

The Talyshis: An Iranian people divided by the Araxes

Victoria Arakelova

Russian-Armenian (Slavonic) University, Yerevan; Yerevan State University

Email: caucasoiranica@gmail.com, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9884-1331>

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.7160/KS.2024.220102>

Dr. Victoria A. Arakelova is Professor at the Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian-Armenian University, Yerevan, and Associate Editor of "Iran and the Caucasus" (De Gruyter Brill: Berlin-Leiden). She works mainly on the non-dogmatic milieus of the Middle East (Yezidis, heterodox Shi'a groups) and the Caucasian-Caspian contact zone, with a particular focus on identity issues. She is (co-)author of several monographs, including "The Religion of the Peacock Angel: The Yezidis and their Spirit World" (Durham, 2014); "The Gnostic World" (NY 2019); "The Ethno-Cultural Others of Turkey" (Yerevan, 2021), etc., as well as numerous articles on the above-mentioned topics.

Abstract

This paper examines the Talyshi people, an Iranian ethnic group divided by the Araxes River between Azerbaijan and Iran. The division, a result of the Russo-Persian War (1804-1813), placed the Talyshis within two distinct political and cultural paradigms. The northern Talyshis, under the successive rule of the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union and Azerbaijan, were confronted with a Turkish political and cultural orientation that contrasted with their Iranian linguistic and cultural heritage. This orientation led to significant shifts in identity, with the Talyshis becoming minorities within a Turkic-speaking, Turkish-oriented Azerbaijan. Southern Talyshis who remained in Iran experienced a more consistent cultural development within the Iranian paradigm, despite political changes. This study examines the impact of these divisions on Talyshi identity, language preservation and socio-cultural adaptation. It discusses the challenges of assimilation and cultural preservation faced by the Talyshis, their linguistic characteristics, and the revival of Talysh self-awareness and nationalism in the face of external pressures. The paper uses a comprehensive analysis of historical, linguistic and ethnographic data to provide insights into the resilience of Talysh identity amidst political and cultural change.

Keywords

Talyshis, Iranian ethnic groups, Cultural identity, Linguistic preservation, Russian-Persian War, Azerbaijan, Iran, Assimilation, Nationalism, Socio-cultural adaptation

*And he said that he was a refugee from the Caspian gates,
not far from the country of Talysh in the province of Gilan.¹*

The Talyshi people are an autochthonous segment of the southwestern pre-Caspian line, whose origins are rooted in the local indigenous ethnic landscape,² and who thus represent an integral and organic element of the historical Iranian ethno-linguo-cultural continuum. Its division into two parts, the northern and southern Talyshi, in the 19th century was the result of the Russian-Persian War of 1804-1813, after which the Talyshi people found themselves not only in two political entities, but also in two fundamentally different civilisational paradigms.

Since 1813, northern Talysh has been ruled successively by the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union and, since 1991, the Republic of Azerbaijan (a former Soviet republic), with its current distinctly Turkish political and cultural vector. This vector towards Turkey is not only the result of the political developments in the region during the last three decades after the collapse of the Soviet Union, although it has certainly gained new momentum during this period. This vector appears to be a logical consequence of the failure of Russian and then Soviet ideologists, who failed to prevent the development of the “Ottomanisation” of the consciousness of the Turkic-speaking population in the Caucasus-Caspian region, while relying on the Turkic-speaking element in their efforts to completely separate the region from Iran and to minimise its influence.³ The newly formed Turkic-speaking titular group, the Azerbaijanis, once moved from the cultural periphery to the political centre, could not help but turn towards Turkey sooner or later, when the Russian/Soviet influence would diminish. The Iranian-speaking Talyshis thus appeared to be among the minorities of the Turkic-speaking and Turkey-oriented state. These historical vicissitudes, and especially the processes of assimilation, have had a major impact on both the Talyshi identity in Azerbaijan and the niche and status of the Talyshi people in the informal hierarchy. The latter was mainly determined by the political dominance of the Turkic-speakers and the fact that any kind of integration - be it

¹ *Ew patmeac' nma, t'ē p'axstakan ē i Kaspiakan druns, merj yašxarhn T'ališ, i gawarñ Gilanay* – the passage from the 16th-century Armenian version of the *Alexander Romance*, in which the original form of Tāliš is attested (Simonyan 1989: 233).

² On the origin of the Talyshis, see in detail: Asatrian and Borjian 2005: 43-51; also Asatryan 2011: 6-9.

³ The Turkification of the consciousness of the Turkic-speaking Caspian Muslims or the Transcaucasian Tatars, as they were called in the Russian tradition of the early 20th century, if not prior to their Russification, ultimately seemed to be an essential element of modern Azerbaijani self-identification, which ultimately led to the emergence of the ideologue “Bir Millet - İki Devlet” (“One People - Two States”) as applied to the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Turkey.

in the political, professional or social niche - required either complete assimilation or a kind of ethno-social "mimicry" as a sign of loyalty to the Azerbaijani elite.

Having remained within Iran since 1813, the Southern Talysh have shared in the political development of the country, which has since passed successively under the Qajar and Pahlavi dynasties and finally become the Islamic Republic of Iran. The changes in political power have not seriously affected the true Talyshi identity, as all developments have taken place within the same Iranian paradigm, to which the Talysh have been shaped and to which they have belonged throughout their history. Of course, some cultural indicators related to the change of regime and the establishment of the Shi'ite state, as well as some socio-cultural markers related to the processes of urbanisation and, more broadly, globalisation, with corresponding changes in lifestyle, behaviour, etc., should be taken into account for a more in-depth ethnographic analysis.

However, in both cases, the Talyshi identity on both sides of the Araxes was formed in states whose political systems and regimes underwent drastic changes. Thus, the problem of different identity markers, both unifying and differentiating, is of particular interest to the researcher of the divided Talyshi people⁴.

Ethnic Territory and Socio-Linguistic Aspects

The Talysh occupy the extreme south-western part of the Caspian coast. Talysh (or Talyshistan), as the Talyshis call their country, borders in the north on the Mughan Plain in the Azerbaijan Republic (AR) and extends in a narrow strip along the southern coast of the Caspian Sea to the settlement of Kopulchal, near the port of Anzali in Iran. The approximate area of the Talyshi inhabited territory in the Republic of Azerbaijan is 5370 sq. km., in Iran - 3839.6 sq. km. According to the relief features, the Talysh territory is divided into a larger mountainous part and a smaller coastal lowland, the latter mainly including the Lankaran lowland between the Caspian Sea and the Talysh mountains.

