Kharlamov (Cadet). The committee included members like M.Y. Jafarov, M.I. Papacanov, K.Q. Abashidze, and P.N. Pereverzev, who was later replaced by A.I. Chkhenkeli.

April 26/9 May 1917 – Adoption of the Interim Government’s decision on “Turkish Armenia”. According to this four-article decision, until the final status of “Turkish Armenia” was defined by a peace treaty, the part of its territory under the Russian army’s control would be subject to the civil administration of the Transcaucasian authorities, detached from the Transcaucasian front’s control, and placed under the authority of the Interim Government. A Turkish Armenian High Commissioner was established [3, с.356-357]. This demonstrated the Interim Government’s aim to bring Armenians closer to their side, applying the concept of “Turkish Armenia” with a focus on Turkey’s territory. Soviet Russia continued this policy. As will be clarified later, due to the liberation of these territories by the Ottoman Empire, the creation of the Armenian state was transferred to Transcaucasia – to Western Azerbaijan lands.

Late September – Early October 1917 – Formation of the Armenian National Council. Led by A.V. Aharonyan (Dashnak), Azerbaijan National Council held discussions about Iravan with this organization.

October 25/7 November 1917 – October Revolution in Russia, Bolsheviks came to power. Disintegration of the Russian Empire. Iravan Governorate, along with other Azerbaijan territories, leaves the Russian Empire. Despite the Russian Empire’s purposeful Armenianization policy of the historically formed administrative territorial structures, ethno-confessional composition, political structure and administration system of the Western Azerbaijan through occupation and colonialism which continued systematically for 90 years, it was not possible to change the fact that these lands, its native population and culture existing there belonged to Azerbaijanis. Western Azerbaijan, as a part of the entire Azerbaijan, left the Russian Empire as a Turkish-Muslim land and entered the territory of the Transcaucasian government.

**Western Azerbaijan in the Transcaucasian statehood system**

The Russian Empire collapsed when the Bolsheviks took power in November 1917. In this situation, Transcaucasia (South Caucasus), which was formed as a geopolitical unit of Russia, entered a new era under the severe consequences of the empire’s dissolution. This period ended with the breakup of Transcaucasia and the emergence of independent states. In such a context, the process of separating Western Azerbaijan from the of Azerbaijan mainland and adding it into the geography of the Armenian state began and played an important role in the establishment of the Republic of Armenia on May 28, 1918. The transfer of Irevan to Armenia by the National Council of Azerbaijan (1918, May 29) and its official recognition by the Ottoman-Armenian Batumi Treaty (1918, June 4) continued during the period of the Republic of Armenia (1918–1920).

**Creation of the first Transcaucasian government**

**1917, November 15/28–1918, March 26** – Fall of the Provisional Government bodies in Transcaucasia as a result of the Bolshevik coup in Russia. Establishment of a provisional coalition government – the Transcaucasian Commissariat (Zakavkom). The chairman was Y.P. Gegechkori, he was the commissioner for the Labor and Foreign Affairs at the same time. Among the members of the Commissariat were Azerbaijanis F.Khoyski (commissioner of Public Education), M.Y. Jafarov (commissioner of Trade and Industry), Kh.A. Malikaslanov (commissioner of Roads), Kh.B. Khasmammadov (Commissioner of State Control). In the first declaration of the Transcaucasian Commissariat, it was stated that “the Transcaucasian Commissariat, based on the principle of nations’ self-determination proclaimed by the Russian revolution, will take steps to solve the national question of Transcaucasia quickly and fairly.” [8, doc. No. 7, p. 9] With the establishment of this coalition government, the ethnic basis of the territorial division of Transcaucasia was also established. The union of Azerbaijan and Georgia in a coalition with Armenians was the recognition of their territorial security. This idea is relevant to the Seim and its provisional government, as well as to the Transcaucasian Republic.

**1917, November** – Irevan governorate, together with all its administrative-territorial units, entered the territory of the Transcaucasian government.

**1917, December 2/15** – Armistice signed in Brest-Litovsk between the Central Powers and Soviet Russia. [16, No. 70.1, p. 337]

**1917, December 5/18** – signing of Erzincan Peace between the Ottoman Empire and Transcaucasia Commissariat. [8, doc. No. 14, p. 18-23)] As a result of this reconciliation, the Ottoman Empire gained diplomatic and then military superiority. The Transcaucasian Commissariat was accepted as a party. With the massive withdrawal of Russian troops from the Caucasus front, measures were taken against the Armenian military forces that wanted to strengthen in the area. Together with the Russian troops, the Armenian refugees who left those territories flocked to the territories of Western Azerbaijan. Their number was at least 300 thousand people.

**1917, December 29/1918, January 11** – Soviet Russia’s adoption of a decree on “Turkish Armenia” for the Armenians on the territory of Türkiye being organized. According to Article 1 of the decree, which consists of a preamble, 4 articles and a note, Soviet Russia recognized the right of Armenians in “Turkish Armenia” to self-determination until full independence. The main role in the implementation of the decree was assigned to Shaumyan, who was appointed extraordinary commissioner of the Caucasus by Lenin in December 1917. [16, No. 69.5, p. 334-335] This was a declarative decree.

**1918, February 12-April 25 –** Ottoman advance. Erzincan, Trabzon, Ardahan, etc. were liberated. At the end of April 1918, the 1877 border between the Ottoman-Russian Empire was restored. [2, p.553] As a result of this movement, in fact, the policy of Russia and Armenians to create an Armenian state in Ottoman territory failed. This policy was transferred to Transcaucasia, to the lands of Western Azerbaijan. During the course of World War I, Armenians who committed genocide against the Turkish-Muslim population in these areas continued to leave these areas and move to Western Azerbaijan.

**Transcaucasian Seim. Organization of the Seim government**

**1918, February 23-May 26 –** Transcaucasian Seim. Chairman N.S.Chkheidze (Georgian Social-Democrat (Menshevik)). 44 of the 125 members of the Seim were from the Muslim faction. Seim organized the Provisional Transcaucasian government (March 26 – April 22) under the leadership of Y.P. Gegechkori.

**1918, March 3 –** Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. [16, No. 70.2, p. 337-347] In accordance with the terms of the peace, the Ottoman Empire received Elviyey-i selaseni (“Three Liwa”), the right to restore its control over Kars, Batum and Ardahan. [8, doc. No. 48, p. 85-86] Since this issue was related to Transcaucasia, it was met with protest by the Commissariat. A territorial issue arose between the Ottoman state and the Transcaucasian commissariat. In the very first stage, territorial contradictions emerged within the Transcaucasian government. Türkiye, before the settlement of its external borders with the commissariat, started to annex the lands granted by Brest and then by military means. As a result, the territory of Transcaucasia became smaller and smaller. This made the struggle for territory in Transcaucasia more acute. Along with the determination of its borders with Transcaucasia, Türkiye began to influence the determination of internal boundaries in Transcaucasia. Thus, the territorial issue in Transcaucasia took on an international character. It was decided to convene a conference in Trabzon to resolve the controversial issues.

**Trabzon conference**

**1918, March 14-April 14 –** Trabzon conference. The Turkish delegation was headed by Minister of Foreign Affairs Huseyn Rauf Bey (Orbay), and the 40-member delegation of the Seim was headed by Minister of Internal Affairs A.Chkhenkeli. The delegation included M.H. Hajinski, Kh.B. Khasmammadov, I. Heydarov, Mir Yagub Mehdiyev, A. Sheikhulislamov from the Muslim faction. The Armenian team was led by A. Khatisov. [8, No. 54-84, p. 107–184; 9, p. 85-94]

Khatisov reminded the opinion of the Turkish media about the large number of delegation from the Seim: “If a military detachment came, it would be small in number, if it is a peace delegation, then it is quite large”. [7, c.278] Both in the Seim and in its delegation, there was a serious disagreement about the current situation. The Seim recalled the delegation on April 14 because it did not accept Brest’s conditions.

