

# Overall Picture of Shirak's Folklore Collection from the Mid-19th up to the Beginning of the 21st Century

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**Abstract:** The article explores the collecting of folklore intangible heritage of the Shirak region. The authors have studied the historical processes of traditionality, mutual influences, formation and application of orally transmitted folklore genres among the present-day population of Shirak. According to Alan Dundes's approach of viewing folklore as a mirror of culture, the folkloric materials from Shirak are not only artistic expressions but also symbols of cultural identity (Dundes & Bronner 2007). Over the course of more than a century, diverse folklore materials have been recorded, published and studied in the Shirak region, with a significant portion of the original works being preserved in the archives of the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of NAS RA. The folklore heritage of Shirak encompasses the centuries-old history of the region, the movements of the local population, traditional practices, original ideas and accumulated knowledge. It reflects the process of formation of human society, and within this folklore heritage one can find remnants of forgotten fragments of mythology, customs and beliefs, providing an opportunity to observe the historical and cultural journey of the present-day population of the Shirak region, along with their spiritual and material achievements and losses in various expressions of the epic folklore.

The analysis of the study was primarily carried out by historical-comparative, historical-geographical, and anthropological methods.

**Keywords:** Shirak, folklore, folklore heritage, archive, recording of folklore materials, Armenian dialect, fieldwork, cultural preservation, ethnic diversity in folklore, epic, lyrical and paremiological genres

## INTRODUCTION

The present-day Shirak region encompasses the northwestern part of the Republic of Armenia, which includes the Akhuryan, Artik, Ani, Amasia and Ashotsk districts (Hakobyan et al. IV 1998: 132–133). According to Anania Shirakatsi's "Geography" (Ashkharatsuyts), Shirak Province, known as Shirak Gavar, was part of the thirteenth district of Greater Armenia i.e. Airarat (Anania Shirakatsi 1979: 296). The name "Shirak" has its roots in tribal origins (Ghanalanyan 2022: 47), dating back centuries. Historian Movses Khorenatsi, while recounting the history of Armenia and citing his primary source Mar Abbas Katina, provides an account of the origin of the Armenian nation and the journey of Hayk the Patriarch and his descendants in Greater Armenia. According to the legend presented by Khorenatsi, Shara, who was the son of Aramayis and the grandson of Hayk's son Aramanyak, was sent to settle in the fertile and prosperous region beyond Mount Aragats, which became known as Shirak in his honor (Movses Khorenatsi 1913: 39, 40). Thus, the name of the region is derived from the ancestor Shirak. Foreign sources, including Xenophon, Ptolemy, Strabo, Herodotus and others, mention the Siracene region and the Sarmatian tribes known as the Siracs, who settled in this area after the invasion of the Sarmatian tribes. According to Armenian historian, philologist and source scholar Hakob Manandyan, their invasion was not aimed at conquest

but rather at gaining control over international trade routes (Manandyan 1984: 281).

According to Strabo's account, members of the tribe known as Shirak or Sirak were engaged in trade. They received goods from India and Babylon through the Armenians and Medes, transporting them northwards via caravans (Manandyan 1984: 281).

The hypothesis linking the toponym "Shirak" to the name of the Sarmatian tribe "Shirak" (Shar-mat) was first demonstrated by Kerovbe Patkanyan (Patkanov 1881: 112).

The ancient manifestation of the name "Shirak" in the form of a proverb was used by Movses Khorenatsi to add authenticity to his narrative, emphasizing the pivotal role of the bread-producing Shirak plain in feeding both the gluttonous Shara and his nephew.

*Aramayis sent his other son Shara, who was a glutton, to a place reported as being very fertile and plentiful, and named this place Shirak after him. The saying "you may have Shara's gluttony and greed, but we do not possess the barns of Shirak" became proverbial* (Movses Khorenatsi 1913: 40).