The lands inhabited by the Talyshi in the Republic of Azerbaijan, the so-called Northern Talysh, comprise five administrative districts: Lenkoran (in Talysh Lankon), Lerik (Lik), Masally (Masalon), Yardymli (Vargadiz) and Astara (Ostoro). The Talysh live compactly in Astara, Lenkoran, Lerik and in the south-eastern parts of the Masally region; in the west of the

⁴ Some aspects of this research were also discussed *inter alia* in the article "The Talishis on Opposite Banks of the Araxes River: Identity Issues" (Arakelova 2022).

Lerik region, in Yardymli and in the north-western part of the Masally region, as well as in the villages on the border strip, the population is mixed (Talyshi and Azerbaijani).

In Iran, the Talyshis compactly live south of the Iranian-Azerbaijani border. They live in four counties (*shahrestans*) of Gilan province: Astara, Talysh, Rezvanshahr and Masal. In the shahrestan of Astara, the Talyshis make up mainly the rural population; in such settlements as Vinebin, Sich, Lavandville, Virmuni, Chalvand they make up the majority. A considerable number of Talyshis also live in the shahrestans of Fuman, Soume'-Sara, Khalkhal, Sheft, Namin, as well as in a number of villages near Ardabil.

Until the mid-20th century, Talysh was considered a separate *shahrestan* within the province of Gilan, with the following five districts (*boluks*): Gorganrud, Asalem, Talyshdulab, Shunderman and Masal. This *shahrestan* was also called Khamse-ye Talysh or Boluk-e Panjganeye Talysh with the city of Shafarud as its center. But since it is located on the southeastern outskirts of the region, on the Caspian shore, the center was transferred to Bazar-e Gorganrud. Other trading centres in the region at that time included Bazaar-e Havig, Lisar and Asalem. In 1947, the administrative system of the Talyshi-populated regions of Iran underwent changes. In 1956, Talysh had four districts - Gorganrud, Talyshdulab, Shanderman and Masal. The centre of Talysh was Hashtpar, later renamed Talysh⁵.

The original area of origin and spread of the Talyshi language essentially covers a relatively narrow strip along the south-western section of the Caspian Sea. Despite some influence from Persian and local Turkic dialects, Talyshi has retained all its original features and is one of the most archaic languages of the Iranian group. The difference between its three main dialects (southern and central, spoken in Iran, and northern, spoken in the Republic of Azerbaijan) is insignificant, mainly due to the fact that the Talyshis have always lived compactly in one and the same territory.⁶

The socio-linguistic parameters vary in the territories of the distribution of the Talyshi language both in Azerbaijan Republic - from Jalilabad (Khamosharu) in the north to Astara on the border with Iran, and in Iran - from Iranian Astara in the north to Fuman in the south.

Almost the entire Talyshi population of the Republic of Azerbaijan is either bilingual, speaking both their native Talyshi and Azerbaijani (which they call *Tyrki*), or trilingual, as many also speak Russian well. However, this bilingualism varies from region to region. From

⁵ Asatryan 2011: 32-33.

⁶ See Bazin 1979; Bazin 1981. On the local Talyshi dialects in Azerbaijan, see: Miller 1953; Pireyko 1976; Pireyko 1991: 91-175; Amiryan 2005. On the local Talyshi dialects in Iran, see Lazard 1978: 251-268; Bazin 1981: 111-124, 269-277; Lecoq 1989: 296-312; Hajatpur 2004.

Jalilabad to Naftachala, the Azerbaijani language predominates, and Talyshi is spoken primarily by the older generation, while in the regions of Yardimli, Lerik and Masalli the native language is considered the first one – the Talyshi children master Azerbaijani during their school education. A certain balance of these languages is preserved in the south, in Astara.

However, the situation in northern Talysh was different in the 19th century and even in the first half of the 20th century. During his trip to Talyshi areas, Miller noted that the female population, especially in remote forest and mountain areas, did not know the Turkic language.⁷ This means that the language of the family, and even more so of the female half of the population, was exclusively Talysh, so that at that time we could only speak of bilingualism with reservations.

In Iran, the Talyshi population is predominantly trilingual: in addition to their mother tongue, they are fluent in Persian, the state language of Iran, and often also speak Gilaki; a small part of the Talyshis living in Astara and areas bordering the Republic of Azerbaijan also speak the local Turkish dialect. The socio-linguistic picture can generally be described as follows. Immediately south of Astara, for example in Namin and Parsabad, trilingualism (Talyshi-Persian-Turkic) can be observed. Moreover, in some places in this region, such as Namin, Talyshi is spoken only by the older generation. Further south, in Fuman, Talyshi retains a fairly strong position in the Talyshi-Gilaki-Persian trilingual continuum⁸.

Population and Statistics

There is absolutely no clear data on the number of Talyshis in either the Republic of Azerbaijan or Iran. In the first case, the lack of data is the result of deliberate, serious distortions in the population censuses, while in the second case the situation is the consequence of the peculiarities of the census system in Iran, which only takes into account the religious diversity of the country⁹.

⁷ Miller 1926: 7.

⁸ In addition to the detailed description of the Talyshi language and sociolinguistic situation in the research of Garnik Asatrian and Habib Borjian (Asatrian and Borjian 2005: 52-62) and the work of Clifton et al. (2005), here we use the most recent data (2017-2023) collected during the series of regular ethnographic and sociolinguistic expeditions to northern Iran by a group of Iranian studies scholars from the Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian-Armenian University, Yerevan, including the author.

⁹ Censuses indicate the number of officially recognised religious groups, such as Muslims (Shi'a and Sunni), Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians. For other parameters that can be used to reconstruct the ethno-linguistic map to some extent, such as population by province and city, see *Iran Sara Portal* [Census 2016](#), [Census 2016 | Iran Data Portal \(syr.edu\)](#) (accessed 01.03.2024). Cf., e.g., the determining of the approximate number of the Iranian Turkophones in Arakelova 2015.