**1918, March 26 –** joint meeting of all Muslim factions of the Seim. After the report of Sheikhulislamov, who had just arrived from the Trabzon conference, the tactics of the Muslim parties regarding Türkiye’s ultimatum on the transfer of the territories transferred to it under the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was being discussed. [14, doc. No. 3, p. 77

**1918, March 31 –** joint meeting of all Muslim factions of the Seim. Discussion of the issue on how Muslim parties will act in case of the war with Türkiye. The representatives of “Hummat” united with the Georgian Mensheviks. Muslim socialist block parties viewed the continuation of the war negatively and decided to make an independent speech in the Seim. “Musavat”, a group of neutrals, and “Ittihad”, a Muslim party in Russia, said that they would take all measures for a favorable termination of the war. The voice of this resolution in the Seim was entrusted to Sh. Rustambayov. [14, doc. No. 4, p. 77-79]

**1918, April 1 –** Inter-factional meeting of members of the Seim. In connection with the declaration of war against Türkiye, the issue of suspending the work of the Seim for two weeks and electing a military board with extraordinary powers of 3 members was discussed at the meeting. [14, doc. No. 5, p. 79-80]

**1918, April 3 –** Inter-factional meeting of members of the Seim. The report of Kh.B. Khasmammadov, a member of the peace commission, was heard. Under the guise of receiving instructions from the Transcaucasian government, the delegation returned. It was clear from the discussions that the Turks were very well informed about the situation of the Muslims of Transcaucasia and have promised to help by active force to suppress the anarchy. [14, doc. No. 6, p. 81-82]

**War between the Transcaucasian Seim government and the Ottoman Empire (1918, April 14-22)**

**1918, April 14-22 –** 8-day war between the government of the Transcaucasian Seim and the Ottoman Empire. Türkiye captures Oltu, Artvin, Ardahan, Sarıgamysh, Batum, and shortly after the war, Kars. Seim surrenders. [15, c.350]

**Creation of Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic (TDFR)**

**1918, April 22-May 26 –** the independence of Transcaucasia was declared as one of the results of the 8-day war. The Transcaucasian Democratic Federal Republic (TDFR) was established. It was the shortest-lived political union of Transcaucasia. It was able to exist only for 34 days. Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs was the head of the Seim delegation in Trabzon A. I. Chkhenkeli. It included Azerbaijanis Kh.B. Malikaslanov (Minister of Roads), F.K. Khoyski (Minister of Justice), N.B. Yusifbeyov (Minister of Public Education), M.H. Hajinsky (Minister of Trade and Industry) and I. Heydarov (State Controller). [12, c.63-64] After the government was formed, the first task was to resume negotiations with Türkiye.

**1918, April 23-26 –** the start of new discussions between the Ottoman and Transcaucasian governments and Batum was chosen as the place of the conference, proposed by the head of the government Chkhenkeli. After the decision on the conference was made, the parties determined the delegation. The head of the Ottoman delegation was the Minister of Justice Khalil Bey, and the second most important person was Vehib Pasha, commander of the 3rd Turkish Army. The Transcaucasian delegation included: A. I. Chkhenkeli (chairman), Georgians: Nikolay Nikoladze, General Odishelidze, Noy Ramishvili, Grigori Gvazava, etc.; Azerbaijanis: M.H. Hajinski, M.A. Rasulzade and others; Armenians: A. Khatisov (Khatisyan), H. Kachaznuni, M. Papajanyan and others. The total number of delegation was 45 people. [2, p.512-523] The Batumi conference can be considered one of the rare events in the history of diplomacy. The conference started between two countries and ended with four countries. Grandmaster Talat Pasha and Deputy Commander-in-Chief Enver Pasha had a decisive role in the organization and management of the conference. The most important of them was Enver Pasha. It is no coincidence that in most of Talat Pasha’s telegrams addressed to the conference, it is mentioned that Enver Pasha is also with him. In this regard, the position of both of them, or rather the position of Talat Pasha, mainly reflects the views of Enver Pasha. According to the subordination, Talat Pasha referred more to Khalil Pasha and Enver Pasha to Vehib Pasha. One of the rare examples was that during the course of the conference, unlike Talat and Enver Pasha’s tandem, there was not only disagreement between them and the delegation, but also between Khalil Pasha and Vehib Pasha, and even non-compliance with the instructions. The Transcaucasian government and its delegation also had their own problems. Here, too, there was no unity, but for a different reason. The delegation consisted of representatives of three opposing groups. There were no guidelines or uniform approach here.

**1918, April 26 –** recognition of the TDFR by the Ottoman state. [2, p.501-503] It is also very interesting that Türkiye played a decisive role in the creation and recognition of the Transcaucasian Republic as well as in its collapse.

**1918, May 1 –** joint meeting of all Muslim factions of the Seim. Discussion of the report of M.H. Hacinski, a member of the Trabzon peace conference delegation. Hajinski notes that one of the most significant events was Enver Pasha’s arrival in Trabzon and Batum. Hajinski reports on Enver Pasha’s views, as the main leader of Türkiye’s policy, on the political structure of Transcaucasia, most importantly on the future mutual relations between Azerbaijanis and Ottomans. If it is not possible to create a unified Transcaucasia, an alliance like of Austria-Hungary could be created between independent Azerbaijan and the Ottoman Empire. Regarding the independence of Armenia, Enver Pasha replied that if the Armenian people stop their intrigues under the influence of Anglo-Russian policy against the Turks, Türkiye is not against the establishment of an independent Armenian state. At the end of his report, Hajinski showed that the attitude of Vehib Pasha and Rauf Bey to this issue differed from that of Enver Pasha. They were in favor of not interfering in the internal affairs of Transcaucasia for the sake of maintaining peace there. [14, doc. No. 13, p. 97-100] Based on this information, some judgments can be made: 1) the creation of Armenian state had became a matter of discussion; 2) Enver Pasha put forward an alternative idea in a way typical of politicians, and did not deny its creation; 3) There was a difference of opinion in Turkish judicial circles on this issue; 4) Hajinski, who was a member of the delegation at the Batumi conference, as well as the members of all Muslim factions of the Seim, got acquainted with the position of Enver Pasha, one of the leaders of the Ottoman state, etc. Unfortunately, there is no mention of the attitude of the members of the Seim’s Muslim faction to this issue.

**1918, May 1-6 –** On May 1, a large delegation including Talat Pasha and Enver Pasha left Istanbul to take the Turkish delegation, including the German representatives led by General Lossov, to Batumi. On May 1, they arrived in Batumi. The Transcaucasian delegation also arrived in Batumi on the same day.

**1918, May 2-10 –** Enver Pasha sent instructions to Vehib Pasha, commander of the Third Army of the Ottoman Empire, about the Batum Conference, consisting of 11 articles. [1, document No. 33, pp. 121-122] Fulfillment of this instruction actually meant that Transcaucasia would became dependent on the Ottoman state. Keeping the important articles of the manual, new instructions were also addressed on May 4 and 5.

**1918, May 6 –** a joint meeting of all Muslim factions of the Seim and the Central Muslim Council of Transcaucasia. The member of the Seim, F.K. Khoyski, made a statement that Dashnak party’s Seim Faction claimed to undertake the cancellation of the Baku events on the condition that the future government in Baku is not exclusively Muslim, but international, and that the Armenian units remain there. F.Khoysky added that he did not reject such a brazen offer at that moment due to tactical consideration. Seim member Yusifbeyov categorically stated that he refused such a service, because it was not a sincere desire to live in peaceful conditions, but due to the approach of the Turkish army. Seim member Khasmammadov also made a sharp speech about this. In the end, Khoyski proposed the Dashnaks to put forward the following conditions: the transfer of power to Muslims in Baku, the entry of Muslim military units into the city, and the withdrawal of disarmed military units. According to tactical and political considerations, it is decided to extend these negotiations and instruct the head of the government not to give official information about it either in Baku or in the newspapers. [14, doc. No. 15, p. 103-104]

**1918, May 7 –** Khalil Bey’s telegram to the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He said that at seven o’clock Chkhenkeli came to him and met him. During the meeting, Khalil bey expressed his dissatisfaction with the situation in the Caucasus, especially with the activities of the Armenians. It is brought to attention that Armenians expelled the population from Muslim villages in Irevan and replaced them with Armenians. Khalil Bey later wrote that they went to visit Jamal Pasha (one of the leaders of the Young Turks) together. At dinner, Vehib Pasha said that he received orders from Enver Pasha to move on Irevan. [2, p.553-554] According to Khalil Pasha, the capture of the Caucasus can complicate the situation and this situation will not be in favor of the Ottoman state. He also expressed his concern that this movement can unite Georgians and Armenians closely. [1, No. 34, pp. 123-124] It was clear that Türkiye’s policy on the Caucasus was being pursued both diplomatically and militarily.

