



# International Journal of Innovative Technologies in Social Science

e-ISSN: 2544-9435

Scholarly Publisher  
RS Global Sp. z O.O.  
ISNI: 0000 0004 8495 2390

Dolna 17, Warsaw,  
Poland 00-773  
+48 226 0 227 03  
editorial\_office@rsglobal.pl

## ARTICLE TITLE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS IN  
THE GEOPOLITICAL CONTEXT IN THE XIX CENTURY

## ARTICLE INFO

Abdulla Abdullayev. (2025) Archaeological Research in The South Caucasus in  
The Geopolitical Context in The XIX Century. *International Journal of Innovative  
Technologies in Social Science*. 1(45). doi: 10.31435/ijitss.1(45).2025.3187

## DOI

[https://doi.org/10.31435/ijitss.1\(45\).2025.3187](https://doi.org/10.31435/ijitss.1(45).2025.3187)

## RECEIVED

19 January 2025

## ACCEPTED

07 March 2025

## PUBLISHED

12 March 2025

## LICENSE



The article is licensed under a **Creative Commons Attribution 4.0  
International License**.

© The author(s) 2025.

This article is published as open access under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0), allowing the author to retain copyright. The CC BY 4.0 License permits the content to be copied, adapted, displayed, distributed, republished, or reused for any purpose, including adaptation and commercial use, as long as proper attribution is provided.

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS IN THE GEOPOLITICAL CONTEXT IN THE XIX CENTURY

**Abdulla Abdullayev**

*Ph.D. Student, Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology, National Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan*  
*ORCID: 0000-0003-2056-1035*

---

## ABSTRACT

The scientific interpretation of archaeological samples of material culture is not always organized objectively. Especially in the early period, archaeological excavations have sometimes been interpreted for various political-historical purposes. In our changing and developing world for the sake of objectivity, it is necessary to consider and analyze doubtful points.

The formation of the ancient and medieval history of peoples and geography was part of the aggressive policy of the empire of the new era. The implemented studies were interpreted not from the point of view of objectivity, but against the background of geopolitical interests. These elements can be observed also in the historical-archaeological research organized by the Tsarist Russian Empire in the South Caucasus in the XIX century.

The leading direction in the implementation of these studies was that culture and its principles of succession were associated with the resources of imperial forces. Although the Tsarist Empire collapsed after World War I, the research conducted in the region was influenced by the political interests of the other Russian Empire (the Soviet Union).

---

## KEYWORDS

South Caucasus, Archaeology, Tsarist Russia, Christianity, Geopolitics

---

## CITATION

Abdulla Abdullayev. (2025) Archaeological Research in The South Caucasus in The Geopolitical Context in The XIX Century. *International Journal of Innovative Technologies in Social Science*. 1(45). doi: 10.31435/ijitss.1(45).2025.3187

---

## COPYRIGHT

© **The author(s) 2025**. This article is published as open access under the **Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0)**, allowing the author to retain copyright. The CC BY 4.0 License permits the content to be copied, adapted, displayed, distributed, republished, or reused for any purpose, including adaptation and commercial use, as long as proper attribution is provided.

---

## Introduction.

Archeology is not a neutral or apolitical science. For there is such a thing as knowledge that is less, rather than more, partial than the individual (with his entangling, and distracting life circumstances) who produces it, yet knowledge is not therefore automatically nonpolitical [Edward W. Said, 1978, p.10]. Although objectivity is the main principle of scientific research methods, scientists are not free from the factor of being a social being, which exposes them to external influence. Therefore, I will argue that for a correct understanding of archaeology's history of archaeology, it becomes essential to evaluate the impact of the framework in which it developed [M.Diaz-Andrew 2007, p.4]. The presented article will analyze the activities of the Russian Empire in the South Caucasus to strengthen its political power in historical and archaeological studies of the ancient and early Middle Ages.

## Analysis of recent publications on the problem.

Since the interpretation of archaeological research in Azerbaijan is carried out according to the principles of traditionalism, we turn to more European publications on this topic.

In this direction, the research of Margarita Diaz-Andrew, D.Tkachenko was used in a global context. The mentioned researchers evaluated the archaeological research conducted within the empire in terms of religion, ethnicity, and politics. E. Said and Jersild's studies on orientalism were also used from a theoretical point of view.

### **Allocation of previously unsolved parts of the general problem.**

Exploring geopolitical influences in archaeological research carried out in the region by Tsarist Russia will make an important contribution to uncovering historical truths and organizing a more objective picture. Although antiquarian issues were studied more in a local context but 19th-century archeology has not been studied from a geopolitical perspective.