In the censuses of Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic, the statistical errors had been determined by the shaping of the titular group, Azerbaijanis¹⁰, through the assimilation of the autochthonous Shi'a Muslim groups of the region, primarily the Tats, but also Talyshis. This process went hand in hand with the linguistic Turkicisation of the population, the transition to the Turkic language even of those who retained their distinct non-Turkic ethnic identity, be they representatives of Iranian or Caucasian peoples. While in the 19th and early 20th centuries the local Turkish dialect was mainly used as the *lingua franca* of the bazaar, in the established Republic of Azerbaijan its niche was secured by the principle of elite dominance. Since the 1939 census, the first in which the group "Azerbaijanis" appeared, through all subsequent censuses, both in the Soviet era and in the post-Soviet period, i.e. in the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic and in the dependent Azerbaijan Republic, the number of the actively formed titular Azerbaijani group has increased consistently and steadily: from 58% in 1939 to 83% in 1989, the latter being the year of the last Soviet population census. This trend continued in the Republic of Azerbaijan, resulting in figures of 91% and 92% in 1999 and 2009 respectively.¹¹ The data on all ethnic and ethno-religious groups on the territory of the Azerbaijan SSR had been eloquently distorted: some of them, such as the Tats, Ossetians, Aysors, Jacks, Gypsies, Laks, etc., had even disappeared from the official statistics for a long time, while the data on some others, such as the Talyshis, Kurds, Khinalugs, Armenians, Russians, Jews, etc., had been seriously distorted.

The peripeteia of data on the Talyshi population is particularly revealing in this context. From 77.3 thousand Talyshis in the 1926 census, to 99.2 in the 1937 census, then to 87.5 thousand in the 1939 USSR census, and 85 Talyshis (only eighty-five persons - sic!) in the 1959 census. In the 1970 and 1979 censuses of the USSR, the Talyshis are not mentioned at all. Finally, in the 1989 census, they are mentioned again, this time in the number of 21.2 thousand. In the 1999 and 2009 censuses, in which "ethnic Azerbaijanis" made up 90.59% and 91.6% of the country's total population, respectively, the corresponding figures for the Talyshis were 75,841 Talysh (1% of the population) and 112,000 (1.3% of the population), which is slightly more than the corresponding figure in 1937 and certainly cannot reflect the real number of this ethnic group.

¹⁰ In the 1926 Census, the notion "Azerbaijani" was not yet even introduced, while the same census distinguishes, e.g., the Georgians from the Ajarians, Mengrels, Laz, Svans, and Abkhazians (in the list of ethnic groups (список национальностей), they are correspondingly under numbers 105-110); the Hemshins are counted among the Armenians (numbers 147-148), etc. (*Vsesoyuznaya perepis' naseleniya 1926 goda*).

¹¹ See for details, with all relevant references to official statistical data: Mardzhanyan 2011.

Meanwhile, the most conservative estimates put the number of Talyshis in Azerbaijan in 1996 at around 0.8-1.0 million people¹². Taking into account the average official data on the annual growth rate of the population of Azerbaijan in 2011, there could be more than 1 million Talysh in the republic, i.e. about 12.4%, i.e. 10 times more than in official sources.¹³

This figure does not seem unrealistic if we take into account such basic and objective parameters as the high birth rate among the Talyshis, the progressive dynamics of population growth, which practically did not change, and the absence of significant migration processes before the collapse of the Soviet Union. Thus, if these parameters are applied to the figure of 88449 Talyshis (in 161 villages with the Talyshi population) at the end of the 19th century (according to the Russian population census (Caucasian calendar 1894)), it should be multiplied many times to obtain an objective indicator more than a century later.

As far as the Talyshis in Iran are concerned, their approximate number, as well as that of other ethnic groups, can be calculated by taking into account the population figures by provinces and their ethnic composition. For example, according to the Gilan Provincial Finance Department, in 1997 the number of Talysh living in the 7 towns and 576 villages of this province was 325,340. However, taking into account the Talyshis of Ardabil and population growth, the current number of Talyshis in Iran can reach 700,000.¹⁴

Thus, we are dealing with a fairly large autochthonous ethnic group of the Iranian-Caucasian region, and although the exact number of Talyshis is unknown, they can safely be considered the third largest in number after the titular peoples of the three Transcaucasian states, and the largest among the non-state peoples of the region.

Religious Diversity: Shi'ism, Sunnism, Specifics of Folk Beliefs

Despite the predominance of Shi'a Islam in both Azerbaijan and Iran, there is some religious diversity among the Talyshi. In the Republic of Azerbaijan, there are twenty-five Sunni Talyshi villages in the mountainous area near the Iranian border, although the majority of Talyshis in the Republic are Shi'a. In Iran, by contrast, most Talyshis are Sunni, followers of the Nakhshbandiyya Sufi order. The Shi'a Talyshi live only in Shanderman and Masal.

¹² Grimes 2002.

¹³ Some experts give an even higher estimate of the current number of Talysh in the Republic of Azerbaijan - up to 20-25% of the total population of the Republic, taking into account the transition to the Turkic language in the cities (see, in particular, Aboszoda 2015). For the results of research carried out by Western scholars in the late 1990s, see, for example, Clifton et al. 2005: 10-13. The latter gives a general idea of the Talyshi population with approximate figures in different regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

¹⁴ For data on Iran, see Rahnamayi 2001: 14. For statistics on Talyshis in the Republic of Azerbaijan and their analysis, see Arakelova 2022.

Historically, Zaydiyya Shi'ism and, to some extent, some heterodox Shi'ism have spread in these areas inhabited by the Talyshi.

However, the peculiarities of the Talyshi religious consciousness go far beyond their formal affiliation with one or another branch of Islam, and reflect complex processes typical of the ethnic territory of this people.

In general, the Iranian pre-Caspian region (especially the south-western coast) has its own unique religious peculiarities, which are fully manifested both in the religious trends that have always spread among the Talyshis and in their folk beliefs. This pronounced specificity of the area is the result of two important factors. The first is the existence of the ancient pre-Caspian cultural contact zone, which was periodically intensified (e.g. with the spread of Christianity in the South and North Caucasus, or later with the spread of Islam). The second is the presence of a kind of natural reserve, covered on one side by the Caspian Sea and on the other by the once impenetrable forests and the Alborz Mountains, which made it difficult for any flow or trend to penetrate and take root. The latter explains many of the archaic features at all levels.¹⁵ Conservative thinking and stubborn adherence to the traditions of their ancestors as characteristics of the local mentality are noted in early Muslim historiography¹⁶.

The above said can be also fully applied to the Talyshis, and especially the Talyshis of Iran, whose religious Weltanschauung is a bright sample of syncretism full of well-preserved pre-Islamic elements.¹⁷ In Talyshi folk religion, at the level of folk Islam, Muslim saints, prophets and figures from the Qur'an coexist with the so-called folk pantheon - authentic figures of pre-Islamic origin.

