

Anush A. Safaryan

**MODERN ARMENIAN KHACHKAR CULTURE AND
THE VANDALISM OF AZERBAIJAN***

Key words – khachkar, border monument, identity marker, cultural heritage, conflict, war, expropriation, Albanisation, ethnocide.

Abstract

The cross and the khachkar have been and remain one of the most important symbols of the Armenian identity, undergoing iconographic, thematic and content changes during their centuries-old existence. Azerbaijan's official policy, in the way of creating its own identity, which was carried out at the expense of the Armenian identity and against that identity, often resorted to the appropriation (Albanisation, Udiization) of the cross and the khachkar and finally its destruction. After the first Artsakh war, the khachkar, having undergone corresponding dimensional and iconographic changes, became the main symbol of the liberated territories, settlements and especially the borders. During the 44-day war, Azerbaijan began to use the erasure and removal of the cross emblem more widely. This was done not only from captured monuments, but also from any pictorial manifestation of it, from military equipment, military clothing, even from the tattoos of captured Armenian soldiers. Based on the analysis of actual materials, the article presents the process of “khachkarization” in the liberated territories and the Azerbaijani aggression towards the cross and khachkars, which led to the complete destruction of a number of monuments.

1. Research methodology

Within the framework of the research, the modern khachkars of Artsakh were collected, cataloged and mapped, and on the background of

* Հոդվածն ընդունվել է տպագրության 29.05.2023:

this examination (the main occasions, purposes and functions of modern khachkars), the fates of the khachkars in the occupied territories during and after the war were revealed.

In-depth interviews were conducted with Artsakh and Armenian khachkar makers¹, those who served in the military in Artsakh, with the officials of Artsakh cultural institutions, as well as with the representatives of several communities.

Monitoring of the media field was carried out, through which the various posts made by Azerbaijani users were collected, where the cases of vandalism towards khachkars can be seen.

2. Introduction

Azerbaijan's vandalism policy towards the cultural heritage of Artsakh is not new at all, it is the continuation of Azerbaijan's century-long "cultural genocide"²: Starting from 1920, when Artsakh, Utik, as well as separate provinces from Syunik and Nakhijevan provinces were annexed to the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan appropriated the Armenian cultural heritage for the "invention" of ethno-political and historical identity. The biggest obstacle for Azerbaijanis on the way to creating that new identity was the large Armenian population and the huge cultural heritage of Armenians, which were spread throughout the territory of Soviet Azerbaijan, especially in Artsakh, Utik and Nakhichevan³.

Since the 1960s, the "conquest" of Artsakh's cultural heritage by Azerbaijanis has become an integral part of the anti-Armenian policy of the Azerbaijani government⁴. Azerbaijani historians spared no effort to alienate the early medieval history of Artsakh Armenians from Armenian history⁵.

1 We had interviews with Robert Askarian and Sergey Karakhanyan from Artsakh, and Varazdat Hambardzumyan, Ruben Nalbandian, Artak Hambardzumyan, Hambik Hambardzumyan, Zakar Balumyan, Gevorg Mnatsakanyan and others from Armenia.

2 About cultural genocide see in details: Daphne Anayiotos, The Cultural Genocide Debate: Should the UN Genocide Convention Include a Provision on Cultural Genocide or Should the Phenomenon be Encompassed in a Separate International Treaty? 22 N.Y.INTL L. REV. 99, 100 (2009):

3 **Պետրոսյան Հ.**, Մշակութային էթնոցիդին Արցախում (մշակութային ժառանգության բռնալուրացման մեխանիզմը) // Արթուրյանի պետական ահաբեկությունը և էթնիկական գտումների քաղաքականությունը Լեռնային Ղարաբաղի դեմ, Շուշի, էջ 138:

4 **Petrosyan H., Muradyan H.**, p. 18.

5 **Shnirelman A.** Myths, Identity and Politics In Transcaucasia, National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka 2001, Shnirelman_V_A_The_Value_of_the_Past_Myths_Identity_and_Politics_in_Transcaucasia_2001.pdf (abkhazworld.com), pp. 154-155 / (մուսնք՝ 12.02.2022).

