

# Sasanian Adurbadagan and Modern Azerbaijan: Historical Roots and Development

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**How to cite this paper:** Khalifa-Zadeh, M., & Khalifazadeh, L. (2023). Sasanian Adurbadagan and Modern Azerbaijan: Historical Roots and Development. *Advances in Historical Studies*, 12, 63-75.

<https://doi.org/10.4236/ahs.2023.122005>

**Received:** March 27, 2023

**Accepted:** June 22, 2023

**Published:** June 25, 2023

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## Abstract

The article analyzes application of the name Adurbadagan to both sides of modern Azerbaijan divided by the Araz river into southern or Iranian and northern or the independent Republic of Azerbaijan. The authors believe that name Azerbaijan roots to the Avestan words Azar or Atash. As a historical and political term, Azerbaijan originates from Achaemenids' Aturpatakan (Atropatena) evolving into the Sassanian Adurbadagan—a Zoroastrian center of the empire. Since late Antiquity, Adurbadagan's military and administrative functions were extended and applied by the Sassanids to all lands in the north from the Aras River, up to Darband fortress in the Caucasus. In the Islamic period, Adurbadagan evolved into Turkified form of Azarbadagan or Azerbaijan, cementing the modern Azerbaijani Turks' identity in the south and north sides of the entire Azerbaijan divided by the Araxes.

## Keywords

Sasanian, Khosrow, Aturpatakan, Adurbadagan, Arran, Caucasus Albania, Azerbaijan, Caucasus

## 1. Introduction

Couple hypotheses exist regarding the origins of the name Azerbaijan. According to the classic tradition, the name comes from the time of Alexander of Macedon's conquest of the Achaemenid Empire. In particular, it presumably originates from general Aturpat—a commander of the Persian King Darius III's army's left wing in the Battle of Gaugamela in 331 BC (Chaumont, 1987).

## 2. Aturpat (Atropates)

Aturpat (Middle Persian/Pahlavi) or Atropates (in Greek) was King Darius III's

general and satrap of Media. He commanded Median, Arranian (Albanian), Iberian, Sacasenian troops in the Battle of Gaugamela. In the battle, the Macedonian troops, facing Atropates, were forced to retreat. Only Alexander's personal intervention with fresh troops allowed the Macedonians to stop their retreat and concentrate on a victorious advance in the center, facing troops under direct the command of Darius III. It was a unique moment in the battle. The Macedonian right wing had begun to retreat and, if King Darius III realized and utilized it, the battle's outcome would have been completely different. However, as is well-known, Darius III's poor commanding and leadership skills resulted in the catastrophic defeat of the Achaemenids Army (Shifman, 1988).

One month after Darius III's death in June 330 B.C., Atropates surrendered to Alexander. Later, in a personal meeting, Alexander mentioned Atropate's military skills and esteemed him so high that Atropates' daughter was married to Perdikkas—a close ally to Alexander and commander of the Macedonian cavalry. The marriage took place at the famous mass wedding in Susa in February 324 BC. Moreover, Atropates also offered 100 Amazons, as Greeks called beautiful female-archers from Media and Albania, for Alexander's military elite massive wedding in Susa (Mayor, 2017). Moreover, Atropates also offered 100 Amazons, as Greeks called beautiful female-archers from Media and Albania, for Alexander's military elite massive wedding in Susa.

In 324 B.C. Atropates pacified unrest against the Greeks, and Alexander decided to keep Atropates as a King of the land which later became the independent Kingdom of Atropatena (in Greek) or Aturpatakan (in Parthian or Arsakid Pahlavi). Thus, as we believe, Aturpat (Atropates) occupies a significant place in the history of Azerbaijan. His name, possibly, is the key to understand the origin of the name Azerbaijan—a land of fire.

Indeed, Aturpat, a nobleman and general, was a follower of Zarathustra (Zoroaster). The name Aturpat comes from Avesta's word "*Atare-pata*". The word "*Atur*" is derived from the Avestan "*Atar*" or "*Atash*" or "*Azar*" that means fire. "*Pat*" may be derived from the Avestan "*payu*" meaning "*guardian*" or "*protector*". The transcription of name Aturpat from Middle Persian (Pahlavi) could be "*protected by fire*" (Khalifa-Zadeh, 2017).