As with any people whose economy has been based for centuries on cattle breeding, the most important figures in popular beliefs are the patrons of cattle and shepherds. Such figures are represented either by demons or by ambivalent demonised deities with a clear set of attributes - ambivalent creatures that combine good and evil principles. The most significant figure among them is Siyāh Gāleš,¹⁸ or Black Shepherd, the main owner and guardian of

¹⁵ For example, some pre-Arian elements in the hydro-toponymy of the region (see Asatrian 2023 Lenkaran), or substrate layers of indigenous cultures whose relics, although semantically transformed, can be found in the cults of the Islamic period (see Arakelova and Omid 2006).

¹⁶ Inostrantsev 1909: 110-135.

¹⁷ I would hardly mention a more or less general work on the subject, except for the chapter on Talyshi religion in Asatryan 2011. Some problems of Talyshi ethnography and religion are discussed in the following works: Dorn 1864; Zeydlits 1870; Bayramalibekov 1893; Bayramalibekov 1894; Bayramalibekov 1899; Marr 1922; Miller 1925; Tchursin 1926; Izmaylova 1964; Kerimov 1977; Abdali 1990; Asatryan 1998; Abdali 1999; Asatrian 2002; Asatryan 2007; Arakelova 2003; Asatrian and Borjjan 2005; Abilov i Mirzalizade 2011.

¹⁸ The name of the deity indicates that his initial priority domain was cattle: *gāleš* is derived from OIr. **gāwaxša-(ka)* (Asatrian 2002: 82). Even today, in modern Caspian dialects, the term *galesh* means "a shepherd of cattle", while the shepherd of small livestock, sheep, is called *kurd*. It cannot be ruled out that, once there had been

livestock. Tradition has it that Siyah Galesh invisibly accompanies the herds wherever they graze, bringing back cows that have strayed from the herd, pacifying and punishing disobedient animals that disobey the shepherd by lightly wounding them, tangling their legs with a rope, sneaking up on them and scaring them so that sometimes the animal falls, and in the case of the most guilty, driving its horns into the ground upside down. Only the owner can save the animal from the Black Shepherd's punishment. Before tying up a stubborn animal, he must pass his hand over the cow's head, mentioning Allah, and draw a circle around it with a knife. If the animal's legs are entangled with a rope, then before cutting it, the owner must perform a magical procedure: draw the same circle, pour water on the cow's head, cover its face with a scarf and read a Muslim prayer. In these elements of protecting the animal from the punishment of the Black Shepherd, it is easy to see the partly demonised nature of the pre-Islamic tutelary deity. Elements of folk magic - the mystical meaning of the circle, the use of a sharp metal object as an apotropaic attribute from a typical set of *materia magica*, etc., is combined with the mention of the name of Allah and Muslim prayer.

Siyāh Gāleš encourages caring shepherds and cattle owners by giving them a magical black rope that brings good luck, promotes the growth of cattle and increases milk yield. Another gift from the Black Shepherd is a magic egg or a piece of meat, which should be placed in a bag of rice and a dinner pot, respectively, so that food supplies in the house never run out. But whoever receives such a gift must keep it secret, otherwise the miracle will disappear.

To please the Black Shepherd, the owner of the cattle must take special care of the animals, especially the pregnant and young ones, and keep the stable perfectly clean. Dairy products must not be taken out of the house or sold at night, and in some versions they must be eaten before dawn.

Legends describe Siyāh Gāleš as a wild, unsociable shepherd who grazes his flocks in the area - a nature reserve that bears his name. People are not allowed to hunt here, and those who disobey face the Black Shepherd's punishment: they are found dead, and some are haunted by bad luck after the hunt. The supervision of the hunt considerably extends the domain of the Black Shepherd, making him not only the patron of livestock, but also the patron of fauna in general, including wild animals. Traditional hunting ethics prescribes taking from nature only

another deity in the Talyshi beliefs, patronizing particularly small livestock, who was not preserved in the tradition. This sounds all the more possible taking into account that a similar division of domains exists in the beliefs of the Yezidis, another Iranian cattle-breeding group, whose folk pantheon has preserved both deity patrons – Gāvān-ē Zarzān and Mamē-Šivān, correspondingly for cattle and small livestock (see Asatryan and Arakelova 2014: 80-86).

what is necessary, and the amount of permitted prey depends on wealth, moral character and other factors. In this case, tradition notes that the animals killed by the hunter are by no means random victims, but those cursed by Siyāh Gāleš for some kind of misconduct. According to the popular beliefs, Siyāh Gāleš can appear in other guises: an invisible old man wrapped in black wool with a staff in his hand, or a big dark-skinned youth. The Black Shepherd is often accompanied by a huge deer, and sometimes, Siyāh Gāleš himself appears as a deer or gazelle¹⁹. Those who manage to recognise the Black Shepherd in one of his guises, or those to whom he reveals himself - for some merit or special quality - will experience a change for the better - luck, wealth and happiness will always accompany such a person, as long as they continue to meet in secret. Those who recognize the Black Shepherd or those to whom he reveals himself, will experience a change for the better - luck, wealth and happiness will always accompany such a person, as long as he keeps the meeting in secret.

Siyāh Gāleš, with its ambivalent nature and contradictory characteristics, is obviously a chthonic deity, what is encrypted in his name, to be more precise, in the attribute “black” in it, as well as in his “dark” appearance and attributes (black magic rope, black animal fur in which he is wrapped). Black indicates the deity's connection with the earth, with the elemental, uncontrollable forces of nature, with the fertility of the soil, the richness of the pastures and the world of flora as a whole. All this extends the Black Shepherd's influence over nature as a whole, completing the classical appearance of the chthonic deity.

The parallel of Siyāh Gāleš, preserved in the folk beliefs of the northern Talyshis, is *Siyo Chykho* (*Black Chykho*, literally “black mante/cape”). Like his southern twin, he has the attribute 'black' in his name, appears as a shepherd in a black robe, brings good luck and fulfils wishes. His special feature is his identification with destiny, and just as each person has his or her own destiny, each person is endowed with his or her own Siyo Chykho. If a person sees Siyo Chykho on his feet, he can become rich by keeping the meeting secret. If the personified destiny appears lying, falling or sleeping, it means that death is approaching.²⁰

There is little doubt that Siyāh Gāleš and Siyo Chykho once represented a single character. Their later development into two separate characters may well be related to the peculiarities of the way of life of the southern and northern Talyshis. The latter, at a certain period of time, changed from transhumant cattle breeding to settled agriculture, thus

¹⁹ On Siyāh Gāleš and other deity-patrons of Iranian cattle-breeders, see Asatrian 2002; Arakelova 2003.

