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**Liana Nazaryan, Davit Nahatakyan, Armen Hayrapetyan,
Hakob Muradyan, Hasmik Matikyan, Arkadi Akopov****THE SPREAD OF CHALCEDONISM IN TAYK AND ITS INFLUENCE
ON THE FORMATION OF THE HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT***

In 451, after the Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon, Chalcedonism spread in Armenia, especially in Tayk. With its spread, Georgian penetrated there having an impact on the historic and cultural life and the ethnic image of the region. A part of the Armenians, breaking away from the Armenian Church, became Georgian-speaking. The study aims to analyze the process and the ethno-religious environment resulted from the impact of the new confession. In Tayk, a bishop's seat was founded as early as the 4th century by Gregory the Illuminator, and it continued to be a diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church, which is testified by the fact that the names of the bishops of Tayk have been remembered at church meetings etc. until the 9th — 10th centuries. Chalcedonism and Georgian writing and literature rooted in the region as late as the 9th — 10th centuries, when the Bagratunis, the local ruling elite, accepted the Chalcedonian confession. As a result, the population of Tayk and their rulers were called 'Georgians' or 'Iberians' in both Armenian and foreign records. In Tayk, even church ceremonies were performed in Georgian, though Armenian was also used.

Key words: Armenian Apostolic Church, confession, Chalcedonism, church assembly, Byzantine Empire, Kgharjk, Kurapat, Armenians, Georgians, Iberians.

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А.Г. Мурадян, А.Г. Матикян, А.А. Акопов****РАСПРОСТРАНЕНИЕ ХАЛКИДОНИЗМА В ТАЙКЕ
И ЕГО ВЛИЯНИЕ НА ФОРМИРОВАНИЕ ИСТОРИКО-КУЛЬТУРНОЙ СРЕДЫ**

После Четвёртого Вселенского Халкидонского собора в 451 г. халкидонизм стал распространяться в Армении, особенно в её провинции Тайк. С распространением халкидонизма туда внедрился грузинский язык, что оказало значительное влияние на историко-культурную жизнь и этнический облик региона.

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Часть армянского населения, постепенно отдаляясь от Армянской церкви, стала грузиноязычной. Цель статьи — изучить процесс распространения халкидонизма в Тайке и образовавшуюся в результате этого новую этнорелигиозную среду, проанализировать влияние нового вероисповедания на историко-культурную среду. В Тайке, где епископский престол еще в IV в. был основан Григорием Просветителем, до IX—X вв. продолжала оставаться епархия Армянской Апостольской церкви, свидетельством чего являются имена епископов Тайка, упоминаемых на церковных собраниях и в других случаях. Только в IX—X вв., когда местная правящая элита — Багратуни — приняла халкидонскую религию, в регионе укоренились халкидонизм, грузинская письменность и литература. В результате смены вероисповедания в армянских и зарубежных источниках население и правители Тайка стали также именоваться «грузинами» или «иберами». В Тайке и соседнем Кхарджке даже церковные обряды проводились на грузинском языке, хотя использовался и армянский.

Ключевые слова: Армянская Апостольская церковь, конфессия, халкидонизм, церковное собрание, Византийская империя, Тайк, Кхарджк, Курапалат, армяне, грузины, иверийцы.

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Introduction

In the middle of the 5th century, extremely important events took place in the life of the Armenian Church. The most important of them was the IV Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon in 451, whose decisions led to the separation of the Armenian Church from the Universal Christian Church. This did not stop the spread of Chalcedonism in Armenia. A new spiritual-cultural, ethno-religious, as well as historical-cultural environment was formed. These processes were especially evident in the territories adjacent to the Byzantine Empire: in the province of Tayk of Greater Armenia and in the western provinces of Gugark (Kgharjk, Artahan, etc.). The separation of the Georgian Church from the Armenian Church and joining the Byzantine Church in the 7th century greatly contributed to the spread of Chalcedonism in these regions.

