



# THE STORY OF NAKHIJEVAN



*Emanuele Aliprandi*

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Emanuele Aliprandi's area of studies is focused on the developments in the South Caucasus and, in particular, the historical, legal and political aspects of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. He cooperates with the programme 'Italian initiative for Nagorno Karabakh' (Iniziativa Italiana per il Karabakh ([www.karabakh.it](http://www.karabakh.it))). Within the framework of that programme he has conducted a research and organized conferences on the issue of the right of Nagorno Karabakh Republic (Artsakh) to self-determination. He is the author of the following books: '1915. The chronology of Genocide. The history of the tragedy of the Armenian nation according to the Italian newspapers of that time' ('1915, cronaca di un genocidio. La tragedia del popolo armeno raccontata dai giornali italiani dell'epoca') (2009) and 'The reasons of Karabakh' ('Le ragioni del Karabakh') (2010), which is the first publication on the issue in Italian. In 2015 one of the chapters of the book 'Infinite Genocide' ('Genocidio infinito'), entitled 'Karabakh. Incessant cry' ('Karabakh, urlo senza fine'), was published with his assistance.



## Noah's Ark and Noah's First Haven

The toponym Nakhijevan (Arm. nakh ijevan – lit. ‘the first haven’) denotes the place where, according to the legend, Noah and his family found a safe haven after the flood when they descended from Mt. Ararat.

Josephus Flavius (38 AD, Jerusalem – after 100 AD, Rome) in his works uses a literal translation from Armenian and calls this place Apobaterion (Greek ἀποβατήριον – lit. ‘place of landing’). Claudius Ptolemy (appr. 90 – appr. 168) in his works also mentions the place calling it Naxuana according to Greek tradition (Greek Ναξουανα) and so on.

*So Noah came out, together with his sons and his wife and his sons' wives. All the animals and all the creatures that move along the ground and all the birds – everything that moves on land – came out of the ark, one kind after another.*

Genesis, 8:18–19



Fig. 1. I. Aivazovsky. Descent of Noah from Ararat, 1889, oil on canvas, 1,28 × 2,18 m (National Gallery of Armenia)



According to legend, Noah founded the city of Nakhijevan. He erected stone walls that encircled the city and lived there with his children and his wife Noemzar. The place where the patriarch was buried would later become one of the most revered sites in the whole region. After the adoption of Christianity, a chapel was built over Noah's final resting place and an Armenian cemetery stretched around it. The last traces of ruins of what according to legend had been Noah's tomb were preserved until the 1930s when the chapel was completely destroyed. In 2006, a new building, which closely resembled the Seljuk mausoleums, was erected on this place.



Photo 1 and 2. Postcards with depictions of Noah's tomb, period of the Russian Empire



## The Cradle of Civilisation

The Nakhijevan region, situated in the North Eastern part of the ancient Armenia, in the foothills of the legendary Mt. Ararat between the river Arax and the mountain ranges of Vayots Dzor and Syunik, provides a glimpse into the origins and early development of Armenian culture.

Numerous clusters of petroglyphs (carvings or incised drawings on rocks), characteristic examples of Neolithic rock art, have been found in these mountains, as well as on Mt. Aragats and in the neighbouring mountain ranges that encircle Lake Sevan.

The petroglyph groups include depictions of animals (including extinct species), different products, and weapons etc. Moreover, there are also distinctively astronomic images, which provide further evidence in support of the well-known theory that astronomical knowledge in ancient times started to evolve in what is now Armenia.

The comparative study of several thousand known petroglyphs points to the existence of a unified cultural basis.



Photo 3. Petroglyph groups



## Nakhijevan as Part of the Kingdom of Van (Biainili, Urartu)

Numerous architectural monuments, toponyms and, foremost, Urartian cuneiform stone inscriptions provide ample proof that the Nakhijevan region was part of the Kingdom of Van during the whole period of the latter's existence (9th – 6th centuries BC). The few known stone inscriptions that have been found, either in the territory of the region or outside its borders, are cuneiform texts, which mention events that had taken place in the region.

One of the most informative cuneiform stone inscriptions found in the territory of the Nakhijevan region consists of five long lines of text and has been made in the name of King Ishpuhini, son of Sarduri (? – appr. 810 BC) at the behest of his son and co-regent Menua (? – 788 BC) in connection with building a stela dedicated to the God Khaldi after a successful military campaign.

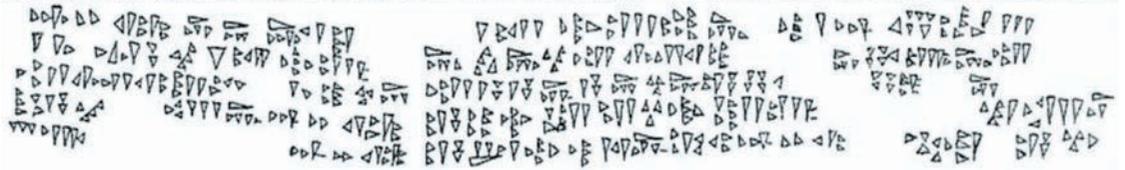


Photo 4 (above). Cuneiform inscription from Mt. Otsasar and its graphic representation

Photo 5 (left). Mt. Otsasar.  
The inscription was found 1988  
by the hydro-geologist V. Igumnov





## Ancient History

In the middle of the 6th century BC, the King of Armenia, Tigran I Orontid (from the Yervanduni Dynasty), in alliance with his childhood friend Cyrus II of Persia (Cyrus the Great), triumphed over Astyages, king of the Medes. The prisoners of war captured by Tigranes were settled in the Nakhijevan region.

During the reign of the King Orontes IV, toward the end of the 3rd century BC, inter-dynastic conflicts escalated to the point of no return. The head of a local clan (nahapet) Murtsean or Marats-ter who ‘was commander of many pike men’ joined with a rebel general, Artaxias, and helped him to overthrow the king.

Artashes the Conqueror became King Artashes I and founded a new capital – Artashat. His loyal ally nahapet Marats-ter became his coregent. However, during the construction of the new capital it turned out that there was no space left to build a palace for the king’s son Artavasdes. Therefore, the prince went to Marats-ter’s ancestral lands, where he founded a city called Marakert or Maravan. The ruins of this ancient city were clearly distinguishable until the beginning of the 20th century AD.