In his examination of the origins of Armenian proverbs, Aram Ghanalanyan, emphasizes the importance of unraveling the allegorical nature of proverbs and delving into their deeper meaning. He argues that toponyms and names of historical figures can assist in determining the approximate time and historical context in which a proverb or saying was created (Ghanalanyan 1960: XIV, XV). In this regard, the analysis of the proverb about Shara leads the researcher to the period of the formation of the Armenian nation and the resettlement of Sarmatian tribes, which occurred during the 4th to the 3rd centuries BC.

The historical authenticity of the aforementioned proverb about Shirak and Shara is further supported by the legend surrounding the Bandzerel caves located north of the village of Bash-Shorgyal in Shirak. According to this legend, the caves served as granaries for the gluttonous Shara (Ghanalanyan 2022: 39; Buniatov 1891: 141).

The history of the Shirak region is not only documented in the accounts of Armenian and foreign historians, chronicles and archaeological excavations, but it is also preserved within the rich collection of multi-genre folklore materials. These materials encompass traditions, conversations, myths and proverbial genres that have been passed down through oral transmission, providing intriguing insights into the centuries-long history of the indigenous population of the Shirak region.

## **A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE SHIRAK REGION'S HISTORY**

The archaeological studies indicate that Shirak corresponds to the ethnic region known as Eriakh within the Ararat kingdom (Urartu) (Katvalyan 1982: 512; Dan 2020: 39, 40). For a significant period, Shirak served as the royal estate of the Armenian kings, which was later granted to the Kamsarakans by the Arshakunis. In 783, Shirak was sold to the Bagratunis. During the Bagratuni rule, Shirak witnessed an economic and cultural flourishing. In 1199, the Zakaryans took control of Shirak, but their reign was interrupted by the Tatar-Mongol invasions during the 13th and 14th centuries.

During the 15th to 17th centuries, Shirak faced frequent attacks from Turkmen tribes, Persians and Turks. In 1813, as per the Gulistan Treaty, and later in 1828, under the Turkmenchay Treaty, Shirak became part of Russia. In the 19th century, Shirak experienced a new economic and cultural revival, with Alexandropol (Gyumri) emerging as its center (Katvalyan 1982: 512–514). From May 1918, Shirak Province became a part of the Republic of Armenia. Since 1920, it has been incorporated into Soviet Armenia.

## **THE PROCESS OF FOLKLORE COLLECTION, PUBLICATION AND STUDY IN SHIRAK (LATE 19TH CENTURY – 20TH CENTURY)**

This research encompasses the living traditions, circulation, collection and publication of folklore materials from the 19th century to the present day, providing insights into the manifestation and representation of the region's folklore heritage.

The Shirak dialect serves as the communication language of the indigenous population of the region. The Shirak dialect has not only maintained its vitality but also, because of undergoing demographic shifts, interactions and intermingling, it has evolved, acquiring new qualities over time that continue to be present in oral speech and within the context of folklore materials.

The collective memory of the population was also maintained by means of folklore heritage handed down from the depths of the centuries, to which were added the folklore values of the Western Armenian provinces handed down by the memory of the Western Armenian emigration. Historical memory has played an important role in the transmission and preservation of the cultural values of peoples around the world. This issue has also been examined within the framework of Irish folklore by Hilary Joyce Bishop (Bishop 2018: 22), whose theory shares common features with similar expressions found among other cultures.

The recording of Shirak's folklore history began in the late 19th century, during a time when the appreciation and collection of the spiritual heritage of the Armenian people had already become an integral part of Armenian history. Given its historical and ethnographic significance and the unique blend of

intra-ethnic layers resulting from the influx of immigrants from various settlements in Armenia, the Shirak region with its rich traditions, eloquence and ingenuity could not go unnoticed by collectors.

Throughout different historical periods, the preservation of oral traditions has been constantly under threat. Some aspects of daily life have been lost, leading to the fading of accompanying oral expressions.

For instance, we can consider work songs<sup>3</sup> that accompanied agricultural practices and household tasks such as horovel<sup>4</sup>, sandi<sup>5</sup>, songs of pulley<sup>6</sup>, khnotsi<sup>7</sup>, and others which have been forgotten. Recognizing the detrimental consequences of such losses, it became crucial to document folklore materials in a timely manner and in appropriate settings.