Azerbaijan's policy aimed at creating false facts to "prove" to the world that their ancestors were the Caucasian Albanians and that they were the ancient inhabitants of Artsakh-Utik and they were the ones who lived in those areas and left a huge cultural heritage. Khachkars were not left out of this policy either. In the 1980s, architect D. Akhundov made an attempt to declare one of the typical monuments of the Armenian Middle Ages, the khachkar, as Albanian, trying to prove that "Albanian" khachkars were significantly different from Armenian khachkars⁶.

Many examples of expropriation and vandalism towards the Armenian cultural values of this region are documented in the works of individual researchers, in which all this is described as a "stone war" directed against historical memory⁷. On February 20, 1988, at the session of the Regional Council of People's Deputies of Nagorno-Karabakh, a decision was made to mediate before the Supreme Councils of the Azerbaijani SSR and the Armenian SSR on the issue of withdrawing Nagorno-Karabakh from Azerbaijan and including it to Armenia's composition. However, on February 21, 1988, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union adopted a decision contradicting the international principles of self-determination of peoples, and the communist authorities of Azerbaijan moved the issue requiring a peaceful solution to the level of inter-ethnic conflict⁸. As a result, the Armenians liberated not only the depopulated villages and towns, but also the historical monuments: monasteries, churches, fortresses, cemeteries and khachkars⁹. Thus, an opportunity was created for the study and preservation of the historical monuments of Artsakh, as well as for the creation of new cultural values.

The immovable monuments of the Armenian cultural heritage were systematically destroyed and reused in the villages populated by Azerbaijanis. The early Christian rock carving complex of Tigranakert, the cross compositions and khachkar of the Vankasar church were erased, the khachkars

6 **Petrosyan H., Yeranyan N.**, Monumental Culture of Artsakh, Yerevan, 2022, pp. 34, 39. Ахундов Д., Архитектура древнего и раннесредневекового Азербайджана, Баку, 1986 / (մուտք՝ 12.02.2022).

7 **Կիրակոսյան Լ.**, Մշակութային եղևոն (Արցախի ճարտարապետական հուշարձանների օրինակով), «Հայագիտության հարցեր» Երևան, N 1, 2014, էջ 110:

8 **Խաչատրյան Կ., Աբրահամյան Հ.**, Հայության պայքարը ԼՂԻՄ-ը Խորհրդային Հայաստանի հետ միավորելու համար, Փաստաթղթերի և կյուրերի ժողովածու, կազմ. Երևան, Պատմ. ինստ., 2011, <http://www.academhistory.am/upload/files/ARCAx.pdf>, էջ 165-166 / (մուտք՝ 12.02.2022):

9 **Կարապետյան Ս.**, Հայ մշակույթի հուշարձանները Խորհրդային Ադրբեջանին բռնակցված շրջաններում, Եր, 1999, էջ 7:

of the area of the newly created Lesnoye Azerbaijani village near the Ptretsik were destroyed¹⁰, about 70 khachkars were destroyed during the construction of the Sarsang reservoir, using the stones in the construction or leaving them at the bottom of the reservoir, a number of khachkars and tombstones around the Handaberd monastery were displaced and rolled into the canyon, in the village of Tsar, while building several residential houses and the village school, fragments of tombstones and khachkars were used as building blocks¹¹. There are a lot of such examples.

3. New stage of khachkar making in Artsakh

In the 1960s of the last century, when the new stage of khachkar-making began in Armenia, it did not gain much popularity in Artsakh, which was at the center of Azerbaijan's cultural ethnocide policy. Edik Gyulnazaryan, the only khachkar maker known to us at that time in Artsakh, was the first to engage in khachkar-making work after the revival of cross-stone work in the 1960s. As noted by Sergey Karakhanyan, E. Gulnazaryan's first work was dedicated to the memory of his mother. His later works were also erected in cemeteries as tombstones (fig. 1).



Fig. 1 Khachkar, work of E. Gulnazaryan, photo by H. Petrosyan.

¹⁰ Petrosyan H., Muradyan H., p. 22.

¹¹ Կիրակոսյան Լ., էջ 111:

Since the khachkar-making has found a very weak expression in Artsakh since the 1960s, due to the complications of the relations between Artsakh and Armenia, no serious school of khachkar-making has been established in Artsakh, and this especially applies to the technical processing of khachkars. In fact, if in different regions of Armenia one can talk about khachkars as a serious cultural phenomenon, then in Artsakh one can talk about its separate, individual manifestations.