Photo 6. The coat of arms on the crown of the Artaxiad Dynasty as depicted on Tigran II tetradrachm



## The Holy Apostles Thaddeus and Bartholomew



Many of the faithful genuflect toward and reverently kiss the Holy Cross placed on the Holy Altar of Descent in the Etchmiadzin Cathedral, but few know that this Cross contains a fragment of the vessel used to bathe the Divine Child. The relic was brought by the Apostle Bartholomew when he came to preach in Armenia in 43–66 AD.

Photo 7. Amenaprkich (Holy Saviour) Cross or the Holy Cross of Yerdjanak. The Cross was kept in the monastery of St. John the Baptist in Yerdjanak



St. Bartholomew, one of the two disciples of Christ who preached in Armenia, visited the Nakhijevan region in the 1st century. According to legends, three ecclesiastical parishes founded by the Apostle in Goght'n later became monasteries. Two of them, in Valanda and Agulis respectively, were named after St. Thomas; the third monastery in Agulis was dedicated to the Holy Virgin.



Fig. 2 and 3. Paintings of the Holy Apostles Bartholomew and Thaddeus in the Etchmiadzin Cathedral made by the artist Hovnat Hovnatanyan (1730–1801), native of Shorot village in the Nakhijevan region



## Mesrop Mashtots and the Armenian Writing System

After the adoption of Christianity, many churches were built in the Nakhijevan region, as well as in the whole territory of Armenia. The ecclesiastical parishes, initially founded in the times of the Apostle Bartholomew, later became monasteries.

In the 360s, the Persian King Shapur II once again invaded Armenia. His previous attacks had been thwarted, but this time several hundreds of thousands were captured in many Armenian towns, including those in the Nakhijevan region.

After the first partition of Armenia in 387 when the Armenian kingdom was divided between the Roman Empire and Sassanid Persia, the Nakhijevan region was ceded to Persia. It was then, in those difficult times, when Mesrop Mashtots took holy orders and left the king's court to preach the Gospel in the Goght'n region. Mashtots orally translated the New Testament into Armenian, but he soon realized that the Armenian people needed a writing system of their own and resolved to invent a national alphabet. Mesrop's alphabet acquired its final form in 405 in Edessa. The village in Nakhijevan, where Mesrop Mashtots once lived and preached, was later named Mesropavan in his honour.



Photo 8. Miniature painter Hakob Jughayetsi. The Holy Gospel, 1586, London, private collection

Records about the existence of different educational institutions in Armenia can be traced back to ancient times. Thanks to Mesrop's invention of the Armenian alphabet, they had reached a high level by the beginning of the 5th century. There were grammar schools called



dprot, as well as higher education institutions called vardapetaran, the graduates of which were awarded the title of vardapet (scholar) and the right to teach students. Depending on their importance, these educational institutions that were always attached to monasteries and priories could be also called mets varjaran, hamalsaran (university) or even chemaran (school of divinity). Almost every monastery had a grammar school or dprot but only the biggest and most influential ones could establish vardapetarans and similar institutions of higher education. The schools of all levels provided classes for the students and had scriptoriums devoted to the copying, translation and writing of various treatises concerning religious and secular matters.

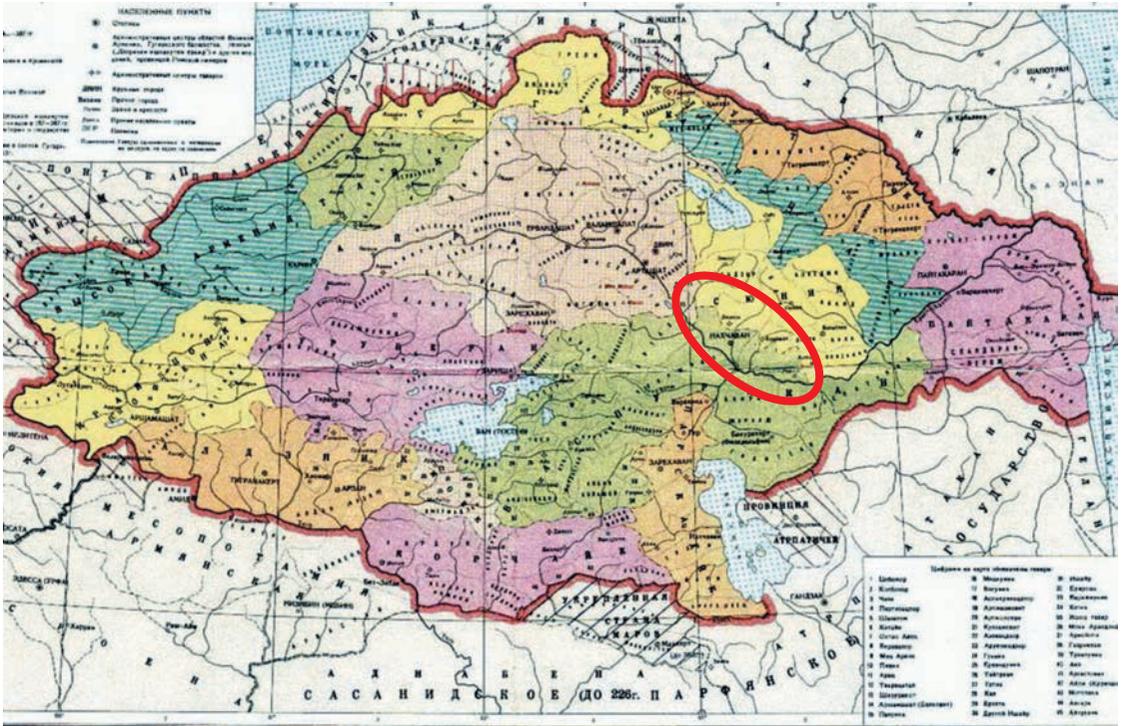


Fig. 4. Miniature painter  
Hakob Jughayetsi.  
The Four Gospels, 1587, Manchester,  
Library of John Rylands University,  
Inv. No. Arm. 20, F. 35v



## Structure of the Nakhijevan Region

According to Ashkharatsuits, a treatise on geography and cartography written around the end of the 6th and beginning of the 7th century, presumably by Anania Shirakatsi, the Nakhijevan region was comprised of five smaller units (called gavar) which, in their turn, belonged to three provinces: Airarat, Syunik and Vaspukaran.