²⁰ See Abilov & Mirzalizade 2011: 199-200.

transforming the once primordial shepherd deity into a new figure - the spirit of fate, who patronises various spheres of human life and activities.

Contrary to Siyāh Gāleš, a well-remembered figure with clear attributes, spread, apart from the southern Talyshis among the Gilakis and Mazandarani, Siyo Chykho is rather a marginal deity with the pretty vague domain and features. Actually, in the beliefs of the northern Talyshis, the protection of livestock had been transferred under the jurisdiction of a Muslim character - Khidr, what is explained by the basic characteristic of this personage - his original connection with water and greenery.²¹ Water itself, the main domain of al-Khidr, is identified with the colour green, while its name can mean not only 'green' but also 'black' and shades in between - brown, grey and the colour of lush, juicy, fresh green. No wonder, then, that with the arrival of Islam, the local tradition entrusted the patronage of the herds to al-Khidr, who is associated with water and greenery, and therefore with rich pastures. Al-Khidr thus supplanted the substrate character(s) in northern Talysh²².

The special cult of Khidr among the northern Talyshis is also manifested in the calendar segment dedicated to this figure - ten days in early February, between the significant periods of *Jole Chyle* and *Ruke Chyle* (marking, in turn, the forty days after *Chyle Eid*, the longest night of the year, and the remaining time until the *Nevruz* - the day of the spring equinox and the beginning of the traditional new year). For these ten days, Khidr Nabi (Prophet Khidr) is said to go with his flock into the forest, where it is covered with snow, after which the earth, which is warmed up during this time, comes to life and is revived by Khidr - the very symbol of rebirth. The Khidr Nabi holiday is among the most significant in the Talyshi religious calendar.

In the folklore of the northern Talyshis, the role of the patron saint of herdsmen is also partly attributed to Musa (the biblical Moses). In one of the legends, Allah, at the request of Musa, creates a dog to protect herds from wolves, in another, Musa acts as a shepherd of the prophet Ismail (Tal. *Ismoyyl*). This happens, most likely, due to the common Qur'anic biography of the two characters.²³

²¹ The connection with water and greenery is clearly emphasised in the sources: al-Khidr sits on a white skin that turns green at his touch; al-Khidr, as Lord of the Sea, prays sitting on a green carpet on the surface of the water. Allah addresses him as he remains near the source of life: "You are al-Khidr, and the earth will turn green wherever your foot steps". (Papazian 1986: 91).

²² See in detail: Arakelova 2011: 82-84; also Abilov & Mirzalizade 2011: 197-198).

²³ Many commentators see al-Khidr, who is not mentioned by his own name in the Qur'an, as the "servant of Allah" who met Musa on his journey "to the confluence of the two seas" (the allegorical search for immortality); others see him as the servant of Musa who accompanied him on this journey (Qur'an 18, 59-8). In some popular beliefs, therefore, both figures are associated with the idea of immortality and thus with power over time. Incidentally, an allusion to the Qur'anic plot mentioned above (the journey in search of the source of immortality and the traditional association of al-Khidr with eternal life) can be found in another example of Talyshi folklore. The legend tells how

Although both pre-Islamic and Qur'anic characters are represented in both parts of Talysh, the Talyshis of Iran have largely preserved the substrate layer, while the Talyshis of the Azerbaijan Republic have assigned more important functional roles to the Muslim characters.

Both among the northern and southern Talyshis, an important element of the religious beliefs is the concept of *Ali-riz* - the footprint of Imam Ali or his horse. Pious believers tend to leave a pebble or a coin in such a place, a sick person - a piece of clothing²⁴.

Finally, one cannot ignore the Talyshi folk pandemonium, with *Alazhen* as one of its central figures. *Alazhen* is the Talyshi version of the demoness *Al*, one of the universals of the Iranian space, a life-antagonist.²⁵ In Talyshi belief, *Alazhen* is a wild woman, black, with red hair, big eyes and huge breasts that she throws over her shoulders. She harms women in labour by frightening or beating them, kidnapping or killing newborn babies. In some legends, *Alazhen* is a forest demon. The demon's husband, *Biaban-guli*, "tall as an elm and shaggy as a buffalo", is also dangerous to children.²⁶

Another life-antagonist in the Talyshi beliefs is the demoness *Shasha* (šāša), who appears as a woman, but smaller than a cat. *Shasha* makes its way to the newborn child on the sixth day (*šašarūz*) or sixth night (*šašašav*) and tries to strangle it. Therefore, it was customary to protect the child on the sixth day: a group of women sat at the cradle, covering the baby with a fishing net and keeping the light on all night long.²⁷

Among the elements of Talyshi folk belief that have almost disappeared are dendrolatry and the remnants of astral cults. As far as dendrolatry is concerned, the worship of beech, oak and sycamore trees is attested among the northern Talyshi even a century ago.²⁸ Among other extremely interesting phenomena is the animation of falling stars, called *iblis*, and their association with fallen angels expelled from paradise, as well the Talyshi folk magic with its own *materia magica*, fortune telling and traditional medicine, all having been well described in the northern Talysh by various authors.²⁹

Khidr, endowed with living water, wants to sprinkle it on people so that they too can attain immortality. He entrusts the task to the raven, who, attempting to sprinkle himself first, splashes the living water on the box tree, which has remained green ever since (and therefore always young, i.e. practically immortal).

²⁴ Chursin 1926: 9.

²⁵ On *Al* in various traditions (Iran, the Caucasus, Afghanistan), see in detail: Arakelova 2003a.

²⁶ Arakelova 2011: 85-88.

²⁷ On the demoness *Shasha*, with an analysis of the character's genesis, see Arakelova 2021.

²⁸ Some specimens were the objects of special veneration: the sacred oaks in Mashkhan and on the top of Vakhmaku near the villages of Razi and Piada, the beech at the height of Ulya Shavesh, the sacred sycamore grove near the villages of Veravula, etc. (Arakelova 2011: 88-89).

²⁹ Ibid.