After the liberation, next to the memorials dedicated to the Great Patriotic War in Artsakh, khachkars dedicated to the victory in the Artsakh war, the victims of the Genocide, the victims of the liberation struggle of Artsakh began to appear¹². Separate or isolated khachkars have become much more widespread. They are placed on the sides of the roads, near the entrances of settlements or in the center, in cemeteries, in the yards of churches and chapels, at street intersections. Khachkars have been erected in almost all military units. On the initiative of khachkar-maker Varazdat Hambardzumyan, a series of khachkars, so-called "sword crosses" or "border crosses", were erected in defense zones to indicate and "defense" the borders.

Today's works of Artsakh masters have a very simple and modest design: plain sculpture, lack of versatility. The only exception is R. Askarian, whose art is quite characteristic of the traditional khachkar culture of Artsakh. As it is known, in the 12th-13th centuries in Artsakh secular sculptures became very common. The themes of fighting, hunting, feasting, craft and occupation, "family portrait", and mourning are presented in those sculptures¹³. Being well-acquainted with the traditional khachkar, tombstone, and carpet-making culture of Artsakh, R. Askarian borrowed the themes and characters found in them, but in the works of the master, these characters and individual motifs "walk" freely throughout the structure of the composition, in contrast to traditional khachkars, where the sculptures

12 In terms of size, memorial complexes sometimes include several monuments - khachkars, memorials or statues, but unlike others, these are more collective, communal, single-purpose structures, although they are also individualized while being common. Usually memorials are solved architecturally by creating some central obvious vertical dominant and usually a horizontal wall. The manifestation of individuality in the memorials of Artsakh can be considered the presence of a constituent wall of the memorial, on which the names of soldiers are engraved or their pictures are placed. This is not only a medieval or traditional phenomenon, we also see this in many examples of memorials built during the Soviet period.

13 **Պետրոսյան Հ.**, Խաչքար. ծագումը, գործառույթը, պատկերագրությունը, իմաստաբանությունը, Երևան, Փրինթինֆո, 2008, էջ 299:

had their own distinct place- the interior of the composition. It is not always possible to find a mutual connection among these characters, which gives a special drama to Askarian's art (fig. 2). It is interesting to study the modern khachkar culture of Artsakh from the point of view of the Artsakh liberation war, because as we have already mentioned, a significant part of them is dedicated to the first Artsakh war. In some cases, they are repetitions of classic examples of khachkars, and if there is no inscription, it will be difficult to find a connection with war, defense or victory.



Fig. 2 Khachkar, work of R. Askaryan, by R. Askaryan.

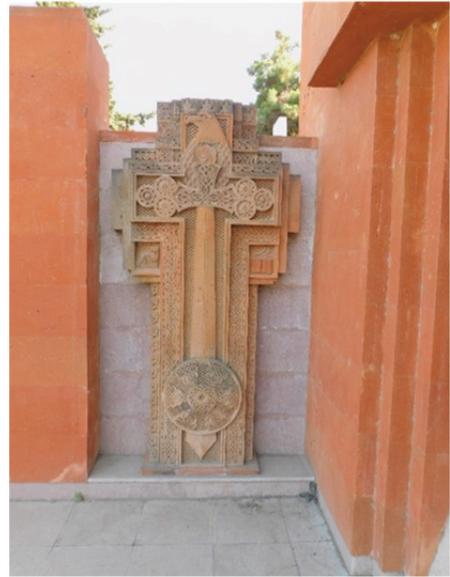


Fig. 3 khachkar with military outlook in photo Stepanakert, photo by A. Grigoryan.

At the same time, a direction of khachkar-making, which main theme is "military", is getting a certain spread. Their designs include an eagle, a sword, and a shield, which appear in different combinations¹⁴ (fig. 3).