Map 2. Provinces of Greater Armenia according to Ashkharatsuits

The map shows that the Nakhijevan region was divided between three different provinces: the northeastern part belonged to Airarat (pink), Chahuk and Yerndjak (which were situated on the northern slopes of a mountain range) – to Syunik (yellow), and Goght'n and Nakhijevan along the river Arax – to Vaspukaran (green).

In the Middle Ages, the Nakhijevan region often suffered military invasions. The Arabs, who several times attempted to invade Nakhijevan at the beginning of the 8th century, finally succeeded only after they had

conquered the whole territory of Armenia. The year 705 is commonly referred to as ‘the year of burning’, commemorating a tragic event in the history of Nakhijevan. In order to prevent the possibility of future rebellions, the Arabs decided to wipe out the Armenian nobility. Several hundred Armenian nobles were invited to give a pledge of allegiance; they were then locked in the church of Nakhijevan (800 people) and cathedral (200 people) where they were burned alive.

At the end of the 9th century Nakhijevan was liberated and included in the Kingdom of Bagratids, which was the main center of the re-established Armenian statehood.



Map 3. The Kingdom of Bagratids and the Armenian vassal states of Syunik, Vaspurakan, Tashir and Vanand



## The Medieval Cultural Heritage

The 10th century marked the beginning of cultural renaissance for Armenia. Military strongholds, civilian facilities (bridges, caravanserais, wells etc.) and religious buildings (churches, monasteries, priories) were reconstructed, repaired and newly built in the Nakhijevan region, as well as in other parts of Armenia. Nakhijevan became a major station on the trade route that connected the East and the West.

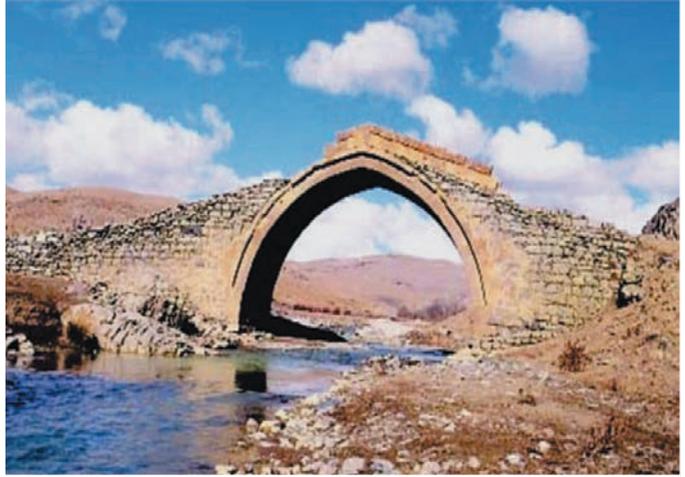
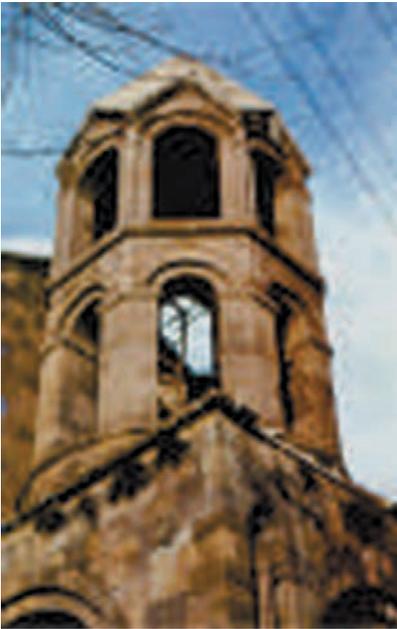


Photo 9. Bridge over the river Yerndjak in the south-eastern part of Shakhkert village



The further development of the region was considerably slowed down but not entirely stopped, by the invasion of Seljuk Turks in the second half of the 11th century. However, in the 12th century the Seljuk conquerors, who had settled in the region, eliminated the control of the local nobility over their ancestral domains. As a result, for a short period of time almost the entire territory of Nakhijevan was ruled by the Eldiguzid dynasty of Atabegs.

Photo 10. Three-storied belfry in the monastery of the Holy Virgin in Tsgzna village



Guillaume de Rubrouck, the Ambassador of King Louis IX of France to the Great Khan of the Mongols, Möngke Khan, who visited Nakhijevan in 1254 on his way home from Karakorum, observed the beginning of the centuries-long process, during which the indigenous Armenian population of the region was forced out by the Turkic newcomers: ‘... Naxua [Nakhijevan], ... used to be the capital of a great kingdom, and was a large and beautiful city; but the Tartars have reduced it to nearly a desert. And there used to be in it eighty Hermenian churches; but there are only two small ones now, for the Saracens have destroyed them’.

Until these events, vassals of the two greatest nakharar dynasties of Armenia – the Artsruni of Vaspurakan and the Syuni of Syunik, had ruled the Nakhijevan region. Afterwards, the rulers came from the House of the Princes of Syunik – Proshyan-Khakhbakyan and Orbelian who were able to maintain their position even during the Mongol invasions in the 13th–14th centuries. Their rather elastic policy was to welcome the Great Khan, who acknowledged their estates as a privileged form of land-holdings called inju.

*According to God’s will, I, Eatchi, son of Hasan, son of Prosha, son of Vasak the Great of the house of Khakhbakyan have taken possession of my ancestral lands of Shahaponik...*

Inscription on a tabernacle from the monastery of Khotakerats, 1300



Photo 11. Folding reliquary Khotakerats Surb Nshvan (The Holy Cross from the monastery of Khotakerats).