### **Formulation of research objectives (problem statement).**

The presented article will analyze the activities of the Russian Empire in the South Caucasus with the aim of strengthening its political power in historical and archaeological studies of the ancient and early Middle Ages.

### **Materials and methods.**

Empirical source: printed sources of the 19th and 20th centuries and digital publications that are digitized and contain information and materials on the mentioned subject problems.

Research methods: comparative analysis, content analysis, description, interpretation, and generalization.

### **An outline of the main results and their justification.**

The Caucasus has always been a region of clashing interests of major powers, and this, like the process its inclusion in the Russian Empire largely determined the course and chronology of historical and archaeological study of the region [I.A.C. 2009, p. 661]. Thus when analyzing the actual of the region's material, we see clear connection between the collection of Caucasian antiquities and attempts to legitimize the Russian military political presence [D. Tkachenko 2022, p.69]. The first descriptions of architectural and archaeological monuments were made by Russian army officers, military topographers and travelers who served in the Caucasus in XIX century [I.A.C. 2009, p.663].

In the last Middle Ages, the Russian nobility was interested in maintaining close ties with European countries in studying the political and economic development of Europe and applying its management experience to the Russian bureaucracy. What E. Said said about the organization of colonial expansion and the sequence of development helps us to form a certain idea about the political-ideological concept of the process. To overcome such redoubtable constants the Orient needed first to be known, then invaded and possessed, then re-created by scholars, soldiers, and judges who disinterred forgotten languages, histories, races, and cultures in order to posit them-beyond the modern Oriental's ken -as the true classical Orient that could be used to judge and rule the modern Orient [Edward W. Said, 1978, p.92].

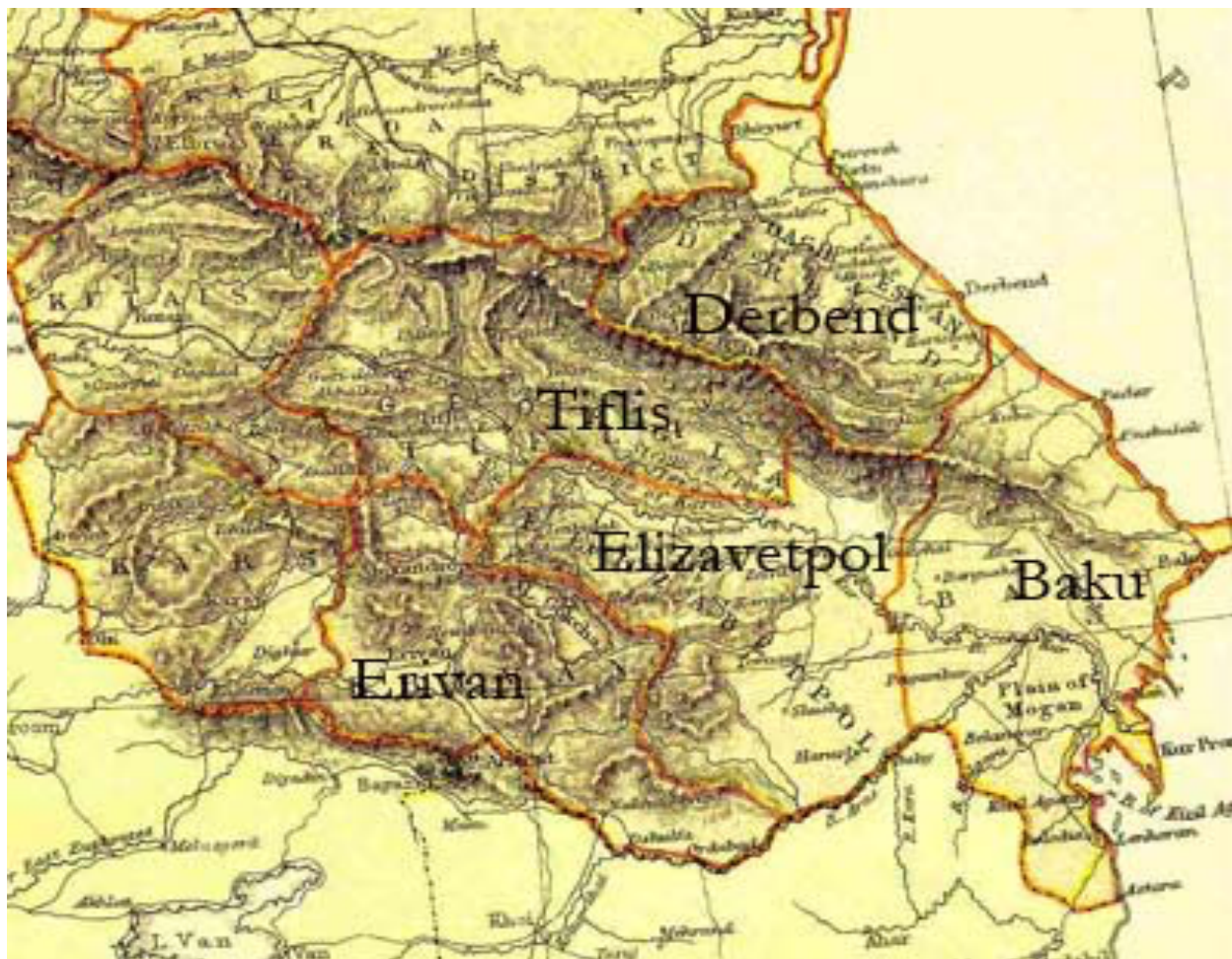
After the conquest of Constantinople by the Ottomans, the Tsarist Russian Empire called itself the Third Roman Empire and tried to play the role of a kind of political and administrative center of Eastern Christians. The peoples over whom the Ottomans ruled, Greeks, Bulgarians, Romanians, and Serbs, shared the Orthodox faith of the Russians, a faith of which the Russian tsar considered himself to be the official defender [M.H.Van Herpen 2014, p.56]. During this period, Russia tried to convert local Muslim peoples to the pro-Slavic Christian religion. It was considered that the predominant faith of Russia was rooted in the Byzantine experience. In terms of contemporary politics, only through conversion into the Orthodox Christian religion could the colonized be considered as Russians [M.Diaz-Andrew, 2007, p.260]. After the "Turkmenchay" and "Adrianopol" peace treaties, the christian population was massively transferred to the South Caucasus. As a result of the resettlement in the mid-1830 the christian population exceeded the muslim population for the first time in more than two centuries [George A. Bournoutian 1980, p.13–14].