The collection of folklore materials in the Shirak region can be broadly divided into three stages, each marked by the contributions of different collectors and institutions.

The first stage spans from the 1850s to the 1920s, and it includes collectors such as Agheksandr Mkhitaryants, Agheksandr Aprikyan, Kajberuni, Tigran Navasardyan, Yervand Lalayan, Hovhannes Kostanyan and others.

The second stage coincides with the period of the Second Republic of Armenia and is further divided into two subphases:

- a) The first subphase covers the 1920s to the 1960s, with collectors like Gegham Tarverdyan, Mnatsakan Tamrazyan, Khayat (Sukias Zahriyan), Nikolhos Nikolhasyan, Hambardzum Ter-Vardanyan, Vard Bdoyan.
- b) The second subphase extends from the 1960s to the 1990s and is primarily associated with the prolific works of the folklore department of the Institute of Archeology and Ethnography of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia. Collectors and researchers from the institute, including Artashes Nazinyan, Sargis Harutyunyan, Arusyak Sahakyan, Araz Karapetyan, as well as a group of intellectuals such as Barkhudar Ghaziyan, Paruyr Barseghyan, Hrach Mkrtchyan, Hrach Ohanyan, Stepan Khachatryan, Yeghishe Khachatryan and others played significant roles in the collection efforts during this period.

The third stage encompasses the 1990s to the present day and is primarily associated with the Shirak Armenological Research Center of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia. Collectors such as Karine Sahakyan, Hasmik Matikyan and others have contributed to the collection of folklore materials during this period.

## The Collection of the Intangible Heritage of the Shirak Region from the 1850s to the 1920s

Motivated by national awakening, a desire to reconnect with their national roots, and inspired by the Russian and European experiences and achievements, the Armenian intelligentsia actively engaged in the collection of diverse demographic materials. In the late 19th century, there was still no clear distinction between ethnographic and folkloric materials, and collectors would record materials based on their personal preferences and interests (Vardanyan 1991: 29). The collection of folklore materials in Shirak Province, as well as its geographical distribution, were influenced by the travel opportunities available to these collectors.

For instance, Kajberuni (1837–1920)<sup>2</sup>, during his extensive journeys and service trips to various provinces of Armenia including Shirak, Kars, and Basen, diligently observed and documented the lifestyle, customs, folk holidays and accompanying rituals of the local people. His original and multi-genre materials were published in books VII–VIII and IX of the *Ethnographic Journal* (Kajberuni 1901; Kajberuni 1902) under the title “Armenian customs”. Kajberuni’s collecting work was not merely for its own sake; it aimed to highlight the changing nature of Armenian customs over time.

*...imperceptibly already forgotten, some are gradually forgotten under the influence of the new current of life, so only literature can preserve the forgotten.* (Kajberuni 1901: 114)

Motivated by a deep desire to study and preserve national traditions, customs and songs, Kajberuni diligently recorded and published his collected materials and travel experiences. He took an independent approach to the materials he gathered, comparing versions of similar materials from different provinces, analyzing their similarities and differences and highlighting regional characteristics. While Kajberuni’s collection activities encompassed a wide range of pan-Armenian demographic materials, other folk collectors who worked specifically in the Shirak region focused solely on recording and studying the local folklore values.

As early as the 1880s, Agheksandr Afrikyan<sup>9</sup> from Alexandropol (Gyumri) observed during his collection work that the population of Shirak was not homogeneous, with a significant portion consisting of Western Armenian refugees who had fled Turkish repressions and the Russian–Turkish wars. These refugees settled in villages of Shirak and, through their interactions with the local population, adopted local behaviors and customs, while also contributing their own habits, lifestyles, languages and spiritual culture from various regions such as Vaspurakan, Mush, Karin, Alashkert and others. This fusion of cultures resulted in the emergence of a new quality in the overall demographic

image of Shirak. The newcomers also enriched the Shirak dialect with their own linguistic styles and vocabulary.

