

## RESEARCH ARTICLE / ARAŞTIRMA MAKALESİ

**To cite this article:** Sinan Koçak, "An Examination on the Demographic Structure of Armenians in Tbilisi (1897-2014)", Review of Armenian Studies, Issue 47 (2023): 63-94.

**Received:** 10.01.2023

**Accepted:** 12.06.2023

# AN EXAMINATION ON THE DEMOGRAPHIC STRUCTURE OF ARMENIANS IN TBILISI (1897-2014)

(TİFLİS'TEKİ ERMENİLERİN DEMOGRAFİK  
YAPISI ÜZERİNE BİR İNCELEME (1897-2014))

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**Abstract:** *The aim of this study is to examine the demographic structure of Armenians living in Tbilisi between 1897 and 2014. The scope of this study includes information about the total population of Armenians, their distribution by settlement, gender composition, marriage, language, and religious structure. The demographic characteristics of the Armenians, who have had a significant population in Tbilisi since ancient times, will be an area of interest for this study. In addition, information will be given about the political, socio-cultural, and economic structures of the Armenians in Tbilisi. The temporal framework of this study will consist of three main periods covering the years 1897-2014, namely the Tsarist Period, the Soviet Union, and the post-Soviet Georgia. The numerical data for these periods will be provided from the official population censuses carried out during the mentioned periods. In the study, the ratios of the numerical data of the population in urban and rural areas according to gender changes will be examined within the time frame determined above. Again, depending on these variables, data on the use of language (Armenian), which is the symbol of Armenian identity, elements that define the socio-cultural*

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*structures of Armenians living in rural and urban centers, and religious preferences will also be included. In this context, information will be given about the Armenians who are affiliated with the Apostolic Church residing in Tbilisi and the Armenians who adopt the Catholic religious belief. As a result of this study, the numerical and sociological assets of the Armenians in Tbilisi will be presented in a holistic way by supporting the demographic data with human data.*

**Keywords:** *Demographics, Armenian, Georgia Armenians, Tbilisi, Tbilisi Armenians*

**Öz:** *Bu çalışmanın hedefi 1897-2014 yılları arasında Tiflis'te yaşayan Ermenilerin demografik yapısını incelemektir. Söz konusu inceleme kapsamında Ermenilerin toplam nüfusu, yerleşim yerlerine göre dağılımları, cinsiyet kompozisyonları, evlilik, dil ve dinî yapıları hakkındaki bilgilerin yer alması planlanmaktadır. Çalışmanın ilgi alanında tarihin eski dönemlerinden itibaren Tiflis'te önemli bir nüfusa sahip olan Ermenilerin demografik özellikleri kalacaktır. İlaveten Tiflis'teki Ermenilerin siyasi, sosyokültürel ve iktisadi yapıları hakkında bilgiler verilecektir. Çalışmamızın zamansal çerçevesi Çarlık Dönemi, Sovyetler Birliği ve Sovyet sonrası Gürcistan olmak üzere 1897-2014 yıllarını kapsayan üç ana dönemden oluşacaktır. Bu dönemlere ait sayısal veriler anılan dönemlerde gerçekleştirilen resmî nüfus sayımlarından sağlanacaktır. Çalışmada yukarıda belirlenen zaman çerçevesinde nüfusun kentsel ve kırsal alanlardaki nüfusun sayısal verilerinin cinsiyet değişimlerine göre oranları irdelenecektir. Yine bu değişkenlere bağlı olarak kırsal ve kentsel merkezlerde yaşayan Ermenilerin sosyokültürel yapılarını tanımlayan ve Ermeni kimlik öğelerinin simgesi olan dilin (Ermenicenin) kullanımı ve din tercihleri konusundaki veriler de yer alacaktır. Bu bağlamda Tiflis'te ikamet eden Apostolik Kilisesi'ne bağlı Ermeniler ile Katoliklik dinî inancını benimseyen Ermeniler hakkında bilgiler verilecektir. Çalışmamızın sonucunda demografik veriler beşerî verilerle desteklenerek Tiflis'teki Ermenilerin sayısal ve sosyolojik varlıkları bütüncül bir şekilde sunulacaktır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Demografi, Ermeni, Gürcistan Ermenileri, Tiflis, Tiflis Ermenileri*

### Introduction

There are many studies on “Tbilisi city” in Türkiye. Most of these studies are on the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline. On 13 November 2022, as a result of the searches we made through the Turkish Council of Higher Education Thesis Center, we reached a total of 30 theses registered with the name “Tbilisi”. Among these theses, Mustafa Tanrıverdi’s study titled “Çarlık Rusyası Döneminde Tiflis Vilayeti (1878-1914)” (“The Province of Tbilisi under the Rule of Tsarist Russia (1878-1914)”) attracted our attention in relation to our article study. Among the academic studies other than theses, there is also a study titled “Ermenilerin Tiflis’teki Siyasi Faaliyetleri (1878-1914)” (“The Armenians’ Political Activities in Tbilisi (1878-1914)”) by Tanrıverdi. Another study on Armenians in Tbilisi is Selim Hilmi Özkan’s article titled “Osmanlı Devleti’nden Gürcistan’a Ermeni Göçü ve Tiflis’de Ermeni Faaliyetleri (1878-1915)” (“Armenian Migration from the Ottoman State to Georgia and Armenian Activity in Tbilisi (1878-1915)”). The article discusses, as the title suggests, the period and the events that led Armenians to migrate from the Ottoman State to Georgia and the activities of Armenians in Tbilisi. The number of studies on Tbilisi Armenians in English is higher than in Turkish. Some of these studies are as follows: Elli Ponomareva’s “Native Tbilisians or Diaspora: Negotiating the Status of Armenians in Tbilisi”, Satenik Mkrtchian’s “Contemporary Armenian Community in Tbilisi”, and Timothy K. Blauvelt and Christofer Berglund’s “Armenians in the Making of Modern Georgia”.

The common feature of the above-mentioned studies, and the point that will offer originality to our study, is that their authors did not address the demographic characteristics of Armenians in detail. Only Tanrıverdi, in his doctoral dissertation, provided information on the demographic structure of ethnic groups in Tbilisi province under Tsarist Russia. As a result of the literature review, the lack of a detailed study on the demographic structure of Armenians in Tbilisi in the Soviet Union and the post-Soviet period, especially in Türkiye, has been the main factor in the emergence of this study. The aim of the study is to thus examine the demographic structure of Armenians in Tbilisi in detail based on the census results conducted between 1897-2014.

Cem Behar, who has conducted remarkable research on populations, categorizes demographic studies into two groups: “formal” and “social”. In formal demographic studies, censuses are at the forefront. In addition, numerical data on populations are presented through statistical and technical methods. Social demographic studies, on the other hand, seek cause-and-effect relationships between phenomena and aim to provide in-depth information about society. In this study, the data obtained through censuses will be used extensively, as well as the events that contributed to the growth of the Armenian population in Tbilisi. In this context, we can state that the evaluations in our

study are based on the data collected with a mixed approach. The main reference sources used are the population censuses conducted between 1897 and 2014. In the analysis section, statistical information will be given first and then the data will be analyzed.<sup>1</sup>

The name of Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia today, is mentioned as *Tphilisi* and *Thbilisi* in different sources. It is seen that these two usages have changed into Tbilisi since 1936. The city takes its name from a hot water spring on the northeastern slopes of Mtabari. The Georgian word “tbili” (თბილი) means “warm”. There is no clear information about when the city of Tbilisi was founded. In different periods of history, this city was under the control of different states. The Persians, Khazars, Islamic armies, Umayyads, Abbasids, Seljuks, Khwarazmshah, Mongols, Ilkhanids, Timurids, Qara Qoyunlu, Aq Qoyunlu, Safavids, Ottomans, and Russians were the states that dominated this geography. Although it is stated that the population of Tbilisi was 60,000 until Shah Abbas invaded the city in 1614, this figure is exaggerated. Evliya Çelebi (1611-1682), one of the most important travelers of the 17th century, described the region as a medium-sized city. The botanist Tournefort (1656-1708) states that the population in 1701 was around 20,000. In his travelogue, the French scholar states that 14,000 of this population were Armenian, 3,000 Muslim, 2,000 Georgian, and 500 Catholic. The German naturalist and explorer Gldenstdt (1745-1781) also stated in his travelogue that the total population of Tbilisi was approximately 20,000, and also noted that 4,000 people had died in the plague epidemic of 1770. Gldenstaedt, like Tournefort, wrote that the majority of the city was Armenian, while the rest was Georgian and Muslim. Another German scholar Klaproth (1783-1835), who visited Tbilisi in 1808, stated that the city’s population was 18,000. Mustafa Aydın, on the other hand, states that the city’s population reached 25,000 in 1830 and 34,800 in 1850. He also emphasized the rapid increase in the population of Tbilisi due to the development of industry and transportation and determined that the total population increased to 70,000 in 1865.<sup>2</sup>

Georgia, which is strategically located in terms of its location, has been subjected to invasions and migrations of different states at various periods throughout history. In his article titled “Georgia’s Ethnic History and the Present Migration Process”, Mamuka Komakhia, who is of Caucasian origin, analyses Georgia’s ethnic change process in four stages:

1 Didem Daniş, *Nfus ve Toplum* (İstanbul: İstanbul niversitesi Aık ve Uzaktan Eđitim Fakltesi, 2020), 9.

2 Mustafa Aydın, “Tiflis”, *Trkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, 41. Cilt (İstanbul, 2012), 150-152; Joseph de Tournefort, *Tournefort Seyahatnamesi*, ed. Stefanos Yerasimos, 4. Baskı (İstanbul: Kitapyayinevi, 2013), 160.

