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Kitap Tanıtımı/Book Review

### **Review of the Monograph by Rizvan Huseynov: Azerbaijan and the Armenian issue in the Caucasus (Baku: Şərəq-Qərb, 2025, 448 pp.)**

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#### **Abstract**

This review examines the monograph Azerbaijan and the Armenian Issue in the Caucasus by Rizvan Huseynov as a critical intervention in the historiography of the South Caucasus. The author challenges dominant narratives constructed through politicized interpretations of history and proposes a decolonial perspective that re-centers Azerbaijan as a subject of its own historical agency. The monograph engages with understudied sources, critiques the manipulation of religious and cultural heritage, and addresses the use of historiography as a tool of territorial legitimization. This work is of relevance to scholars interested in identity formation, memory politics, and contested historical narratives in post-imperial regions.

**Keywords:** Azerbaijan, Armenian issue, historiography, Caucasus, memory politics, decoloniality, identity

#### **Öz**

Bu inceleme, Rizvan Huseynov'un Kafkasya'da Azerbaycan ve Ermeni Meselesi adlı monografisini Güney Kafkasya tarih yazımına yönelik eleştirel bir katkı olarak değerlendirmektedir. Yazar, siyasallaştırılmış tarih yorumlarıyla inşa edilen egemen anlatılara karşı çıkmakta ve Azerbaycan'ı kendi tarihinin öznesi olarak merkeze alan sömürgecilik karşıtı bir bakış açısı önermektedir. Monografi, az çalışılmış kaynakları tartısmakta, dini ve kültürel mirasın araçsallaştırılmasını eleştirmekte ve tarih yazımının toprak iddialarını meşrulaştırma aracı olarak

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kullanımını sorgulamaktadır. Bu çalışma, kimlik oluşumu, hafıza siyaseti ve post-imparatorluk coğrafyalarında tarihsel anlatıların çatışmasıyla ilgilenen araştırmacılar için önemlidir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Azerbaycan, Ermeni meselesi, tarih yazımı, Kafkasya, hafıza siyaseti, sömürgecilik kontrasti, kimlik

The monograph *Azerbaijan and the Armenian issue in the Caucasus* by Azerbaijani historian and orientalist Rizvan Huseynov is not merely another study in the historiography of the South Caucasus – it is an intellectual manifesto aimed at revisiting entrenched narratives rooted in post-Soviet and Western academia. The work challenges traditional paradigms and proposes a new lens through which to analyze ethno-political transformations in the post-imperial space.

The monograph is a voluminous and structurally coherent study dedicated to deconstructing the Armenian historical narrative and defending the historical and cultural sovereignty of Azerbaijan. The research draws on a vast array of rare archival materials, ancient and medieval manuscripts, and obscure texts in Arabic, Persian, Ottoman, Armenian, and European languages. Of particular note is the use of European cartographic tradition: atlases and maps from the 18th–19th centuries are not merely illustrations but are used as stand-alone arguments supporting the author's claims. The work with toponymy, demographic statistics, and political boundaries is enhanced by critical analysis of ideological transformations of concepts such as the "Armenian Highlands," "Eastern Armenia," and "Nagorno-Karabakh."

The author adopts a decolonial methodological stance, explicitly rejecting historiographic patterns shaped by Russian, Soviet, and European (including Armenian) traditions. Instead, he treats the Caucasus as a historical subject in its own right. According to Huseynov, the "Armenian issue" is not an organic component of regional history but a geopolitical construct, consciously embedded in the political and demographic fabric of the Caucasus in the 18th–19th centuries through mechanisms of demographic engineering, missionary activity, and cartographic myth-making.

The principal academic contribution of the monograph lies in its systematic refutation of the Armenian historiography's claims regarding the ancient Armenian presence in territories historically associated with Azerbaijan. Huseynov critiques Armenian sources, particularly the works of the Mkhitarists and the publishing activities of Catholicos Simeon in Madras, revealing these as political and ideological instruments intended to legitimize claims to foreign historical and cultural heritage.

The analysis of falsifications related to the Armenization of Albanian, Turkic, and other Christian legacies in the South Caucasus is especially compelling. Huseynov convincingly demonstrates how religious structures –

primarily the Etchmiadzin Church – appropriated sacred sites left “ownerless” after the Islamization of the local population and retrospectively integrated them into the Armenian canon.

One notable chapter explores the international diplomacy of the 18th–19th centuries, where the author traces the role of the Ottoman, Qajar, and Russian Empires in the partition of Azerbaijani territories. Huseynov situates Azerbaijani history within the broader framework of global political developments – from the Napoleonic Wars to the Great Game in Asia – emphasizing the intersection of Azerbaijan’s fate with transnational processes such as colonialism, geopolitical alliances, and imperial ideologies. According to the author, the mass resettlement of Armenians from the Ottoman Empire and Iran into the region was not a humanitarian gesture but part of a strategic demographic redesign aimed at shifting the confessional and ethno-political balance.

The monograph also contributes to the study of historical memory and falsifications, showing how Armenian historiography facilitated the Armenization of Caucasian Albania, constructed pseudo-ancient genealogies, and how Soviet historiography cemented artificial toponyms, displacing authentic Turkic and Iranian names.

Methodologically, the book straddles the line between polemical essay and academic research. This dual character is both a strength and a limitation. On the one hand, the rhetorical force of the text makes the author’s position and its historical-political rationale unmistakably clear. On the other hand, the drive for evidentiary confrontation sometimes results in generalizations that may blur academic rigor with polemical intensity. Nevertheless, Huseynov explicitly declares the book’s mission as a response to propagandist constructs, and thus the chosen style can be interpreted as part of a narrative decolonization strategy.

Azerbaijan and the Armenian issue in the Caucasus is a critical work in the historiography of the South Caucasus that blends academic research, political commentary, and ideological polemic. It is of interest to historians, political scientists, Caucasus specialists, and those engaged with issues of national identity and historical memory in the post-imperial world. The work raises fundamental questions about the legitimacy of historical narratives, the right to interpretation, and the role of the scholarly community in shaping the ethno-political landscape of the region.

In conclusion, Huseynov’s monograph represents a significant contribution to the re-evaluation of historical memory in the Caucasus. Its scholarly value lies not only in the breadth of its sources and originality of interpretation but also in initiating a much-needed process of critical historiographical revision.

**Beyanlar / Declarations**

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Hakem Değerlendirmesi - *Peer-review*: Dış bağımsız hakemlerce çift taraflı kör hakemlik sürecinden geçirilmiştir. *Externally and double-blind peer-reviewed.*

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