In fact, the spread of Chalcedonism in those provinces of Greater Armenia created favorable conditions for changing the religious, linguistic, and cultural environment. The Georgian language that penetrated Tayk, Kgharjk and the surrounding areas had a significant impact on the historical and cultural life and ethnic image of the region. Part of the population, separated from the Armenian Church, gradually became Georgian-speaking. The new language greatly influenced other areas of culture as well. And yet, Tayk, with its rich historical-cultural heritage, preserved its Armenian identity, and the Armenian language and writing were preserved here until the first decades of the 20th century. Therefore, it is necessary to study the causes and process of ethno-religious, linguistic, historical-cultural changes in the Armenian territories.

Diocese of Tayk of the Armenian Apostolic Church (4th — 9th centuries)

After the declaration of Christianity as the state religion in Armenia, Gregory the Illuminator established episcopal dioceses (Ukhtanes 2011: 243) in various provinces of the country, including Tayk. According to Agathangelos, the first bishop of Tayk was Aghbios, who, due to the fact that he was the spiritual leader of Tayk and Taron, received the name of the bishop of the sparapet house or Mamikonians (Agathangelos 1983: 178). The issue of diocesan division of the Armenian Church during the pontificate of Gregory the Illuminator was addressed by B. Harutyunyan. According to him, after the declaration of Christianity as the state religion, 36 dioceses were established in Greater Armenia “which was based on a twofold principle: the administrative division of the kingdom according to the provinces (called “ashkharh”, which means “province”) and giving the right to episcopal dioceses to the most prominent ruling families of Armenia who embarked on the path of feudalism” (Harutyunyan 2000: 126).

The examination of the boundaries of his preaching supports the fact that Gregory the Illuminator ordained a bishop in Tayk. Thus, according to the Armenian edition of the history of Agathangelos, the first pastor of the Armenian Church preached as far as Khaghtik and Kgharjk (Agathangelos 1983: 468), i.e. the western and northern border of Tayk. Therefore, it can be assumed that Tayk was among the areas of Gregory’s preaching. According to Movses Khorenatsi, the spread of Christianity from Kgharjk to the Caspian Sea was carried out by saint Nune (Khorenatsi 1991: 232, 234). The Georgian Church calls the latter Nino (Takayshvili 1900: 1—116). This information is important because if the borders of Gregory the Illuminator’s preaching reached Kgharjk and Khaghtik; Nino’s started from Kgharjk and reached the Alanats Doors and the Caspian Sea. Therefore, it can be clearly stated that Tayk remained in the “section” of Gregory’s preaching.

The sources mention the Tayk bishops on various occasions both before and after the convening of the IV Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon. For instance, Pavstos Buzand, referring to the spiritual leaders of the Persian section after the first division of Armenia between Rome and Persia (387), remembers the bishop of Tayk Kirakos and calls him Shahap, ranking him among the most influential (Buzand 1987: 400, 410).

The next bishop of Tayk was Tachat, a participant of the Artashat assembly (450) (Parpetsi 1982: 28). In the middle of the 5th century, the priest Abraham from “Zenaks village of Tayk province” was also known, as evidenced by Ghazar Parpetsi (Parpetsi 1982: 224). He is best known as the chronicler Abraham Khostovanogh, and in 463 he was ordained a bishop of Bznunik province. The Catholicos Gyut A Arahezatsi (461—478) (Parpetsi 1982: 264) was also born in Tayk. It is likely that both of them started their spiritual activities in Tayk.

The name of the bishop Atatea of Tayk is found in the list of participants (Girq Tghtoc 1901: 41) of the first church assembly of Dvin in 506. If we take into account the fact that the council was directed against Nestorianism and Chalcedonism, then the participation of the bishop of Tayk proves that at the beginning of the 6th century Chalcedonism was not rooted here and the diocese was part of the Armenian Apostolic Church. Movses Kaghankatvatsi remembers Bishop Stepanos of Tayk, who participated in the drafting of the letter written by Armenian Catholicos Hovhannes II Gabeghenatsi (557—574) to Catholicos Ter Abbas of Aghvan (551—595) regarding “preserving the Armenian faith steadfast” (Kaghankatvatsi 2011: 168). Stepanos is also mentioned in “Girq Tghtots” (Girq Tghtoc 1901: 81).