### 3. Aturpatakan (Atropatena)

After Alexander's death in June 323 B.C., Atropates secured his rule in a part of Media, known as Atropatena or Lesser Media, which was mostly settled by the Medes, a founding Iranian tribe of the Median Empire, preceding the Achaemenids.

Atropatena is Aturpatan in Old Persian. During the subsequent Parthian era the Old Persian name Aturpatan evolved to the Middle Persian Aturpatakan. In Old and Middle Persian (Pahlavi), "*Atur*", as mentioned early, means fire. The Encyclopedia Iranica describes Aturpatakan as "a place where the holy fire is protected".

Indeed, Aturpatakan was the only place in Ancient Iran where Zoroastrianism was never challenged by other religions, particularly the Greek pantheon. Moreover, it is highly likely that Aturpatakan was the place where the prophet Zarathustra was born and the Holy Avesta was kept in the sacred fire Adur Gushnasp temple (now Takht-e Soleyman, Iranian Azerbaijan) (Ghodrat-Dizaji, 2007).

Under the Seleucids, Atropates, as King of Atropatena, tried to minimize the impact of the Hellenistic religion on Zoroastrianism. He enjoyed full support from the Zoroastrian clergy—Magi and priests. The Atropatena’s capital was Ganzak, a cultural and logistical hub. It was a fortress and stronghold of Zoroastrianism. The Encyclopedia Iranica mentions: “It was presumably the capital of Atropates and his descendants, under whom, it seems, the chief Median sacred fire Ādur Gušnasp was established on a hill nearby. Later developments show that the fire became closely associated with both Ganzak and Lake Urmia.” (Boyce, 2012).

Aturpatakan or Atropatena was an independent or semi-independent (vassal of Arsakid Parthia) kingdom until the 3 CE. Atropatena and Parthia considered Rome a great threat and allied themselves in a long-lasting war with the Romans. Later, Atropatena was absorbed by the Sasanian Empire and Aturpatakan evolved to Adurbadagan (in Pahlavi).

#### 4. Adurbadagan/Adarbadagan

As the result of the transition from Old Persian to Middle Persian (Pahlavi), the word “Atur” or “Atar” evolved to “Adur” or “Adar”, and so Aturpatakan has been named Adurbadagan or Adarbadagan by the Sasanians.

In the Seleucid and Parthian eras, Aturpatakan (Adurbadagan) played a central role as a stronghold against the Greek and Roman pantheons, respectively, to preserve and expand Zoroaster’s faith. In the Sasanian era, Adurbadagan became the religious center of the empire. The chief Median sacred fire temple of Atur or Adur Gushnasp (Pahlavi) was established sometime in the Parthian period on a hill near Aturpatakan’s capital Ganzak.

The Sasanians proclaimed Zoroaster’s faith as an imperial religion and Adurbadagan occupied the role of the empire’s religious core, holding the temple Adur Gushnasp as the imperial sacred fire of the highest grade. The Byzantines as well acknowledged the imperial and religious value of Adurbadagan holding fire Adur Gushnasp. During the Byzantine-Sassanian War of 602-628 CE, the Byzantine emperor Heraclius, in 623 CE, occupied Adurbadagan and sacked out fire Adur Gushnasp, aiming to crash the Sassanian will and power to fight. (Maksymiuk, 2017)

Adur Gushnasp—an Atash Bahram (Parthian: Ataxsh-i-Wahram (Yamamoto, 1979) or Pahlavi: Adur Wahram—“fires of Victory”, Zoroastrian name of God of War and Victory) was the Zoroastrian most sacred or “cathedral” fire of the highest grade established in the late Achaemenid or Parthian era in Adurbada-

gan. The temple was linked to the warrior class (Pahlavi: *arteshdar*) to which the Sasanian dynasty belonged itself. Since King Bahram V (420-438 CE), the Sasanian kings after coronation pilgrimage to the temple providing royal gifts and celebrate Nowruz (Pahlavi: *No Ruz*). Adur Gushnasp continued to burn down up to 11th century (Boyce, 2014).

During the late Sasanian period, the Sasanian King Kawad I (488-96, 499-531) and Khosrow I Anushirvan (531-579) conducted military and administrative reforms to establish a quadripartition of the empire. The reform was aimed improving the empire's military and defense capabilities to lead a long-lasting permanent war with Byzantium, as well as to address direct threats from Turks and Khazars in Caucasia. The reform was designed to strengthen the empire's defense following the establishment of four quarters or sides (Pahlavi: *kust*) reported to the assigned trustworthy general (Pahlavi: *spahbed*) for each quarter (Farrokh, 2021; Ghodrat-Dizaji, 2010).

