

**Eastern Armenia
in the
Last Decades of Persian Rule
1807–1828**

**A POLITICAL AND SOCIOECONOMIC STUDY
OF THE KHANATE OF EREVAN ON THE
EVE OF THE RUSSIAN CONQUEST**

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politics maintained some political independence and their Christian faith. In fact, it was only after the numerous campaigns of Timur, at the close of the fourteenth century, that the area was permanently settled by Turkish tribes and Islam became the dominant faith.⁶⁴ For the Armenians remaining in the region, this signaled the beginning of direct foreign rule.

By the sixteenth century the Armenian population of Chahkhar Sa'ad, oppressed by the despotic rule of the local khans, fled periodically to Karv-Kilan (M. Karvinsk), in the Pashalik region, seeking Georgian or Russian protection.⁶⁵ The appointment of Shams Quli Khan Qajar to the governorship of Erevan in 1807 ushered in a new era for the Armenians. His policies not only stopped the periodic exodus but also encouraged new settlers into the area.⁶⁶

The figures listed in the Kameral'nye Otsyaski for the number of Armenians in the Khanate of Erevan present a minor problem. The totals include the many thousands of Armenians who emigrated from Persia and the Ottoman Empire following the Russo-Persian and Russo-Turkish Wars of 1826-1829. But by listing the newly-arrived Armenians in separate columns, the survey makes it possible to correct the discrepancy. Furthermore, other primary sources also mention the total number of new arrivals and confirm overall the figures of the Russian survey.⁶⁷ By deducting the newcomers from the total Armenian population listed in the Kameral'nye Otsyaski, the number of Armenian inhabitants at the end of Persian rule can be measured rather accurately, largely because there was no major debilitation of Armenians during the war.

A number of Armenian historians quoting post-1830 figures estimate that during Persian rule Armenians constituted between 30 to 50 percent of the total population.⁶⁸ However, the Armenian element seems to have formed less than 20 percent of the total population (25,000) of the Khanate of Erevan,⁶⁹ with the Muslims exceeding 80 percent.⁷⁰ In any case, at no time in the Persian period was the Armenian population a majority or on par with the Muslims. Although the survey indicated an Armenian majority in some mahals, this was only after the emigration of over 25,000 Muslims from the territory; thus there is no evidence of an Armenian majority during the Persian administration. Karv-Kilan—with the Armenian industrial center, Echmiadzin—seems to have been the only district where there might have been an Armenian majority.⁷¹ By 1832, however, with the departure of thousands of Muslims and the arrival of some 45,000 Armenians to the Khanate,⁷² the Christian population had risen considerably, until it matched that of the Muslims.⁷³ But it was not until the last quarter of the nineteenth century—after the Russo-Turkish Wars of 1829-1830 and 1877-1878 brought more Armenians in from the Ottoman Empire—that the Armenians established a solid majority in the region. Even then, and up to the beginning of