Catholicos Nerses III (641—661) was one of the representatives of the Tayk spiritual class, who, according to Sebeos, was from the village of Ishkhan (Sebeos 1979: 166). Before being elected Catholicos, Hovhannes Draskhanakertsi (Draskhanakertsi 1912: 83) and Asoghik (Asoghik 1885: 88) remember Nerses as the bishop of Tayk. The church council of Dvin, convened by Nerses III in 645 (or 648), was attended by the Bishop Israel of Tayk, who is also mentioned in Kanonagirk (Hakobyan 1971: 214). It is assumed that the latter became the bishop of Tayk after Nerses was elected as the Catholicos.

Another bishop of Tayk, Sargis, participated in the Seventh Church Assembly of Manazkert (Girq Tghtoc 1901: 223) convened by Catholicos Hovhannes III Odznetsi (717—728) in 726.

The vardapet (archimandrite) Sahak Mrut, who wrote a reply letter to the patriarch Pot, was born in Tayk, who, being persecuted by the Chalcedonians of Tayk, found refuge with the Armenian prince, then king Ashot I (885—890). Vardan the historian writes about it: “The one named Sahak Mrut, who was the bishop of Tayots in Ashunk (from Oshk), and who was persecuted for his faith, came to Ashot” (Vardan 1862: 85).

The participation of these bishops in the church assemblies is enough to prove that the episcopal diocese of Tayk continued to be part of the Armenian Church even after the Council of Chalcedon, and its spiritual pastors always occupied an influential position among the representatives of the church class.

Nevertheless, Tayk is one of the provinces of Greater Armenia, where the Chalcedonian confession spread widely and deeply rooted. And it had a political connotation. Until the middle of the 7th century, a part of the Armenians of Tayk saw in Chalcedonism a way to oppose Persia, from the middle of the 7th century, an opportunity to get the support of Byzantium in the fight against the Arabs (Akopov 2013: 29). The inaccessible location of the territory also contributed to the spread of the new confession. Persecuted Chalcedonians from other regions of Armenia took refuge in Tayk, as a result of which over time they formed a large number there.

The Spread of Chalcedonism in Tayk

The first evidences in sources about the Chalcedonian communities in Tayk are preserved in the Armenian-Chalcedonian “Narratio de rebus Armeniae” (Akinean 1968: 439—450; Bartikyan 2002a: 97—110) (“Narrative about the Armenian Question”), according to which “a war took place...” In the E (5) year of emperor Phocas (602—610) and the T (20) year of Khosrov (Khosrov II, 590—628). It was at that time that the heretic Catholicos Abraham forced the bishops of the section of Hovhannes (Kaghankatvatsi 2011: 336) to denounce the council of Chalcedon, otherwise, to leave the regions of Armenia. The latter did not agree and some of them moved to Tayk, some went to Byzantines and died in a foreign land (Bartikyan 2002a: 107). Based on the above, it can be concluded that the first Chalcedonians appeared among the general population of Tayk in the beginning of the 7th century, and in the ruling elite — only in the 9th century, when the Bagratuni dynasty received titles from the Byzantine emperors, marking the beginning of the hereditary rule of Kurapalats.

However, Chalcedonism was not widespread in the region even in the 9th — 11th centuries, and even among the clergy, the memories of the saints of the Armenian Church continued to be preserved. This is evidenced by a Georgian hagiographic-testimonial collection (Muradyan 2008: 1) of the first half of the 11th century of the Monastery of Iviron in Athos. According to N. Marr it is “intended for Armenians associated with the Georgian Orthodox Church” (Marr 1899: 68). This remarkable statement of the scientist is based on a sentence on page 349r₂ of the manuscript: “ესე (წამებ)ანი სომხურიოგან თარგმნილ არიან” (These testimonies are translated from Armenian) (Marr 1900: 68). I. Abuladze interprets it differently: “ესე (საკითხა)ვნი სომხთაგან თარგმნილ არიან” (These readings are translated by Armenians) (Abuladze 1944: 061—062). N. Marr and I. Abuladze do not deny that the collection was created in the Armenian Chalcedonian environment. Moreover, according to them, it was translated in the Armenian-Chalcedonian and Georgian-speaking environment of Tayk-Kgharjk. In other words, although the Armenian clergy of Tayk and Kgharjk appropriated Georgian writing and literature, they continued to keep in their memory the hagiography and testimonies taken from the Armenian “Vark Srbots”.