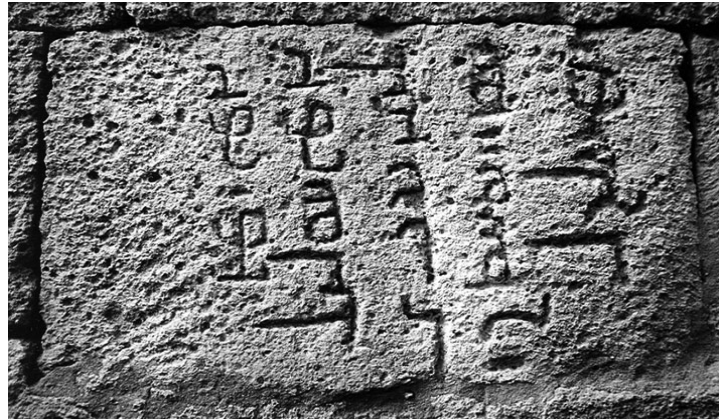
King Khosrow I Anushirvan abolished the one-person command of *Eranspahbed* (Pahlavi: *Isbahbadh al-bilad*, *Artestaran salar*, the office of the marshal or general of all Iranian forces) (Maksymiuk, 2015) and replaced it with four generals (*spahbed*) reporting directly to the Shahanshah (king of kings). As a result of the reform, *kust-i Adurbadagan* (quadrant or side of Adurbadagan) was established holding Adurbadagan *spahbed* (general) and Adurbadagan *amargar* (financial or administrative officer) as well. The office of supreme military command (*Isbahbadh*) of Azerbaijan, with specially assigned Adurbadagan general (*spahbed*), was covered Adurbadagan, Armin (Armenia) and Arran (Caucasus Albania) (Maksymiuk, 2015; Farrokh, 2021; Ghodrat-Dizaji, 2011; Gylesen, 2001; Kasumova, 1988) (Figure 1 and Figure 2).



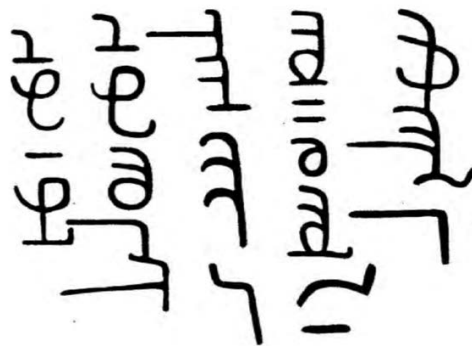
**Figure 1.** Gorgon i Mehran...ud hujadag Xusro wuzurg eran—kust I Adurbadagan *spahbed* (Maksymiuk, 2015).



**Figure 2.** Sed-hos i Mehran shahr asbed ud hujadag Xusro wuzurg eran—kust i Adurbadagan spahbed (Maksymiuk, 2015).



**Figure 3.** The Darband wall Pahlavi inscription. It transcribes as, “ēn ud az ēn ābarbar Daryuš ī Ādurbādagān āmārgar”, and translates as This and higher than this made by Dariush, revenue/tax collector of Adurbadagan (Azerbaijan) (Kasumova, 1988; Gadjiev & Kasumova, 2006).



**Figure 4.** The Darband wall Pahlavi “ēn ud az ēn ābarbar Daryuš ī Ādurbādagān āmārgar” inscription drawing (Kasumova, 1988; Gadjiev & Kasumova, 2006).

The establishment of kust-i Adurbadagan with specially assigned general was designed to improve the empire's military and defense capabilities and to strengthen the central power of the Shahanshah. Moreover, as we believe, the reform aimed to strengthen Zoroastrianism in lands bordering the Christian Orthodox Byzantium and Turks in the Caucasus. The Sassanids considered kust-i Adurbadagan the most important quadrant because of its military potential and geographical location. The kust included the province of Adurbadagan (a religious center of the empire) and all adjoining lands in the north and west from the Araz River up to the Khazar lands in the Caspian Sea.

The establishment of kust-i Adurbadagan allowed to redesign the Sassanian military architecture in this part of the empire, projecting Adurbadagan's structures and functions to the north over the Araz river up to Caucasia's Darband fortress as Adurbadagan shahr (country, in Pahlavi) (Gadjiev & Kasumova, 2006).