A fragment of the Holy Cross is embedded under the central stone. Silver, gold, precious stones, gilded, chiseled, embossed, engraved, filigree work, inlaid work, 42 × 27 × 5 cm



## Another Period of Invasions and Wars

An invasion led by Tokhtamysh in 1385 put an end to all privileges. Soon afterwards, i.e. in 1386, followed the first of many invasions led by Timur the Lame during the period between 1386 and 1403 until Mongol dominance was firmly established. The 15th century was no more peaceful. After the Timurids, the Turkic nomadic tribes Kara Koyunlu and Ak Koyunlu moved to Nakhijevan. It was a period of devastation. The whole of Eastern Armenia, including Nakhijevan, Syunik and Artsakh, became a battlefield where Kara Koyunlis, Ak Koyunlis and Timurids were ferociously fighting each other. It was during this time that the once prosperous region of Artsakh acquired its present name – Karabakh, which means ‘the Black Garden’. The final victory belonged to the federation of Ak Koyunlu tribes.

The tuman (district) of Nakhijevan established during the period of Mongol rule was almost fully incorporated into Safavid Persia as one of its military administrative units (from 1501). As a rather large administrative unit, this tuman was put under the jurisdiction of Tabriz beylarbeylik, but at the beginning of the 17th century it came under the jurisdiction of Chuhur-Saad beylarbeylik.

After a conflict between the Ottoman Empire and Safavid Persia in the middle of the 16th century, the region of Nakhijevan fell to the Ottoman Empire and in compliance with the Treaty of Constantinople (21 March 1590), it was finally incorporated into the latter.

At the turn of the 17th century, Shah Abbas I of Persia once more declared war on the Ottoman Empire and recaptured the region of Nakhijevan. During a temporary retreat, the Shah who had employed the so-called scorched earth tactics, decided to relocate the civilian population. At first the Armenian inhabitants of almost the entire Eastern Armenia were driven to the ‘field of Etchmiadzin’. According to Arakel Davrizhetsi ‘the camp stretched from the foot of Garni mountains to the shores of the great river Yeraskh’. Afterwards, the refugees were made to march to Nakhijevan and, when they reached Jugha, had to cross the river Arax. Many drowned trying to reach safety. In the annals of history, this deportation is known as ‘the great surgun’. More than 300 thousand people were forcefully deported to the inner regions of Persia.



The inhabitants of the town of Jugha alone, for example, where the Ambassador of the King of Rzeczpospolita, Sefer Muratovich, in 1602, i.e., two years before the relocation of its population, had counted 15,000 houses, were relocated to the vicinity of Isfahan on the other shore of the river: the newly founded settlement was named 'New Jugha'.



Fig. 5. Engraving by Jan Luyken. Shah Abbas deports the Armenians in 1604

As the Ottoman Empire gained a foothold in Europe, the number of various embassies to Persia started to grow, which resulted in an increased demand for new maps. The maps that were drawn according to the Ptolemy's Geography (translated into Latin by Jacob Angelus around 1411) mentioned only three geographic names of this area: the regions of Goght'n, Naxuan and Artashat, and were thus clearly out of date. More detailed maps only appeared at the beginning of the 18th century.





Map 4. Fragment of a map drawn according to the Ptolemy's (2nd century AD) world map's Tabula III Asiae [Armenia Major and Colchi, Iberia, Albania], published in 1535 by Michael Servetus



Map 5. Fragment of the map 'Countries around the Caspian Sea' published by Guillaume de Lisle in 1723



## Mural Art

It might seem strange, but the development of mural art in the Nakhijevan region gained impetus during the troubled times of the 17th/18th centuries. The artist Naghash Hovnatan, together with his two sons Hakob and Harutyun, founded a school of mural art known as the ‘Shorot’ school. There are five generations of artists from this family. The fame of the ‘Shorot’ school reached Etchmiadzin, Yerevan, Tiflis, Tehran and St. Petersburg.

Naghash Hovnatan (1661, Shorot – 1722, Shorot) and his two sons Hakob Naghash (1692, Shorot – 1757) and Harutyun Shorotetsi (1706/07, Shorot – ?) decorated with murals not only churches in Aprakunis, Agulis and other places of Nakhijevan, but also the Etchmiadzin Cathedral and the St. Peter and St. Paulus church in Yerevan. Hakob’s son Hovnatan (1730s, Shorot – 1801/02, Tiflis) continued to paint murals in the Etchmiadzin Cathedral.



Photo 12. The painted dome of the St. Thomas church in Agulis (end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Naghash Hovnatan)

Once a series of the Ottoman-Persian conflicts was over, the Safavids tried to repopulate territories devastated after ‘the great surgun’. A catastrophe of such magnitude left a deep trace on the ethno-demographic situation of Eastern Armenia, including the Nakhijevan region. However, according to Antonio de Gouveia, Ambassador of Philipp III, King of Spain, Portugal and the Algarve, those encouraged to settle in these areas



were ‘Mohammedans, not Christian Armenians’, i.e. they were members of various Turkic and Kurdish nomadic tribes. Shah Abbas II, for example, allowed the Kengerli tribe to settle in the Nakhijevan region. The Persian authorities did their utmost to repopulate the Nakhijevan region as well as the whole of Eastern Armenia with Muslims, as it had not escaped their notice that the Russian Empire had begun to expand at an alarming rate and its southern borders ran close to the Caucasus. In Eastern Armenia, Russia was already perceived as the liberator from the Turco-Persian yoke. Discontent, first noticed in the second half of the 17th century, turned into a national liberation movement against the Persian and Turkish conquerors. In the 1720s, Syunik rose in rebellion headed by Davit Bek and Mkhitar Sparapet. The uprising quickly gained impetus, and also spread to several territories of the Nakhijevan region, including the whole area of Ordubad-Argulis, as well as Astapat and Shakhkert.

In 1747, following another Ottoman-Persian war and the death of Nadir, Shah of Persia, the Khanate of Nakhijevan was established.

Being situated along Arax river basin, which provided important route between the East and West, Nakhijevan has not only suffered from clashes between big empires but it also profited from exchange of ideas and goods. Jugha in 15th–17th centuries and Agulis in 17th–19th centuries grew up as important urban centres of merchants who were directly involved in world commerce encompassing Persia, Levant, Russia, Southern and Northern Europe, Far East and Africa. Jugha and Agulis have been privileged to establish their urban self-rule under the direct authority of Persian Shah, thus having been exempted from any duties and levies towards local Muslim rulers.