Two testimonies from “Vark Srbots” refer to the lives of children who were martyred for their faith. In one of them, the young brothers are killed by their uncle Tevdas, because “they had a true and upright faith in the Holy Trinity” (Muradyan 2008: 107). The second testimony refers to the

nine children who are also martyred for the faith by their parents. As mentioned in the testimony: “Near the source of the big river called Kur, in the province called Kogha, there was a big village (we are talking about the village of Kriakunk). The majority of the population of that village were worshipers of pagan idols, a small part of the people were Christians, worshipers of God” (Muradyan 2008: 115). The author of the testimony notes that the priest baptizes children in the Kur River at night, because of which they are killed by their parents. In other words, the majority of the population of the village of Kriakunk mentioned in the second testimony were worshipers of pagan idols, a small part of the people were Christians, God-worshippers (Muradyan 2008: 115). Both of these testimonies were written no earlier than the 8th century and no later than the 9th century, the period when Chalcedonism was spreading in Tayk, so it is surprising that the testimonies refer to the struggle between Christianity and paganism.

The existence of two testimonies proves that they were created by the Armenian-Chalcedonians of Tayk and, being significantly alienated from the Armenian reality, were not included in the Armenian bibliography. The second explanation can be the following: they were written by the followers of the Armenian Apostolic Church of Tayk, and then translated into Georgian, again without leaving the Chalcedonian environment. However, we think there is also a third option. It is not excluded that instead of the struggle between Christianity and paganism described in the testimony, the struggle between Chalcedonism and monophysitism was originally described, the former being presented as Christianity, and the latter as paganism. Since in this case the facts of the forced spread of Chalcedonism among the common people would have been obvious, subsequent imitations or translations, which are scarce, have transformed it into a struggle between Christianity and paganism. That is why they were not spread among the Armenian Church, and they are relatively few in the framework of Georgian bibliography.

In other words, these testimonies show that in the 8th — 9th centuries, communities following the religion of the Armenian Church were preserved in Tayk, and Chalcedonism was accepted with hostility among the common people, unlike the ruling classes.

Indirect evidence of the existence of followers of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Tayk and neighboring Kgharjk (9th — 10th centuries) can also be found in the pages of the hagiography of Grigor Khandztetsi. Although it does not directly mention the believers of the Armenian Church, it mentions some “evil spirits” and “enemies”. They are constantly persecuting one of Grigor Khandztetsi’s students and want to expel him from his monastery (Merchule 1911: 113—114). The latter turns to Khandztetsi for help, who goes and puts the “evil spirits” to flight (Merchule 1911: 114). This information mixed with myths has no value outwardly, but become remarkable when we consider the period. Grigor Khandztetsi lived and developed his spiritual activities in the 9th — 10th centuries. It was a period when the spread of Chalcedonism was increasing in Tayk and Kgharjk, which was definitely not accepted by the local Armenians, as evidenced by the two above-mentioned testimonies. The student of Grigor of Khandzta, according to the biographer, came from Mijnadzor and settled in “Berdi” (in the Georgian original: ბერძობს (Bertisa) (Merchule 1911: 113). And in Tayk until the second half of the 9th century, bishop Sahak Mrut was known, who, as we have already mentioned, “was persecuted for his faith, and came to Ashot” (Vardan 1862: 85). From the combination of the above two testimonies, it follows that when the Chalcedonian spiritual figure came to Tayk, he was persecuted by the local clergy. However, soon the Chalcedonians won and persecuted and put to flight those who believed in monophysitism, whose leader Sahak Mrut, according to Vardan’s testimony, took refuge with Ashot.