14 The eagle is an ancient symbol of power and victory, and in this sense it is depicted on the weapons of many nations (Hall 1996, 405-406). The image of the eagle acquires a dominant position in khachkar compositions especially in the 16th-17th centuries and it shows the closest connection with the Christian philosophy of immortality and resurrection (Petrosyan 2008, 298). Some of the masters, of course, being well-acquainted with all this, included the eagle in the khachkar composition, but the other part tries to interpret it independently. "...As a testament to the strength and courage of our boys who fought or died." Masters interpret the shield as follows. "We did not start a war, we defended our rights, as a result we won..." As for the sword, let's note that in the traditional khachkar sculptures of Artsakh, the sword is rarely depicted, as the main type of weapon, the spear was depicted. However, the use of the sword in many monuments surrounding us led to the fact that the

Through these details, the masters tried to give a victorious-defensive image to the composition and thereby connect it to the theme of the liberation war. The most unique manifestation, which is fundamentally related to the liberation struggle of Artsakh, is a unique and new phenomenon in the khachkar culture: "sword-crosses" (or "border crosses", fig. 4). The basis of the perception of the cross as the most victorious weapon and symbol of victory comes first of all from the redemptive crucifixion of Christ, the victory over death, the rite of Baptism, immersing the cross in water to kill or bind the dragon, death and sin, the scene of the destruction of hell, the visions of Gregory the Illuminator and Constantine the Great, finally, the similarity of the cross with the sword¹⁵. Khachkar inscriptions also describe the cross as an unfading weapon that defeats enemies and is infused and anointed with divine blood¹⁶.



Fig. 4 Sword-cross in the defense zone of Artsakh, photo by V. Hambardzumyan.

However, if the medieval masters, characterizing the cross as a weapon or a sign of victory in khachkar inscriptions, avoided making the cross look like a weapon or a sword, in the case of new khachkars, we clearly see that the cross has become a sword. This is a new phenomenon that somewhat deviates from the general Christian ideology, because the cross, which is directed to the future, is never depicted as a sword or a weapon. With the example of these

sword itself was perceived as the "weapon of the victory" and it is not only about the sword depicted in the Khachkar compositions.

15 Պետրոսյան Հ., էջ 367-370:

16 Պետրոսյան Հ., էջ 267:

khachkars, today we can talk about the new function of khachkars, which the classical khachkar did not have.

The central cross is created in the form of a modified sword. Unlike a normal sword, it is four-edged. We do not see an ordinary sword with a hilt, a horizontal divider and a blade; the master seems to have tried to depict its strength and power in all directions.

The second important component is the shield, which the master depicts as a symbol of protection. As a rule, the shield is composed of woven geometric decorations. Further down we see the rays created by the blow of the sword, which V. Hambardzumyan was inspired by Hakob Kojoyan's painting "Sasuntsi David". The base usually carries the inscription "Let the Cross be our support."

Such crosses were erected in Varanda (Fizuli), Nerkin Chartar, Spitak Shen, Martakert, Mataghis, Tonashen (Yeghikir), Jrakan (Jabrayil) and elsewhere.

4. The functions of khachkars

The interviews show¹⁷ that, regardless of the occasion of their erection, the khachkars in Artsakh settlements were "involved" in the cultural events of the community: the day of the declaration of the Republic of Artsakh on September 2, the day of the liberation of Shushi and the creation of the Artsakh Army on May 9, and the Day of the Defender of the Motherland on January 28, Armenian Genocide Day, April 24. If they were individual monuments, there were also visits on the days of birth and death. School visits, thematic events, cleaning works, etc. were organized on the above-mentioned days.

We see different situation in the case of khachkars erected in the territories of military units. As shown by surveys conducted among soldiers, khachkars mainly served as a "wall" suitable for taking pictures. In some military units, the swearing-in ceremony was organized next to the khachkar. "And completing the service to the army, the traditional photo is taken next to the khachkar".

5. The fate of Khachkars during and after the 44-day war

17 Interviews were conducted with Gayane Budaghyan, Head of Hadrut Regional State Service for Historical Environment Protection, Alla Arzumanyan, Head of Askeran Regional State Service, Ani Khachatryan, Head of Culture and Youth Department of Martun administration, as well as representatives of some communities. In order to understand the functional significance of khachkars in military units, we had interviews with those who served in the military in Artsakh.

The renaming, transformation of the Armenian cultural heritage, as well as the distortion of historical realities are an integral part of the Azerbaijani state policy even today.

During and after the 44-day war, Armenian cultural heritage objects, including khachkars, are regularly destroyed and targeted in the territories that became under the control of Azerbaijan.