**1918, May 9-10 –** Enver Pasha, in an instruction sent on May 9, demanded a speedy conclusion to the negotiations. Among these arguments, the immediate cessation of the aggression of the Armenians against the Muslims was mentioned based on the telegrams sent by the people of Igdir and Irevan. [2, p.526-531] In Enver Pasha’s border project, the external borders of the Ottoman state and the TDFR were determined. This border line was drawn on a 1:400,000 scale map and sent to Khalil Bey on May 10. [1, document No. 36, pp. 138-139]

**Batumi conference**

**1918, May 11-June 4 –** Batumi Conference. Only one opening meeting of the conference was held, then relations were conducted by exchanging notes, finally, with the dissolution of the TDFR, the work of the conference was continued with separate delegations. From this point of view, the activities of the conference could be divided into two parts: until May 26, 1918 (dissolution of the Seim) and aftermath. The modern political geography of the South Caucasus, with some exceptions, was designed at the Batumi conference.

**1918, May 11 –** the first session of the Batumi conference. The meeting started at 16:00 in the wooden building of the Batum (Georgian) club under the chairmanship of Khalil Bey and ended at 18:35. The meeting was attended by the Ottoman government, the Transcaucasian government, the North Caucasian delegation based on the agreement of the conference, and the German delegation led by von Lossow. It should be noted that the German factor also played an important role in the course of the conference. They took the Georgians under protection, and by strengthening their position accelerated the collapse of the federation. Chkhenkeli wanted to achieve negotiations based on the Brest Treaty and the involvement of the Union states. Khalil Bey stated that after the Trabzon conference, new conditions were created, that is, because Türkiye acquired the territories in the Brest Treaty through war, blood was shed, and accordingly, new territorial demands were necessary. He rejected the acceptance of the Brest Treaty as the basis of negotiations, and at the same time the participation of the Union states. The Ottoman state wanted to conclude an agreement only with the Transcaucasian government. With that, the activities of the Batum conference went in a different direction. This general meeting was the first and last. [8, No. 131, p. 312-316; 1, document No. 37, pp. 140-141; 2, p.545-550] The Batumi conference was a stage, and what took place here were sometimes meaningful, sometimes meaningless diplomatic games. As a result, the main issue was the June 4 agreement. Considering this, it is necessary to pay more attention to those contracts. It is also noted that the Batum sub-system was created in the system of international relations of that period, albeit for a short time. [13, p.5-22]

**1918, May 12** **–** meeting of representatives of Transcaucasia. Discussions were held around Türkiye’s demands, but a single opinion could not be reached. In the end, it was decided to issue a note to the Turkish government. [2, p. 551-553; 5, p. 45 ]

**1918, May 13 –** note of the Transcaucasian delegation. In documents and materials, it is called the 1st memorandum. This note was written by Avalov. [8, p. 268-269) ] Here, the main goal was a political maneuver to involve Germany in discussions. [2, p. 553]

– Khalil Bey’s telegram to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In this telegram, it is stated that the movement in the direction of Irevan was against the Brest Treaty. [1, document No. 38, p. 142] Khalil Bey was trying to prevent the movement on Irevan by all means.

– Separate meetings of Khalil Bey with Georgian, Armenian and Muslim representatives. This meant the emergence of a new format during the conference. Georgian (Chkhenkeli), Armenian and Azerbaijani (Rasulzadeh) representatives express their opinions about the border. He wrote about this in Talat Pasha’s report: Chkhenkeli noted that the Transcaucasia government and the Seim will collapse as a result of the territorial demands of the Ottomans. Khalil Bey said that there will be no concessions. It was written about the meeting with the Armenian delegation that they united with Russia, regretted their participation in the war against Türkiye, and now want to take refuge in it, etc. The territorial issue was also discussed in the meeting with Rasulzadeh. [1, document No. 41, pp. 147-149 ]

– Joint meeting of all Muslim factions of the Seim. Acceleration of the demarcation of the territory of the three main nations of Transcaucasia was also mentioned among the adopted measures. [14, doc. №16, с.106] As it can be seen, along with the borders between the Ottoman state and the Transcaucasian republic, the discussion of internal borders also became an important factor.

**1918, May 13-14 –** appeals of representatives of Ganja and Irevan to Talat Pasha. This appeal mentioned Armenian oppression in Nakhchivan, Ordubad, Karabakh and Irevan. Here, the results of the destruction of 130 villages in Irevan province in recent months, the displacement of their population and settlement of Armenians, and the siege of Irevan city, along with other places, were noted and assistance was requested. [1, p.143-144] Thus, the territory of Western Azerbaijan became the center of political processes. Armenian armed groups, which played an active role in World War I, carried out genocide against the Azerbaijani population here, and the local population was deported in order to settle Armenians from the Ottoman Empire. The number of Azerbaijani refugees from Western Azerbaijan increased.

**1918, May 14 –** Khalil Bey’s telegrams to the central government. In one of these telegrams, the situation of Georgians and Armenians was discussed, and the importance of the independence of the Caucasus rather than its occupation was mentioned. In another telegram, Soviet Russia’s interference in Caucasian affairs was considered harmful. Another telegram of the same day mentioned the issue of borders. [1, document No. 40, pp. 145-146; No. 41, pp. 147-149; No. 42, pp. 150-151; No. 43, pp. 152-153).]

**1918, May 14, around midnight –** Khalil Bey’s note from the Turkish side about the departure of the Turkish army to Julfa (Iran) via Alexandropol (Gumru). [8, pp. 269-270; 10, p. 111-112] Here, the main goal was the acceptance of Turkish demands by the Transcaucasian delegation.

**Military operations of the Ottoman state in Western Azerbaijan. “Armenian-Ottoman war (1918)”**

**1918, May 15 –** Chkhenkeli protested the start of hostilities in a reply letter. [8, doc. No. 134, p. 271; 2, p. 555]

– Reply note of the Ottoman delegation. It consisted of 4 articles. Negotiations on the basis of the Brest Treaty were not accepted. [8, No. 136, p. 272-273; 2, p. 557-558]

**1918, May 15 at 6:00 p.m. –** Armenian withdrawal from Alexandropol. [2, p.574] This event is considered as the beginning of the “Armenian-Ottoman war”. In the course of this war, the Ottoman army liberated a large part of the Western Azerbaijani lands from the Armenians. Armenian armed forces continued to remain in other parts of Western Azerbaijan. The territories occupied by the Ottoman state remained within it until the Treaty of Mudros on October 30, 1918. Administration system was created, etc. Armenians were carrying out the policy of deportation and genocide in the Western Azerbaijan lands. After the return of Western Azerbaijan lands according to the Mudros Treaty the Ottoman army left these territories, Armenians continued to massacre Azerbaijanis in these lands. Regarding the liberation of Alexandropol, 1) this event brought Armenians and Georgians closer together; 2) territorial issue for the establishment of the Armenian state was mentioned.