Actualization of Identity Issue, Search for Roots, Self-Identification

The collapse of the Soviet Union triggered a wave of self-awareness among almost all the peoples of the once united country. Parallel processes could be observed among both the titular nations and the minorities of the newly formed states: the raising of questions of origins and identity, the actualisation of the religious factor - a significant identity marker that was marginalised and almost completely ignored in the USSR, cultural and political activation and, in some cases, a surge of nationalism.

Despite the prolonged assimilation processes in Azerbaijan throughout the history of the republic, the Talyshis have definitely preserved their collective ethnic identity, the various indicators of which have come to the fore against the background of the situation described above. The Talyshi intellectuals not only raised such issues as the real number of the Talyshi population in the republic, the revival and development of the mother tongue, the preservation of traditional culture and religious values, but also managed to use the window of opportunity in the period of political turbulence, which resulted in the creation of the Talysh-Mughan Republic. Despite its short existence, it gave ideological impetus to a number of processes in different fields, first of all the emergence of the Talyshi National Movement, not without internal contradictions, but with a clear vector for independence and the creation of the Republic of Talyshistan, with the capital in Lankon (Lenkoran) as its ultimate goal. Among other derivatives of the national surge is the establishment of the *Talyshi National Academy (Tolyshi Milliye Akademiyə)* – the organization registered in 2010 in Riga, by a group of scholars of the Talyshim with its current head-quarter is in Minsk, Belarus. Active publication of literature in Talyshi, compilation of dictionaries, research in various fields of Talyshi studies are among the obvious achievements of this institution.³⁰

The revival of the native language is also reflected in its more active use at weddings, funerals and other traditional rites. Toasts and songs in Talyshi during wedding ceremonies have recently become common, although even these elements are under the control of local authorities in the Republic of Azerbaijan. There is an informal requirement that toasts and songs in the native language should be interspersed with those in Azerbaijani. However, in the Talyshi

³⁰ *Bulletin of the Talyshi Natinal Academy (Бюллетень Талышской Национальной Академии)* (ed. Iqbal Abilov; Minsk, 2011), published in Talyshi, Russian and English; Абосзода 2011; Абосзода 2012; Aboszoda 2012; Абосзода и Садыхзода 2019.

diaspora, mainly in Russia, they usually use the mother tongue through the whole ceremony, and for the Talyshi participants, to speak toasts in Azerbaijani is approached as kind of a *movetón*. This could have been taken for granted by any ethnic group, were it not for the fact that such a situation was unreal for the Talyshis some years ago, and is still problematic in the Republic of Azerbaijan. Another important sign is the modern inscriptions on graves, in which the Talyshis began to write the name of the deceased using the Talyshi authentic patronymic terms – *zōa* and *kīna* (“the son of” and “the daughter of”) – instead of the previously widespread Turkic *oğli* and *qizi*.³¹

The search for roots, the emergence of popular ideas of ethnogenesis is another overwhelming trend, which was actualised in the 90s of the last century, especially among the northern Talyshis.

Both in Iran and in the Azerbaijan Republic, the Talysh have a distinct Iranian identity, which, however, is incomparably more important in Azerbaijan. Among the northern Talyshis, their affiliation to the Iranian ethno-linguistic environment is based on the Iranian-Turkic opposition, which is typical of any Iranian group living in the Iranian-Turkic contact zone. Meanwhile, among the Talyshis of Iran, the same Iranianness (Pers. *Irānīyyat*) is reflected in the search for Iranian ancestors among the autochthonous peoples of the South Caspian. Taking into account that, the neighbouring Gilakis and Mazandarani do have such alleged ancestors (the ancient Gēls (in Arm. *Gēl*, *Gēlk*) for the Gilanis, and the Tapyrs for the Mazandarani),³² Talyshi intellectuals, in their turn, have tried to trace the origin of the Talyshis to the Cadusians (*Καδούσιοι*, *Cadusii* of classical authors)³³, another autochthonous groups once existed in the area. This idea has become an ideological element of modern Talyshi self-identification and even a cultural phenomenon. Kadus has become a popular masculine name, and many objects (hotels, restaurants) in the Talyshi areas of Iran are now called 'Kadus'.

Like any popular search for roots, the Talyshi folk interpretation of their history has its mythological aspects, which is particularly typical of the northern Talyshis. It is the Talyshis of the Republic of Azerbaijan who began to attribute the Talysh origin to such legendary and

³¹ Most of these nuances are collected by the author during her personal communication with Fakhraddin Abosoda, an outstanding Talyshi intellectual, scholar (lexicographer), writer and journalist, who was killed in Gobustan prison in Baku on 9 November 2020, as well as among the Talyshis living in the diaspora, mainly in Russia and Belarus.

³² Asatrian and Borjian 2005: 46-47

³³ This approach cannot be characterized as fundamentally wrong; it should be taken into account - at least as a valid hypothesis – in the reconstruction of the early history of the Talyshis (see in detail Asatryan 2011: 7-8). In any case, the Talyshis are undoubtedly part of the autochthonous Caspian ethnic continuum, Iranised (linguistically, of course) as a result of the Aryan migration. Besides, neither the name *Καδούσιοι*, nor the ethnonym *Talysh* have Iranian etymology.

historical figures as the Prophet Zoroaster, the commander Artageres (the military leader of the Persian king Artaxerxes II and, according to Plutarch, the leader of the Cadusians, 3rd century BC), Babak Khurramdin (the leader of the Iranian national uprising against the Abbasid Caliphate, 9th century AD), and others. This element is highlighted among the northern Talyshis for at least two reasons. First, all the mentioned characters tie the Talyshis to the Iranian history, in some cases, to its most ancient periods, thus emphasizing the belonging of the people to the ancient authentic Iranian tradition as opposed to the late Turkic one. Second, in the new history of the Talyshi people, their historical and cultural achievements have been often presented as those of the Azerbaijanis, in line with the adopted state policy: many aspects of the history and culture of the Azerbaijani people were created by means of the appropriation of Iranian historical and cultural realities.³⁴ This policy has been a mainstream line both in the process of creating the titular Azerbaijani nation in Soviet Azerbaijan and in the process of building a unified Azerbaijani identity (*azərbaycançılıq*) in the modern Azerbaijan Republic.

Conclusion

The differences in the relevance of various identity markers between the northern and southern Talyshis living on either bank of the Arax are obvious. However, this kind of variability by no means indicates the absence of a unified Talyshi identity. In both cases we are dealing with the same people with a clear Talyshi self-identification.