## Part of the Russian Empire

In the early 19th century, a new actor appeared on the political scene of the Nakhijevan region – the Russian Empire. The Treaty of Turkmenchay signed on February 10 (22), 1828, after the second Russo-Persian war (1826–1828), determined that the Erivan Khanate and the Nakhijevan Khanate were to be ceded to Russia.

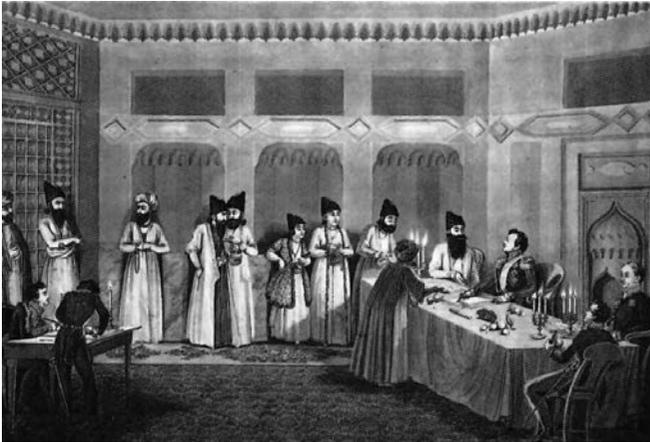


Fig. 6. Conclusion of peace in Turkmenchay on February 10, 1828. Engraving by V. Moshkov. (Moscow, Literary Museum)

According to an edict issued by the Tsar, Nicholas I, on March 21, 1828, these territories were to form the Armenian Oblast (province) which consisted of two big and one smaller administrative units, namely, of Erivan and Nakhijevan uyezds, and of Ordubad okrug. Soon afterward, in 1840, the Armenian Oblast was dissolved, and on December 27, 1844, the territories of the former Armenian, Caspian and Imeretian Oblasts as well as of the Georgian Governorate were incorporated into the newly formed Caucasus Viceroyalty.

On June 9, 1849, a special imperial decree addressed to the Senate stated that the territories of the former Armenian Oblast were to be reformed into the Erivan Governorate, the southeastern part of which would include the Nakhijevan and Sharur-Daralagyozy uyezds as well as the Ordubad okrug.



At first, it seemed that after the liberation from Turko-Persian control, life in the Nakhijevan region started to return to normal. The frequent and prolonged wars and large-scale deportations of civilian populations had ceased. According to an important paragraph included in the Treaty of Turkmenchay, people were allowed to return home from Persian captivity. The conditions of socio-economic and cultural development in the region had radically changed, there was a relatively slow but still quite important growth of the indigenous population. New factories were built, including mills that produced silk thread. Carpet weaving continued to thrive. Village and church schools were opened, whilst fully or partially renovated churches and monasteries reopened their doors to parishioners.

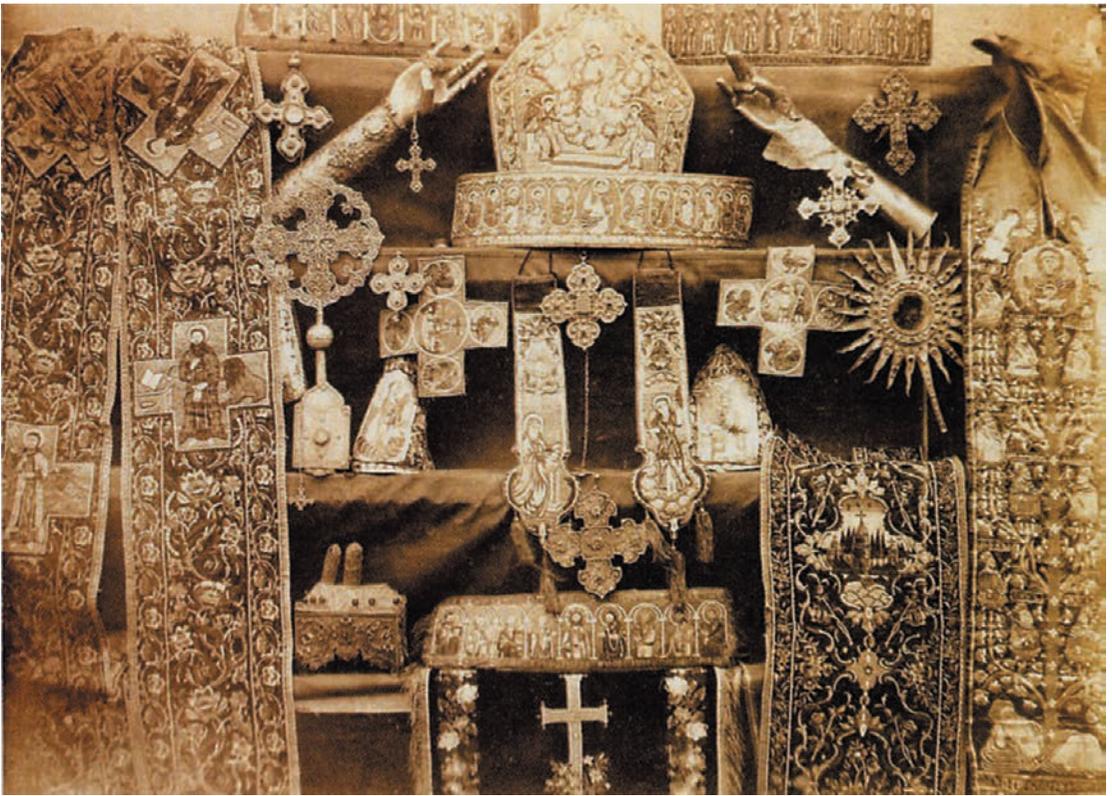


Photo 13. Relics in the museum of St. Thomas church in Agulis (1900–1922)



However, in the two centuries that had passed since ‘the great surgun’ many people from Jugha, Nakhijevan, Shorot were scattered all over the world. For example, some went to the West leaving a nostalgic reminder in far-away Venice – a street named Giuffa (Jugha); some were buried in Livorno, in the church of San Gregorio Illuminatore. Others went



Fig. 7. Crossing the river Arax. Litograph from Francis Chesney’s book about his travels between 1835 and 1837

to the North where they founded settlements named after their homeland – e.g. Nakhijevan in Crimea, and Nakhijevan-on-Don in southern Russia. There were also those who traveled to the East. Across South-East Asia and India, one can find tombstones with epitaphs where the dates of birth and death of the deceased are given not in four-digit but in three-digit numbers. The explanation of this oddity is quite simple: the Armenians from Jugha had their own calendar which began at the year 1615. It had been invented by Azaria Jughayetsi, a specialist in calendars, and became very popular among the Armenians from Jugha who had settled in Persia, India and Southeastern Asia.