**1918, May 16 –** the second note of the delegation of Transcaucasian government. In this note, it was suggested that the negotiations should be conducted on the basis of the Brest Treaty. [8, No. 137, p. 273-277]

– Telegram of Chief Minister Talat Pasha to Khalil Bey. The telegram recommended cooperation with the Georgians in order to isolate the Armenians. [1, document No. 45, p. 157]

**1918, May 17 –** additional note to the 2nd memorandum (May 16) of the Transcaucasian delegation. Again, the Brest Treaty was insisted upon. [8, doc. No. 140, p. 281-282]

– Reply note of Khalil Bey. In response to the May 15 protest, it is reported that at the May 13 meeting, the Ottoman army mentioned the need for strategic action, but no response was received. Regarding the note of May 17, it is noted that it is necessary to review the facts with the army commander. At the end of the note, he mentioned readiness to conclude a friendly agreement to end the struggle and prevent unpleasant complications. [8, doc. #141, p. 282-283]

**1918, May 18 –** Khalil Bey’s reply to the telegram (May 16) of Chief Minister Talat Pasha about cooperation with Georgians. Khalil Bey wrote in his answer: “In order to win the Georgians, I advised the Muslim murahhas (representatives – K.S.) to satisfy the Georgians by giving them some concessions.” I hope that if we give them something from Ahılkelek Kazâsı, we will completely win over the Georgians and leave the Armenians alone, and we will do our work easily. What are the orders?” [1, document No. 45, p. 157] Thus, at the Batumi conference, apart from the borders between the Ottoman state and the Republic of Transcaucasia, the internal borders of Transcaucasia also began to be interfered with. The fact that the Ottoman delegation took on such a mission complicated the situation. In the early period, it was presumed that only the external borders were being discussed.

– Telegram of the head of the Dashnak fraction of the Seim, Karchikyan, to representatives Khatisov and Kachaznuni in Batumi. In the telegram, it is mentioned that the Turkish army was allowed to go to Julfa without hindrance, and it was suggested that the roads be handed over to the Germans. Otherwise, it was mentioned that an Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict would arise in the Irevan governorate. [8, doc. No. 142, p. 283-284; 2, p. 562 ]

– Chkhenkeli’s answer to Khalil Bey’s May 17 note. Here, ordering Turkish troops to advance along the Aleksandropol-Julfa railway was considered as a violation of Transcaucasia’s sovereignty, and Türkiye was blamed for the events. [8, doc. No. 143, p. 284-285; 2, p. 563]

– The Transcaucasian Republic’s declaration on the occupation of Alexandropol. [8, doc. No. 144, p. 287-288]

– Khalil Bey’s response to the Transcaucasian government’s note dated May 16. [8, doc. No. 145, p. 288-290; 2, pp. 563-566]

**1918, May 19, Sunday –** the head of the German delegation, von Lossow, took advantage of the tense situation between Türkiye and representatives of the Transcaucasian government, and appealed to Chkhenkeli for mediation. [8, doc. No. 147, p. 293; 2, p. 566]

**– 8:30 p.m.** **–** discussion of von Lossow’s mediation proposal at the Transcaucasian government delegation meeting. Reply to von Lossow on acceptance of mediation. With this, the roads between Germany and Türkiye begin to diverge. [8, doc. No. 148, p. 293-301, No. 149, v. 301-302; 2, pp. 566-567]

**1918, May 20 –** Initiation of a new forward march to influence the Transcaucasian government due to the deadlock in negotiations. Occupation of Jalaloglu and Igdir, north of Karakilsa. [2, p. 575]

– Arrival of Armenian National Council members A. Ohanjanyan and A. Zohrabyan in Batumi.

– Khalil Bey’s telegram to Talat Pasha. Discussions with Georgian, Armenian, Muslim and North Caucasus representatives were discussed. He wrote about his meeting with Chkhenkeli that if the Armenians did not cooperate, he advised them to protect the confederation together with the Muslims, but he replied that it was impossible. From this, it turns out that Georgians insist on creating a state for Armenians. It is clear from the meeting with the Armenian representatives that the Armenians were also informed that Türkiye would give them an ultimatum, and the Armenian representatives left, noting that they needed time because they had just arrived. From the meeting with the Muslims, that is, Azerbaijani representatives, it is known that Khalil Bey tried to pressure them. He wrote: “I also met with Muslim murahhas. They are very afraid that, hundreds of thousands of armed and homeless Armenians will run away from the army, and they will make havoc in the Muslim villages. Georgians have soldiers and cannons and rifles. They can protect themselves. I said that if peace settlement with them is advised, the army will immediately rush to their support, and if not, it will try to fulfill this duty by war. As I told the Muslims, I told Chkhenkeli that if some space can be allocated to the Armenians on the other side of the land that we will receive, they would not resist.” In the end, he expresses his opinion as follows: “I am busy trying not to destroy the confederation and to make them accept our proposal, otherwise, I need to separate Armenians and Georgians. Make sure to do everything for our benefit. I will be very happy if we can finish the work with the current government without renewing hostility. A movement that will intensify (increase) the existing anarchy will greatly increase our difficulties and will be a pity for Muslims.” [1, document No. 47, pp. 159-160]

**Attitude towards the establishment of the Armenian state: different views of the Azerbaijani elite. The position of the Ottoman state.**

**1918, May 21 –** The arrival of the Turks to Sardarabad from the west.

**–** Agreement on Alexandropol – Julfa railway line. [1, document No. 48, p. 161; 2, p. 576-577]

**– in the afternoon –** meeting of Azerbaijanis and Georgians. Georgians: Nikoladze, Jordan, Surguladze, Avalov; Azerbaijanis: Khoyski, Khasmammadov, Safikurdski, Pepinov, Yusifbeyov, Jafarov. Azerbaijanis accepted the establishment of an Armenian state in the South Caucasus in exchange for Armenians giving up Karabakh. This state was to be created around Alexandropol, which was controlled by Türkiye. The Armenians accepted the establishment of two foreign states – Azerbaijani and Georgian states. Georgians went against this and announced that they will leave the federation. [5, p. 57; 2, p.579-580] Among the representatives of Azerbaijan, the idea of establishing the Armenian state around Etchmiadzin prevailed in the first period. [17, pp. 72-74] From here it is clear that this idea turned towards Alexandropol. Later, the Irevan area came to the agenda. In any case, the main target was the lands of Western Azerbaijan.

**1918, May 22 –** meeting of the Georgian delegation in Batumi. Georgians officially resolve the issue of independence during the discussion. Appeal to von Lossow for German protection. [2, p. 581]

– Khalil Bey’s answer to the “Addendum to the note dated May 16” presented by the Transcaucasian delegation on May 17. Here, too, the insistence on the Brest Treaty was not accepted, on the other hand, it was suggested that the treaty would be concluded only with the Transcaucasian government. [8, No. 153, p. 303-304; 2, pp. 565-566, 575]

– Capture of Hamamli (Spitak) station in the north-west by the Ottoman army.

– Ahmet Agaoglu and Ali Bey Huseynzade’s letter to Talat Pasha and Enver Pasha about their opinions on the establishment of the Armenian state. The creation of an Armenian state is not recommended here, the protection of the confederation is suggested. [1, document No. 50, pp. 165-166] Thus, there is a difference of opinion among the Azerbaijani political elite on the issue of creating an Armenian state. Khalil Bey begins to base his activities on the group that supports the establishment of the Armenian state, and for this he tries to discredit Ahmet Agaoglu and Ali Bey Huseynzade. This is also evident from Talat Pasha’s telegrams.

**1918, May 23 –** Chkhenkeli’s protest against the attack of the Turks in the direction of Karakilsa. [8, p. 304-305; 2, p. 577]

– Georgian and German meetings. The Germans acquire the ports of Batumi and additional privileges. [2, p. 581]

– Talat Pasha’s telegram to Khalil Bey. It is mentioned here that “Our army will ensure the union of Georgians and Muslims after entering the Caucasus. As for the Armenians, they can also be established in the canton part of Iravan. After all, I see it as useless (harmful) to prolong the issue.” [1, document No. 51, p. 167] Here, a different point of view emerges between the Ottoman state and the Azerbaijani delegation on the question of where to establish the Armenian state. While the Azerbaijani delegation is considering Alexandropol and its surroundings, the Ottoman state is focusing on Irevan. The latter prevailed. In contrast, what would history be like if the former prevailed? If viewed from the modern era, it seems that it will be more efficient, but this remains a matter of judgment.

