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# ABOUT THE TOPONYM AZERBAIJAN

## An Azerbaijani Historic Cultural Reserve

THE NERVOUS ATTITUDES TO THE WORD COMBINATION NORTH AZERBAIJAN WHICH EXISTS TODAY SHOULD BE EXPLAINED IN PURELY POLITICAL TERMS: INTERESTED PARTIES ARE USING IT DURING SPECIFIC MOMENTS IN ORDER TO ARTIFICIALLY CREATE A NON-EXISTENT 'PROBLEM'. WHAT IS THE REASON THAT SPECIFIC POWERS PERCEIVE THIS DEFINITION AS FAR FROM UNAMBIGUOUS? AND WHAT KIND OF POWERS ARE THEY?

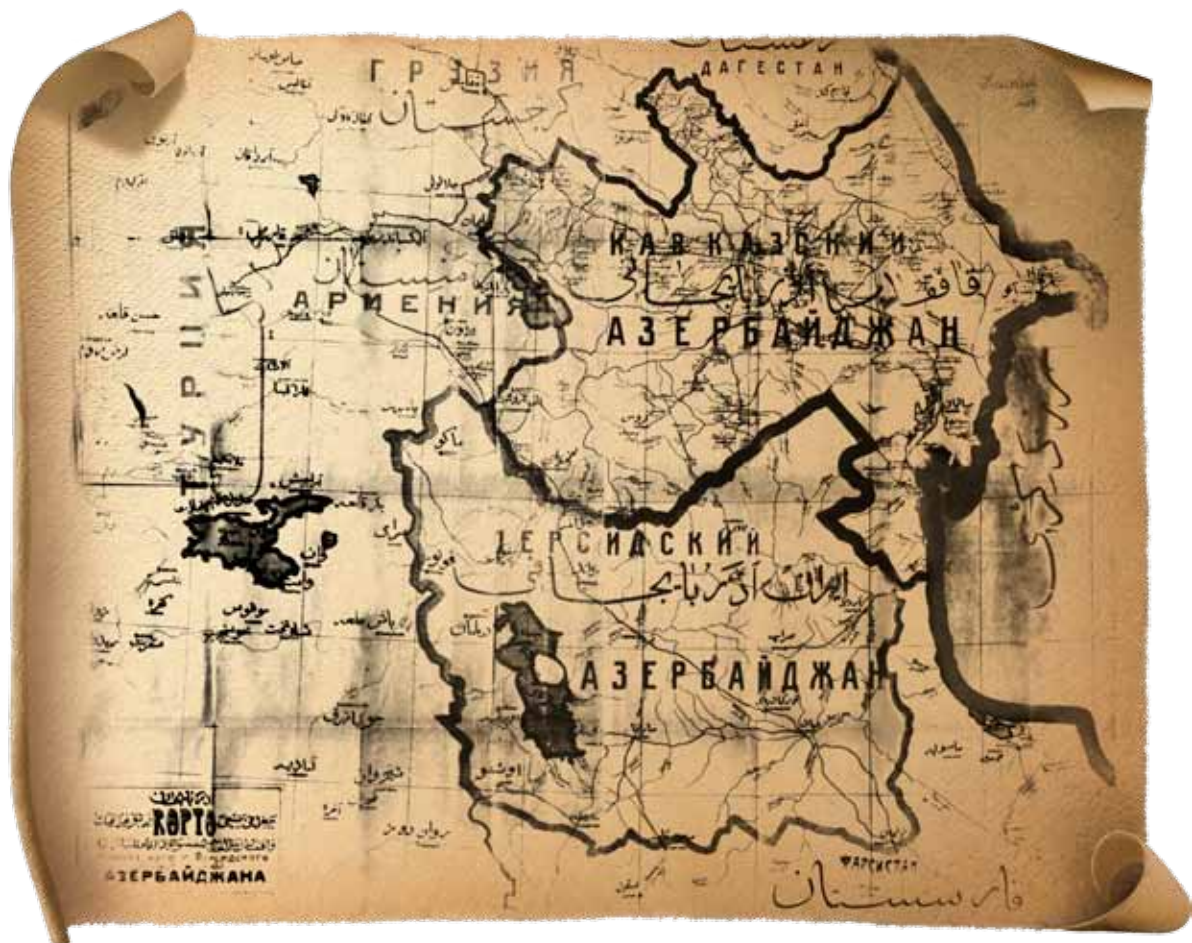
**T**he phrase North Azerbaijan refers to a part of a whole and logically presupposes the existence of a South Azerbaijan. Because the territory to which both terms refer is not today within the structure of a single state 'problems' of different types arise.