*First*—From the Middle Ages to the late 18th century when non-Georgian ethnoses moved to Georgian territory on the invitation of the Georgian czars/princes to settle the land abandoned by the Georgians.

*Second*—From the early 19th century to the advent of Soviet power. Migration waves (mainly forced migration) changed the size of various nationalities. The Russian imperial authorities moved large groups of non-Georgians to Georgian territory mainly for military-political and economic reasons.

*Third*—From 1921 to the Soviet Union's disintegration. Industrialization and the industrial boom in Soviet Georgia attracted hundreds of thousands of migrants from all the Union republics.

*Fourth*—From 1991, when Georgia declared its independence, to the present day. Political, social, and economic cataclysms drove away not only non-Georgians, but also Georgians; in recent times, non-Georgians have been leaving the republic for social and economic reasons.”<sup>3</sup>

Armenian researcher Satenik Mkrtchian, in his article titled “Contemporary Armenian Community in Tbilisi”, states that the historical background of Armenians in Tbilisi dates back to the late 6th and early 7th centuries. He also points out that the migration of Armenians to Tbilisi began to increase especially after the fall of the Bagratuni Dynasty and the seizure of the city of Ani by the Byzantines. The Armenians participated in the political, economic, and cultural life of the country and had a distinct role in the formation of the Georgian state. During the 1170s, there were so many Armenians in Georgia that an Armenian diocese with its center in Tbilisi was established. Armenians continued to migrate to Georgia in the 14-18th centuries, and this process increased significantly during the early 18th century. According to Mkrtchian's data, at the end of the 18th century, out of the total population of Tbilisi (20,000), 12,000 were Armenians. According to this data, Armenians, who constituted the numerical majority in the city, built churches and other places of worship in Tbilisi. In the early 19th century, they began to be recognized as the natives of the city.<sup>4</sup>

Armenians, who gained important positions thanks to the privileges they received during the Tsarist Russia period, had a significant population in the city thanks to their migration to Tbilisi in various periods. In the 19th century, Tbilisi became a sociocultural, political, and economic center for the

3 Mamuka Komakhia, “Georgia's Ethnic History and the Present Migration Processes”, *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 1 (49), 2008, 160.

4 Satenik Mkrtchian, “Contemporary Armenian Community in Tbilisi”, *Iran & the Caucasus*, Vol.13, No.2 (2009), 299-300.

Armenians. However, after the establishment of Soviet power in Tbilisi, the Armenian population began to decline. In addition, the Second World War and the cultural indigenization in Georgia were other factors that affected the decline of the Armenian population. Apart from these negative developments, the economic and cultural development of Soviet Georgia triggered migration from other Union Republics to the region. In the post-Soviet period, the aggressive nationalist policy implemented by the Georgian government, the socio-economic problems experienced during the Eduard Shevardnadze era, the unwillingness of the Armenians in Javakheti Region to integrate with the Georgians, the fear of assimilation, and migration abroad caused the Armenian population to decrease. Due to these reasons, many Armenians left Tbilisi. Those who remained changed their surnames and remained in the city.

This study consists of three parts. The first part is titled “The Demographic Structure of Armenians in Tbilisi under Tsarist Russia”. In this section, the political and socio-economic conditions of the Armenians who lived in Tbilisi during the Tsarist rule will be explained and then their demographic characteristics will be discussed. The second section is titled “The Demographic Structure of Armenians in Tbilisi during the Soviet Union Period”. Under this title, the events that caused the population movements of Armenians residing in Tbilisi during the Soviet Union period will be mentioned and then information about their demographic structure will be presented. The third chapter is titled “The Demographic Structure of Armenians in Tbilisi in the Post-Soviet Period”. In this section, information will be given about the events that led to the population mobility of Armenians in Tbilisi in the post-independence period and then there will be an emphasis on their demographic. In addition, although the focus is on the Armenians in Tbilisi, data on Armenians in Georgia will also be frequently included in order to see the whole picture.

## 1. The Demographic Structure of Armenians in Tbilisi under Tsarist Russia

Information on the administrative structure of Tbilisi is as follows: On 10 April 1840, the Caucasus Krai<sup>5</sup> was divided into two administrative regions: the Georgia-Imereti Guberniya<sup>6</sup> and the Khazar Oblast<sup>7</sup>. According to this administrative structure, Tbilisi was one of the 11 uyezd<sup>8</sup> of the guberniya. In

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5 Krai (Russian): Territory.

6 Guberniya (Russian): Governorate, a territorial unit in Imperial Russia. See: Farid Shafiyev, *The Russian-Soviet Resettlement Policies and Their Implications for Ethno-Territorial Conflicts in the South Caucasus*, Carleton University, Unpublished Thesis, Ottawa, 2015, x.

7 Oblast (Russian): Province. Shafiyev, *The Russian-Soviet Resettlement Policies...*, x.

8 Uyezd (Russian): Region, a territorial unit in Imperial Russia. See: Shafiyev, *The Russian-Soviet Resettlement Policies...*, x.

1846, a new administrative organization was introduced. Accordingly, some parts of Georgia-Imereti Guberniya were reorganized under the name of Tbilisi Guberniya. According to the regulation dated 14 December 1846, the Tbilisi Guberniya consisted of Tbilisi, Telavi, Gori, Elizavetpol, Signakh, Nakhichevan, Yerevan, and Alexandropol uyezds. Later, Akhalkalaki was included in the Alexandropol uyezd, and the Ossetian and Tushino-Pshavo-Khevsurian okrugs<sup>9</sup> were included in the Tbilisi Guberniya. In the charter, the city of Tbilisi was mentioned as the center of the guberniya. In addition, the governor of Georgia-Imereti was henceforth referred to as the Military Governor of Tbilisi. Throughout the 19th century, there were changes in the borders of the guberniya. In 1849, Yerevan, Nakhchivan, and Alexandropol uyezds were separated from the Tbilisi Guberniya and reorganized under the Yerevan Guberniya. The Tbilisi Guberniya was directly subordinated to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Empire. However, it also had administrative responsibilities to the Caucasus Regency. The Caucasus Regency, the most authoritative power in the Caucasus, was abolished because it was considered incompatible with the integrity of the centralized structure. In 1882, the Viceroyship of the Caucasus was established instead of the Regency. By the last quarter of the 19th century, the Tbilisi Guberniya consisted of nine uyezds and one okrug. These were the Tbilisi, Mtskheta, Borchaly, Akhalkalaki, Dusheti, Gori, Tionety, Telavi, and Signakh uyezds, and the Zakatal okrug.<sup>10</sup>

In 1844, with the establishment of the Caucasus Regency, Tbilisi became the center of the Russian Empire's administration of the Caucasus and remained so until the end of the empire's presence in the region. The Tbilisi Guberniya was important not only as an administrative center but also as a social, economic, and political center. As a center of trade, Tbilisi was important for its agricultural economy and as a place where goods were sold. It also had an important share in the guberniya's exports, with products such as wheat, barley, corn, flax oil, wool, leather, livestock, oil, chicken, fruit, cheese, workwear, rugs, timber, and wine. The guberniya was multiethnic and multicultural in terms of its ethnic and religious composition. According to the 1897 census, about 50 languages were spoken in Tbilisi. The cosmopolitan structure of the Tbilisi Guberniya was undoubtedly the result of the Russian Empire's population and territorial policy.<sup>11</sup>

When historical processes are considered, it is observed that some factors were more prominent in the settlement of Armenians in Tbilisi. In addition to the

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9 Okrug (Russian): Administrative Region, District.

10 Mustafa Tanrıverdi, *Çarlık Rusyası'nda Tiflis Vilayeti (1846-1914)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2019), 6-9.