– Khalil Bey’s telegram to Talat Pasha. It noted that Armenians could create a state in and around Irevan. Since Armenians mostly lived in the territories annexed to the Ottoman Empire, Muslims were dominant in the surrounding lands. In this regard, it is noted that Muslims did not like the creation of an Armenian state in those areas. [1, document No. 52, pp. 168-169; No. 53, pp. 170-173]

– Letter of Muslim representatives in Batumi, National Council and Seim members to Enver Pasha. [1, document No. 53, pp. 170-173] Although the establishment of an Armenian canton was accepted, the letter persisted in the territories controlled by Türkiye.

– A new meeting between Germans and Georgians. It was an important step towards the dissolution of the Federation. [2, p. 582]

– Decision to issue a definitive ultimatum to the Transcaucasian delegation. Vehib Pasha, who was in Alexandropol, was informed about it. He also tried to report the situation. It is clear that the main issue was not to allow the formation of the Georgian-Armenian union. [2, pp. 588-589]

– Vehib Pasha’s telegram to Khalil Bey. As a result of the capture of Jalaloglu and the capture of Garakilsa, the establishment of a relationship with the Muslims of Ganja-Karabakh would affect the separation of Georgians from Armenians. [1, document No. 54, p. 174; 2, p. 200]

– Ultimatum to the Transcaucasian delegation intensified telegraphic communication between the Central authorities and the head of the delegation in Batumi, Khalil Bey. On the same day, Talat Pasha’s telegram was received, Khalil Bey responded with four telegrams. Talat Pasha’s telegram mentioned the organization of Armenians into a government. In this regard, it is said: “I am not in favor of Armenians forming a government. After five years, a small Armenian autonomy will become an Armenian state with a population of five million and will dominate the entire Caucasus. All the Armenians in Iran and America will live there and, as you said, they will be supported by the British-Americans and the French in every way, and in the future they will act against us with the Christian Georgians and the Ajems with great ease. In this case, if possible, it is best to eliminate the problem explicitly. Since it is not possible, it is necessary to form this state in such a way that it is weak and unsustainable. I am of the opinion that we are in the same opinion and that separation is an obstacle to this. Otherwise, we would definitely convince each other.” At the end of Talat Pasha’s telegram, he mentioned Ahmet Bey Agaoglu and wrote: “I think Agaoglu Ahmed Bey does not have great confidence, so it is appropriate not to intervene him in the discussion.” [1, document No. 55, p. 175] As it is clear from here, Talat Pasha had an alternative approach to the creation of the Armenian state, similar to Anvar Pasha’s opinion on May 1, 1918. Mr. Khalil also used it skillfully.

**1918, May 24 –** Telegrams of Khalil Pasha to Talat Pasha. [1, document No. 56, pp. 176-177; document No. 57, pp. 178-179; No. 58, p. 180; No. 59, pp. 181–182] In these telegrams, the idea of creating an Armenian state is consistently defended. Not accepting this idea, he mentioned Ağaoğlu Ahmed Bey in the telegram: “It is natural that I will not interfere with Agaoğlu Ahmed Bey. He should not have been sent here. After arriving, I could not prevent him from having relations with his Caucasian compatriots. As he was sent by His Highness Enver Pasha, he was informed about the discussion by meeting with Muslim murahhas and delegations and expressed his desire to write his feelings.” [1, document No. 56, p. 177] In return, he quotes widely from the May 23 appeal of the representatives of Azerbaijan to Enver Pasha. [1, document No. 57, p. 179; No. 58, p. 180; No. 59, pp. 181–182]

**1918, May 24-25 –** The Georgian National Council accepts Germany’s offer of protection.

**1918, May 25–** a meeting of all Muslim factions of the Seim. As soon as the Azerbaijani faction in the Seim learned about the Georgians’ actions, it held two meetings in the morning and evening. In the morning meeting, it was decided that if Georgians leave the federation, Azerbaijanis should also declare their independence. Discussions were continued in the evening session. The leader of the meeting, F.Khoyski, went to the Chairman of the Seim, Chkheidze, and wanted to find out the agenda of the May 26 meeting. After some time, Chkheidze returned with Sereteli and Gegechkori. Sereteli and Chkheidze ruled out the possibility of a federation. F.Khoyski also made a speech and stated that if Georgians declare their independence, they would also declare Azerbaijan’s independence. After the Georgians left, F.Khoyski informed that from his conversation with the member of the Seim and the government, Karchikyan, the Armenian section of the Seim was preparing to declare the independence of Armenia in the event of Georgia’s secession. [14, doc. No. 20, p. 11-114; 2, pp. 583-584]

– Enver Pasha’s instructions to Vehib Pasha. Here it was requested to send the free forces to Baku under the agreement to be concluded after the definitive ultimatum. [2, p. 590 ]

– Von Lossow left Batumi, stating that the Transcaucasian republic will collapse. Although he said he would go to Berlin, he arrived in Poti. [2, pp. 569, 582]

– Talat Pasha’s telegram to Khalil Bey. It was mentioned that “If Georgians organize a separate and independent government, we will negotiate with them separately. The organization of a separate independent government of the Muslims of the North and South Caucasus is being considered, knowing the degree of independence and the determination of their relations. There is a possibility for Georgians and Muslims to unite after the Armenian issue is resolved. Your Highness can already start to work on this aspect.” [1, document No. 61, p. 184]

**– in the evening –** the delegation at the conference received a letter that the next morning, May 26, Georgia would be declared independent. [2, pp. 569-570]

**1918, May 26 –** Khalil Bey’s ultimatum to Chkhenkeli regarding the territorial claims of the Ottoman state. Chkhenkeli was given 72 hours to respond to the ultimatum. [1, p. 134-135; 10, c. 115]

– Khalil Bey’s telegram to Talat Pasha. It was mentioned that “Muslim murahhas came to me this morning. They are very worried about the situation in Baku. Because the said city is in the hands of Armenians. For this, they wanted to allocate a canton for Armenians the beyond the territory that will be left to us. Today the head of another Armenian faction, apart from the Dashnaks, came to me in Tiflis. He also appeared to be a supporter of this proposal. I stated that the Ottoman Government is not opposed to the division of such a canton. He asked for a few days for this, and if the ultimatum is to be given, he requested that it be given for at least three days duration. If such agreement is realized, it is requested that a delegation be sent to Istanbul to present it to the Government of the Sublime State, with the addition that some kindness and leniency be shown to our side. The manifestation of this event in favor of the Armenians will have a very positive impact in Europe and America. [1, document No. 64, pp. 188–189]

**1918, May 26-28 –** Capture of Garakilsa. The second most important station of the Gyumri-Tbilisi railway was captured. [2, p. 576]

**Release of Transcaucasian Seim**

**1918, May 26, Sunday at 15:00 –** Adoption of the decision to dissolve the Seim.

**Western Azerbaijan during the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic**

During the period of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (1918–1920), the western regions of Azerbaijan faced border-related challenges. Although independent states of Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia were established in the South Caucasus, their borders were not precisely defined. The complex situation of mixed population settlements in the territories of Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia during the previous era of the Russian Empire contributed to the difficulty of determining clear borders.

Between 1918 and 1920, there were 11 disputed territory zones between Azerbaijan and Armenia, as well as between Azerbaijan and Georgia. While some of these disputes were resolved peacefully based on the principle of allowing the population to determine their fate freely, in many cases, armed clashes occurred due to the attempts of the Armenian and Georgian governments to settle the issue by force.

The area of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic without border disputes was 97,297.67 km². This area included 39,075.15 km² for the Baku governorate, 44,371.29 km² for the Ganja governorate, 3992.54 km² for the Zaqatala governorate, and 9858.69 km² for the Irevan governorate. However, the disputed area of Azerbaijan between Armenia and Georgia was 16,598.30 km² (7,913.17 km² within the Irevan governorate and 8,685.30 km² within the Tiflis governorate). During this period, including the disputed territories, the total area of Azerbaijan reached 113,895.97 square kilometers.