The definitions **North Azerbaijan and South Azerbaijan** are not only used with geographical but also very often with politicised historical meaning. Caucasian Azerbaijan and Persian Azerbaijan are their analogues but with some differences which received political

status in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the Khanates of North Azerbaijan were conquered by the Russian Empire. From that time, the southern part of the country, which remained within the Iranian State, was named Iranian or Persian Azerbaijan and the northern part, which was included in the Russian Empire, became known as Caucasian or Russian Azerbaijan in different sources, maps and documents. The Gulustan and Turkmanchay Peace Treaties, signed between the Iranian State and the Russian Empire following the Russian-Iranian wars of

1804-1813 and 1828-1829, led to the provisional liquidation of the Azerbaijani statehood which had existed before that time in the form of 20 independent Khanates.

It is necessary to note that the Gajar Shah dynasty of Turkic origin (1779-1925), ruled during that period in the Iranian State. From this time Azerbaijan was destined to exist in the form of different administrative territorial units within the structure of two empires. South Azerbaijan, especially its capital Tabriz played, and continues to play, a quite important role in internal and foreign policy as



Map of Caucasian and Persian Azerbaijan, 1920

well as the economic life of the Iranian State. The official residence of the heirs to the Gajar throne was located here. South Azerbaijan was considered *valiahd-nashin* (the Residence of the Heirs) and Tabriz was named *dar-us-saltane* (the Royal Residence). Accordingly, Tabriz performed the role of a second capital of the Iranian State and served for some time as host to foreign diplomatic missions. Thus, after the signing of the Turkmanchay Peace Treaty of 1828 the Ambassador Plenipotentiary of the Russian Empire to the Iranian State and also the residences of the Consulates General of the Russian and Ottoman Empires were found in this city.

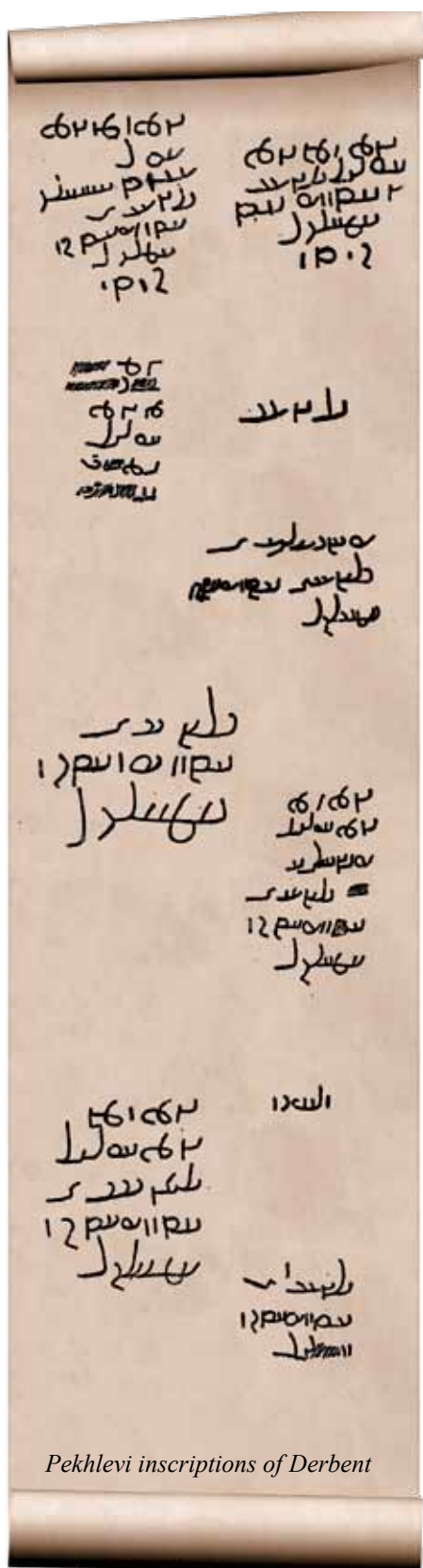
Before 1938 South Azerbaijan was one of four provinces (ostans) of the Iranian State. Later, as a result of administrative reform it was divided into two ostans: Eastern Azerbaijan, with its centre in Tabriz, and Western Azerbaijan, with its centre in Urmiya.