When recording fairy tales, Afrikyan pays attention to the fact that:

*... Each storyteller among us has his own speech styles and endings.*  
(Mkhitareants 1901: IX)

He observed that the folk colloquial language of the Shirak region can be characterized as a “multilingual language” due to the incorporation of foreign words, particularly from Persian and Turkish, which have found their rightful place within it. This linguistic phenomenon is particularly evident when examining the language used in fairy tales. Based on his observations, he came to the following conclusion.

*To expel, to drive out foreign words from our folk tales, means to completely drain the folk spirit from them, to erase the folk pattern from them.* (Mkhitareants 1901: IX)

Based on these observations, a method for recording folklore materials was created which aimed to faithfully preserve every word spoken by the native speakers. This method involved providing etymological explanations for unclear words on the spot and staying true to the original narrative without deviating from it. It was also crucial to investigate the linguistic roots, including the ancestral origins of the speakers, and to trace the sources and transmission methods of the material in order to study its evolution over time. It is evident that earlier folklorists intuitively perceived folklore as a form of artistic communication within small groups of society, a concept that received its theoretical formulation in the 20th century (Ben-Amos 1971).

During the 1870s and 1880s, Agheksandr Mkhitaryants (1846–1916)<sup>10</sup>, a resident of Alexandropol, diligently collected a wide range of folklore and ethnographic materials in the settlements of Shirak and Vanand<sup>11</sup>, alongside his teaching and publishing activities. By 1887, his collection was ready for publication, but due to a lack of funds, it remained unpublished for 14 years.

Finally in 1901, Agheksandr Mkhitaryanc’s collection, entitled “Debris from Shirak’s barns”, was finally published in Volume A of the Eminian ethnographic collection (Mkhitaryants 1901). This publication marked the culmination of his efforts and contained a wealth of materials from the diverse folklore and ethnography of Shirak province, particularly Alexandropol. It was the first comprehensive attempt to collect, study and publish the demography of the region. In the same vein, in 1900, Mkhitaryants published the materials of Shirak’s lyrical folklore under the title “Songs and Games”. During this period, there was a growing emphasis on the collection and publication of folklore as valuable “raw material” for scientific study.

In 1899, Mkrtich Isahakyan (1870–1921)<sup>12</sup>, another collector and educator, published his collection “Folk songs of Shirak” in Book E of the ethnographic magazine (Isahakean 1899: 200–212). Isahakyan recorded these songs from the residents of Gyumri and the surrounding villages. His collection included love songs, dances and popular local troupe songs, offering a glimpse into the lyrical folklore of the late 19th century in the Shirak region.

These publications by Mkhitaryants and Isahakyan played a significant role in preserving and documenting the rich folklore heritage of Shirak and contributed to the growing body of knowledge about the region’s cultural traditions.

Arshak Brutyan (1864–1936)<sup>13</sup>, a renowned musicologist and philologist from Alexandropol, made significant contributions to the collection, recording and study of Shirak’s lyrical folklore in the late 19th century; his folk songbook entitled “Farmer’s whispers” was so popular that it was published 4 times throughout 9 years (1895, 1898, 1901, 1904). Although he had recorded numerous songs, he only published the texts for various reasons. Unfortunately, during his lifetime, he was unable to publish the complete recorded version of his collection, which was ready for publication in 1898.

However, in 1985, Arshak Brutyan’s granddaughter, Margarit Brutyan, fulfilled his dream and presented the valuable collection titled “Ramkakan mrmunjner” (meaning “Folk Songs”) to readers. This collection contains folklore texts, musical notations and annotations of significant value, and it was published in two languages, Armenian and Russian (Brutyan 1985).

Indeed, Hovhannes Kostanyants also played a significant role in collecting and studying Shirak’s novelistic folklore and diverse demographic materials. In 1896, he presented his unique approach to folk materials and their processing in the book entitled “From the Legends and Folk Life of Shirak” (Kostanyants 1896).