11 Tanrıverdi, *Çarlık Rusyası'nda Tiflis Vilayeti*, 7-8.

vibrant trade life in Tbilisi, the fact that the Russian Empire began to have a say in the region where the city was located politically enabled the Armenian migration to this point. In addition, the administrative rivalry between Armenian leaders also triggered migration to Tbilisi. Armenians, who had a significant population in the Tbilisi Guberniya, did not only live in Russian Armenia. There were also significant Armenian populations in the major cities of the Ottoman, Persian, and Russian Empires. After the death of Karim Khan in 1779, the struggle between the Armenian rulers led to the migration of a large number of Armenians from Yerevan and Karabakh to Russia and Georgia. This conflict between the Armenian rulers influenced the choice of the city of Tbilisi as a center by the Armenians. In the early 19th century, the Russian Empire's crossing of the Caucasus Mountains caused a new migration movement. In this process, Armenian migration from Yerevan to Tbilisi took place. Migration to Tbilisi continued to increase until the first quarter of the 18th and 19th centuries. After a while, Armenians became the majority in the cities where they settled. However, most of the influential Armenian leaders, with the exception of the Tbilisi community, lived outside the Caucasus.<sup>12</sup>

In the early 18th century, one aspect of the economic strategy of the progressive movements that began with Tsar Peter I was to increase the empire's revenues in order to reach "warm waters" through the Caucasus region. Steps were taken in Transcaucasia to achieve this goal. In 1782, Georgian King Heraclius (Erekle) II sent a request for an alliance to Russian Empress Catherine II in order to get rid of the pressure of the Ottoman and Persian empires among other reasons. Georgia officially became a Russian protectorate on 24 July 1783.<sup>13</sup>

The Russian Empire carried out several activities in order to change the ethnic structure of the Caucasus. Between 1826 and 1828, the Russian Empire invited Armenians residing on the Iranian and Ottoman borders to its territory. Thereupon, Armenians who supported Russia during the Ottoman-Russian War migrated to Russian territory after the war.<sup>14</sup> The Treaty of Edirne (Adrianople) signed in 1829 paved the way for another migration movement. As a result of this treaty, approximately 20,000 Armenians left Ardahan, Beyazıt, Kars, and Erzurum and migrated to Yerevan, Nakhichevan, and Tbilisi. Similarly, around 50,000 Turks, Kurds, and Iranians settled in the Ottoman Empire and Iran.<sup>15</sup>

12 George A. Bournoutian, *Ermeni Tarihi Ermeni Halkının Tarihine Kısa Bir Bakış*, 2. Baskı (İstanbul: Aras Yayıncılık, 2016), 132-191.

13 Özgür Türker ve Abdolvahid Soofizadeh, "Gürcistan'ın Rus Himayesine Girmesi ve Sonuçları: Georgiyevsk Antlaşması'ndan Ağa Muhammed Han'ın Tiflis Seferi'ne", *History Studies*, Cilt 7, Sayı 3, Yıl: 2015, 149-163.

14 Selim Hilmi Özkan, "Osmanlı Devleti'nden Gürcistan'a Ermeni Göçü ve Tiflis'de Ermeni Faaliyetleri (1878-1915)", *Yeni Türkiye*, Sayı 62 (Eylül-Aralık 2014): 1801.

15 Bournoutian, *Ermeni Tarihi*, 193.

From this time on, Armenians began to dominate Tbilisi both demographically and class-wise. Richard G. Hovannisian, a professor of Armenian history, has pointed out that Tbilisi in the nineteenth century had become “an important center of Armenian intellectual and political life” that rivaled Istanbul.<sup>16</sup> In addition, Mkrtchian shared the following data on the population of Armenians in Tbilisi during the Russian Empire:

“In 1817, the Armenian population constituted 75,6% of the total population in Tiflis [Tbilisi]. This figure decreased gradually: in the 1830s to 65%, 1850s to 54%, and in 1886, according to the official statistics, to 47,7%, and made up only 36,4% in 1899. Indeed, in the second half of the 19th century, the Armenians no longer had a majority in the city, merely a plurality.”<sup>17</sup>

Bournoutian states that an Armenian middle class had begun to emerge by the second half of the 19th century, and underlines that Armenian merchants gained power in Tbilisi, Elisavetpol, Baku, and other urban centers of Transcaucasia towards the end of this century.<sup>18</sup> Ronald Grigor Suny notes that Georgian nobles did not like the Armenians. He explains the reasons for this situation as follows: “the [existence of] fundamental cultural differences between the emerging bourgeois civilization of urban Armenians and the traditional aristocratic values of the Georgian upper class, and the demographic, political and economic hegemony of Armenians over Tbilisi and most of the country.”<sup>19</sup>

The Armenian middle class was concentrated in the cities of Baku and Tbilisi, where Armenians had considerable influence. They were influential in trade, banking, crafts, and bureaucracy. In Tbilisi, even the mayor and some of the members of the municipal council were Armenian.<sup>20</sup> Suny emphasizes that “in the railroad workshops of Tbilisi, in the oil fields of Baku, and in the refineries of Batumi Port, Armenians constituted an important segment of the Caucasian working class”.<sup>21</sup> Giving information about the 19th century “Armenian Bazaar”, the most important trade center in Tbilisi, Tanrıverdi states that Armenians who engaged in trade in Tbilisi formed an organization similar to the guild organization in the Ottoman Empire and called the head of each organization “foreman”.<sup>22</sup>

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16 Richard G. Hovannisian, *The Armenian People From Ancient to Modern Times, Volume II* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1997), 431.

17 Mkrtchian, *Contemporary Armenian Community in Tbilisi*, 300.

18 Bournoutian, *Ermeni Tarihi*, 229.

19 Ronald Grigor Suny, *Ararat'a Bakmak Modern Tarihte Ermenistan* (İstanbul: Aras, 2015), 70.

20 Bournoutian, *Ermeni Tarihi*, 230-231.

21 Suny, *Ararat'a Bakmak*, 42.

22 Mustafa Tanrıverdi, “Ermenilerin Tiflis'teki Siyasi Faaliyetleri (1878-1914)”, *19-20. Yüzyıllarda Türk-Ermeni İlişkileri-Kaynaşma-Kırgınlık-Ayrılık-Yeni Arayışlar*, Cilt:2 (İstanbul 2015), 1154.

Bournoutian emphasized that after Georgia came under Russian rule, Armenians opened a Russian school and Russian Orthodox seminaries in Tbilisi. Armenians also published the newspaper *Kavkaz* (*Кавказ*) in Russian.<sup>23</sup> Suny also noted the opening of the Armenian elementary school Nersesian Camaran in Tbilisi, which was part of a small network of schools in churches and homes, often taught by a single teacher. He also added that by the end of 1836, Caucasian Armenians had 824 churches and 21 parochial schools.<sup>24</sup>

Tbilisi was also an important base for the Armenian revolutionary movement. Armenians in Russia also supported revolutionary groups established in Yerevan, Karabakh, Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Tbilisi.<sup>25</sup> The Armenian Revolutionary Federation, also known as *Dashnaksutyun* (Dashnak Party), founded in Tbilisi in 1890, was one of the most important of such revolutionary groups. Among the founders of this revolutionary organization were Kristapor Mikayelian, Simon Zavaryan, and Stepan Zoryan. The aim of Dashnaksutyun was to create an independent Armenian state in eastern Anatolia.<sup>26</sup> Pointing out that Dashnaksutyun was a separatist organization founded in Tbilisi in 1890, Tanrıverdi stated that the Russian Empire did not oppose it at first since its targets were Ottoman Armenians. However, when the aims of Dashnaksutyun members began to cover the Caucasus, the Russian government changed its perspective towards them. In fact, since it considered Dashnaksutyun's political activities in Tbilisi as a terrorist movement, it took every measure to stop them.<sup>27</sup> Using Tbilisi as a base for its separatist ambitions, Dashnaksutyun engaged in propaganda against the Ottomans through the press organs in Tbilisi. During this period, many periodicals were published in Tbilisi, which was active in the field of media. One of them, the newspaper *Mshak*<sup>28</sup> (*Մշակ*), published news that encouraged Armenians to revolt. Likewise, the newspaper *Droshak*<sup>29</sup> (*Դրոշակ*) also urged the Armenian community to revolt.<sup>30</sup>

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23 Bournoutian, *Ermeni Tarihi*, 231-233.

24 Suny, *Ararat'a Bakmak*, 101.

25 Bournoutian, *Ermeni Tarihi*, 237.

26 Աշոտ Սարգսյան, Արարատ Հակոբյան, *Հայոց Պատմություն (Հնագույն Շրջանից Մինչև Մեր Օրերը)* (Երեվան: Ճարտարագետ, 2004), էջ 176-177.