It is necessary to mention one more fact. The Georgian inscriptions of some of the churches in Tayk have serious spelling errors. Thus, E. Takayshvili describes the Georgian and Greek inscriptions of the church of Ekek village as illiterate and adds that the author of these inscriptions was not good at the Greek and Georgian languages (Takayshvili 1952: 76). The Georgian scholar believes that the inscription was written around 1006—1007, that is, when the “Tao-Klarjetian Kartvelian Kingdom” was in its cultural heyday. Naturally, it is difficult to believe that such mistakes were made on the walls of the temple “by Georgian clergy in Tao, which has a Georgian

national majority”. Supposedly they will oppose our statement, claiming that the person who made these inscriptions was not Georgian, and this explains the many spelling mistakes that are present in the inscription. However, let’s not forget that according to the dominant point of view in Georgian studies, both the population and the clergy of Tayk were Georgians, so it is difficult to imagine how a foreigner could make a inscription with typographical errors, and the Georgian clergy and population tolerated it. All of this has only one explanation: neither the clergy of Ekek, nor the population were familiar with the Georgian language, that is, they were not Georgians, but Chalcedonian Armenians.

Thus, by examining the information of the sources, it is possible to state the forced spread of Chalcedonism in Tayk, especially among the common population. It rooted and spread widely with the adoption of Chalcedonism by the local ruling elite led by the Georgian branch of the Bagratuni dynasty. And the Georgian Church, separated from the Armenian Church, began to make attempts to spread its own influence there. Nevertheless, even in the 11th century, monophysist communities continued to exist in Tayk.

Ethno-Religious and Linguistic Changes

In the 8th — 9th centuries, with the establishment of the Bagratuni dynasty in Tayk and Kgharjk, the intervention of the Byzantine Empire became active in political life. Byzantine policy was aimed at creating a religious base in the frontier regions of the empire, first of all for the local population. Therefore, at the beginning of the 9th century, Ashot, the Bagratuni prince, was granted the title of Kurapalat in exchange for apostasy. In the 9th — 10th centuries, Chalcedonism began to spread more rapidly throughout the territory, as a result of which local residents, accepting the same confession as Georgians, began to be called Georgians in Armenian sources, although they were Armenians by nationality and origin. The best interpretation of it was given by the 17th century author Yakovb Karnetsi: “And the inhabitants of the country (Tayk) were half Armenians and half Georgians, but they spoke the Armenian language” (Karneci 1903: 17—18). And some of the latter, while being assimilated into the Georgian population, have passed on their Armenian names to the generations. Mkhitar Gosh gives another important testimony regarding the religious issue, according to which “whether a Georgian should baptize an Armenian or an Armenian should baptize a Georgian” (Gosh 2014: 458). In other words, just as Armenians accepted dyophysitism, Georgians accepted the confession of the Armenian Church. Over time, during church ceremonies, the Georgian language began to be used and spread. It was not possible to completely eradicate Armenian among the population in a short period of time. Moreover, the Georgian language was mainly used during church ceremonies. The proof of this was the “Conversations” (Akinian 1958: 30—48) translated from Arabic to Armenian by the order of Davit Kurapalates, which were narrated in the royal palaces. In fact, not only Davit Kurapalates spoke Armenian, but also those around him.

In Armenian sources, defining the authorities and leaders of Tayk with the term “Georgian” was definitely due to the religious factor, while the authority was considered purely Armenian. This is evidenced by the information of the 11th century historian Aristakes Lastivertsi, that among the Armenian authorities and kingdoms, the authority of Davit Kurapalates from Tayk is also remembered (Lastivertsi 1963: 98). Although the latter was a Chalcedonian.

Initially, Byzantine sources called Tayk either in the Armenian form “Tayk” or simply referred to it as an Armenian territory with an Armenian population (Nazaryan 2019: 128—129). However, in the 9th — 11th centuries, the situation changed and the rulers and the population of Tayk started to be called Iberians (i.e. Georgians) (Nazaryan 2019: 120—131). In Arabic sources, the region is mostly found in the form of Siraj-Tair (Shirak-Tayk) (Nazaryan 2014: 36—42). Arabic sources, unlike Byzantine, did not take into account religious affiliation. For them, both Armenians and Georgians were equally Christians and did not differ from each other from a religious point of view. Therefore, the political side was more important and Tayk was mentioned in the Armenian way. In

Arabic sources, the region is remembered together with Shirak in the form of Siraj-Tair, based on the fact that their rulers were Bagratunis.