The interest in folklore and ethnography, as well as collecting work, continued in Shirak Province at the beginning of the 20th century. In 1911, the ethnographer-philologist Yervand Lalayan conducted research and wrote materials in the villages of Shirak. Lalayan’s collection of tales from Shirak was included in Volume IV of the series “Armenian Folk Tales”, which presented tales from Shirak and the surrounding regions (HjH IV 1963: 15–194).

The collections and publications of folk collectors, including Agheksandr Mkhitaryants, Mkrtich Isahakyan, Arshak Brutyan, Hovhannes Kostanyants and Yervand Lalayan and the materials published in press provide a comprehensive picture of Shirak’s epic folklore from the late 19th to the early 20th centuries.

### **Folklore Collecting in the Shirak Region from the 1920s to the 1990s**

As has already been mentioned, the second stage of Shirak’s collection of folklore materials coincides with the years of existence of Soviet Armenia. Shirak,

as a repository of multi-genre folklore materials, has always been the center of attention of field workers. After Sovietization, great changes took place in the life of the people, and the traditional way of life, habits, and even more so, beliefs were pushed into the background. Many things were forced out of life; the youth was guided by new ideas, new ways of living, and the traditional remained in the memory of the older generation.

Observing the folklore materials recorded in the first sub-phase of the first stage, we notice that in 1925–34, special attention was paid to the new manifestations of lyrical folklore. Field worker Gegham Tarverdyan traveled all over Armenia (including Shirak) and recorded new songs based on the needs of the time, the themes of which are mainly about the everyday life of the Soviet country, party leaders (Lenin, Stalin), collective farm life (“Tractor’s Song”, “Kolkhoz Game”) and about individuals and events of local significance (“The Haykino Fire of Leninakan”) (Tarverdyan FFI: 2349–3802). In this sub-phase, Mnatsakan Tamrazyan, ashugh<sup>8</sup> Khayat (Sukias Zahriyan), Nikoghos Nikoghosyan, Hambardzum Ter-Vardanyan and Vard Bdoyan recorded multi-genre folklore materials from Shirak’s Amasia, Ghukasyan, Akhuryan, Leninakan and Pemzashen settlements; some of their manuscript collections are kept in the IAE archive. In the 1920s and 1930s, Herik Hartenyan recorded fairy tales from his father Ashugh Tsaghkaly (Melikset Hartenyan), biblical traditions, jokes, songs, samples of folk medicine, etc., which are atypical and are stored in the archive of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia (NAS RA).

Among the collections of this sub-phase, the works dedicated to the activities of Shirak’s ashughs stand out. The roots of ashugh traditions in Shirak go back centuries and ashugh song art is one of the characteristic features of this historical-ethnographic period. Field worker Mnatsakan Tamrazyan presented an original memorial-study about the ashughs who lived and created in Aleksandropol–Leninakan in the period 1830–1930, which is a valuable source for those who study this field.

The second sub-phase of the field work process (1960–1990) highlights the intensive collecting, research and publishing activities of the departments of folklore and documentation of folklore sources of the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography, which also includes the folklore culture of Shirak region. In the 1960s, expedition groups (folklore-based) worked in the Shirak region (Sargis Harutyunyan, Artashes Nazinyan, Arusyak Sahakyan, Zhenya Khachatryan, Araz Karapetyan) who recorded multi-genre folklore materials both by hand and with a tape recorder, mainly from the older generation who had memorized the materials during their childhood. The collections of researchers were supplemented by the collections of amateur and volunteer collectors. Amateur field workers, mostly retired intellectuals, teachers, actors, journalists, state-party workers, within the scope of their interests in the villages of Shirak and the city of Leninakan, recorded multi-genre folklore materials, which are

included in the archives of IAE RA and present the traditional folklore materials preserved and still living in the region from the 1950s–1990s.

Each of the collections of amateur field workers is distinguished by the genres it covers, which represent the image of the region's epic folklore within 100 years. Born and raised in Alexandropol, Paruyr Barseghyan (who received his higher education in Moscow), presented the original face of the city of Alexandropol–Gyumri–Leninakan in his collections.