In 1977 a third Southern Azerbaijani ostan was created – Zanjan, with its centre in the city of the same name. After the Khomeini Revolution of 1979 further administrative territorial subdivision took place: today South Azerbaijan is divided into Eastern and Western Azerbaijan, the Ardabil, Zanjan, Hamadan and Gazvin Ostans and Save and Astara magals (regions). The whole of the territory of South Azerbaijan is 280 thousand square kilometres and North Azerbaijan is 130 thousand square kilometres. Thus, the area of historic Azerbaijan is 410 thousand square kilometres.(1)

The modern sovereign Republic of Azerbaijan corresponds to North Azerbaijan and to a considerable extent with the territory of Caucasian Albania but it does not include all Azerbaijani lands. The historic homeland of the Azerbaijanis, where they are native, is the whole

of Azerbaijan: from Derbent in the north (now within the Russian Federation) to Hamadan in the south (now within Iran) and from the Caspian Sea in the east to Asia Minor in the west.

The state of Atropatene (4<sup>th</sup> century BC to 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD) existed in the southern lands of Azerbaijan (south of the Araz River) (2) and Albania (3<sup>rd</sup> century BC to 7<sup>th</sup> century AD) in the northern lands of Azerbaijan (north of the Araz River). (3) These independent states from time to time suffered invasions by different tribes and by the great powers of antiquity and the Early Middle Ages and at times formed part of them. Thus, in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, when Azerbaijan was part of the Sassanid State (224-651), its head Shahanshah Khosrov I Anushiravan (531-579) carried out administrative reforms which resulted in the creation of four vicariates or kusts



*Pekhlevi inscriptions of Derbent*

(parts). The northern kust was named Azerbaijan. (4) It included all the historic lands of Azerbaijan. (5) A text from the 6<sup>th</sup> century, written in Pahlavi (Medieval Persian) survives on the walls of ancient Derbent, one of the most important cities of Azerbaijan and of Southern Dagestan: 'Barznish, amargar (Financial supervisor of) Adurbadagan'. (6) **This important source testifies to the fact that when referring to Azerbaijan all the historical lands were meant.**

In 9-10<sup>th</sup> century Arab sources Azerbaijan is repeatedly referred to as an administrative territorial unit in the Sassanid period. Thus, a map of the Caspian created by the 10<sup>th</sup> century Arab author Ibn Khaukal names the coastal territory from Derbent in the north to Gilan in the south as Azerbaijan. The Arab Caliphate was divided into provinces, one of which was also referred to as Azerbaijan by the 12-13<sup>th</sup> century Arab writer Ibn al-Asir.

However, under the influence of the current political situation some researchers ignore these sources and even try to falsify them. Specifically, A. P. Novoseltsev, when translating the geographical names marked on the map by Ibn Khaukal from Arabic into Russian, for unknown reasons, did not provide an explanation for these words 'Azerbaijan, stretching from Derbent to Gilan' which are given in the Arabic text. (7) This map, published on the cover of the book by A. P. Novoseltsev, is a very important historical source which refutes the conjectures of those who are against the use of the definition Azerbaijan as referring to the territory of all the historic lands.