After the establishment of the Soviet rule in Transcaucasia, the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic was compelled, under Moscow’s pressure, to cede approximately 10,000 km² of its undisputed territories to Armenia and Georgia during various periods.

Between 1918 and 1920, territorial disputes among the Transcaucasian republics took on a complex character. The characteristic feature of these conflicts was that the ethnic Muslim population of the disputed territories, as a rule, was the victim and was subjected to aggression by the neighboring republics, especially by the Armenian armed forces.

In 1918, Armenian armed forces eradicated 229 residential areas in the Baku governorate (including 58 in the Shamakhi district, 112 in the Quba district), 272 in the Ganja governorate (115 in Zangezur, 157 in Karabakh), 211 in the Irevan governorate (32 in Irevan district, 7 in Novo-Bayazid, 75 in Surmali, 84 in Etchmiadzin), and 82 residential areas in the Kars province. Hundreds of thousands of people were displaced and driven from their ethnic territories.

To address the refugee problem, the Muslim fraction of the Transcaucasian Seim established a refugee department in March of 1918. The Muslim fraction raised the issue with the Seim government, and a delegation was dispatched to put an end to the violence against Muslims in the Irevan governorate. The results of the investigation were discussed in the Seim session, and although some improvements were achieved in the refugees’ conditions, stopping the violence proved to be impossible.

In May 1918, when the Armenian state was established on the territory of the Iravan governorate, which included historical Azerbaijani lands, the choice of the capital city for this newly formed state was not determined. The Azerbaijani government, aiming to put an end to the national conflicts, declared on May 29 that they were willing to concede Iravan city for becoming the capital of the Armenians. However, the Iravan Muslim National Council immediately voiced its objection to this concession.

Based on the Batum Agreement signed on June 4, 1918, the territory of the Armenian Republic covered approximately 9,000 square kilometers, and the Armenian government announced that it had no territorial claims against Azerbaijan. Nevertheless, following massacres in Eastern Anatolia, Armenian armed forces under the command of General Andranik, fleeing the advancing Turkish forces, moved from Gyumri to Garakilse, then to Dilijan Valley and Goyche, and further to Nakhchivan and from there to Zangezur, leaving Muslim villages in ruins. The threat posed by the Armenian armed forces from Zangezur to Karabakh was a serious concern for the Azerbaijani government.

The Armenians living in the mountainous part of Karabakh armed themselves and sought to join the forces of Andranik, with the aim of uniting the Muslim-populated villages between Karabakh and Armenia by force. Andranik’s gang groups devastated the villages of Chamirli, Shorja, Gayabashy, Sariyaqub, Dashkend, Teze Qoshabulag, Gizilbulag, Yukhari Alchaly, and Kerkibash in the Goycha district of the Novo-Bayazid county, seizing property and forcing the surviving population to retreat to the mountains. Representatives of these villages came to Ganja and appealed to the head of the government, Fatali Khan Khoyski, requesting assistance to end the massacres against Muslims in the Novo-Bayazid county. As a result, the Azerbaijani government expressed its opposition to the Armenian government and demanded action to facilitate the return of the displaced population to their rightful lands.

After the Armenian armed forces wreaked havoc in Goycha, they occupied Nakhchivan and then entered the Zangezur district, capturing the Gorus district and the road to Shusha. In response, the Azerbaijani government sent a protest note to the Armenian government on August 15, condemning the Armenian armed forces’ actions as an invasion. The Azerbaijani government firmly stated that if no measures were taken to remove the Armenian forces from Azerbaijani territory, the responsibility for the subsequent developments would squarely fall on the Armenian government. However, the Armenian government used a ruse, claiming on August 1 that General Andranik and his detachment were not under the command of the Armenian government anymore. They explained that Andranik and his detachment had declared themselves independent from the Armenian government, and as a result, the Armenian government was not accountable for their actions. Furthermore, the Armenian government’s appointment of a representative to the Karvansara district (modern-day Ijevan) of the Gazakh county in October 1918, along with its assumption of control over that area, also sparked dissatisfaction from the Azerbaijani government. The Azerbaijani government protested against this action as well.

The Azerbaijani government, aiming to normalize relations with Armenia through peaceful means, put an end to internal conflicts and armed clashes, resolve territorial disputes fairly, and alleviate the situation of refugees, appointed Mammad Khan Takinski as a permanent representative to Armenia in early November 1918.

Despite numerous appeals from the Azerbaijani side to hold peace conferences in the autumn of 1918, the armenian side remained indifferent to this proposal. Taking advantage of the opportunity created by the withdrawal of Turkish and German forces from the Caucasus as a result of the Mudros Armistice signed on October 30 and the subsequent mandate given to British forces by the Allies to enter the Caucasus, Armenia opted to expand its territory at the expense of Azerbaijan and Georgia. However, the Armenian side was compelled to engage in peace talks due to the striking blows dealt by the local Muslim self-defense units in the Vedibasar and Zangibasar districts of the Iravan governorate, as well as the counterattacks by Georgian forces in the Borchaly and Loru regions.

To resolve the territorial disputes between Azerbaijan and Armenia in favor of Armenia, the Allied Commissariat sought to create neutral zones in the Nakhchivan and Sharur-Daralayaz districts, thereby removing these areas from Azerbaijani control. However, the Azerbaijani government rejected the pressures it faced and agreed to the creation of neutral zones on the condition that Azerbaijan’s sovereign rights would be preserved in those areas.

On November 23, 1919, the Prime Ministers of Azerbaijan and Armenia held a meeting in Tbilisi to resolve territorial disputes. During the meeting, the Armenian government pledged to withdraw its forces from Zangezur, which it had occupied, to ensure Azerbaijan’s territorial integrity. However, contrary to the promise made by the Armenian government about the withdrawal of the Armenian armed forces from the occupied settlements in Zangezur, on January 19-25, 1920, they destroyed 48 villages in the 3rd area of Zangezur district and 3 villages in the 4th area, subjected the local Muslim population to genocide.

In March 1920, as Bolshevik forces approached the northern borders of Azerbaijan, the secret arrival of members of the Armenian National Council from Armenia to Karabakh further escalated the situation with acts of sabotage and national atrocities. The Azerbaijani government took significant measures to expel Armenian emissaries from Karabakh and suppress separatist Armenians, ensuring the protection of its sovereign rights in the region. Despite the formal recognition of the independence of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic by the Paris Peace Conference in January 1920, territorial disputes and internal conflicts remained unresolved. The refugee problem also persisted as a legacy of World War I and the national conflicts that occurred in the Baku and Iravan governorates in March-April 1918.

During World War I, Bakı governorate, particularly the city of Baku, had received thousands of refugees from Eastern Anatolia, the Balkans, and other conflict zones. The majority of these refugees were non-Muslims. During that period, alongside the Muslim Benevolent Society in Baku, committees and societies like the Armenian Refugee Assistance Committee, Latvian Refugee Assistance Committee, Committee for Assistance to the Dispersed Polish Population due to the War, Baku Office of the Committee for Registration of Refugees founded by Princess Tatyana Nikolayeva, and Baku branch of the General Commission for the Settlement of Refugees on the Caucasus Front were active. The information sent by the Baku Gradonachalnik to Petrograd on December 31, 1917, stated that there were 2,568 refugees in Baku, including 1,763 Armenians, 276 Latvians, 169 Russians, 157 Jews, 95 Greeks, 84 Poles, 13 Assyrians, 7 Hungarians, 3 Czechs, and 1 Bulgarian. It is apparent that the Baku Gradonachalnik intentionally excluded Muslim refugees from the registration, aiming to deprive them of aid. In reality, during that period, thousands of Turkish refugees, especially from Eastern Anatolia and Kars, found refuge in Baku. They were taken care of by the Muslim Benevolent Society of Baku. After the establishment of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic’s government in Ganja, the Ministry of Health and Protection was formed, and Khudadat bey Rafibeyli was appointed as the Minister.