The Sasanian reform strategy was pragmatic and effective. It strengthened the empire's defense and military capabilities by incorporating Arranian (Albanian) troops into the Sasanian Imperial army under the Adurbadagan spahbed's (general) command. However, the establishment of kust Adurbadagan had a clear religious function, as mentioned, because the province Adurbadagan, holding the most sacred fire Adur Gushnasp, was the imperial center of Zoroastrianism. Thus, projecting Adurbadagan's military and administrative functions to the north of the Araz River (Araxes) was of paramount significance to the Sassanids enforcing both the central Shahanshah's power and the Zoroastrian faith in Arran (Albania) which was challenged by the Orthodox Byzantium (Caucasus Albania was baptized into Nestorian Orthodox Christianity at the beginning of the 7th CE) (Rapp Jr., 2012). It increased Zoroastrian gravity and the importance of Adurbadagan as an imperial religious center, cementing the Sasanian power and Zoroastrianism (as the unique imperial religion) under Adurbadagan shahr umbrella in the geographical region where the military and religious rivalling with the Orthodox Byzantium was in the stages of war (Rapp Jr., 2012).

The establishment of Adurbadagan's command (Isbahbadh) (Maksymiuk, 2015) under a specially assigned general (spahbed) centralized and expanded military operations up to the Darband fortress on the frontier with the Turks and Khazars in Caucasia. Despite Darband, at the time, was within the semi-independent Arran state (Pahlavi: Arranshahr), the Sasanians maintained military garrisons under the direct supervision of Adurbadagan's spahbed. They strongly believed that Arranian (Albanian) forces alone were not enough to stop the Turks from penetrating the Darband passage deep into Iran (Pahlavi: Eranshahr) (Farrokh et al., 2018; Farrokh et al., 2019).

The Sassanian Kings (Shahanshah) and Kings of Arran (Arranshah) improved Darband's fortifications by constructing double walls and the Narin Gala citadel on the hill. The fortified defense line was erected to protect a narrow passage between the Caucasus Mountains and the Caspian Sea, blocking the invasion of Turks and Khazars.

It is noteworthy that Azerbaijani and Dagestani scholars translated many Pahlavi inscriptions on the Darband walls. One of the inscriptions confirms the Darband's subordination to Adurbadagan's tax or revenue officer (Pahlavi: amargar). The Pahlavi wall inscription "en ud az en abarbar Darius-i Adurbadagan amargar" was translated as: "This and higher than this made by Darius, Adurbadagan's revenue/tax collector" (Gadjiev & Kasumova, 2006) (Figure 3 and Figure 4).

The Pahlavi writings on the Darband wall and the Sasanian garrisons' location (Gadjiev, 2003) in Arran's (Albanian) fortresses of Darband, Torpakh kala (Sahrestan Yazdegerd), Beshbarmag and in the Gilgilchay Defense Wall under the Adurbadagan's general (spahbed) command as well as kust-i Adurbadagan marzban (administrative office) location in the Adurbadagan province's city of Ardebil clearly confirm the projection of Adurbadagan's political, military and administrative functions to the north from the Araxes. Later, historical developments indicate that Arran and Adurbadagan became interchangeable names in the region (Bosworth, n.d.; ARRAN, n.d.).

It is not surprising that Adurbadagan's name and functions were projected onto Arran (Albania). The local Arranian (Albanian) nobility was close to the Sasanian crown and Arranian (Albanian) troops were integrated into the Sasanian army under command of Adurbadagan spahbed. Thus, despite that the Caucasus Albania (Arran) was an independent (from time to time) or semi-independent state, however, the defense was under Adurbadagan spahbed command who was at the time famous Iranian military and political hero—spahbed Rostam Farrokhzad of Adurbadagan. General and Prince of Adurbadagan Rostam Farrokhzad was a member of the Pahlav clan of Ispahbudhan family (House)—one of the Seven Great (Pahlavi: wuzurgan) House of the Sasanian Empire claiming its descent to the Arsacids of Parthia (Maksymiuk, 2015).

