

HISTORY AND ARCHEOLOGY, ARCHIVAL STUDIES

The ethnic composition of Shamakhi in the 15th to 18th centuries

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Abstract. Shamakhi, the ancient city in the conjunction of the international trade roads between Middle East and European countries, was ethnically diverse with the domination of Turkic Muslim pattern. This article considers ethnic composition of Shamakhi in the 15th-18th centuries based on the accounts of European travelers such as Adam Olearius, Giosafat Barbaro, Anthony Jenkinson and etc. Research on these sources and comparison of the contemporary ethnic groups of Shamakhi with the Medieval Turkic groups prove that mainly populated by the Turkic population, it had a large group of Christian community because of being the center of international trade.

Keywords: *Shamakhi, Azerbaijan, population, Turkmens, Qushchular.*

In the middle ages one of the economic and political centers of Azerbaijan, Shamakhi, located on the conjunction of the international trade roads, had a great importance for the world trade [Sara Ashurbeyli (2006), 130]. As a result, Shamakhi was populated not only with the local inhabitants, but also with the foreign traders who established here permanent communities. This is the reason that medieval Shamakhi was ethnically diverse by its ethnic and religious composition.

In accordance to the medieval primary written sources and my fieldwork study in Shamakhi, based on observation method, show that the Turks were mainly dominant population of the city and its suburban outskirts. Making comparison Shamakhi toponyms with the Turkmen tribes, we see a lot of overlap. For example, such toponyms in Shamakhi as Karakush, Akkaya, Bashibaghli, Qarachukha, Abdal were the ethnonyms among the Turkmens [Ataniyazov (1999), 16-28].

Also we can see an overlap between Turkmen tribes and Shamakhi tribes. These parallels are traced in the below columns.

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Turkmen ethnonyms

Soltanli
Keller
Memmedali
Gabirdi
Jynlar
Bayramali
Molla
Sallahlar
Juyje
Demirchi
Suleymen
Nejef
Gushchi etc.

Shamakhi ethnonyms

Soltanli
Kecheller
Memmedali
Gabirdi
Jyrlar
Bayram
Mollagullu
Shallali
Julge
Demirli
Haji Suleymanli
Nejef
Gushchi etc.

The representatives of these clans, whose languages, customs, clothes, occupations, and etc. having a little difference from each other, have not forgotten which clans and tribes they belong to and have kept this connection alive until today. Here I would like to go to details about the *Gushchu* tribe. It should be underlined that *Gushchu* tribe is divided into two clans: *Karakoyunlu* and *Bozkoyunlu*. Simultaneously, *Karakoyunlu* and *Bozkoyunlu* are divided into "qishlaqs" (winter pasture) -K.M. However this is not the last division, because qishlaqs are divided into "obas" (settlements). See the table below *.

In accordance to the primary written sources, we see the evidences that show the local population of Shamakhi were the Turks in the Middle Ages. Adam Olearius writes that he met Georgians and Armenians in Shamakhi [Adam Olearius (1669), 208]. They probably came here for trade and stayed longer. In other words, they are not local residents. It is not coincidence that they spoke Turkish, the language of the local population. Even Adam Olearius writes that they do not understand each other if they do not speak Turkish [Ibid]. This also shows that the local Turkish population was the majority and the Turkic was the common language. Then he writes: "At the entrance to the city, a group of horsemen sent by the beylarbey greeted us with a "welcome". The horsemen bowed to the ambassadors, and cheerfully shouted "Choshkeldi!" in local Turkic and greeted. They spoke in Turkic more enthusiastically than Persian." [Adam Olearius (1669), 208]. This fact also shows that the dominant population of the city was the Turks, and the beylerbeyi of Shirvan, governor of the province, also spoke in Turkic.