27 Tanrıverdi, "Ermenilerin Tiflis'teki Siyasi Faaliyetleri (1878-1914)", 1153.

28 It was a literary and political newspaper published in Tbilisi between 1872 and 1920. The newspaper was published weekly in the first years and then became a daily. The founder and first editor of the newspaper was Grigor Artzruni. For further information, see: Գարեգին Լևոնյան, *Հայոց Պարբերական Մամուլը* (Երեվան: Հրատարակություն Մեյրնյան Ֆոնդի, 1934), էջ 19.

29 This newspaper, which was the publication of Dashnaksutyun, was published in Geneva between 1891-1914 and in Paris between 1925-1934. In its early period, it was published every fifteen days, and later in monthly intervals. Kristapor Mikayelian was the founder of this periodical. R. Zoryan, S. Zavaryan, S. Vratsyan, and A. Camalyan were newspaper editors. For detailed information, see: Մ.Ա. Բարդիյան, *Հայ Պարբերական Մամուլը* (Երեվան: Հայկական ՍՍՀ ԳԱ Հրատարակչություն, 1986), էջ 47.

30 Özkan, "Osmanlı Devleti'nden Gürcistan'a Ermeni Göçü ve Tiflis'de Ermeni Faaliyetleri (1878-1915)", 1804.

Following the defeat of Tsarist Russia by Japan in 1905, a constitutional regime was proclaimed in the same year. With this revolution, the Tsar accepted liberal reforms and constitutional monarchy. During this period, the Tsarist government lost its authority in the Baltics, Poland, and the Caucasus. The 1905 Revolution created a climate of freedom that prevented the continuation of the Russification policy for a while. Political pressure on Jews and Armenians was lifted. This atmosphere of freedom lasted for about 2 years. In 1907, a new system was implemented in the elections and as a result, the representation of the people in the non-Russian regions and along the borders was reduced. Thus, in 1907, nationalist practices made a return. In this process, many rights of the communities living in non-Russian regions were taken away. The return to the policy of Russification was met with a reaction by non-Russian communities and led to the emergence of underground resistance groups. These resistance groups continued to grow stronger until the First World War and the October Revolution. With the end of the Tsarist regime, the Russification policy came to an end.<sup>31</sup>

The demographic structure of Armenians in Tbilisi presents the following picture: According to 1880 population data, a total of 86,455 people lived in Tbilisi. Among them, Armenians constituted a part with 38,513 people. 21,504 Armenians were male and 17,009 were female. Armenians made up 45% of the total population and compared to other ethnic groups, Armenians were the most populous group in the city. After the Armenians came the Georgians, Russians, and Turks.<sup>32</sup>

The first general census in the Russian Empire was conducted by the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 1897. About 135,000 people, including teachers, priests, and literate soldiers, took part in this census. The census recorded the names, surnames, gender, age, marital status, social status, place of birth, address of residence, religion, mother tongue, literacy, and occupation of the inhabitants of 89 provinces of the Empire.<sup>33</sup> According to the first census, a total of 1,051,032 people lived in the Tbilisi Guberniya. The number of Armenians belonging to the Apostolic Church was 210,161. Of these, 113,399 were men and 96,762 were women. The number of Catholics was 20,216. Of this population, 10,363 were male and 9,853 were female.<sup>34</sup> The data showing the beliefs adopted by the Armenians in Tbilisi is as follows: 81,778 Armenians

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31 Selim Öztürk, "Çarlıkta Ruslaştırma Siyaseti ve Sovyet Sonrası Dönemde Ruslaştırmadan Geriye Dönüş Politikaları", *AVRASYA Uluslararası Araştırmaları Dergisi*, Cilt 7, Sayı:16 (2019): 1104.

32 Tanrıverdi, *Çarlık Rusyası'nda Tiflis Vilayeti*, 49.

33 George Bournoutian, "The Population of the South Caucasus according to the 1897 General Census of the Russian Empire", *Iran and Caucasus*, 21 (2017): 324-325.

34 "Первая всеобщая перепись населения Российской Империи 1897 г. Распределение населения по вероисповеданиям и регионам", *ДЕМОСКОП Weekly*, accessed 22 March 2022, [http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/rus\\_rel\\_97.php?reg=96](http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/rus_rel_97.php?reg=96).

of the Apostolic Church lived in urban areas. Of these, 45,466 were men and 36,312 were women. In addition, 1,833 Catholic Armenians lived in urban areas. Of these, 979 were men and 854 were women.<sup>35</sup> The number of native Armenian speakers in the Tbilisi Guberniya was 196,189. Of these, 105,035 were men and 91,154 were women.<sup>36</sup>

In 1906, the rural population of the Tbilisi Guberniya was 826,889. The number of Armenians living in rural areas was 168,051. There were 89,818 men and 78,233 women in 18,578 households. The total population of Georgians was 368,058. As can be seen, Georgians outnumbered Armenians in rural areas. Georgians also constituted the majority of the population in the Tbilisi Uyezd. After the Georgians came the Armenians and Turks. According to the statistical data of 1906, a total of 15,769 Armenians lived outside the city of Tbilisi in 178 settlements of the Tbilisi Uyezd. 8,458 of them were men and 7,311 were women, residing in 2,074 households.<sup>37</sup>

According to the 1917 census results, the distribution of Armenians living in rural areas of the Tbilisi Guberniya by region was as follows:

REGION	POPULATION	REGION	POPULATION
Akhalkalaki	68,592	Signakh	5,777
Ahiska	6,762	Telavi	3,717
Borchali	23,087	Tionety	144
Gori	11,668	Tiflis	17,584
Dusheti	2,608		
		<b>Total</b>	139,939

**Table 1:** Armenian Population in the Rural Areas of the Tbilisi Guberniya According to the Census Results of 1917<sup>38</sup>

According to 1906 data, the number of Armenians living in rural areas of the Tbilisi Guberniya was 168,051. In the 1917 census, the Armenian population was recorded as 139,939. In other words, the Armenian population had decreased by 28,112 people in 11 years. The reason for the decrease in the Armenian population between 1906 and 1917 can be attributed to the

35 “Первая всеобщая перепись населения Российской Империи 1897 г. Распределение населения по вероисповеданиям и регионам”, *ДЕМОСКОП Weekly*, accessed 22 March 2022, [http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/rus\\_rel\\_97.php?reg=185](http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/rus_rel_97.php?reg=185).

36 “Первая всеобщая перепись населения Российской Империи 1897 г. Распределение населения по родному языку, губерниям и областям”, *ДЕМОСКОП Weekly*, accessed 22 March 2022, [http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/rus\\_lan\\_97.php?reg=104](http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/rus_lan_97.php?reg=104).

37 Tanrıverdi, *Çarlık Rusyası'nda Tiflis Vilayeti*, 49-67.

38 “Ethnic Composition, All Rural Places of Eastern Georgia: 1917 Census”, *Pop-Stat*, accessed 22 March 2022, <http://pop-stat.mashke.org/georgia-ethnic-loc1917-east.htm>.

Russification policy that was reintroduced in 1907. The Russification policy continued until 1917 when the Tsarist regime came to an end.

### 2. The Demographic Structure of Armenians in Tbilisi under the Soviet Union

Since the Soviet Union had a multinational structure, it emphasized federal units in its administrative structure. Consisting of 15 Union Republics, the Soviet Union was organized into three different categories. These were Autonomous Republics, Oblasts, and Okrugs<sup>39</sup>. The capital of Soviet Georgia, one of the 15 Union Republics of the Soviet Union, was Tbilisi. Soviet Georgia included three autonomous regions. The Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia and the Autonomous Oblast of South Ossetia were ethnically based. However, the Autonomous Republic of Adjara was based on religion.<sup>40</sup>

Stating that the status of the city of Tbilisi did not change until the Bolshevik Revolution, Mustafa Aydın states that the population of the city consisted of Azerbaijanis, Georgians, and Armenians. Tbilisi was the capital of the Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic, which gained its independence on 22 April 1918. On 26 May, the Georgians, who left this formation, formed an independent Georgian State under the auspices of Germany and chose Tbilisi as the capital again. The city of Tbilisi was first captured by the British after the First World War and then by the Red Army in February 1921. Between 1922 and 1936, it was the capital of the Transcaucasian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic. In 1936, after the dissolution of this union, Tbilisi became the capital of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic, one of the independent members of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), and remained so until 1991, the year of the dissolution of the USSR.<sup>41</sup>

Here is an overview of the main events that influenced the change in the Armenian population in Tbilisi: After the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Georgia, the mutual territorial claims between Georgia and Armenia caused Armenians in Tbilisi to be seen as potential enemies. Therefore, Armenians started to lose their influence in the city. In addition, Dashnaktsutyun leaders in the city were arrested and Armenian property was confiscated. As a result, many Armenians migrated to Yerevan. Until the 1920s,

39 Eldar İkramoğlu Aslanov, "Ülke Ülke Yerel Yönetimler Azerbaycan'da Yerel Yönetimler", *Çağdaş Yerel Yönetimler Dergisi*, 7 (3): 115.