Videos and photos documenting the destruction and desecration of khachkars are regularly published by Azerbaijani soldiers, in addition, such publications can also be found by state, public and government media, in the videos published by the Ministry of Defense of Azerbaijan.

Still during the war, in the video published by the Ministry of Defense of Azerbaijan on October 7, 2020, it is clearly seen that in the village of Shykyurbeili of the Jrakan (Jabrayil) region, the Christian monument made of tuff in a form of crosses bearing an Armenian inscription “Your cross will be our support” by Varazdat Hambarzumyan, has been demolished¹⁸. In the video, it can be seen that the khachkar is almost completely broken, only the part of the inscription remained half standing (fig. 5).



Fig. 5 The destruction of the khachkar, Jrakan (Jabrayil), photo by <http://monumentwatch.org/>.

¹⁸ Destruction of a Christian Monument in Jrakan (Jabrayil), <https://monumentwatch.org/en/alerts/destruction-of-a-christian-monument-in-jrakan-jabrayil/> / (մուսնք՝ 12.02.2022).

On October 18, 2020, the video showing the next vandalism was shared on the Internet by the Ministry of Defense of Azerbaijan, where it can be seen that the Azerbaijanis also broke the khachkar¹⁹, which was part of the monument located in the city of Varanda (Fizuli), Martuni region. Later, a photo appears on the Internet, where the khachkar has already been completely destroyed. It should be noted that the khachkar belongs to Varazdat Hambardzumyan's "sword crosses" series.

We learn about another case of vandalism from the video published on January 12, 2021, by the press secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia Anna Naghdalyan showing some Azerbaijani soldiers destroying a khachkar with a special machine in Arakel village in the occupied region of Hadrut²⁰.

On December 3, 2020, photos are published on Facebook, in which we see that after the 44-day war, the Azerbaijanis destroyed the "Revived Talish" monument of the Talish village of the Martakert region, the khachkars placed on both sides of the entrance are again the works of Varazdat Hambardzumyan²¹ (fig. 6).



Fig. 6 The destruction of the "Revived Talish" monument, photo by <http://monumentwatch.org/>.

19 The destruction of the khachkar in Varanda (Fizuli), Telegram: Contact @Azerbaijan_MOD / (մուսք' 12.02.2022).

20 Destruction of a Khachkar in Arakel Village of Hadrut Region, <https://monumentwatch.org/en/alerts/destruction-of-a-khachkar-in-arakel-village-of-hadrut-region/> / (մուսք' 12.02.2022).

21 Destruction of the "Revived Talish" monument, <https://monumentwatch.org/en/alerts/destruction-of-the-revived-talish/> / (մուսք' 12.02.2022).

Next case of vandalism is the monument dedicated to the victims of Artsakh war. A video appears on the Internet, where Azerbaijani militants opened fire in the direction of khachkar. And already on June 23, 2021, a user named “*Karabakhskii Vestnik*” (“Карабахский Вестник”, “Karabakh Bulletin”) posted on the Telegram, where it is clearly seen that the khachkar is completely broken, only the base remains standing, and the entire monument is desecrated²² (fig. 7).



Fig. 7 The destruction of the monument dedicated to the victims of Artsakh war, photo by <http://monumentwatch.org/>.

On April 16, 2021, the Karabakh Records Twitter page stated about another manifestation of cultural vandalism in the occupied territories of Artsakh. It unfolded the destruction of the khachkar of Ukhtadzor village of Hadrut region. The memorial is partially standing, and the khachkar is completely missing. It should also be noted that the monument is dedicated to the memory of the victims of the Patriotic War, later the khachkar dedicated to the Artsakh war was added (fig. 8).

²² Destruction of the memorial to the soldiers in Hadrut, <https://monumentwatch.org/en/alerts/destruction-of-the-memorial-to-the-soldiers-in-hadrut/> (дата обращения: 12.02.2022).



Figura 8 The destruction of the khachkar of Ukhtadzor village, photo by <https://war.karabakhrecords.info/>.

Next, we see the destruction of the khachkar placed in the courtyard of the Ghazanchetsots church in Shushi.

From the video of the Ministry of Defense of Azerbaijan from April 26, 2021, it can be seen that the khachkar is still standing, and already in the video from April 28 of the same year, the khachkar has disappeared.