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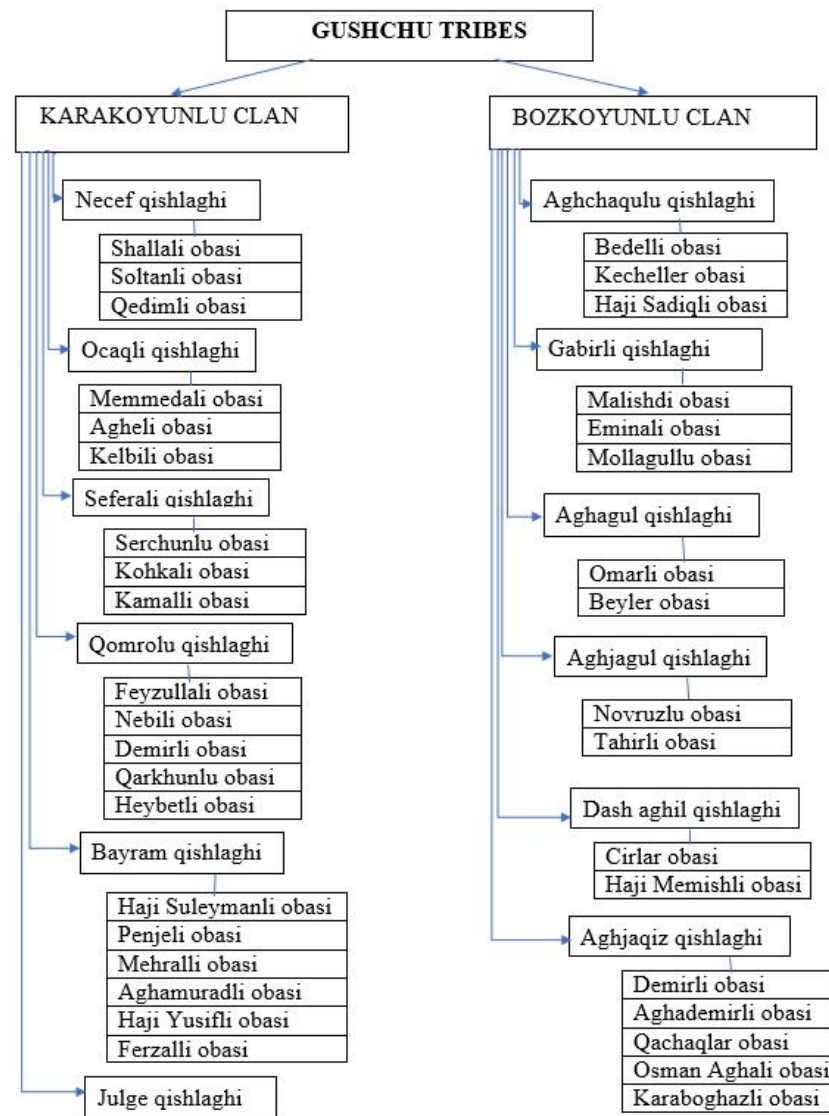
Tofiq Nacafov also wrote that in the Middle Ages, Shamakhi was located on international trade routes and was one of the important trade centers. [Nacafov (2012), 431]. The fact that being one of the international trade centers has led to the settlement of merchants from different countries in Shamakhi. We can meet with this fact in the primary sources, written by Adam Olearius, Ovliya Chelebi and many travelers who visited Shamakhi in the Middle Ages. A. Olearius noted that, there were two warehouses for foreign merchants to entertain and sell their goods. One of them was called the Shah Caravanserai and it was a designated place for Muscovites. Another one called Losgi Caravanserai was built for Circassian Tatars. Jews also owned a part of this warehouse [Adam Olearius (1669), 222-223]. Ovliya Chelebi writes that there are 44 Caravanserais in Shamakhi [Eoliya Celebi (2003), 242]. Also Streis claims that many Indian traders lived in the medieval Shamakhi [Streis (1935), 255]. Contemporary researcher Rudi Matthee's work also prove that many nationalities lived in this city, from Shia and Sunni Iranians to the Turks and Russians [Rudi Matthee (2015), 480]. All these facts show that people from different countries lived in Shamakhi and this is the reason that Shamakhi was diverse in terms of its ethnic composition in the Middle Ages, as it was a center of international trade.

In addition, there are some controversial points about who was the local population of the city in the sources. Giosafat Barbaro and Anthony Jenkinson wrote that a good part of inhabitants of Shamakhi were Armenians [Barbaro (1871), 86]. Also he writes that, Shamakhi locates in the great Armenia [Ibid], but actually no Armenian kingdom existed in the region for that period. On the other hand, he noted that Shamakhi is a city in the Media [Ibid, 86], which did not exist as well.

Finally the primary written sources and my fieldwork studies prove that in the Middle Ages, the local and main population of the city of Shamakhi were the Turks. The reason for the ethnic diversity here was the development of foreign trade. All conditions led some of them to stay here for a long time. The Armenian merchants settled here and built their own church in Saghyan village in the 17th century. Also A.Olearius had witnessed this [Adam Olearius (1669), 213]. Gerber wrote that the language was a Turkish mixed with Tatar in Shamakhi in 1728. [Gerber (1958), 6]. All these evidences show that Turks were the main inhabitants of medieval Shamakhi and Christian communities moved here later.

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*Table



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