40 David Losaberidze vd., "Local Government in Georgia," *Developing New Rules in the Old Environment*, ed. Igor Munteanu, Victor Popa (Budapest: Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative, 2002), 308.

41 Aydın, "Tiflis", 152.

Armenians constituted the majority of the population in Tbilisi. However, after Georgia came under Soviet rule, the number of Armenians living in the city began to decline. It is possible to analyze the Armenians in Tbilisi during the Soviet period in two groups. The first group, called Old Armenians, were those who had settled in Tbilisi before 1915. The second group consisted of Armenians who migrated to the city after the 1915 Events.<sup>42</sup>

According to Bournoutian, the number of Armenians residing in Soviet Armenia was smaller compared to those living in other Soviet countries. The majority of Armenians lived in Tbilisi, Baku and other Russian cities. However, it is claimed that later on there was a cultural indigenization in Georgia and Azerbaijan, and Armenian intellectuals, especially those living in Tbilisi and Baku, were directly affected by this situation and migrated to Yerevan.<sup>43</sup> In addition, Suny states that Yerevan welcomed Armenians who could not receive higher education or reach good positions in Azerbaijan and Georgia.<sup>44</sup>

After joining the Soviet Union, Georgia experienced significant economic and cultural developments. Economically, the Zemo Avchala, Abasha, and Rioni hydroelectric power plants started operating in 1927, 1928, and 1934 respectively. In addition, many enterprises started production during this period. During the Second Five-Year Plan (1933-1937), Georgia became an industrial-agricultural republic. In the cultural sphere, there was a significant increase in the number of literate people in Georgia and 700,000 students were educated during the Second Five-Year Plan. In addition, 20,000 specialists were trained in 19 colleges. Theaters, clubs, libraries and reading rooms were opened in various parts of Georgia.<sup>45</sup> The economic and cultural developments in Soviet Georgia made the country a center of attraction among other Union Republics.

If we look at the demographic characteristics of Armenians in Tbilisi, according to the results of the 1922 census, the number of Armenians living in urban areas of Georgia was 135,448, while the number of Armenians living in Tbilisi was 85,309.<sup>46</sup> According to the 1923 census, 24,900 Armenians lived in the rural areas of Tbilisi. The Armenians lived in the settlements of Avchala, Asuretis, Aghbulaghis, Gomboris, Dighomis, Ertsoş, Zemo Tsalkis, Teletis,

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42 Elli Ponomareva, "Native Tbilisians or Diaspora: Negotiating the Status of Armenians in Tbilisi", *Proceedings of the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography*, Vol.2, 122-123.

43 Bournoutian, *Ermeni Tarihi*, 266-268.

44 Suny, *Ararat'a Bakmak*, 298.

45 Fahrettin Çiloğlu, *Dilden Dine, Edebiyattan Sanata Gürcülerin Tarihi* (İstanbul: Ant Yayınları, 1993), 66-67.

46 "Ethnic Composition, All Urban Places: 1922 Census", *Pop-Stat*, accessed 22 March 2022, <http://pop-stat.mashke.org/georgia-ethnic1922-cities.htm>.

## An Examination on the Demographic Structure of Armenians in Tbilisi (1897-2014)

Kojoris, Manglisis, Martqopis, Mtskhētis, Priutis, Sagarejos, Sartichalis, Kvemo Tsalkis, and Qaraia.<sup>47</sup>

According to 1923 data, the number of Armenian speakers in the rural areas of Tbilisi was 15,085. Their distribution by region was as follows:

REGION	NUMBER OF ARMENIAN SPEAKERS	REGION	NUMBER OF ARMENIAN SPEAKERS
Avchalis	38	Manglisis	161
Asuretis	733	Martqopis	4
Aghbulaghis	4,900	Sagarejos	37
Gomboris	6	Sartichalis	3
Dighomis	7	Kvemo Tsalkis	1,657
Zemo Tsalkis	7,380	Qaraia	50
Kojoris	109		

*Table 2: The Number of Armenian Speakers in the Rural Areas of Tbilisi during the Soviet Union According to the 1923 Census Results<sup>48</sup>*

Data from 1923 shows that the place where the Armenian language was most widely spoken among the rural areas of Tbilisi was Zemo Tsalkis. It was followed by Aghbulaghis, Kvemo Tsalkis, Asuretis, Manglisis, and Kojoris. There were very few Armenian speakers in other regions. The main reason for the low number of Armenian speakers in rural areas was that the Armenian population in Tbilisi mostly lived in urban areas.

According to the results of the census conducted during the Soviet Union, we have the following data on the population of Armenians living in Soviet Georgia:

47 "Ethnic Composition, All Rural Places: 1923 Census", *Pop-Stat*, accessed 22 March 2022, <http://pop-stat.mashke.org/georgia-ethnic-loc1923.htm>.

48 "Linguistic Composition, All Rural Places: 1923 Census", *Pop-Stat*, accessed 23 March 2022, <http://pop-stat.mashke.org/georgia-lang-loc1923.htm>.

YEAR	TOTAL POPULATION OF SOVIET GEORGIA	TOTAL ARMENIAN POPULATION	RATIO OF ARMENIANS TO TOTAL POPULATION
1926	2,666,494	307,018	11.5
1939	3,540,023	415,013	11.7
1959	4,044,045	442,916	11.0
1970	4,686,358	452,309	9.7
1979	4,993,182	448,000	9.0
1989	5,400,841	437,211	8.1

*Table 3: Armenian Population in Soviet Georgia and its Ratio to the Total Population (1926-1989)<sup>49</sup>*

It is understood from the data that the total population of Armenians in Soviet Georgia tended to increase between 1926 and 1970. When the table above is analyzed, it is seen that the total Armenian population was the highest in 1970. The Armenian population, which was 452,309 in 1970, decreased to 437,211 in the 1989 census. This can be attributed to the migration movements and the cultural localization of Soviet Georgia. Moreover, the proportion of Armenians to the total population was on a steady downward trend since the 1939 census. The main reason for this was the Second World War that started in 1939. This 6-year-long war had an impact on the decline in the total population.

The distribution of Armenians living in Soviet Georgia according to their settlements was as follows:

49 “Всесоюзная перепись населения 1926 года. Национальный состав населения по регионам республик СССР”, “Всесоюзная перепись населения 1939 года. Национальный состав населения по республикам СССР”, “Всесоюзная перепись населения 1959 года. Национальный состав населения по республикам СССР”, “Всесоюзная перепись населения 1970 года. Национальный состав населения по республикам СССР”, “Всесоюзная перепись населения 1979 года. Национальный состав населения по республикам СССР”, “Всесоюзная перепись населения 1989 года. Национальный состав населения по республикам СССР”, *ДЕМОСКОП Weekly*, accessed 26 March 2022,

[http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/sng\\_nac\\_26.php?reg=2330](http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/sng_nac_26.php?reg=2330).

[http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/sng\\_nac\\_39.php?reg=4](http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/sng_nac_39.php?reg=4).

[http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/sng\\_nac\\_59.php?reg=8](http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/sng_nac_59.php?reg=8).

[http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/sng\\_nac\\_70.php?reg=6](http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/sng_nac_70.php?reg=6).

[http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/sng\\_nac\\_79.php?reg=6](http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/sng_nac_79.php?reg=6).

[http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/sng\\_nac\\_89.php?reg=6](http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/sng_nac_89.php?reg=6).

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YEAR	URBAN POPULATION	RURAL POPULATION	TOTAL POPULATION
1926	149,545	157,473	307,018
1939	196,784	218,229	415,013
1959	242,399	200,517	442,916
1970	255,115	197,194	452,309
1979	260,658	187,342	448,000
1989	260,516	176,695	437,211

*Table 4: Distribution of Armenians in Soviet Georgia by Residential Areas (1926-1989)*<sup>50</sup>

In contrast, the urban Armenian population in Soviet Georgia increased year by year. From 149,545 in 1926, the urban Armenian population increased to 260,516 in 1989. However, the number of Armenians living in rural areas declined after the 1939 census. From 218,229 in the 1939 census, the Armenian rural population dropped to 176,695 in 1989, the last census of the Soviet Union. One of the important reasons that triggered the increase in the urban population and the decrease in the rural population was internal migration from rural to urban areas.