Photo 14. A street name plate from the Giuffa (Jugha) street in Venice

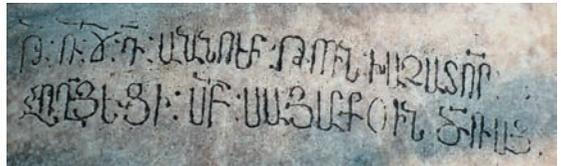


Photo 15. Graffiti on one of the pillars in the Saint Mark’s Basilica in Venice, 1655



## The First World War and the Establishment of New States in the Transcaucasus

Pan-Turkism had made inroads into the Caucasus in the early 20th century. A natural obstacle in the way of a successful implementation of pan-Turkic ideas was the Armenian population: it therefore had to be eliminated. Pogroms had begun in Baku in February 1905 and immediately grew into wide-scale massacres. The violence quickly spread to all Transcaucasian governorates and in May of the same year reached the Nakhijevan uyezd. Fortunately, various means of self-defence employed by the local people, as well as some changes in the policy of the Russian administration significantly reduced the enthusiasm of the overly zealous proponents of pan-Turkism.

The beginning of the First World War once again aggravated the situation in the region. The series of victories in the battles fought on the Caucasus front was interrupted by the October Revolution and the defence lines collapsed. As a result, in the rear area, i.e. in Sharur and Nakhijevan, there were renewed attacks on Armenians, instigated by Turkish secret agents.

The Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic (TDFR) was proclaimed on April 22, 1918, amid an impending attack by the Turkish Army. However, this newly formed state lasted no longer than a month. In compliance with Turkey's demands, the Transcaucasian Sejm was dissolved and the TDFR split into three independent states.

On June 4, 1918, in compliance with the newly signed Treaty of Batum, the Turks occupied several territories of the Republic of Armenia, including the Sharur and Nakhijevan uyezds. In the aftermath, the remnants of the Armenian population were massacred not only by Tatarian and Kurdish armed gangs but also by regular Ottoman military units that had previously taken part in the Genocide. Only some highland villages of Gogh'n were able to put up resistance.

After the end of the First World War, the Ottoman Empire was one of the defeated states, and therefore in compliance with the armistice of Mudros (30 October 1918), it had to withdraw its troops from the Transcaucasus. Nevertheless, several hundred Turkish soldiers and their commander Edif-bey stayed in Nakhijevan and announced the establishment of the Republic of Arax-Nakhijevan. Their goal was the final secession of the Nakhijevan region from the Republic of Armenia. However, in May 1919, this small entity that had been created and supported by Turkish army ceased to exist.





Map 6. The Republic of Armenia, 1919.

The map was drawn at the order of the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia, General of the Infantry T. O. Nazarbekyan for the purpose of presentation to the Paris Peace Conference 1919–1920

Armenian refugees and small military units began to return to Sharur-Nakhijevan. In the summer of 1919, Turkish secret agents instigated another series of conflicts and, as a result, the dominant Tatar-Kurdish Muslim majority of the region began Armenian pogroms, which quickly turned into massacres. The small garrison stationed in Nakhijevan was forced to retreat while trying to protect a new wave of refugees. Simultaneously, the armed forces of the Musavat, i.e. of the so-called Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (ADR) launched war against Armenia.

Civilians from Nakhijevan were among hundreds of thousands of hungry refugees pursued by Turkish, Tatar and Kurdish guerrilla fighters.

The most notorious massacre took place in Agulis where thousands of Armenians were slaughtered and the town, known from the Middle Ages as a center of trade and crafts, was wiped out. Recently, Azerbaijani writer Akram Aylisli evoked the Agulis massacre in his 'Stone Dreams' novel, which was met by defiance and smear campaign of the Azerbaijani authorities.



## The Methodical Alienation of Sharur-Nakhijevan and the Sovietisation of the Newly Founded States

In June 1920, the armed forces of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (GNA of Turkey), or what is wider known as Kemalist Turkey, were brought into Nakhijevan. In July they were joined by the 1st Caucasian regiment of the 11th Army of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (WPRa RSFSR), which had arrived fighting its way through Syunik.

On July 28, 1920, the Revolutionary Committee (Revkom) of Nakhijevan, which also included representatives of the Turkish Armed Forces, proclaimed the Soviet Republic of Nakhijevan.

On August 10, 1920, in Sevres, the Republic of Armenia signed a peace treaty with Ottoman Turkey, which was identified as one of the states defeated in the First World War. Nevertheless, the GNA of Turkey refused to ratify the treaty that had been signed by a representative of the Sultan.

On the same day, the Republic of Armenia and RSFSR signed an armistice agreement in Tiflis. According to this agreement,

Karabakh, Syunik and Nakhijevan were, for the time being, left under the jurisdiction of the Red Army.

On the same day the President of the Revkom of Nakhijevan announced that Nakhijevan was an integral part of the Azerbaijan SSR.

On August 24, 1920, the RSFSR and the GNA of Turkey signed a treaty of friendship, which confirmed and legalized the presence of Turkish and Soviet armed forces in Nakhijevan and joint administration of the region.

In October, the wide-spread fears that Syunik and Karabakh would also be incorporated into the Azerbaijan SSR triggered an insurrection headed by Poghos Ter-Davtyan and Garegin Nzhde.

On November 21, 1920, two brigades of the 11th Army and several allied Turkish battalions that had left Nakhijevan and entered Syunik were defeated by the rebels. It must be duly emphasized that Syunik remained part of Armenia only thanks to the rebels who on December 25, 1920, proclaimed the Autonomous Republic of Syunik, which was later reformed into the Republic of Mountainous Armenia (27 April 1921). Unfortunately, Nakhijevan and Karabakh were lost.