In October, when the Azerbaijani government moved to Baku, this ministry was divided into two entities – the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Protection. According to the information provided by the Ganja district inspector in 1919, in addition to Muslim refugees in Ganja, there were 3,928 Armenians (including 1,818 Turkish Armenians), and 427 Russian refugees who had sought refuge from the Saratovka and Novo-Ivanovka villages, which had been destroyed by Armenian armed forces. The Ministry of Protectorship had established a military hospital (lazaret) in Ganja to accommodate Armenian refugees. As mentioned, one of the directions of the Ministry of Protection’s activities was to assist compatriots living abroad and Muslim refugees.

On June 4, 1919, the Azerbaijani government instructed its diplomatic representative in Irevan, M. Takinsky, to collect statistical data about the villages of Irevan governorate and Kars province that had been devastated by Armenian armed forces, including the names of those killed and their relatives, as well as information about those taken prisoner or stolen livestock. The Azerbaijani government intended to use these facts at the Paris Peace Conference. The Irevan Muslim National Council had also used these facts in its appeal to the heads of missions of major states in the Caucasus. To address the issue of Muslim refugees in Armenia, Zulfuqar bey Makinsky was appointed as a representative of the Ministry of Protection in Irevan, on July 8, 1919.

Even during World War I, the Baku Muslim Benevolent Society had opened a branch in Kars. This society had saved 40,000 Turks from famine and death as a result of the atrocities perpetrated by Armenians. During the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic era, a representative office was established on the basis of this branch in Kars. In January 1919, the South-West Caucasus government appealed to the Azerbaijani government, requesting financial assistance and officials to resolve the refugee problem. The Azerbaijani government had sent gold coins through several diplomatic figures (a delegation) to provide aid to the population of the Chyldyr and Aghbaba districts, and the refugees from Irevan governorate who had found shelter in these areas.

In 1918–1920, Azerbaijanis from Armenia and Kars province came to the border of Georgia mainly via the Irevan-Gyumru-Tbilisi and Kars-Gumri-Tbilisi railways, and from there they made their way to Azerbaijan via the Tbilisi-Ganja-Baku railway. In general, in 1919, the permanent representation of Azerbaijan in Georgia ordered 171 wagons from the Ministry of Roads of Georgia to send refugees from Armenia and Kars province to Tbilisi.

According to the information provided by the Permanent Representation of Azerbaijan in Armenia, the number of Muslim population whose houses were destroyed and were displaced by the Armenian armed forces in Novo-Beyazid, Etchmiadzin and Irevan districts in 1919 alone reached 200 thousand. Based on the information provided by the representative of the Ministry of Protection in Armenia, the ministry submitted a draft decision to the Parliament on providing assistance to the population in Armenia. In July 1919, 3 million manats were allocated for this purpose. At the expense of these funds, 15 wagons of flour, grain and barley were sent to Armenia. In addition, since September 1, 1919, a dispensary for Muslims was opened in Irevan, and an orphanage for 85 people was organized there. Later, this orphanage was placed at the disposal of the American Children’s Aid Committee. In order to provide assistance to Muslims fleeing from Armenia and Kars province, mobile food stations (free canteens) were opened on the roads they passed. According to the instructions of the Ministry of Defense, such food stations were opened at the Ashaghi Saral station and near Tbilisi.

On the eve of the fall of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, a little more than 10,000 Turkish (Azerbaijani) people remained out of the 575,000 Muslim population that lived in the territory of today’s Armenia until 1918. Therefore, from the more than half a million Azerbaijani population who were subjected to genocide in Armenia in 1918–1920, the main part of the population who could save their lives found refuge in Azerbaijan as refugees. However, the problem of the return of refugees to their ancestral lands was inherited by Soviet Azerbaijan from Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. Unfortunately, this problem was not solved fairly even during the Soviet rule in Azerbaijan. Until 1922, only 100,000 Azerbaijanis were able to return to present-day Armenia – to their historical ethnic lands.

**Western Azerbaijan during the of Soviet rule**

In 1918–1920, the policy of ethnic cleansing against the Azerbaijani population was continued in Soviet Armenia in different stages and in different ways, just as it was during the rule of the Dashnaks in the territory of Western Azerbaijan. Along with the policy of ethnic cleansing against Azerbaijanis, the process of expanding the territory of Armenia at the expense of Azerbaijani territories has been continued.

In accordance with the treaty signed on June 4, 1918, between the Ottoman Empire and Armenia, in Batumi, Armenia’s territory was approximately equal to 10,000 km2, upon the establishment of Soviet rule, the Dashnak-led Armenia controlled about 18,000 km2. Soviet rule was established in Armenia on November 29, 1920. On December 2, 1920, a military and political agreement was signed between Soviet Russia and Soviet Armenia in Iravan. The agreement was signed by Boris Legran, the diplomatic representative of Russia, and by General Dro and A. Terteryan, who had defected to the Bolsheviks from the Armenian side. In return for Armenia’s Sovietization, Russia recognized without dispute that the entire former Iravan province, the mountainous part of the Zangezur uezd, and the Qazakh uezd would become part of Soviet Armenia.

On July 20, 1921, the Armenian People’s Commissariat confirmed Armenia’s administrative-territorial division into 8 uezds and 33 nahiyahs. On August 31, a new 9th uezd was created – Zangezur uezd with Gorus city as its center. In response, Azerbaijan removed the western part of Zangezur from its administrative-territorial division. As a result, Zangezur was divided into two parts, and its western part was integrated into Armenia. Subsequently, several districts, including Mehri, Gafan, Garakilsa, and Gorus, were established in Western Zangezur.

Due to its economic dependence on Azerbaijan, the Soviet Armenian government attempted to attribute the policy of ethnic cleansing carried out in the years of 1918–1920 to the Dashnak government. However, the Soviet Armenian government also tried to prevent the return of Azerbaijani refugees to their ancestral lands through various pretexts. In the matter of repatriation, the Armenian government mainly insisted that Azerbaijani refugees who had sought asylum in Iranian territory could return to Zangezur and Vedibasar regions only if they proved that they did not participate in any fights against Armenians during the years 1918–1920.

In the autumn of 1921, the government of Armenia made a decision to stop the re-evacuation of refugees by the Julfa-Iravan railway line until the spring of 1922, citing the country’s difficult economic situation and the spread of infectious diseases. On the one hand, the Armenian government appealed to the Azerbaijani government to stop the return of the Azerbaijani refugees who found refuge in Azerbaijan to their homeland, and on the other hand, it decided to resettle the Armenian refugees from Turkey in districts inhabited mainly by Azerbaijanis. It was decided to settle 25,000 Armenians in Zangibasar, 60,000 in Vedibasar, 25,000 in Garnibasar, 25,000 in Dilijan okrug, 25,000 in Qarakilsa okrug, and 10,000 in Novo-Bayazid okrug. The Armenian government did this so that when the Azerbaijani refugees return to their homeland, they see that their houses and villages as a whole are inhabited by Armenian refugees, so that they either return or find a new shelter for themselves in another place. All this was a deliberate step taken by the government of Soviet Armenia to discriminate against Azerbaijanis.

Despite all this, Azerbaijanis returned to their native lands in Western Azerbaijan. From May 1921 to the end of May 1922, 96,500 Azerbaijanis returned to the current territory of Armenia. Among them, 26,000 Azerbaijani refugees returned to Iravan uezd, 14,000 to Novo-Bayazid region, 9,000 to Echmiadzin uezd, 10,000 to Alexandropol uezd, 15,000 to Zangezur, 5.5,000 to Derelayez, and 17,000 to Loru-Pambak and Karvansara (Ijevan) region.