It seems that after a long pause, on May 8, 2022, a video showing another Azerbaijani vandalism appeared on the Internet. The chapel built by the members of the "Union of Karabakh War Veterans" organization and the surrounding khachkars were vandalized in Mataghis village of Artsakh. Khachkars were placed around the chapel in the name of the soldiers who were martyred in the April 2016 war²³.

Only some of the known cases of destruction of khachkars are presented here. Unlike other cultural monuments, the disappearance of khachkars is difficult to document through both published videos and satellite images.

During the war, not only the khachkars but also other structures bearing the cross mark became victims of Azerbaijani aggression. For example, in the town of Vorotan (Kubatlu) in the Kashatagh region, they

23 Destruction of khachkars caused by Azerbaijan in the occupied territories of Artsakh, <https://monumentwatch.org/en/alerts/destruction-of-khachkars-caused-by-azerbaijan-in-the-occupied-territories-of-artsakh/> (մուսնք՝ 27.05.2022).

toppled a metal cross²⁴ (fig. 9), the cross from the dome of St. Harutyun Church in Hadrut region was removed²⁵, the cross of Spitak Khach church in Vank village of Hadrut region²⁶, as well as the cross of Mekhakavan Zoravor St. Astsvatsatsin or St. Mariam Astsvatsatsin church, which was removed before the church was completely destroyed²⁷.



Figura 9 The fall of the metal cross of the city of Vorotan, photo by <https://war.karabakhrecords.info/>.

The target of the Azerbaijani aggression was not only the khachkars, the monuments bearing the cross, but also any sign of the cross. We can also see the expression of intolerance towards the cross in the case of cross tattoos on the bodies of dead soldiers and prisoners of war, when such tattoos were simply "removed" from the bodies, and in some cases, on the

24 The destruction of the khachkar in Vorotan town (Kubatlu), Kashatagh region, Telegram: Contact @Azerbaijan_MOD, / (đnıunp` 12.02.2022).

25 Azerbaijan desecrated Hadrut church: the cross was removed, and the Armenian inscription was erased, <https://war.karabakhrecords.info/en/2022/04/29/azerbaijan-desecrated-hadrut-church-the-cross-was-removed-and-the-armenian-inscription-was-erased/> / (đnıunp` 22.07.2022).

26 Xocavnd rayonu Ağ ođlan qəsəbəsi (HADRUT), Xocavnd rayonu Ağ ođlan qəsəbəsi (HADRUT) - YouTube / (đnıunp` 22.07.2022).

27 The Armenian Church of Surb Astvatsatsin in Mekhakavan, <https://war.karabakhrecords.info/en/2022/03/07/the-armenian-church-of-surb-astvatsatsin-in-mekhakavan/> / (đnıunp` 07.07.2021).

contrary, crosses were depicted on the backs of the soldiers using red-hot metal²⁸.

The impression is that Azerbaijan has also included the religious conflict in the toolkit of anti-Armenian aggression, presenting Armenians as Christians.

Despite the fact that the Armenian governmental bodies avoid giving this conflict a religious character, all these are manifestations of obvious religious intolerance, which in this case is directed against the sign of the religious identity of the Armenians, the cross, which continues to this day²⁹.

Conclusions

The destruction of the Armenian cultural heritage is the result of the policy implemented by Azerbaijan at the state level. The Azerbaijani expropriation places particular importance on the monuments that were erected after the liberation. The officials of Azerbaijan openly state in their reports that they are removing the monuments, buildings, etc. which were illegally erected by the "occupiers" during the last thirty years.

Thus, if we can consider the first Artsakh war as an occasion or reason for the modern khachkar making in Artsakh, then in the 44-day war, that occasion becomes one of the main reasons for the destruction of those khachkars by Azerbaijan.

However, we should also note that in 2010 "Armenian cross-stones art. Symbolism and craftsmanship of khachkars" is included in the "List of Intangible Cultural Heritage" adopted by UNESCO in 2003³⁰, which implies that the parties of the conflict are obliged to ensure the integrity of cultural values under enhanced protection, refraining from making such values the object of attack³¹.

28 Fieldwork, interview with Artsakh Human Rights Defender S. Geghamyan.

29 Fieldwork, interview with Artsakh Human Rights Defender S. Geghamyan: "Even during the "ceasefire", the Azerbaijani side continues to shoot with "light-emitting" weapons or flashing bullets in the direction of metal or light crosses within the borders of our territory".