At the same time, the King of Arran (Varaz Grigor (628-637), Zoroastrian name that may have been Gadvsnasp prior to his second baptizing into dyophysite (Chalcedonian doctrine) (Toumanoff, 1961) Orthodox Nestorian Christianity, was adopted as the title of Arranshah. He was a member of the wuzurgan Mihran family (a Pahlav noble-family, separated or branch of the Ispahbudhan House). Moreover, Arranshah Varaz Grigor was related to the Sasanian Shahanshah Khosrow I Anushirvan or even "being himself a noble of the family of Ardashir I" and Prince Javanshir (Pahlavi: Juansher) of the Caucasus Albania (Arran) was a son of Varaz Grigor. The Pahlav House of Mihran held high ranking positions in the Sasanian hierarchy and occupied high command over frontline in the north, leading the negotiations with the Khaqan of Turks (Maksymiuk, 2015).

Notably, the famous Sasanian general Rostam Farrokhzad of Adurbadagan escorted and introduced Prince Javanshir to the last Sasanian King Yazdegird III (632-651) in Ctesiphon, the Sasanian capital. Prince Javanshir has occupied a significant place in the history of Azerbaijan and Iran.

On November 636, in the famous Battle of al-Qadisiyyah between the Sasa-

nians and Muslim Arabs, Prince Javanshir was the commander of the Arranian (Albanian) troops, which were part of the Imperial Army under the command of spahbed Rostam Farrokhzad of Adurbadagan.

In 637, Javanshir with 3000 - 4000 troops (Hoyland, 2020), helped arrange King Yazdegird III's evacuation from the Sasanian capital Ctesiphon sieged by the Muslims. Later, Yazdegerd III awarded Javanshir two golden spears and shields and acknowledged his bravery, awarding a flag—the Standard of Jamshid (Pahlavi: Derafsh-e Kavian) which was the highest honor for loyalty and bravery in the fight with the Muslim Arabs. Before the final defeat of the Sassanian army at the Battle of Nahavand in 642, Javanshir arrived in Adurbadagan. One can assume, that he planned to resume command of the Sassanian Adurbadagan military in the wake of the death of Rostam, and because of Yazdegerd's strong will to collect a new army in Media to fight the Arabs. However, Rostam's brother Farrukhzad was assigned as the Adurbadagan spahbed and Javanshir fled back to the Albanian capital Partaw (now Barda, present-day Azerbaijan).

## 5. Azarbaijan/Azerbaijan

Since the Muslim conquest of Iran following the disintegration of the Sasanian empire and Caucasus Albania, Muslim Arabs have followed the Sassanian tradition applying Adurbadagan as shahr to both south and north banks of the Araz river (Ghodrat-Dizaji, 2010). The Muslims followed the Sasanian military command structure and Sasanian fortifications' infrastructure designed to protect the Araxes's northern lands keeping a garrison in Caucasia's Darband. In the meantime, since the Muslim conquest of Iran, the Middle Persian (Pahlavi) experienced great Arabic influence, and many Pahlavi words evolved into new form of writing and reading. In fact, Adurbadagan shahr transformed into Azarbadagan (Arabic pronunciation), and finally, thanks to the Turkification that followed, evolved into Azarbaijan or Azerbaijan (in Azerbaijani Turkish).

Since the Sasanian era, the central and northern and northwestern parts of Iran particularly Adurbadagan, Arran, and Armin (Arminiyaya or Armenia), experienced a high degree of Turkification (Aray, 2010). The first Oghuz Turkic tribes (Afshars) began penetrating Iran as early as the 5th CE. The local population of Sassanian Adurbadagan shahr (province and kust) was involved into the permanent and long-lasting (5th-11th centuries) process of Turkification following the gradual transition from the Adari Iranian language to Azeri Turkic or Azerbaijani Turkish. Simultaneously, entire Adurbadagan region experienced of the settlement of Turkic tribes fueling the partial or full absorption of the local population by the Turks.

The Seljuk Turk's conquering of Iran in the 11th century (Peacock, 2000) became a dominant force creating the ethnic and cultural foundation of contemporary Azerbaijani Turks or Azerbaijanis identity on both sides of the Araxes. The Seljuk Turk's massive influx and conquering accelerated local Adari language degradation (Kasravi, 1993) and its gradual replacement by Azeri or Azeri Turkish. This process created a common political, religious, ethnic, cultural, and



linguistic space, or the sole identity of Azerbaijani Turks on both sides of the Araxes (Alstadt, 1992).