Among the identity markers of the Iranian Talyshis, the Iranianness, the feeling of belonging to the Iranian continuum, its cultural and linguistic environment, as well as to the Iranian state, is the main and most important element of identity. Belonging to a local culture, the proper Talyshi self-consciousness, is a significant and essential part of the mentality, but it is secondary to the idea of Iranian-ness. The maximum possible ideological field here is the hypothetical possibility of having “their own” Iranian province - *Ostane Talesh* (instead of the currently existing regional unit - *Shahrestan-e Talesh*), by analogy with the Gilakis and Mazandarani, who, so to say, have “their own” provinces - Gilan and Mazandaran.

The situation is different in the Republic of Azerbaijan,³⁵ where the Talyshi identity went through peripeteia connected with the shaping of the titular Turkic group of the republic – the Azerbaijanis. In general, anti-Turkism, the perception of the Turkic element as an “inimical, hostile other”, is a phenomenon typical of the Iranian peoples living in contact zones

³⁴ See, e.g., Lornejan and Doostzadeh 2011.

³⁵ On the formation of Talyshi identity in the Republic of Azerbaijan, see Ter-Abrahamian 2005.

with Turkic and Turkic-speaking groups, including the Talyshis. The policy of harsh assimilation in Azerbaijan has repeatedly increased the relevance of this marker and even made it the main one for almost all non-Turkic Muslim minorities in that country, including the Talyshis. The idea of an independent Talysh state has seriously taken root among the Talyshis, both in the Republic of Azerbaijan and in the diaspora (Russia, Europe, Belarus). In this context, however, the idea of belonging to the Iranian continuum is relevant primarily as an opposition to the current Turkish environment. The Talyshis of the Republic of Azerbaijan, as an Iranian people and part of the common South Caspian cultural continuum, have nevertheless absorbed many important elements of the mentality and ideologies spread in the region over the last two centuries by Tsarist Russia and later by the Soviet Union. This is particularly relevant in terms of the system of education and cultural realities (secular education, theater, opera, painting), which have shaped a fundamentally new mentality of the Muslim population living to the north of the Araxes river. For the Soviet history of the Talyshis, such an ideological element as the common memory of the heroic past with other peoples of the Soviet Union (first of all the participation of the Talyshis in the Second World War) is still important³⁶. Despite the ambiguous status of the Talyshis in Soviet Azerbaijan - their forced assimilation, the denial of their identity and the appropriation of many aspects of their history and culture in order to strengthen the position of the Turkic-speaking titular group - the situation of all minorities in the independent Azerbaijani state turned out to be incomparably worse. This fact has constantly strengthened the traditional pro-Russian vector among the northern Talyshis, as well as other minorities during the last three decades. The Talyshi community, which has been growing and strengthening in Russia over the past three decades, is largely made up of people who moved there from the independent Republic of Azerbaijan. Among them are representatives of the Talyshi intelligentsia and activists who fled persecution.

Thus, the northern Talyshis can currently be characterised as a Russia-oriented Iranian people living in a Turkic-speaking and Turkey-oriented environment, while the southern Talyshis can be seen as an organic part of the Iranian pre-Caspian ethno-linguistic landscape.

³⁶ The figure of Hazi Aslanov (1910, Lankaran - 1945), a Soviet military leader, twice Hero of the Soviet Union, is of particular importance. Like many other outstanding Talyshis, Aslanov has been classified as an Azerbaijani Turk, which has always caused indignation among the Talyshis. See, e.g., «Талышу – Дважды Герою Советского Союза Ази Асланову исполняется 107 лет!», Avesta Talysh; Талышу – Дважды Герою Советского Союза Ази Асланову исполняется 107 лет! – Avesta Talysh (accesses 20.02.2024); also «Талфш. Дважды Герой Советского Союза», <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ciLQ84fqZ1E> (accesses 01.03.2024).

Acknowledgements

This article is part of a wider research on the Talyshis and other autochthonous peoples of the Caucasus-Caspian area, realized within the framework of project 21AG-6A079 of the State Committee for Science of the Republic of Armenia.

References

- ABDALI, A. *Cahār resāle dar zamīne-ye tārix o joghrafiyā-ye Tāleš*, Rasht, 1999.
- ABDALI, A. *Tālešihā kīstand?* Tehran, 1990.
- ABILOV, I., MIRZALIZADE, I. *Otcherki po istorii i etnografii talyshey*. Minsk, 2011.
- ABOSZODA, F. «My vedem issledovanie o real'noy tchislennosti talyshey v Azerbaydzhanе», 2015, *Voskanapat.info*, 1.02.2015, <https://voskanapat.info/?p=10277> (accessed 10.03.2024).
- ABOSZODA, F. *English-Talyshi Dictionary*, Munich, 2019.
- ABOSZODA, F. *Nesostoyavshayasya nezavisimost' Talysha*. Minsk 2011, TolishPress.org - Nesostoyavshayasya nezavisimost' Talysha /Tchast' 1/ (accessed on 20.03.2024)
- ABOSZODA, F. *Russko-talyshskiy slovar'*. Moskva, 2012.
- ABOSZODA, F., SADYKHZODA, A. *Talyshskiy yazyk: fonetika, morfologiya, sintaksis*. Moskva, 2019.
- AMIRYAN, B. *Gūyeš-e tāleši-ye Anbarān*, Tehran, 2005.
- ARAKELOVA, V. Al (Spirit possessions) — Iran, the Caucasus, Central Asia and Afganistan, *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Culture*, 2003a, vol. 1, Leiden: 52-53.
- ARAKELOVA, V. Again on the Demoness Šaša. *Iran and the Caucasus*, 2021, 25(4): 379-382. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1163/1573384X-20210405>
- ARAKELOVA, V. On the Number of Iranian Turkophones. *Iran and the Caucasus*, 2015, 19.3: 279–282. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1163/1573384X-20150306>
- ARAKELOVA, V. The Siyah-Galesh and Deity Patrons of Cattle-Breeding Iranian Peoples. *Iran. Questions et connaissances*, 2003, vol. 3, Paris: 171-176.
- ARAKELOVA, V. The Talishis on Opposite Banks of the Araxes River: Identity Issues. *Iran and the Caucasus*, 2022, 26.4: 407–417. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1163/1573384X-20220406>
- ARAKELOVA, V., OMID, P. Phallic Objects from Ardabil. *Iran and the Caucasus* 2006, 10.2: 231-237. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1163/157338406780345925>
- ARAKELOVA, V.A. «Religiya i narodnye verovaniya talyshey», *Vvedenie v istoriyu i kul'turu talyshskogo naroda* (pod redaktsiey G.S. Asatryana), Erevan, 2011:75-90.
- ASATRIAN, G. S. The Lord of Cattle in Gilan. *Iran and the Caucasus*, 2002, 6.1-2: 75-85. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1163/157338402X00061>
- ASATRIAN, G. S., BORJIAN, H. Talish and the Talishis (the State of Research). *Iran and the Caucasus*, 2005, 9.1: 43-72. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1163/1573384054068169>