30 Armenian cross-stones art. Symbolism and craftsmanship of Khachkars, Armenian cross-stones art. Symbolism and craftsmanship of Khachkars - intangible heritage - Culture Sector - UNESCO / (մուսք՝ 23.04.2022).

31 Second Protocol to the Hague Convention of 1954 for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, The Hague, 26 March 1999 [https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=31415, / \(մուսք՝ 23.04.2022\).](https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=31415, / (մուսք՝ 23.04.2022).)

The cross is perceived as a sign or absolute symbol of the identity of the "occupiers" or "enemy" and the removal of the cross symbol is widespread not only in relation to khachkars, but also from military equipment, clothing, body tattoos of captured Armenian soldiers, etc³². It can also be said that the conflict has a pronounced ethno-religious nature, it is not only a conflict of preserving the territorial integrity of the two countries, but first of all, it is a conflict of two civilizations, where one tends to eliminate everything and first of all obvious ethno-cultural, ethno-religious, or identity signs, and if we make a list, of course the first place is the cross, the second place is the destruction of monuments dedicated to those who died or went missing in the first Artsakh war, churches and so on.

Anush A. Safaryan - Her scientific interests include Armenian Identity Studies, Cultural Heritage Studies, especially modern khachkars' culture. Publications are related to modern khachkar culture of Armenia: "Modern cross-stone culture of Artsakh", Proceedings of The History Museum of Armenia, N2 (10), Yerevan, 2022, pp. 138-144, "Traditions and master: Modern culture of the khachkars of Artsakh based on the works of sculptor Robert Askaryan", VEM Pan-Armenian journal, N3 (75), Yerevan, 2021.

Email: anush.safaryan@ysu.am

32 "The fact that after the war Azerbaijan has developed a policy of enmity is evidenced by the new forms of torture against Armenian prisoners. For example, in one case, Azerbaijani soldier demanded from an Armenian soldier to renounce Christianity and convert to Islam. When the Armenian soldier refused to comply with the demand, they burned his leg, severely beat and mocked him. We have never seen anything like this before. In another case, they noticed a cross tattoo and burned that part of the body with a lighter, after severely beat. See details:

<https://www.facebook.com/KristinneGrigoryan/posts/pfbid02zkEKGWauHGhUaSrX5j7zjDt7kxK3k3sRdtfCf9JGPrTGSks36b2eZkiHgAZjMQWol/> / (ũnũnp` 12.02.2022).

**ԱՐՑԱՆԻ ԺԱՄԱՆԱԿԱԿԻՑ ԽԱՉՔԱՐԱՅԻՆ ՄՇԱԿՈՒՅԹԸ ԵՎ
ԱԴՐԲԵՋԱՆԻ ՎԱՆԴԱԼԻՋՄԸ**

Անուշ Ա. Սաֆարյան

Բանալի բառեր – խաչքար, սահմանային հուշարձան, ինքնության նշան, մշակութային ժառանգություն, հակամարտություն, պատերազմ, բռնալուրացում, աղվանացում, էթնոցիդ:

Խաչն ու խաչքարը, իրենց դարավոր գոյության ընթացքում կրելով պատկերագրական, թեմատիկ և բովանդակային փոփոխություններ, եղել և մնում են հայ ինքնության կարևոր խորհրդանիշներից մեկը: Ադրբեջանական պաշտոնական քաղաքականությունը սեփական ինքնության ստեղծման ճանապարհին, որն իրականացվում էր հայկական ինքնության հաշվին և ընդդեմ դրա, հաճախ դիմում էր խաչի և խաչքարի յուրացմանը (աղվանացում, ուղիացում) և ի վերջո ոչնչացմանը:

Արցախյան առաջին պատերազմից հետո խաչքարը, ենթարկվելով ծավալային և պատկերագրական համապատասխան փոփոխությունների, դարձավ ազատագրված տարածքների, բնակավայրերի և հատկապես սահմանների նշանակման գլխավոր խորհրդանիշը:

44-օրյա պատերազմի ժամանակ Ադրբեջանն սկսեց ավելի լայնորեն իրականացնել խաչանշանի ջնջումն ու հեռացումը: Ընդ որում, այն վերացվում էր ոչ միայն գրավված հուշարձաններից, այլև իր ցանկացած պատկերային դրսևորումից՝ զինտեխնիկայից, զինվորական հագուստից, մինչև անգամ գերեվարված հայ զինվորների դաջվածքներից:

Փաստական նյութերի վերլուծության հիման վրա հողվածումներ կայացվում են ազատագրված տարածքների «խաչքարացման գործընթացը» և ադրբեջանական ագրեսիան խաչի ու խաչքարերի

նկատմամբ, ինչը հանգեցրել է մի շարք հուշարձանների իսպառ ոչնչացմանը:

Резюме

СОВРЕМЕННАЯ КУЛЬТУРА ХАЧКАРОВ АРЦАХА И ВАНДАЛИЗМ АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНА

Ануш А. Сафарян

Ключевые слова – хачкар, пограничный памятник, идентификационный знак, культурное наследие, конфликт, война, присвоение, албанизация, этноцид.

Крест и хачкар на протяжении их многовекового существования, претерпев изобразительные, тематические и содержательные изменения, были и остаются одними из важнейших символов армянской идентичности. Официальная политика Азербайджана на пути создания собственной идентичности за счет армянской идентичности и против нее, часто прибегала к присвоению (албанизация, удиизация) креста и хачкара и, в конечном итоге, к их уничтожению.

После Арцахской войны 1990-х годов хачкар, претерпев соответствующие объемно-иконографические изменения, стал главным символом обозначения и освящения освобожденных территорий, поселений и особенно границ Арцаха.

В период 44-дневной войны Азербайджан стал повсеместно стирать и удалять изображения креста. Делалось это не только на захваченных памятниках, но и на любом объекте, где было его изображение: на военной технике, военной одежде, даже на татуировках пленных армянских воинов.

В статье на основе анализа фактологического материала представлены процесс хачкаризации раннее освобожденных территорий, а также азербайджанская агрессия против креста и хачкаров, которая привела к полному истреблению ряда монументальных памятников.

REFERENCES

1. **Axundov D.**, Arxitektura drevnego i rannesrednevekovogo Azerbaydzhana, Bakhu, 1986 (**In Russian**).
2. **Holl J.**, Slovar syujetov i simbolov v iskusstve, per. s angliskogo A. E. Maykapara, Moskva, Krokh-press, 1996 (**In Russian**).
3. **Karapetyan S.**, Hay mshakuyti hushardzannerë Khorhrdayin Adrbejanin brnakts'vats shrjannerum, Erevan, 1999 (**In Armenian**).
4. **Khachatryan K., Abrahamyan H.**, Hayutyanyan payk'arë LGHIM-ë Khorhrdayin Hayastani het miavorelu hamar, Pastatgheteri ew njuteri zhoghovatsu, kazm. Erevan, Patm. Inst., 2011 <http://www.academhistory.am/upload/files/ARCAX.pdf> (**In Armenian**).
5. **Kirakosyan L.**, Mshakutayin eghern (Arts'akhi chartarapetakan hushardzanneri orinakov), «Hayagitutyanyan harts'er» Erevan, N 1, 2014 (**In Armenian**).
6. **Petrosyan H.**, Khachk'ar. tsagumë, gorcaruytë, patkeragrutyunë, imastabanutyunë, Erevan, Printinfo, 2008 (**In Armenian**).
7. **Petrosyan H.**, Mshakutayin etnuts'idn Arts'akhum (mshakutayin jarangutyanyan brnayurats'man mekhanizmnerë)// Adrbejani petakan ahabekchutyunë ew etnikakan ztunneri k'aghak'akanutyunë Lernayin Gharabaghi dem, Shushi, 2010 (**In Armenian**).
8. **Petrosyan H., Muradyan H.**, The Cultural Heritage of Artsakh/Karabakh at the Cross-Hairs of Attacks, Yerevan, 2022.
9. **Petrosyan H., Yeranyan N.**, Monumental Culture of Artsakh, Yerevan, 2022.
10. **Shnirelman A.** Myths, Identity and Politics In Transcaucasia, National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka 2001.
11. **Shnirelman V A** The Value of the Past Myths Identity and Politics in Transcaucasia_2001.pdf (abkhazworld.com).