The conquering of the Seljuk Turks and the subsequent Turkification fundamentally changed the ethnic composition of Iran. It created a new political balance within Iran, resulting in the origin of the entire Azerbaijan and later Azerbaijani Turks' identity on both banks of the Araxes, and shifted the nature of Iran into Muslim Shi'a power under the Turkic dynasties' rule.

Notably, after the defeat of Jahan Shah (Sultan of Azerbaijan, Emperor of Persia, son of Sultan of Azerbaijan Yusef Kara of Kara Koyunlu, a leader of the Kara Koyunlu Turkic dynasty in Azerbaijan and Arran) (Uzun Hasan & Turkmen Ruler, n.d.) by Uzun Hasan, the 9th Shahanshah of the Turkic Ak Koyunlu dynasty, in the Battle of Chapakchur (November 11, 1467), the name Arran was totally abolished (Bosworth, n.d.) as a political term. Uzun Hasan (1453-1478) proclaimed Azerbaijan's Tabriz as the capital of the Turkic Ak Koyunlu Empire and translated the Quran into Turkic.

Next, with the rise of the Safavid Turkic dynasty in Iran, the forces of Shah Ismail I Safavid (1487-1524, maternal grandson of Uzun Hasan of Ak Koyunlu) defeated and killed Shirvanshah Farruh Yassar of Shirvan (Persianized dynasty) in the Battle of Jabani in 1500. The Shirvanshah Yassar's defeat accelerated the disintegration of the state of Shirvanshahs on the northern side of the Araxes, following its absorption by the Safavid Empire in 1538. The disintegration of Shirvanshahs terminated Shirvans' political functioning, cementing entire Azerbaijan under the Safavids. However, Shirvan and Arran, as geographical terms, have survived until today. The Turkic Safavids proclaimed Azerbaijan's Tabriz as the capital of the empire. The Safavids, following the Sasanian tradition, valued both parts of Turkic speaking Azerbaijan (Adurbadagan) as the core of the empire.

The Safavids appointed Beglarbegis in the following major provinces: Isfahan, Azerbaijan, Qaradag and Qarabaq. The administrative reform in the Safavid period confirmed the final political abolishment of the Arran (Caucasus Albania) and Shirvan (state of Shirvanshahs) to the north of the Araxes as independent or semi-independent entities, securing them as geographical and historical toponyms till modern time.

Undoubtedly, the Seljuk and later Safavid eras facilitated the sailing of the northern part of Iran as Azerbaijan to the 18th century Iran of Qajars, which was the Iranian royal dynasty of Turkic origin from present-day Azerbaijan. However, several defeats of Qajar Iran by the Russian empire, following the early 19th century Russo-Persian wars, pushed them to sign the painful Treaties of Golestan (1813) and Turkmanchay (1828). Both treaties forced Iran to cede the Qajar's Caucasian or Azerbaijani khanates including the Iravan khanate (present-day Armenia), to Imperial Russia (Zardabli, 2014; Ismailov, 2017).

## **6. Modern Azerbaijan: South (Iranian) Azerbaijan and North (Independent Republic of) Azerbaijan**

Many the Imperial Russia's official documents indicate the newly gained territo-

ries from Qajar Iran as Aderbeijani (Azerbaijani) khanates. On September 4, 1795, Russia's Empress Catherin the Great wrote to General Gudovich: [we] "...have cordially to invite officers of Aga Mohammad Shah [Qajar] and, if he wants to be acknowledged as a Shah, he must stop his [military] operations in the region close to the Caspian Sea and named as the khanates of Darband, Baku, Talish, Shusha and others locating in Aderbeijan [present-day Azerbaijan]" (Dubrovin, 1871).

On January 8, 1804, following the capture of Ganja fortress (present-day Azerbaijan), the Commander-in-chief of the Russian forces in Caucasia, General Titianov, wrote to Russia's Caucasian Governor Kasparov: "Thanks to the location of Ganja fortress, which keeps the whole Aderbeijan [Azerbaijan] in fear, it is the most important purchase for Russia; and I would like to update you on this event recommending you to inform about this great victory in all places of the gubernia [region] which is under your control" (Gezalov, n.d.).