On November 29, 1920, the 11th Army entered Armenia and the Revkom of Armenia proclaimed the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic (the Armenian SSR).

On November 30, 1920, the Revkom of Azerbaijan published an announcement that stated that the territories of Nagorno-Karabakh, Syunik and Nakhijevan were an inalienable part of Soviet Armenia.

On the night of December 2/3, 1920, the Republic of Armenia and the GNA of Turkey signed a peace treaty in Alexandropol. According to this treaty, the Kars oblast and Surmalu uyezd were to be ceded to Kemalist Turkey. Nakhijevan, Sharur and Shakhtakhty were defined as territories that would temporarily remain as Turkish protectorates, pending a ‘plebiscite that would determine a special administration’. The government of the RSFSR and the Revkom of Armenia did not recognize the Treaty of Alexandropol under the pretext that it had been signed after the Republic of Armenia ceded power to the Revkom of Armenia.



On March 16, 1921, in Moscow, the RSFSR and the GNA of Turkey concluded an agreement of 'friendship and brotherhood' according to which 'the Nakhichevan Region (...) will hereafter form an autonomous territory under the auspices of Azerbaijan, under the condition that Azerbaijan will not relinquish the protectorate to any third party'.

On October 13, 1921, in Kars, the Armenian SSR, the Azerbaijan SSR and the Georgian SSR, on one side, and the GNA of Turkey, on the other, and with the participation of the RSFSR, signed an agreement of friendship that confirmed the status of Nakhijevan, previously specified in the Treaty of Moscow.

Therefore, we can conclude that at this particular stage of history, the ideas of pan-Turkism were partially implemented. A pro-Turkish realm was established on the Caspian shores and the strategically important Nakhijevan was entrusted to this realm. As examples of problematic areas, one can see Syunik, which interrupted direct communication between the Azerbaijan SSR, and the Nakhijevan autonomous oblast, as well as a small part of Iran, which interrupted direct communication between Nakhijevan and its metropolis – Turkey. These problems had been considered manageable and their solution was postponed. Turkey gained access to the Nakhijevan Autonomous Republic by swapping territories with Iran while Azerbaijan began invoking the 'corridor issue' between Nakhijevan and Azerbaijan in the framework of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict resolution. However, Armenia strongly resisted the possibility of conceding its sovereign territory to Azerbaijan for the creation a Pan-Turkic corridor.

With the establishment of Soviet regime, the previous method of pogroms and massacres in the region of Nakhijevan was replaced with a systematic and highly organized policy of displacement of the indigenous population. It was implemented by means of a purposeful and sometimes even undisguised program targeted not only at mainly ethnic, but also socio-economic and cultural problems.

Thus, Article 78, Chapter 7 'Courts and the Prosecutor's Office' in the Constitution of the Nakhijevan ASSR, which was promulgated on September 18, 1937, by the Extraordinary 10th Congress of Soviets of the Nakhijevan ASSR stated: 'Legal proceedings in the Nakhijevan ASSR shall be conducted in the Azerbaijani language, but in settlements



and villages where the majority of population is Armenian they shall be conducted in Armenian’. However, subsequent Constitutions promulgated in later years did not specify any such language division.



Map 8. Fragment of a map with the original title:  
ZSFSR – the Armenian SSR, 1928.

The map was created for the ‘Collection of Maps of Soviet Socialist Republics’.

On this map the Nakhijevan Autonomous SSR still has no border with Turkey.

It is worth mentioning that an object of exchange was also the mountain Little Ararat



Fig. 8. Image of the flag of the Nakhijevan ASSR according to the Constitution of 18 September 1937



Moreover, in Article 112 of the Constitution of the Nakhijevan ASSR, the following description appeared: ‘The State Flag of the Nakhijevan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic shall be the State Flag of the Azerbaijan SSR which is red field charged in the canton (upper corner nearest to the flagpole) with golden sickle and hammer and white lettering in Azerbaijan and Armenian language “AzSSR”, with addition of smaller lettering below in Azerbaijan and Armenian language “Nakhijevan SSR”’. However, the Constitution promulgated on July 28, 1939, does not mention any lettering in Armenian.

The time-honoured policy of displacement of the population was nevertheless not overly effective in reaching its final goal – the total disposal of the indigenous inhabitants of the region. These people (i.e. Armenians) used every opportunity to return to, and settle in their homeland, stubbornly ignoring all the obstacles and difficulties. It was obvious that the only solution was a total erasure of cultural memory preserved in the historical heritage of the native people. Once this simple truth was realized, the ideologues of pan-Turkism were ready to tackle the problem. Inevitably, they first of all turned their attention to the most sacred and revered sites.

Thus, the 1930s saw the destruction of the ancient site of Noah’s tomb and the chapel which had been built over it. In 1971, an Armenian cemetery in Nakhijevan was deemed as the most appropriate place to erect a monument in honour of soldiers who had lost their lives in the Second World War, thus resulting in a large part of the cemetery being levelled to the ground. The Holy Trinity Church, where several hundred of Armenian nakharars were burned to death in 705, was destroyed in 1975. St. Stephan church in Tsgzna village was turned into a storehouse for toxic chemicals, many other churches and monasteries were used as barns and warehouses, even more sites of religious worship were simply blown up and destroyed.



Photo 16. In 1970–1980 hundreds of cross-stones of the Armenian vast cemetery in Jugha were crashed to pieces by a crowbar, transferred to other places and used as a construction material



On November 22, 1988, after an anti-Armenian rally in the centre of Nakhijevan, an angry but still manageable mob began pogroms. Simultaneously, well-organized gangs went to loot several Armenian villages. Resistance was only encountered in the village of Aznaberd. After these events, the last indigenous inhabitants of the Nakhijevan region were evacuated to Armenia.

After the systematic and meticulous erasure of all the traces of Armenian cultural heritage, attention was turned to gravestones. Special efforts were made to destroy a cemetery in Old Jugha that in the past had been famous for its khachkars (stone crosses). According to the French Jesuit Alexandre de Rhodes, in 1649 there had been approximately 10,000 khachkars in the cemetery. In 1903/04, their number was reduced to 5000. In the last quarter of the 20th century, there were approximately 3000 khachkars in the cemetery. Many stone crosses were still intact even after the destruction of 1998 and 2002. In 2005 it took several military units, with their heavy vehicles, to finish the job, and thus finally obliterating the cemetery. Its territory was turned into a shooting range.