It is known that both parts of Azerbaijan have more than once

been completely or partially included into the structure of a single state. Among such states are the ancient State of Manna (9-7<sup>th</sup> centuries BC) created by ancestors of the Azerbaijanis, the medieval Azerbaijani Atabey (1136-1225), Hulagid (1256-1353) and Agh-Goyunlu (1378-1508) States and the most significant among them is the Safavid Empire (1501-1736), in the structure of which the Azerbaijani lands were included in their entirety. (8) During that period Azerbaijan was divided into four administrative territorial units – Beylarbeyliy: Tabriz, Chuhur-Saad, Garabagh and Shirvan. (9) From foreign states which possessed this land we will mention the Achaemenid and Sassanid Empires, the Arab Caliphate and the Seljuk and Mongol powers. (10)

The creator and first ruler of the Afsharid State, Nadir Shah (1736-1747), changed the Safavid administrative territorial division of Azerbaijan by joining the aforementioned beylarbeyliys and creating the new unit Azerbaijan with its centre in Tabriz. From the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the first third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century 20 independent khanates existed on Azerbaijani lands. This period is considered by the American Caucasus scholar T. Svetohovski as one of the periods of Azerbaijani independence. (11)

It is appropriate to mention the following historical fact to those who today do not accept the term North Azerbaijan: in 1828 the Russian Empire created the Armenian region on the lands of the Azerbaijani Iravan and Nakhchivan Khanates which it had liquidated. This is the same historic Azerbaijani lands as the Chuhur-Saad beylarbeyliy. The Armenian region, creat-

ed in an artificial way, was needed to form a mass organised resettlement of Armenians from the Ottoman and Persian Empires in order to increase the Christian element of the population here which could be relied on to carry out imperial policy. The Republic of Armenia is located here today and it covers 298000 square kilometres of Azerbaijani lands.

It would be useful also to ask those who zealously care about correct usage of the names of states in accordance with their territorial and historical origin why they do not object to the definition 'Armenia in the Caucasus'. **This toponym never existed in this region before the 19<sup>th</sup> century.** 26 Armenians are known beyond the Caucasus, in Asia Minor. (12)

Armenians laid claim to the territory of Caucasian Albania, including the former Karabagh Beylarbeyliy – later the Karabagh Khanate, after coming to the Caucasus in the first third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. **In accordance with works by Armenian scholars the resettlement of Armenians from their historical motherland on the Balkan to Asia Minor took place in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC and their arrival in the Caucasus is dated to the 19<sup>th</sup> century AD.** (13) From the antique authors Herodotus and Strabo, who never mentioned the Armenians as belonging to the Caucasian tribes, to Russian Caucasus scholars of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century nobody considered the Armenian people indigenous to the Caucasus. (14) The Russian Caucasus scholar G. F. Tchursin wrote that the Armenians in the Caucasus are indeed indigenous Caucasians in the geographical meaning in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. (15)