Next, British Imperial cables from Persia confirmed that the ceded Caucasian khanates were Azerbaijan. On June 27, 1864, British Keith E. Abbot, H.M. Consul-General in Tabriz (Iranian Azerbaijan), sent a cable to the Foreign Office stating the following: "The country which is known to the Persians as Azerbaijan is divided between them and Russia... This area includes the following territories: ...Mohammedian countries of Erivan, Nakhchevan, Karabagh, Ghenja, Shirwan, Sheky, Shamachy, Bakou, Koobeh, Salian and a portion of Talish" (present-day Azerbaijan). In the same cable he also states the following: "The population of Russian Azerbaijan consists of mixed races, Mohammedan and Christians, amounting probably to 700,000 to 800,000 souls. Persian Azerbaijan extends southward to the range of mountains known as the Kaflan Kooh. The country included in these boundaries, and perhaps, a large part, if not all, of Russian Azerbaijan, is generally recognized as the Media Atropatena of ancient geography" (Abbott, 1863-1864).

Moreover, Imperial Russia referred to the local population on both sides of the Araz River Aderbeijanskiye (Azerbaijani) Tatari (Tatars of Aderbeijan or Azerbaijan) because they spoke, as Russians believed, in the same or similar language as Russia's Tatars in Kazan (Velichko, 1904).

As a result of the above-mentioned historical developments, the phenomenon of two Azerbaijan—South (Iranian) Azerbaijan and North (Russian) Azerbaijan emerged, creating a new geopolitical landscape in Caucasia and on both banks of the Araxes in the beginning of the 19th century.

After the Russian Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, the national Musavat government in Ganja proclaimed independence of the northern Azerbaijan from Imperial Russia on May 28, 1918. Thus, the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (ADR) emerged as the first Western-style state in the Muslim world. The ADR political system was based on Western secular values established the National Parliament (Milli Majlis), granting the equal voting rights to women as well as switching from Arabic to the Latin alphabet.

Finally, as a result of the Soviet collapse in 1991, northern or Soviet (Russian) Azerbaijan proclaimed its return to independence as the Republic of Azerbaijan—a political and historical descent of the ADR of 1918. On December 25, 1991, Iran recognized the independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

## 7. Conclusion

As we have seen, the name Azerbaijan is deeply rooted in the Achaemenids era and possibly originates from Avestan Adur or Atash. In the Sassanids period, Azerbaijan (Adurbadagan, in Pahlavi) became the principal Zoroastrian center of the empire, housing the sacred cathedral fire of Adur Gushnasp.

In the 5th-6th century, the Sassanids implemented reforms designed to strengthen the empire's structure and military capabilities during the war with the Byzantines and Turks. They pushed forward the gravity of Adurbadagan, the empire's Zoroastrian core, into the defense and consolidation of the Sasanian power in military and politically sensitive Caucasia to address direct threats from the Byzantium, Khazars and Turks.

The Sassanids reorganized the empire's architecture, expanding Adurbadagan's military and administrative functions to Darband in Caucasia as under the Adurbadagan shahr or kust umbrella. The newly discovered Sasanian (kust-i Adurbadagan spahbed) military seals in Takht-e Soleyman (Iranian Azerbaijan) and Pahlavi writings on Caucasia's Derbent walls confirm that Arran and Adurbadagan were interchangeable names on the north bank of the Araxes since late Antiquity.

After the disintegration of the Arranshahr (Caucasus Albania) and Shirvan-shahs, paralleling the large-scale Turkification process in the central and northern parts of the Oghuz Turk dynasties' Iran, the entities like Arran and Shirvan lost their political essence and were replaced by Azerbaijan, the Turkified form of Adurbadagan. However, the historical and geographical functioning of Arran and Shirvan has survived until modern times.

Historically, as we have seen, the names Arran and Azerbaijan were interchangeably used to refer to the northern bank of the Araxes. Thus, Azerbaijan applied for the larger area combining both south and north sides of the Araxes. The term Arran, however, was used for a narrower area implying not for the whole territory of the Araxes' north bank.

Finally, the Turkification process gave birth to the Azerbaijani Turks identity, holding the Azerbaijani Turkish language as a key element as well as cementing the whole of Azerbaijan on both sides of the Araz river. The population on the river's both banks became the same ethnic group sharing the common language and religion. However, the historical and geographical partitioning of Azerbaijan by the Araxes into southern and northern parts culminated in the present-day geopolitical reality of modern Azerbaijan, representing the combination of Southern (or Iranian) Azerbaijan, and Northern—the independent Republic of Azerbaijan. The existence of two Azerbaijanians shapes history and geopolitics between and around Iran and the independent Republic of Azerbaijan.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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