*... it was the indispensable urban environment that with unique traditions, characteristics, lifestyle and psychology (that is, dialect, patriotism, religiosity, sloppiness, wit, humor, the ability to touch a person, unabashed love of song and music, a tendency to winged words, illegal with catchphrases and curses) was giving birth and food to jokes. (Barseghyan 1969: FFVI: 6638)*

Paruyr Barseghyan presented the entertainers of this original city (Poloz Mukuch, Jgher, Tsitro, Kuzhik and others), famous ancient Gyumri dwellers, with their many stories and 1400 nicknames of people, each of which has an interesting story hidden under them, realizing and paraphrasing fairy tales, conversations, lyrical folklore and the whole Shiraki coloring of rhetoric.

The paremiological material of Shirak is the main core of the collections of field workers Anushavan Gevorgyan, Ashot Gevorgyan, Hrach Mkrtchyan, Hrach Ohanyan and others: thousands of proverbs and sayings, blessings and curses, tongue twisters, riddles, oaths and diminutive words.

The field workers have maintained the dialectal features and attached explanatory notes and glossaries of dialect words to their collections.

### **Folklore Collecting in the Shirak Region from the 1990s to the 2020s**

The third stage of field work collections in Shirak coincides with the years of the Third Republic of Armenia (the 1990s – beginning of the 21st century) and is mainly related to the activities carried out by the Shirak Center for Armenological Studies of NAS RA. One of the goals of the Center's researchers is to collect and write down the currently living folklore materials and, through their research, to reveal and raise the issue of preservation, changes and genre manifestations of traditional folklore material.

The history of Shirak's field work shows that from the 19th century until today, a rich material of traditional folklore heritage has been accumulated; much more has been collected than studied or published, the publication and study of which is not equivalent to the collecting works. In the Soviet and post-Soviet years, the Shiraki volume of the series of Armenian folk tales was published by an academic publication (HJhH IV 1963: 15–194) and Shirak's traditional materials were included in collections dedicated to separate folklore

genres (Ghanalanyan 1960; Ghanalanyan 2022; Harutyunyan 1965; Harutyunyan 2006). During this period, individual amateur collectors, according to their preferences, recorded and published satirical conversations, witticisms, funny stories, jokes of folk art, etc. For this period H. Ikilikyan's "Gyumri, Poloz Mukuch and Satirical Paintings" (Ikilikyan 1989), H. Gevorgyan's "Leninakanian Funny Conversations and Wits" (Gevorgyan 1989) and M. Hovhannisyan's books on "History, Ethnography, Folklore of the Village of Voskehask (Molla-Musa)" (Hovhannisyan 2005) are worth mentioning.

There have also been no separate scientific studies dedicated to Shirak's folklore heritage. However, at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, many reports dedicated to various issues of folklore were delivered at conferences organized by the Shirak Center for Armenian Studies of NAS RA, which were then published in the form of articles in the scientific research collections of the SSC (Sargis Petrosyan, Karine Sahakyan, Hasmik Harutyunyan, Ester Khemchyan, Marine Khemchyan, Lusine Ghrejyan, Hasmik Galstyan, Hasmik Matikyan, Raisa Khachatryan and others).

Multi-genre and rich folklore materials available in archives and separate collections are the basis of the foundation of the book "Shirak: The Folklore Tradition of Armenians", published in 2024 (Khemchyan et al. 2024). It will complete Shirak's folklore heritage of the 20th century in all its forms (epic, lyrical, paremiological), by mirroring the exceptional materials and providing prerequisites for future research. The collection will have an extensive preface, an explanatory dictionary of dialect words, notes, lists of personal names and place names, biographies of field workers and narrators, photos and a map. It is envisaged to present the foreword and some folklore samples typical of the region in English.

The modern studies of the Shiraki folklore culture assume the comparative and quantitative analysis of the written materials of the 19th and the 20th century, features of the life and reproduction of the folklore repertoire and genres, the historical necessity of the manifestations of novelties and modern value systems in the folklore texts and their analysis, responses to archaeologies and forgotten or obscured phenomena and their interpretation using modern scientific methods.