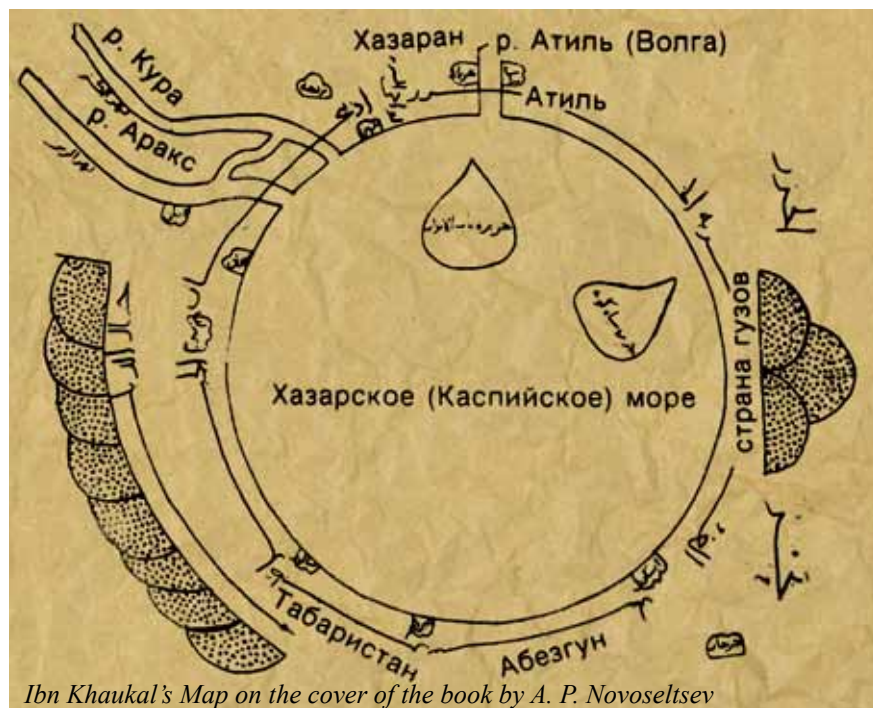
Jealous relations to the defini-

tion Azerbaijan appeared in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: it is natural that all attempts at national revival of this country, at that time divided between Russia and Iran, met with opposition from them. The period when 'Azerbaijani autonomy entered the international scene as an already formed political programme' (M. A. Rasul-zade) coincided with the collapse of the Russian Empire in 1917, during which circles aiming for great power and also hostile to the idea of Azerbaijani autonomy joined closely together. The same position was taken by Iran who managed, with assistance from foreign powers, to suppress the national liberation movement of Azerbaijanis in South Azerbaijan (1905-1911) and tried in every possible way to prevent the equivalent movement in North Azerbaijan. The opponents of the idea of Azerbaijani autonomy presented its dissemination in South Azerbaijan as interference in the internal affairs of Iran and even as an occupation of South Azerbaijan. In these terms the founder of the movement for autonomy, M. A. Rasul-zade, pointed out that people of both halves of the country have a single origin and wrote: 'In accordance with official geography before the universal war (meaning the First World War – F.A) the definition Azerbaijan meant Tabriz and its surroundings in northern Iran. As for Azerbaijan, which became the talk of the town after the war and the Great Revolution of Russia, it represents a territory in the southeast of the Caucasus to the north of that Azerbaijan which was mentioned above (i.e. South Azerbaijan – F.A.) with its capital in Baku.' (16) In December 1917 he wrote: 'Today, to speak of Azerbaijani autonomy means to talk

about Iravan, Yelizavetpol and Baku Provinces and other uyezds and okrugs of Transcaucasia.' (17)

Iran was very uneasy about the declaration on 28<sup>th</sup> of May 1918 of the Independent Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan (DRA) which for the first time in history turned the toponym Azerbaijan into the official name of the northern part of the country. **(For information:** after the collapse of Yugoslavia and the declaration in 1992 of the Independent Republic of Macedonia Greece insistently objected to its official name, announcing that the definition Macedonia can only be attached to a region of Greece.) There were serious apprehensions. In Tehran that South Azerbaijan may separate from Iran with the support of the Ottoman State. The signing of the friendship treaty between the Ottoman Empire and DRA strengthened these fears even further.

In such conditions the government of the DRA considered it reasonable to use the term Caucasian Azerbaijan in diplomatic correspondence. (17) Then Iran brought itself to establish friendly relations with Baku and was the first of them to send an official delegation to the other. By doing this it recognised the independence of North Azerbaijan. An Iranian-Azerbaijani conference took place in Baku from the 5<sup>th</sup> of December 1919 to the 20<sup>th</sup> of March 1920, (19) as a result of which a friendship treaty, bilateral agreements on trade, post-and-telegraph relations, consul relations and implementation of legal decisions were signed. In accordance with the signed treaty the head of the Iranian delegation made an official declaration about the de jure recognition of the DRA by Iran. An Ambassador of the DRA was sent to Tehran and



Ibn Khaukal's Map on the cover of the book by A. P. Novoseltsev

in a number of cities of Iran, including South Azerbaijan, consuls of the DRA were established. (20)

Thus, Tehran, which had strongly objected to the political geographic definition of Azerbaijan with regards to the DRA, de jure recognised the existence of an independent Azerbaijani State in the Caucasus and ended this problem. Even the Commander in Chief of the Russian Voluntary Army, General A. Denikin, who at first refused to recognise the independence of the Caucasian republics and supported a 'single and indivisible Russia', announced his recognition of them, including the DRA. (21)

In conclusion we will note that the modern sovereign Republic of Azerbaijan, from the day of its declaration in 1991, officially announced that it does not lay claim to any territories outside its state borders, including the indigenous primordial Azerbaijani lands which have until today remained within the Iranian State.

Thus, both historical sources and special literature confirm that no lat-

er than the 6<sup>th</sup> century the toponym Azerbaijan referred to all of the lands initially settled by the Azerbaijani people. These, as was mentioned above, are lands stretching from Derbent in the north to Hamadan in the south and from the Caspian Sea in the east to Asia Minor in the west.

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