The gender composition of Armenians living in Soviet Georgia was as follows:

50 “Всероссийская перепись населения 1926 года. Национальный состав населения по регионам республик СССР”, “Всероссийская перепись населения 1939 г. Распределение городского и сельского населения СССР и союзных республик по национальности и полу”, “Всероссийская перепись населения 1939 г. Распределение городского и сельского населения СССР и союзных республик по национальности и полу”, “Всероссийская перепись населения 1959 года. Городское и сельское население республик СССР по полу и национальности”, “Всероссийская перепись населения 1970 года. Городское и сельское население республик СССР по полу и национальности”, “Всероссийская перепись населения 1979 года. Городское и сельское население республик СССР по полу и национальности”, “Всероссийская перепись населения 1989 года. Распределение городского и сельского населения республик СССР по полу и национальности”, *ДЕМОСКОП Weekly*, accessed 27 March 2022,

[http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/sng\\_nac\\_26.php?reg=2330](http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/sng_nac_26.php?reg=2330).

[http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/sng\\_nac\\_39\\_gs.php?reg=5&gor=1&Submit=Tamam](http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/sng_nac_39_gs.php?reg=5&gor=1&Submit=Tamam).

[http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/sng\\_nac\\_39\\_gs.php?reg=5&gor=2&Submit=Tamam](http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/sng_nac_39_gs.php?reg=5&gor=2&Submit=Tamam).

[http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/ussr\\_nac\\_59.php?reg=6](http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/ussr_nac_59.php?reg=6).

[http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/ussr\\_nac\\_70.php?reg=6](http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/ussr_nac_70.php?reg=6).

[http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/ussr\\_nac\\_79.php?reg=6](http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/ussr_nac_79.php?reg=6).

[http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/ussr\\_nac\\_89.php?reg=6](http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/ussr_nac_89.php?reg=6).

YEAR	MALE POPULATION	FEMALE POPULATION	TOTAL POPULATION
1926	155,628	151,390	307,018
1939	208,617	206,396	415,013
1959	212,824	230,092	442,916
1970	217,874	234,435	452,309
1979	214,630	233,370	448,000
1989	211,245	225,966	437,211

*Table 5: Distribution of Armenians by Gender in Soviet Georgia (1926-1989)<sup>51</sup>*

According to the data in the table presented above, it is seen that the Armenian population in both male and female genders tended to increase in the period between 1926 and 1970. However, while the male population outnumbered the female population in 1926, by 1959, the female population had surpassed the male population. The main reason for this was the Second World War between 1939 and 1945. During the war period, the male population decreased significantly as men went to the front, where many of them lost their lives. In addition, the political and socioeconomic problems in the country in the post-war period led to a decline in both male and female population after 1970.

The Armenian population in the Tbilisi Region in particular was as follows: According to the 1926 census, a total of 128,745 Armenians resided in the Tbilisi Region. Of the Armenians in the Tbilisi Region, 100,148 lived in the city of Tbilisi.<sup>52</sup> While the number of Armenian speakers in the Tbilisi Region was 98,301, 81,477 of this number were living in the city of Tbilisi.<sup>53</sup>

51 “Всероссийская перепись населения 1926 года. Национальный состав населения по регионам республик СССР”, “Всероссийская перепись населения 1939 г. Распределение городского и сельского населения СССР и союзных республик по национальности и полу”, “Всероссийская перепись населения 1959 года. Городское и сельское население республик СССР по полу и национальности”, “Всероссийская перепись населения 1970 года. Городское и сельское население республик СССР по полу и национальности”, “Всероссийская перепись населения 1979 года. Городское и сельское население республик СССР по полу и национальности”, “Всероссийская перепись населения 1989 года. Распределение городского и сельского населения республик СССР по полу и национальности”, *ДЕМОСКОПИ Weekly*, accessed 28 March 2022,

[http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/sng\\_nac\\_26.php?reg=2330](http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/sng_nac_26.php?reg=2330).

[http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/sng\\_nac\\_39\\_gs.php?reg=5&gor=3&Submit=Tamam](http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/sng_nac_39_gs.php?reg=5&gor=3&Submit=Tamam).

[http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/ussr\\_nac\\_59.php?reg=6](http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/ussr_nac_59.php?reg=6).

[http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/ussr\\_nac\\_70.php?reg=6](http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/ussr_nac_70.php?reg=6).

[http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/ussr\\_nac\\_79.php?reg=6](http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/ussr_nac_79.php?reg=6).

[http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/ussr\\_nac\\_89.php?reg=6](http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/ussr_nac_89.php?reg=6).

52 “Ethnic Composition, All Communes: 1926 Census”, *Pop-Stat*, accessed 23 March 2022, <http://pop-stat.mashke.org/georgia-ethnic1926.htm>.

53 Linguistic composition, all communes: 1926 census”, *Pop-Stat*, accessed 23 March 2022, <http://pop-stat.mashke.org/georgia-lang1926.htm>.

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The table below shows the gender composition of Armenians living in Tbilisi according to the censuses conducted during the Soviet Union:

YEAR	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
1939 <sup>54</sup>	67,090	70,241	137,331
1959 <sup>55</sup>	69,764	79,494	149,258
1970 <sup>56</sup>	70,545	79,663	150,208
1979 <sup>57</sup>	71,527	81,373	152,900
1989 <sup>58</sup>	70,989	79,149	150,138

**Table 6:** Gender Composition of Armenians in Tbilisi According to the Census Results of the Soviet Union Period (1939-1989)

The table showing the gender composition of Armenians in Tbilisi shows that there were more women than men. The Second World War may be pointed as reason for the higher proportion of women. During this war, many people lost their lives fighting in the ranks of the Red Army. However, the population of both men and women continued to increase until the 1979 census. In 1989, the male population was 70,989 and the female population was 79,149. The total population increased continuously until 1979. At its peak in 1979, the total number of Armenians in Tbilisi was 152,900.

### 3. The Demographic Structure of Armenians in Tbilisi in the Post-Soviet Period

Georgia, which gained its independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union, has faced a number of political and socioeconomic problems. The first of these problems is the failure in the process of state and nation building. The second is the problems experienced in the process of democracy implementation. The third problem is the issue of social integration between Armenians and

54 “Всероссийская перепись населения 1939 г. Распределение городского и сельского населения областей союзных республик по национальности и полу”, *ДЕМОСКОП Weekly*, accessed 24 March 2022, [http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/rer\\_nac\\_39\\_gs.php?reg=26&gor=3&Submit=Tamam](http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/rer_nac_39_gs.php?reg=26&gor=3&Submit=Tamam).

55 Всесоюзная перепись населения 1959 года. Городское и сельское население областей республик СССР (кроме РСФСР) по полу и национальности”, *ДЕМОСКОП Weekly*, accessed 24 March 2022, [http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/resp\\_nac\\_59.php?reg=61](http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/resp_nac_59.php?reg=61).

56 “Всероссийская перепись населения 1970 года. Городское и сельское население областей республик СССР (кроме РСФСР) по полу и национальности”, *ДЕМОСКОП Weekly*, accessed 24 March 2022, [http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/resp\\_nac\\_70.php?reg=66](http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/resp_nac_70.php?reg=66).

57 “Всероссийская перепись населения 1979 года. Городское и сельское население областей республик СССР (кроме РСФСР) по полу и национальности”, *ДЕМОСКОП Weekly*, accessed 24 March 2022, [http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/resp\\_nac\\_79.php?reg=69](http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/resp_nac_79.php?reg=69).

58 “Всероссийская перепись населения 1989 года. Распределение городского и сельского населения областей республик СССР по полу и национальности”, *ДЕМОСКОП Weekly*, accessed 24 March 2022, [http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/resp\\_nac\\_89.php?reg=63](http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/resp_nac_89.php?reg=63).