- ASATRIAN, G., ARAKELOVA, V. *The Religion of the Peacock Angel: The Yezidis and Their Spirit World*, Durham, 2014. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315728896>
- ASATRYAN, G.S. (ed.) *Otcherki po istorii i kul'ture talyshskogo naroda*. Erevan, 2007.
- ASATRYAN, G.S. (ed.) *Vvedenie v istoriyu i kul'turu talyshskogo naroda*. Erevan, 2011.
- ASATRYAN, G.S. *Etyudy po iranskoj etnologii*. Erevan, 1998.
- BAYRAMALIBEKOV, T. Iz kosmogonitcheskikh poveriy talyshintsev Lenkoranskogo uezda. *Sbornik Materialov dlya opisaniya mestnostey i plemen Kavkaza*, vyp. XVII, Tiflis, 1893:202-204.
- BAYRAMALIBEKOV, T. Talyshinskie legendy i pover'ya. *Sbornik Materialov dlya opisaniya mestnostey i plemen Kavkaza*, vyp. XXVI, Tiflis, 1899: 1-10.
- BAYRAMALIBEKOV, T. Talyshinskie teksty. *Sbornik Materialov dlya opisaniya mestnostey i plemen Kavkaza*, vyp. XX, Tiflis, 1894:17-22.
- BAZIN, M. Quelques échantillons des variations dialectales du tâleši. *Studia Iranica*, 1981, 10: 111-124, 269-277.
- BAZIN, M. Recherche des rapports entre diversité dialectale et géographie humaine: l'exemple du Tâleš. *Beihefte zum tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients – Reihe B*, 1979, Nr. 40: 1-16.
- CLIFTON, J., TIESSEN, C., DECKINGA, G., LUCHT, L. *Sociolinguistic Situation of the Talysh in Azerbaijan*, London, 2005. [\(2\) \(PDF\) Sociolinguistic situation of the Talysh in Azerbaijan \(researchgate.net\)](#) (accessed on 01.03.2024).
- DORN, B. Ottchet ob utchenom puteshestvii po Kavkazu i yuzhnomu beregu Kaspiyskogo morya. *Trudy Vostotchnogo Otdela Russkogo Arkheologicheskogo Obshchestva*, tch. 4, SPb., 1864:246-317
- GRIMES, B. *The Ethnologies*, 14th edition, Dallas, 2002.
- HAJATPUR, H. *Zabān-e tâleši: Gūyeš-e Xošābar*, Rašt, 1383/2004.
- INOSTRANTSEV, K. A. B. *Sasanidskie etyudy*, Sankt-Peterburg, 1909.
- IZMAYLOVA, A. A. O narodnoy odezhde naseleniya yugo-vostotchnykh rayonov Azerbaydzhana (po materialam Lenkoranskogo i Lerikskogo rayonov). *Izvestiya AN Azerb. SSR, seriya obshch. nauk*, № 4, Baku, 1964:93-100.
- KERIMOV, T. Ob itogakh etnograficheskoy poezdki v zonu Lenkorani-Astary. *Arkheologicheskie i etnograficheskie izyskaniya v Azerbaydzhanе*, Baku, 1977:68-69.
- LAZARD, G. Le dialecte tâleši de Mâsule (Gilân). *Studia Iranica*, 1978, 7/2: 251-268.

- LECOQ, P. Les dialectes caspiens et les dialectes du nord-ouest de l'Iran. *Compendium Linguarum Iranicarum*, Wiesbaden, 1989: 296-312.
- LORNEJAN, S., DOOSTZADEH, A. *On the Modern Politicization of the Persian Poet Nezami Ganjavi*, Yerevan, 2012.
- MARDZHANYAN, A. A. «Azerbaydanskaya statistika o tchislennosti talyshey i protchikh men'shinstv», *Vvedenie v istoriyu i kul'turu talyshskogo naroda* (pod redaktsiey G.S. Asatryana), Erevan, 2011:23-40.
- MARR, N.Ya. *Talyshi*. Petrograd, 1922.
- MILLER, B. *Predvaritel'nyy ottchet o poezdke v Talysh letom 1926 goda (doklad, protchitannyy na zasedanii Istoriko-etnograficheskoy septsii Obshchestva 14 setnyabrya 1925 goda)*, Baku, 1925.
- MILLER, B.V. *Talyshskiy yazyk*. Moskva-Leningrad, 1953.
- PAPAZYAN, A. Al'-Khidr i Il'ya: Mifologicheskie istoki analogii. *Palestinskiy sbornik*, 28 (91), Leningrad, 1986:89-97.
- PIREYKO, L. Talyshskiy yazyk; dialekty tati Irana. *Osnovy iranskogo yazykoznaniya*, Novoiranskie yazyki, tom 5, Moskva, 1991:91-175.
- PIREYKO, L. *Talyshsko-russkiy slovar'*, Moskva, 1976.
- RAHNAMAYI, M. Koǰāyī Tāleš va kīstī tālešān? *Tahqīqāt-e tāleš*, 2001, N 1: 9-24.
- SIMONYAN, H. *Patmut'iwn Aleksandri Makedonac'woy*, Erevan, 1989.
- TER-ABRAHAMIAN, H. On the Formation of the National Identity of the Talishis in Azerbaijan Republic. *Iran and the Caucasus*, 2005, 9.1: 121-144. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1163/1573384054068132>
- TCHURSIN, G.F. Talyshi (Etnograficheskie zametki). *Izvestiya kavkazskogo istoriko-arkheologicheskogo obshchestva*, Tom 4. Tiflis, 1926:15-45.
- Vsesoyuznaya perepis' naseleniya 1926 goda*. T. 14. Moskva: 1928-1929.
- ZEYDLITS, N. Etnograficheskiy otcherk Bakinskoy gubernii. *Kavkazskiy kalendar' na 1871 g.*, Tiflis, 1870:46-67.