

ANNUAL REPORT

Key Outcomes of Scientific Research and Organizational Activities at the Shirak Center for Armenological Studies NAS RA in 2025

1. The most important results of the activities of 2025 of Shirak Center for Armenological Studies of the RA NAS are as follows:

"Within the scientific framework of "Archaeological and Historical-Ethnographic Studies of Shirak-3" (supervisor: PhD in History, Armen Hayrapetyan)

- a. Excavations continued at the site of the Bronze-Iron Age fortified settlement of Jradzor. The materials unearthed provide compelling evidence that the fortress's defensive system underwent repeated reconstruction over time. Evidence of reuse during the medieval period is indisputable. The masonry has been found to contain Byzantine anonymous cross-shaped bricks, medieval glazed ceramics, and remains of tints. The presence of an Urartian temple, along with clear traces of medieval reuse, indicates a close intertwinement of religious, administrative, and military functions in this region. Consequently, Jradzor can be conceptualised as a regional power base, where military and economic systems converged along communication routes extending northwards from the Ararat Plain.
- b. In 2025, in the southern part of the village of Jradzor in the Shirak region, on the right bank of the Akhurian River, newly discovered caves No. 1 and No. 2 were explored, which were found during the construction of the Kaps Reservoir. No archaeological cultural layer was identified in Cave No. 1. Within the confines of Cave No. 2, an excavation site was meticulously delineated, subdivided into squares measuring 3×3 m, and excavations were conducted in layers, accompanied by comprehensive stratigraphic recording, documentation, and photography of the finds in situ. A total of 101 ceramic fragments were unearthed, comprising shards of a clay jug buried in the ground, pieces of wavy and glazed ceramics, and animal bone remains preserved inside the jug. The material evidence unearthed provides insights into the nature of the settlement and the economic utilisation of the site, thereby enabling its contextualisation within the broader framework of medieval reuse of the Dzradzor fortress.
- c. A comparative analysis was conducted of the countries mentioned by Herodotus (c.). The geographical entities referred to as Eastern Pactica, Bactria, and Western Pactica. Etymological analysis has shown that the name Eastern Pactica is derived from the Sanskrit word *paktha*, meaning "five," and the name *Bactria*, like its double *zari-aspa*, has a "horse" character. With regard to the appellation 'Western or Armenian Pactica', it is not a local – nor, it should be added, Armenian – toponymic designation. The term is derived from the Indo-European root *pahrt-*, signifying "agreement" or "union", and corresponds to the name of the federative state of Urartu.

2. The main results of 2025 obtained with basic financing

In 2025 Shirak Center for Armenological Studies of NAS RA continued to carry out the project "Archaeological and Historical-Ethnographic Studies of Shirak-3" (supervisor: Armen Hayrapetyan, PhD in History):

In the field of Archaeology – In 2025, a programme of archaeological surveys was conducted in the Ashotsk and Amasya districts of the Shirak region. These surveys covered the upper reaches of the Akhurian River, the Arpa Lake basin, the southern, western, and southeastern slopes of Mount Achkazar, the Bavra Plateau, and the Artashen-Tashir highway. New groups of monuments were identified in the area of the village of Saragyukh, as well as in the high mountain zone of Mount Aragats. In collaboration with the German Archaeological Institute, four samples of animal bones extracted from beneath the floor of the late Urartian temple complex in Jradzor were submitted for radiocarbon dating. Following the receipt of the radiocarbon analysis data, it is envisaged that the final scientific article will be prepared.

In the field of Historiography- Etymological analysis of proper names has proven that the Sumerians had their own ideas about the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge, and their concepts of the "garden of the gods" and the "pure Euphrates" indicate that the Sumerian paradise was located in the Armenian Highlands. The prototypes of the *Tree of Life* and the *Tree of Knowledge* were the dense and long-lived trees of the Armenian Highlands, including poplar and oriental maple, amongst others. It is important to note that there were other "paradieses" in the Armenian Highlands. For instance, the term "Ararat Paradise" corresponds to the later garav of Aragatsotn. The toponyms *Ushi* and *Karbi* (karb — "eastern maple") located in proximity to the modern city of Ashtarak have preserved the memory of a pair of trees from the local paradise. A detailed study of the new Ottoman tax register of the 17th century, reflecting the demographic picture of Historical Tayk, has been conducted. The present study constitutes a continuation of the investigation into the social, cultural, and publishing activities of prominent Shirak Catholic figures from the latter half of the nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries. An examination of the literary heritage of Archimandrite Aleksandr Araratyan and the editor of the magazine *Bazmavep* (1919–1920), Archimandrite Gabriel Nahapetyan, has been undertaken. Research into the socio-economic life of the Alexandropol district in the second half of the 19th century has continued. A comprehensive analysis of the educational policy of the First Republic of Armenia has been conducted.

In the field of Ethnography – The fabric culture of Shirak became the focus of a separate research project. A comprehensive study was conducted on all crafts related to lace-making. Notably, this paradigm shift also recognised fabric as a carrier of intangible culture. The investigation into the satirical oral heritage of Gyumri was pursued. An investigation was conducted into the ethno-demographic processes that took place in the South Caucasus during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The study aimed to identify the motives and reasons for changes in the ethnic composition of the population, as well as the consequences of the implementation of the national policy of tsarist Russia.