Fig. 9. Ruins of Julfa (old Jugha) and river Arax. Litograph from Francis Chesney's book about his travels 1835–1837



Photo 17. View of the cemetery in Jugha, 1972



Photo 18. View of one of the three hills of the cemetery of Jugha, 1915





Photo 19–21. The final stage of the intentional destruction of the cemetery started in 1998, which was completed in December, 2005 with the efforts of soldiers and officers of the Azerbaijani army





Photo 22. View of the cemetery of Old Jugha from the Iranian shore up to 2005



Photo 23. The moment of destruction of the cemetery of Old Jugha in 2005



Photo 24. View of the shooting range in the territory of the destroyed cemetery of Old Jugha





Photo 25. St. Gevork Monastery (1869–1972)



Photo 26. The Church marked on the Soviet military map, scale: 1:10 000, 1976



Photo 27. The same place after the complete destruction of the Church on the photo from space (Google Earth)



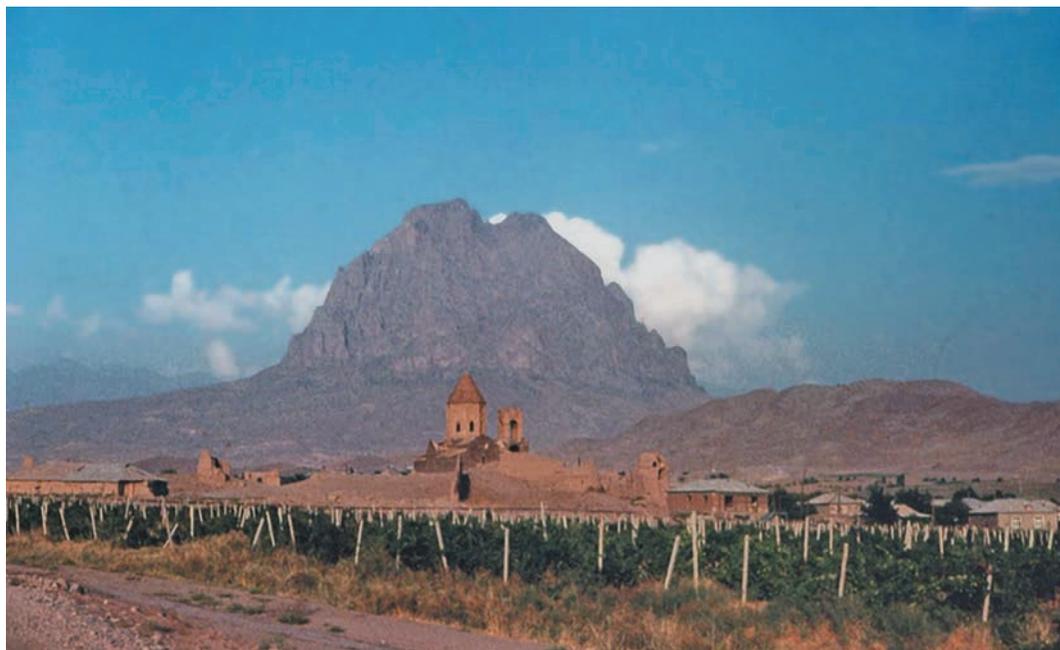


Photo 28. St. Karapet Monastery (St. Forerunner, 1381, reconstructed in 1648–1649), located in the Western side of Abrakunis village, 1980s



Photo 29 and 30. Another photo of the same place after the complete destruction of the Monastery, by the Scottish researcher Steven Sim, 2005



## Conclusion

Historically, Nakhijevan has been one of the most prosperous regions under the rule of all Armenian kingdoms. Since the early history of the Armenian people until the 20th century, Nakhijevan was famous as a highly developed spiritual and cultural centre. In pre-Christian times the singers of Nakhijevan's Goght'n province were very famous throughout Armenia. Then, in the early Christian period, the first Armenian churches were founded in various areas of Nakhijevan. In this region, Mesrop Mashtots and his disciples preached and taught, gradually coming to the conclusion that Armenians needed their own alphabet. During the following centuries Nakhijevan became famous in one of the most significant spheres of Medieval Armenian culture, that is. crafting stone crosses (khachkars).

After the collapse of Armenian statehood, the Nakhijevan region struggled to preserve its Armenian identity. In the late medieval period, the Armenian merchants of Agulis played an important role not only in regional trade deals, but also in the trade between the East and the West.

Nakhijevan has also continuously been subject to foreign invaders' forays. Nevertheless, as much as they attempted, the geopolitical calculations of the Arab, Seljuk, Tartar, Turkmen, Ottoman and, later on, of Kemal-Bolshevik invaders, failed, and they were not able to remove the Armenian imprint from this region. The policy of the complete cleansing of Armenians and annihilation of all traces of Armenian culture and history from Nakhijevan was implemented after the region was annexed to a state created in the 20th century – Azerbaijan. Despite the fact that, according to the Moscow and Kars Treaties of 1921, Nakhijevan was to be a protectorate of Azerbaijan, the authorities of Soviet Azerbaijan initially took full control of the region and afterwards commenced to implement a policy of ethnic cleansing, whilst simultaneously conducting a fierce campaign against the Armenian language. The authorities of the already independent Azerbaijan were not content with the complete ousting of the natives out of their homeland and took steps towards the full annihilation of all traces of the Armenian presence. Cemeteries, which were evidence of the physical existence of Armenians, as well as churches, which were part of the spiritual heritage in the area, were deliberately destroyed. The last stroke of this barbaric policy was the destruction of one of the last



masterpieces of the Armenian culture in Nakhijevan – the stone crosses in Old Jughha Medieval cemetery.

Such was the fate of the Armenian autonomous region given to Azerbaijan by the will of the Bolsheviks. When nowadays in front of the whole world the authorities of Azerbaijan are promising high autonomy to another Armenian region – the Republic of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh), it is the example of Nakhijevan that reveals the genuine motives of those promises to every reasonable human.