## CONCLUSION

The Shirak region of the Republic of Armenia was named in ancient times and has passed through a long way, preserving its unique customs, beliefs, household features and rich folklore, which is reproduced in the Shirak subbranch of the Karno dialect.

The folklore fragments preserved in the pages of historiography and chronicles were filled in and the image of the folklore heritage of the historical region

was completed thanks to the efforts of field work that began in the mid-19th century and continues to this day.

Observations of folklore materials have shown that changes in the environment (wars, forced migrations, massive demographic shifts, coups, change of authorities, etc.) have affected the traditional folklore repertoire, as a result of which a number of folklore genres (myths, songs devoted to horovels, mortars, pulley and churn, etc.) have been pushed out of everyday life and a number of new and self-created ones have been put into circulation, folkloric works corresponding to the time.

From the combination and examination of written folklore materials of the 19th and 20th centuries, it turns out that traditional folklore genres were still preserved in the 19th century, the records of which provide an opportunity to study the part of Shirak's folklore heritage that has completely disappeared in the modern period, and the fragments preserved by inertia are not understandable to today's narrators.

It is obvious that the field workers have included as many settlements of the region as possible and aimed to save all manifestations of oral speech from loss for later publication and study. According to observations, the ethnic population of the Shirak region is not pure, which has left its stamp on the folklore heritage. The deportees from different provinces of Western Armenia enriched the folklore heritage of Shirak with their dialects, customs and folklore stories of their regions.

Shirak's folklore heritage includes the epic (prose-narrative: fairy tales, legends, narrative tales, memorates, jokes, etc.), lyrical (work songs, patriotic songs, love songs and dance songs, etc) and paremiological (proverbs and sayings, blessings, oaths, curses, prayers, riddles, etc) genres which are distinguished from pan-Armenian folklore materials by their local specificities, everyday life features, customs and vocabulary.

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#### NOTES

- 1 Archival materials have not been published yet. Some of the materials are to be published.
- 2 Kajberuni, also known as Gabriel Ter-Hovhannisyan, completed his education in 1858 when he graduated from Tiflis Nersisian School. The following year, in 1859, he was accepted to Moscow University and successfully completed his medical studies in 1864. For the next fifty years, he dedicated his career to serving as a provincial doctor. In addition to his medical profession, Kajberuni actively pursued interests in literature, Armenian studies, and ethnography.
- 3 Work songs are those folk songs that were primarily performed collectively during various work processes.

- 4 "Horovel" is an Armenian folk work song. It was performed by a group of men plowing the soil with oxen during the work process. "Horovel" is an ancient ritual song that, according to belief, ensures the future harvest.
- 5 "Sandi" songs were performed during the threshing of wheat on the threshing floor. The songs that were performed were called "sandi" songs.
- 6 "Khnotsu" songs accompanied the process of obtaining butter by churning the churn.
- 7 "Chakharaki" songs were performed by women who turned wool into thread by means of a spinning wheel.
- 8 The ashugh is a folk professional poet-singer-musician who composes a melody for his own poetry, personally sings, and accompanies himself with stringed musical instruments (e.g., saz, kamancha, etc.).
- 9 Agheksandr Afrikyan, a native of Alexandropol, had a close friendship with the renowned Armenologist Grigor Khalatyan. In 1880, Gr. Khalatyan included four tales written by Afrikyan in his collection titled "Pshrank Shirak's Ambars" (EAZA).
- 10 Agheksandr Mkhitaryants received his education in Alexandropol and later graduated from the Nersisian School in Tiflis. He was involved in pedagogy, book publishing and the collection of music.
- 11 Vanand province, located in the Akhuryan river valley, was part of the Ayrarat region of Greater Armenia. During the period under study, it was situated within the Kars region (Hakobyan et al. 1998: 753).
- 12 Mkrtich Isahakyan was born, lived and worked in Alexandropol. He was the brother of the poet Avetik Isahakyan. For many years, he dedicated himself to teaching and collecting materials.
- 13 Arshak Brutyan's entire creative, pedagogical and collecting life was connected to the city of Alexandropol-Leninak-Gyumri and the Shirak region.

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