In the field of Folklore Studies – In comparison with the extant body of research on dance songs, the study of folk lullabies remains a relatively under-researched area. The description of clothing in children's games is examined, since clothing not only represents the external appearance of the lyrical hero, but also conveys his social status and, often, the imagery of the plot. The identification and classification of materials related to the folkloric culture of Shirak in the Armenian periodical press of 1850–1920 has continued.

In the field of Art Studies – A typological study of rural and urban folk songs from the Shirak region during the Soviet period was conducted, and a corpus of folk songs from Shirak during the Soviet era was collected and processed.

The six-column centric domed temple of the Ani citadel was the subject of a study, and the stages of its construction corresponding to the Bagratid and Zakarian periods were identified. A comparative analysis of architectural forms, construction techniques, and master marks was undertaken to facilitate the precise determination of the temple's construction stages. A parallel architectural and ethnographic study of traditional Armenian residential houses made it possible to revise the etymology and functional meaning of the term "oda."

As a component of the project initiated by the Centre in 2025, the following publications were distributed: The initial two issues (226 and 300 pages, respectively) of the 28th volume of the periodical collection *Scientific Works*, along with the monograph "*Textile Culture in Shirak*" (19th–20th Centuries) (288 pages), the 192-page publication "*Childbearing and Childrearing Traditions of the Shirak Region of Armenia*" and the 159-page monograph "*Megalithic Culture of Artsakh*", constitute a compendium of materials from the 12th International Conference "*Historical and Cultural Heritage of Shirak*". The present volume, "*Current Issues in Armenian Studies*", is a collection of articles, constituting 376 pages. In addition, it includes the 200-page collection of "*Ethnographic and Folklore Readings – 1*", as well as 69 scientific articles (17 of which were published abroad) and 74 conference reports (11 of which were published abroad). The following events were held: the 12th International Conference "*The Historical and Cultural Heritage of Shirak: Current Issues in Armenian Studies*" (89 participants, including 21 from abroad), the 5th Republican Scientific Conference "*Ethnographic and Folklore Readings*" (17 participants), and the Third International Summer School for Young Archaeologists (25 participants, including 11 from abroad). Excavations were organised at four archaeological sites, and 11 ethnographic expeditions and 22 seminars were held.

During the reporting year, the Center's Facebook page, its trilingual website (www.shirak-center.sci.am), and the bilingual website of the periodical publication of the National Scientific Center of the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia, "Scientific Works" (www.shiraksciworks.sci.am), provided detailed information on the Center's scientific, organisational, and publishing activities.

Director of the SCAS

A. Hayrapetyan (PhD in History)

Scientific secretary

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3. The results achieved in 2025 via thematic financing means

In the course of the reporting year, the Center saw the implementation of three subjects within the framework of the projects financed by the Committee of Higher Education and Science of the RA Ministry of Education and Science on "contractual (thematic) financing of scientific and scientific-technical activities": a) "*Tayk in the 12th-17th centuries (Historical and Architectural Research)*"; b) "*Armenian Traditional Music in the Historical and Cultural Context of the 20th century*"; c) "*Folklore Heritage of the Kars-Shirak Region.*"

a) "*Tayk in the 12th-17th centuries (Historical and Architectural Research)*" (sup.: **A. Akopov, PhD in History**). In the inaugural year of the thematic funding project, a scientific expedition was organised to the gavas of Bogha and Partizakspot in historic Tayk (Turkey). The objective of the expedition was to document, photograph and subject the approximately 100 known and unknown monuments of historical and cultural heritage created by Monophysite and Chalcedonian Armenians to historical and architectural analysis. The monuments included fortresses, fortifications, churches, monasteries, chapels, bridges, epigraphic monuments, civil structures, and so on. A number of reports were presented by members of the research group at a number of international conferences in Armenia and abroad. The research conducted is reflected in six scientific articles (including one in a foreign journal included in the SJR Q1 quartile), six reports at international conferences, and several scientific seminars. A collective monograph, entitled "*Tayk: Historical and Architectural Research, Part G (Vokhage and Bogha)*," is currently being prepared for publication.

b) Second research project is entitled "*Armenian Traditional Music in the Historical and Cultural Context of the 20th century*" (sup.: **PhD in Art Studies, H. Harutyunyan**). In the course of the present reporting year, Armenian folk and ashugh songs have been collected and studied. The present study is based on the genre classification principle, and approximately 50 songbooks were studied. The working group, in collaboration with Professor Ulrich Morgenstern of the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna, who is an expert on this subject, addressed historical, cultural and organological issues pertaining to the traditional Armenian instrument bagpipe. Concurrently, we are undertaking the collection and organisation of manuscripts, printed materials, and audio archives pertaining to the art of mugham from the early 20th century. One research article has been published in an international journal.

c) In the framework of the third thematic funding "*Folklore Heritage of the Kars-Shirak Region*" (sup.: **H. Matikyan, PhD in Philology**), the group members concentrated on epic and lyrical folklore, undertaking a comparative study of this genre across the Kars and Shirak regions. During the reporting year, the project's supervisor and the members attended six international conferences and published five scientific articles.

Director of the SCAS



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