Georgians. Armenians, especially those living in the Javakheti region of Georgia, are far from integrating with Georgian society and rely on the support of foreign powers to feel safe. They oppose the Georgian government's efforts to integrate Armenians and insist on not learning Georgian. They also perceive the government's efforts as cultural assimilation.<sup>59</sup>

Elli Ponomareva points out that in the post-Soviet period, Armenians in Tbilisi have found themselves in a rapidly nationalizing state and witnessed the status of Armenians in the newly established state becoming a matter of debate. She also emphasizes that since 1988, minorities in Georgia have been defined as "guests in our [Georgian] land".<sup>60</sup> However, political scientist Timothy K. Blauvelt, in his article titled "Armenians in the Making of Modern Georgia" in the book *Armenians in Post-Socialist Europe*, states that Armenians are envisioning their future in Georgia with fear after having experienced the aggressive nationalism under Zviad Gamsakhurdia and socioeconomic problems under Eduard Shevardnadze. The same source also reports that many Armenians living in Tbilisi migrated to the West, Russia, and Armenia in the early 1990s due to political and socio-economic problems and claims that some of those who remained in the city have changed their surnames to resemble Georgians. Blauvelt emphasizes that Armenians who have continued to live in Tbilisi after the Rose Revolution (2003) are in fear of assimilation. The reason given by the political scientist is that Armenians have lost the privileges for the use of their mother tongue. They also face obstacles such as the problem of church ownership and lack of representation in the Georgian parliament.<sup>61</sup>

The dissolution of the Soviet Union brought about significant changes in the lives of Armenians living in Tbilisi. As a legacy of the Soviet Union, many of the Armenians in Tbilisi were fluent in Russian, which enabled them to hold important positions. However, after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, after which the Russian language lost its importance, the lack of Georgian began to be felt in the Armenian community and this led to the Armenians in Tbilisi losing their status.<sup>62</sup>

In the post-Soviet period, two censuses have been conducted throughout Georgia. The first of these was conducted in 2002. According to this census, the total population of the country was 4,371,535.<sup>63</sup> Of this population, 248,929

59 Timuçin Kodaman ve Adem Ali İren, "Gürcistan Ulus İnşa Çabalarının Önünde Bir Engel: Cavaheti Ermenileri", *Uluslararası Alanya İşletme Fakültesi Dergisi*, C:5, S:2, Yıl:2013, 74.

60 Ponomareva, "Native Tbilisians or Diaspora", 124.

61 Timothy K. Blauvelt, Christofer Berglund, "Armenians in the Making of Modern Georgia," *Armenians in Post-Socialist Europe*, ed. Konrad Siekierski, Stefan Troebst (Köln: Böhlau Verlag Köln Weimar Wien, 2016), 76-83.

62 Ponomareva, "Native Tbilisians or Diaspora", 125-126.

63 "All Places: 2002 Census", *Pop-Stat*, accessed 25 March 2022, <http://pop-stat.mashke.org/georgia-census2002.htm>.

## An Examination on the Demographic Structure of Armenians in Tbilisi (1897-2014)

were Armenians.<sup>64</sup> Of these, 171,139 were representatives of the Apostolic Church.<sup>65</sup> We do not have any information about the religious beliefs of the remaining 77,790 people. The existence of data on the population of Catholic Armenians during the period of Tsarist Russia is an indication that they had a significant proportion of the population at that time. The fact that the Catholic Armenian population in Georgia was unknown by the 2000s can be considered as an indication that there were no Catholic Armenians of significant numbers left in Tbilisi by that time.

The picture that the above table presents when we look at the Tbilisi Region in particular is as follows: According to the 2002 census, the number of Armenians of the Apostolic Church living in the Tbilisi Region was 51,687.<sup>66</sup> In total, 82,586 Armenians lived in this region. Their distribution according to rayons<sup>67</sup> was as follows:

RAYON	POPULATION	RAYON	POPULATION
Gldani-Nadzaladevi	13,706	Mtatsminda- Krtsanisi	8,259
Didube- Chugureti	8,644	Vake-Saburtalo, Tsqneti	5,219
Isani-Samgori	46,757	Rural Area	1

*Table 7: Armenian Population in the Rayons of the Tbilisi Region According to the 2002 Census Results<sup>68</sup>*

The rayons with the largest number of Armenians in the Tbilisi Region were Isani-Samgori, Gldani-Nadzaladevi, Didube-Chugureti, Mtatsminda- Krtsanisi and Vake-Saburtalo, Tsqneti.

The second general census in Georgia took place in 2014. According to this census, 3,713,804 people live in Georgia. 2,122,623 of them live in urban areas and 1,591,181 in rural areas.<sup>69</sup> According to 2014 data, the total population of Armenians, the third largest ethnic group in Georgia, is 168,102.<sup>70</sup> Of these,

64 “Ethnic Composition: 2002 Census”, *Pop-Stat*, accessed 25 March 2022, <http://pop-stat.mashke.org/georgia-ethnic2002.htm>.

65 “Religious Composition: 2002 Census”, *Pop-Stat*, accessed 25 March 2022, <http://pop-stat.mashke.org/georgia-religion2002.htm>.

66 “Religious Composition: 2002 Census”, *Pop-Stat*, accessed 25 March 2022, <http://pop-stat.mashke.org/georgia-religion2002.htm>.

67 Rayon (Russian): Region, a term used to define territorial units in the Soviet Union. See: Shafiyev, *The Russian-Soviet Resettlement Policies...*, x.

68 “Ethnic Composition: 2002 Census”, *Pop-Stat*, accessed 25 March 2022, <http://pop-stat.mashke.org/georgia-ethnic2002.htm>.

69 “2014 General Population Census Main Results”, *National Statistics Office of Georgia*, accessed 25 June 2022, [http://census.ge/files/results/Census\\_release\\_ENG.pdf](http://census.ge/files/results/Census_release_ENG.pdf).

70 Ralph Hakkert, *Population Dynamics in Georgia - An Overview Based on the 2014 General Population Census Data* (Tbilisi: National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2017), 47.

86,538 live in urban and 81,564 in rural areas.<sup>71</sup> Compared to the 2002 census, the Armenian population in Georgia has decreased by 80,827 people. The reasons for this decrease include the inability of Armenians in Javakheti Region to integrate into Georgian society, socioeconomic problems during Shevardnadze’s years in power, migration of Armenians to other countries, fear of assimilation, and loss of status of the Armenians.

In the 2014 general census, population data based on the age range indicate the following information: The number of Armenians between the ages of 15-24 is 12,500, while the number of Armenians between the ages of 15-29 is 20,600.<sup>72</sup> 15.7% of the Armenians in Georgia are included in the elderly population group.<sup>73</sup>

According to the data of the same year, the number of Armenians in the Tbilisi Region is 53,409. 53,183 of them reside in urban areas and 226 in rural areas.<sup>74</sup> Compared to 2002 data, the Armenian population has decreased in all rayons. For example, in the 2002 census, a total of 13,706 Armenians lived in the Gldani and Nadzaladevi rayons. When we examine the 2014 statistics of the same rayons, we see that the Armenian population has decreased to 8,124. The Armenian population in these rayons has thus decreased by 5,582 people. According to the 2014 census, the distribution of Armenians living in other rayons of the Tbilisi Region is as follows:

RAYON	POPULATION	RAYON	POPULATION
Gldani Rayon	4,934	Mtatsminda Rayon	1,396
Didube Rayon	1,385	Nadzaladevi Rayon	3,190
Vake Rayon	1,070	Saburtalo Rayon	1,359
Isani Rayon	19,378	Samgori Rayon	13,764
Krtsanisi Rayon	3,313	Chugureti Rayon	3,620

**Table 8:** Armenian Population in the Rayons of the Tbilisi Region According to the 2014 Census Results<sup>75</sup>

71 “Ethnic Composition: 2014 Census”, *Pop-Stat*, accessed 25 March 2022, <http://pop-stat.mashke.org/georgia-ethnic2014.htm>.

72 Frank Eelens, *Young People in Georgia - An Overview Based on the 2014 General Population Census Data* (Tbilisi: National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2017), 17.

73 Bart de Bruijn and Maka Chitanava, *Ageing and Older Persons in Georgia - An Overview Based on the 2014 General Population Census Data* (Tbilisi: National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2017), 22.

74 “Ethnic Composition: 2014 Census”, *Pop-Stat*, accessed 25 March 2022, <http://pop-stat.mashke.org/georgia-ethnic2014.htm>

75 “Ethnic Composition, All Places: 2014 Census”, *Pop-Stat*, accessed 25 March 2022, <http://pop-stat.mashke.org/georgia-ethnic-loc2014.htm>.

Data from 2014 shows that the rayon with the highest number of Armenians in Tbilisi Region is Isani. This rayon is followed by Samgori, Gldani, Chugureti, Krtsanisi, Nadzaladevi, Mtatsminda, Didube, Saburtalo, and Vake. Compared to the 2002 census, the ranking of the rayons with the highest number of Armenians remains unchanged.