Starting from the 11th century, the Byzantine Empire began appointing rulers of Byzantine nationality in the Armenian territories it received, with the aim of strengthening its position in those territories and accelerating the assimilation of the local Armenian population (Lastivertsi 1963: 6). One of them was Eustathios Boilas, who settled with his family in the domains of David Kurapalates, which passed to Byzantium, in Tayk and some part of Kgharjk. In his testament, Boilas states that in the middle of the 11th century, the Armenian population of Tayk and Kgharjk was not yet completely Chalcedonian, otherwise he would not have written that he had lived among peoples who worshiped other faiths (Bartikyan 2002b: 65). The Georgians were not of a different confession to the Byzantines, nor could the Chalcedonian Armenians be. Therefore, in this case, Boilas was referring to the Armenians who profess monophysitism (Bartikyan 2002b: 65). And the Chalcedonians and the followers of the Armenian Apostolic Church considered each other as heretics.

In the middle of the 11th century, the political and military leadership of Tayk-Kgharjk was in the hands of Armenians (perhaps of Chalcedonism confession) (Bartikyan 2002b: 66). Grigor Bakurian, a prominent military and statesman of the Byzantine Armenian nation of that period, was one of them (Bartikyan 2002c: 409). Although the latter considered himself a Georgian, he was originally from the Armenian Chalcedonians of Tayk, and wrote in Armenian (Marr 1905: 20—21). He built the Monastery of Patricios in Bulgaria, and he himself wrote the “Constitution” (Typicon) for its congregation. It is written in Greek, but Grigor Bakurian signed it in Armenian, although the monastery is called “Georgian” (Arutyunova-Fidanyan 1978). Most of the congregants were probably Armenians who, like Grigor Bakurian, used Armenian, but considered themselves Georgians. This circumstance is natural, because in the given period, the criterion of nationality was also confession.

Cases of apostasy of the Armenian population of Tayk can also be found during the following centuries, which was mainly due to the provision of security. For example, the Christian population of the territories that came under the control of the Ottoman Empire, who had previously accepted Chalcedonism, converted to Islam in order to avoid massacres. In other words, their confession has changed, not their nationality. Therefore, in the 9th — 11th centuries, the population of Tayk was mostly Chalcedonian, but the latter were Armenians by nationality and origin, who are called Georgians in Armenian sources, and Iberians in Byzantine sources.

Results

Thus, judging from the information of the sources, it can be stated that Tayk, Kgharjk and other surrounding settlements, being territories bordering the Byzantine Empire and Georgia, were affected by the latter’s political, religious, cultural and linguistic influences. As a result of all that, Chalcedonism spread and deeply rooted, which was also the basis for the penetration of the Georgian language and the Georgian ethnic group.

However, before the IV Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon and after that, Tayk was and remained a diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church, having its own bishop. Sources up to the 9th — 10th centuries mention the Tayk spiritual leaders on various occasions. This proves that although Chalcedonism was spreading in the region, Tayk remained an inseparable part of the Armenian Church.

However, Tayk was one of the Armenian regions where the Byzantine Church’s confession became predominant. The first evidence of the spread of Chalcedonism there dates back to the beginning of the 7th century. Due to its geographical location, the region was a reliable refuge for the Chalcedonians, who, escaping persecution, settled there. However, the new confession was forcibly spread among the common population. Only in the 9th — 10th centuries, when the Bagratunis, who ruled Tayk accepted Chalcedonism, it was strengthened in the region.

Along with the spread of Chalcedonism, Georgian writing and literature also penetrated Tayk and the surrounding provinces. With the spread of the Georgian language, the Georgian population gradually formed in the state. However, no matter how much the latter penetrated and strengthened in the territory, the Armenian population continued to survive in Tayk. As a result of ethno-religious changes, the local Armenian population began to be called “Georgian” and “Iberian” in the sources, which characterized their confessional affiliation. In the following centuries, the Christian population of Tayk also converted to Islam to avoid the massacres.

Therefore, over time, ethno-religious, linguistic and cultural changes left their mark on the formation of a new historical and cultural environment of the region.

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