According to the census conducted in Armenia in 1922, there were 5,431 people in Dereleyez uezd, 8,476 people in Dilijan uezd, 6,464 people in Zangezur uezd, 4,497 people in Qarakilsa uezd, 6,372 people in Alexanderpool (Gumru) uezd, 4,807 people in Lori uezd, 53 people in Mehri (Meghri) uezd, 10,666 people lived in the Novo-Bayazid uezd, 16,723 people in the Iravan uezd, and 7,224 people in the Echmiadzin uezd. There were 71,190 Azerbaijanis in Armenia at that time, which constituted 11.2 percent of the population of Armenia.

In 1922, Azerbaijanis returned to 164 settlements of Armenia.

According to the results of the general Transcaucasian census held in 1926, 84,717 Turkish-speaking (Azerbaijani) people were registered in Armenia.

Since 1930, the district administrative-territorial division was abolished in Armenia and transferred to the district administrative division. In 1931, there were 27 districts in Armenia. The names of the regions were: Pashaly (Azizbayov), Allahverdi, Akhta, Amasiya (Aghbaba), Ashtarak, Abaran, Artik, Basarkecher, Gorus, Dilijan, Karvansara (Ijevan), Duzkend (Leninakan, later Akhuryan), Boyuk Qarakilsa (Kirovakan), Kotayk, Gurdugulu (Hoktemberyan), Gamarli (Artashat), Gafan, Garanliq (Martuni), Mehri (Meghri), Keshishkend (Mikoyan), Novo-Bayazet, Shamsheddin, Garakilsa (Sisian), Jalaloghlu (Stepanavan), Uchkilsa (Vagarshapat), Vedi (Vardenis). 99,796 Azerbaijanis lived in those regions. In 1931, 6,656 Azerbaijanis lived in Iravan and 316 in Gumru (Leninakan). In total, 106,708 Azerbaijanis were registered in Western Azerbaijan, which constituted 10.1 percent of the republic’s population. At that time, there were 1242 settlements in Western Azerbaijan.

In general, 40 regions have existed in the current territory of Armenia at different times.

According to the results of the All-Union census held in 1939, 130,896 Azerbaijanis were registered in Western Azerbaijan, which constituted 10.2 percent of the republic’s population.

At the beginning of December 1947, a letter was sent to Stalin on behalf of the first secretaries of the Central Committees of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan and Armenia. In the joint letter, it was requested to resolve the issue of relocation of 130,000 Azerbaijanis living in Armenia. Under that letter, a copy of which is kept in the Archive of Political Documents of the Republic of Azerbaijan, there is no signature, date of signing and sending number. On December 23, 1947, the Council of Ministers of the USSR adopted a decision “On the resettlement of collective farmers and other Azerbaijani population from the Armenian SSR in the Kur-Araz lowland of Azerbaijan SSR “. With that decision, 100,000 Azerbaijanis were to be relocated from 22 regions of Armenia. Paragraph 1 of the decision provided for the resettlement of 10,000 people in 1948, 40,000 in 1949, and 50,000 in 1950. In 1948–1953, approximately 100,000 Azerbaijanis were deported from their historical-ethnic lands- from more than 200 settlements in 24 districts and the city of Iravan. As a result of the deportation, the leaders of Armenia succeeded in erasing the traces of Azerbaijanis from Ashtarak, Garanliq (Martuni), Karabaghlar, Eller (Abovyan), Uchkilsa (Echmiadzin) regions. Then the Karabakhlar region was abolished, and now most of the villages of this region are in ruins. The decisions made by the USSR government on the resettlement of Azerbaijanis gave the Armenian government the opportunity to erase most of the Azerbaijani settlements around the city of Iravan and along the borders of Armenia with Iran and Turkey from the map once and for all. Only after the death of Stalin in 1953, some of the Azerbaijanis who were deported from Armenia were able to return to their historical and ethnic lands.

According to the results of the All-Union census held in 1959, 107,748 Azerbaijanis were registered in Western Azerbaijan, which constituted 6.1 percent of the republic’s population.

In Armenia, anti-Turkish and anti-Azerbaijani propaganda was launched again in the mid–1960s. In 1965, the decision to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the fictitious “Armenian genocide” further inflamed Armenian chauvinism.

In 1970, the number of Azerbaijanis was 158,189 (5.3%), and in 1979, it was 160,841 (5.3%).

After Mikhail Gorbachev was elected General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1985, an annexation plan against Azerbaijan was developed under the guise of self-determination of the Armenians living in the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region. Heydar Aliyev, the only person who could prevent the implementation of Armenia’s annexation plan against Azerbaijan, was removed from the membership of the Political Bureau of the former Central Committee of the CPSU and from the position of the first Deputy Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers in October 1987 under the pressure of the Armenian lobby.

On February 20, 1988, during an extraordinary session of the National Deputies’ Council of Armenia held with the participation of only Armenian deputies, a decision was made to remove the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (NKAO) from the jurisdiction of the Azerbaijan SSR and include it within the administrative territory of Armenia. After the Supreme Soviet of the Azerbaijan SSR rejected the decision of the National Deputies’ Council of Armenia as unconstitutional, the nationalist leaders of Armenia began to implement the “Armenia without Turks” program of the “Dashnaksutyun” party. As a result of Moscow’s support for the Armenians, in 1988–1989, during the period of territorial disputes, Azerbaijani settlements were evacuated from 170 entirely Azerbaijani-inhabited villages and 94 mixed-population settlements in present-day Armenian territory. The last Azerbaijani village, Nuvedi, situated in the region adjacent to Zengilan in Armenia’s Meghri district, was evacuated on August 8, 1991. In general, as a result of the final episode of ethnic cleansing, approximately 250,000 Azerbaijanis were forcefully expelled from their historical and ethnic territories, which encompassed 22 village regions and 6 cities within Armenia. The long-desired policy of “Armenia without Turks” that Armenians had aimed for over the years was implemented.

In general, until recently, the names of 704 administrative-territorial units belonging to Azerbaijanis in the current territory of Armenia were changed.

After 1920, with direct assistance from Moscow, the territory of Soviet Armenia expanded by approximately 11,000 km2. The territory of the Republic of Armenia, which exists in the historical territory of Azerbaijan, is currently equal to 29,743 km2. As of today, Armenia’s total border length is 1,261 kilometers. It shares a border of 787 kilometers with Azerbaijan (with 221 kilometers of this being the border with Nakhchivan), 268 kilometers with Turkey, 164 kilometers with Georgia, and 42 kilometers with Iran. In fact, all areas along Armenia’s external borders are inhabited by Azerbaijanis.b

On November 7, 1995, a new law on the administrative-territorial division of the Republic of Armenia was adopted. According to the new administrative-territorial division of Armenia, the division into regions that existed until that time was abolished, and 11 provinces (marz) were created instead. Amasiya (Aghbaba), Gizil Goch (Gukasyan), Duzkend (Akhuryan), Aghin (Ani) and Artik districts were included in the Shirak province, Kalinino, Jalaloglu (Stepanavan), Allahverdi (Tumanyan), Hamamlı (Spitak) and Boyuk Qarakilsa (Gugark) districts became Lori province, Barana (Noyemberyan), Karvanserai (Ijevan) and Shamsheddin (Tavush) districts became Tavush province, Talin, Aparan, Elayaz (Aragats), Ashtarak districts became Aragadzon province, Akhta (Hrazdan), Ellar (Abovyan, Kotayk), Nairi districts became Kotayk province, Chambarak (Krasnoselo), Basarkecher (Vardenis), Garanliq (Martuni), Kavar (Kamo) and Yelenovka (Sevan) districts became Gegharkunik province, Baghramyan, Gurdugulu (Hoktemberyan) and Uchkilsa (Echmiadzin) districts became Armavir province, Zangibasar (Masis), Gamarli (Artashat) and Vedi (Ararat) districts became Ararat province, the former Pashali (Azizbayov, Vayk) and Keshishkend (Yeghegnadzor) districts were included in the Vayots Dzor province, and the former Mehri (Meghri), Garakilsa (Sisian), Gafan and Gorus districts were included in the Syunik province. The city of Iravan was also given the status of a separate province.