From a religious point of view, Georgia is known as a Christian-majority country. Approximately 83% of Georgia's population is Orthodox, 11% is Muslim, and 3% are Armenians belonging to the Apostolic Church.<sup>76</sup> The number of Armenians belonging to the Apostolic Church in Georgia is 109,041. Of these Armenians, 47,423 live in urban areas and 61,618 in rural areas.<sup>77</sup> Compared to the 2002 census, there is a decrease of 62,098 Armenians belonging to the Apostolic Church in Georgia. The total number of Armenians belonging to the Apostolic Church in the Tbilisi Region is 29,368. Of these, 29,320 live in urban areas and 48 in rural areas.<sup>78</sup>

When the marital status of the ethnic groups in Georgia is analyzed, it is seen that Georgians and Turks are more homogeneous than Armenians. While 97.5% of Georgians and 97.6% of Turks prefer to marry Georgians and Turks respectively, the situation is slightly different for Armenians. Only 79.5% of Armenian marriages are homogeneous. In urban areas 66.1% and in rural areas 93% of the marriages are homogeneous. The fact that there are fewer homogeneous marriages among Armenians compared to other ethnic groups can be interpreted as one of the factors that trigger the assimilation process of Armenians in Tbilisi.<sup>79</sup>

The linguistic skills of Armenians living in Georgia were also within the scope of our study. The data we obtained in this context are as follows: In Georgia, knowing Georgian is a prerequisite for pursuing higher education and having a career. In urban areas, 78.9% of Armenian men and 76.9% of women speak Georgian. In rural areas, 24% of men and 20.5% of women speak Georgian. In total, 46.4% of Armenian women and 47.4% of men can speak Georgian.<sup>80</sup> It is evident from these numbers that, among the Armenians living in rural areas of Georgia, the rate of Georgian speakers is much lower than in urban areas. The main reason for this may be the limited educational opportunities in rural areas compared to urban areas.

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76 Eelens, *Young People in Georgia*, 17.

77 "Religious Composition: 2014 Census", *Pop-Stat*, accessed 25 March 2022, <http://pop-stat.mashke.org/georgia-religion2014a.htm>.

78 "Religious Composition: 2014 Census", *Pop-Stat*, accessed 25 March 2022, <http://pop-stat.mashke.org/georgia-religion2014a.htm>.

79 Ralph Hakkert and Nana Sumbadze, *Gender Analysis of the 2014 General Population Census Data* (Tbilisi: National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2017), x-18.

80 Hakkert, *Gender Analysis*, xi-42.

## Conclusion

Based on the works analyzed in this study, the following information can be provided about the historical background of the Armenians in Tbilisi and the events that led to their population mobility: The historical background of Armenians living in Georgia dates back to the late 6th and early 7th centuries. The fall of the Bagratuni Dynasty and the Byzantine takeover of the city of Ani accelerated the migration of Armenians to Tbilisi. By the 12th century, the number of Armenians in Georgia had reached a significant proportion and they had even formed their own diocese centered in Tbilisi. Between the 14th and 18th centuries, the migration of Armenians to Georgia continued, and by the end of the 18th century, the number of Armenians in the city of Tbilisi, which had a population of 20,000, had reached 12,000. The death of Karim Khan in 1779 led to a struggle among the Armenian rulers. As a result, many Armenians living in Yerevan and Karabakh migrated to Russia and Georgia. According to 19th century data, Armenians had begun to be recognized as the natives of the city. In the early 19th century, the Russian Empire's crossing of the Caucasus Mountains caused a new wave of migration. Between 1826 and 1828, the Russian Empire invited Armenians from Iran and the Ottoman Empire to its territory to intervene in the ethnic composition of the Caucasus. Thereupon, Armenians who supported Russia during the Ottoman-Russian War settled in Russia after the war. Moreover, 20,000 Armenians migrated to Yerevan, Nakhchivan, and Tbilisi in accordance with the Treaty of Edirne signed in 1829. In the 19th century, Tbilisi became an important center of intellectual and political life for Armenians. However, as of the second half of the 19th century, Armenians began to lose their population dominance in the city.

Tbilisi was an important center for the Armenian revolutionary committee members operating against the Ottomans. Especially Dashnaksutyun, which was founded in 1890, was one of the most prominent of such committees. After the Bolshevik Revolution, problems emerged between the Democratic Republic of Georgia and Armenia due to mutual territorial claim, which led to the Armenians in Tbilisi being perceived as a threat. Over time, the Armenians in the city began to lose their influence. In addition, Dashnaksutyun members in the city were arrested and Armenians' properties were confiscated. As a result, Armenians began to migrate to Yerevan. Until the 1920s, Armenians had a significant population in Tbilisi. However, the establishment of Soviet rule in Georgia led to a decline in the number of Armenians living in Tbilisi. During this period, Armenians were divided into two groups: those who migrated to the city before and after 1915. Over time, Georgia's cultural indigenization directly affected Armenians and led them to leave the city. The Second World War also contributed to the decline of the Armenian population in Tbilisi. Apart from the events that contributed to the population decline, the economic and cultural progress in Soviet Georgia led to migration from other

regions to Georgia. In the post-Soviet period, the ultra-nationalist policy implemented by the Georgian government, socioeconomic problems, fear of assimilation, and loss of status caused most of the Armenians in Tbilisi to migrate to the West, Russia, and Armenia. Meanwhile, some of those who preferred to stay in the city changed their surnames, which began a process of assimilation.

Within the scope of this study, the first population data related to the Tsarist Russian Period belongs to 1880. According to this data, the number of Armenians living in Tbilisi was 38,513. According to the 1897 census, there were 210,161 Armenians belonging to the Apostolic Church in the Tbilisi Guberniya. When the 1897 census is compared to the 1880 census, it is seen that the Armenian population increased approximately 6 times. However, it is not correct to interpret this increase as an explosion in the Armenian population, because the main reason for the increase stemmed from administrative structure. While the 1880 data refers to the “city of Tbilisi”, the 1897 census refers to the “Tbilisi Guberniya”. To summarize, the Guberniya was a much larger administrative unit than the city. Therefore, it was normal that the Armenian population in the Guberniya was much larger. Some questions arise when the number of native Armenian speakers in the Tbilisi Guberniya is compared to the total Armenian population. According to the 1897 census, the total number of native Armenian speakers in the Tbilisi Guberniya was 196,189. According to the same census, the number of Armenians belonging to the Apostolic Church was 210,161. When the Catholic Armenian population of 20,216 is added to this number, the total number of Armenians is 230,377. However, when the total number of Armenians whose mother tongue is Armenian is considered as 196,189, it can be concluded that 34,188 Armenians did not speak Armenian as their mother tongue. This shows that Armenian was not the mother tongue of all Armenians living in the Tbilisi Guberniya. Between 1906 and 1917, there was a decrease in the population of Armenians living in rural areas. In 1906, 168,051 Armenians lived in the rural areas of Tbilisi Guberniya. According to 1917 data, the population of Armenians living in rural areas of the Guberniya decreased to 139,939. The main reason for the decrease of 28,112 people in 11 years was the Russification policy pursued by Tsarist Russia.

One of the most detailed population data on Armenians in Tbilisi during the Soviet Union is the 1926 census. According to this census, 128,745 Armenians lived in the Tbilisi Region. 100,148 of this population resided in the city of Tbilisi. The number of Armenian speakers in the Tbilisi Region was 98,301. In other words, the number of those who were Armenian but did not speak Armenian was 30,444. The main reason for this situation was the language policy implemented during the Soviet Union. In line with this language policy, every nation living under the Soviet Union was expected to speak Russian.

According to the censuses conducted during the Soviet Union, the Armenian population in Tbilisi showed an increasing trend until 1979. In parallel to this, both male and female population increased continuously until 1979. The 1979 census was a turning point for Armenians in Tbilisi and their population started to decline after this date.

In the post-Soviet period, population censuses were conducted in Georgia in 2002 and 2014. According to the 2002 census, a total of 82,586 Armenians lived in the Tbilisi Region. Among them, the number of those belonging to the Apostolic Church was 51,687. Meanwhile, according to the 2014 census, 53,409 Armenians reside in the Tbilisi Region. Of these, 29,368 belong to the Apostolic Church. When the two censuses are compared, it is seen that the total Armenian population in the Tbilisi Region has decreased by 29,177 people in 12 years. Similarly, the number of Armenians belonging to the Apostolic Church has decreased by 22,319. The main reasons for this decrease can be attributed to the political and socioeconomic problems in the country.

The small number of Georgian-speaking academics in Türkiye causes the studies on Georgia and especially on Tbilisi to be limited. At the same time, the fact that Georgians had been under the rule of Russia for many years was influential in the writing of many sources in Russian. Especially the publication of the census results of Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union in Russian attracts the attention of scholars who would like to focus on this subject. As a disadvantage-advantage situation again, the fact that some of the statistical sources by the National Statistics Office of Georgia being published in Georgian creates a problem in analyzing those sources, but this problem can be solved by referring to Russian and English sources.

This study represents an intense effort to identify the units of the administrative structure of Tbilisi during Tsarist Russia, the Soviet Union, and independent Georgia. It briefly gives the equivalents of these administrative units in Türkiye in the footnotes section to avoid creating confusion for the readers. As mentioned above, this article has mainly utilized Russian and English sources. Having examined the demographic structure of Armenians in Tbilisi across different periods, it constitutes one of the links to our academic studies on the demographic characteristics of Armenians residing in different countries of the world.

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