Based on Catherine's "Greek Plan" political line, Russia tried to expand its borders towards Anatolia in order to restore the Byzantine Empire. Therefore for many imperial administrators idea of opening or invention connections between their regions and Ancient Greece has become a real passion [7.Ch. King 2004, p.162].

Among the leaders of Russia, as well as other Western countries, there was a common harmony regarding antiquity. While Russia and the Russians themselves viewed themselves as having brought European civilization and progress to backward people for people living outside of civilization and society Russian colonial impulse was very similar to the Western one [A.Jersild 2003, p.11]. However compared to European empires with Russia was unable to form absolute power in its colonies, and one of the main indicators of this is that although there were no active foreign explorers in the European colonies people from various European countries carried out research in Russia. Whereas it seems that the dominion of France over North Africa was beyond dispute, the same could not be said about the Russian colonies, which French, British and German explorers and archaeologists also endeavored culturally to colonize [M.Diaz-Andrew 2007, p.246].

"Albanism" began to be organized in the background of shaping Greek, Roman and Christian history in the region. The history of Albania and all its cities attracted the attention of researchers, especially Russians, in the first half of the 19th century. This was mainly related to the annexation of Azerbaijan to Russia in 1813 and 1828 [Babaev Ilyas 1990, p. 10].

The policy of unification was carried out in parallel with administrative and religious structural changes [Fig.1].



*Fig. 1. The governorates in the South Caucasus for the period Tsar Russia.*

The policy of unification was carried out in parallel with administrative and religious structural changes. [Fig. 1]. On September 10 1829,

the statehood of the Armenian province was officially approved [10, p. 24]. On March 11, 1836, the Russian state approved the decree "On the Status of the Armenian Church", which included the name "Armenian-Grigorian Church" [Decree of March 11, 1836]

XIX century Albanian "research" was mainly related to the localization of ancient cities. In the "Encyclopedic Lexicon" published in 1835, Albania is noted as including part of present-day Dagestan and the entire Shirvan region - from Derbent to Araks. In 1846, A. Yanovsky localized Albania in the Alazani valley and in the provinces of Sheki, Shirvan and Absheron along the Sumgaitchay river. According to B. A. Dorn, Albania covered the lands of Sheki, Shirvan, partly Dagestan, to Derbent [Khalilov D. 1984, p. 7].

However, these localization studies have been quite confusing and controversial. B. A. Dorn does not agree with A. Yanovsky and on the issue of the location of the Kabala, which he places on the river Turyançay [K.V. Trever 1959, p. 27].

E. S. Takaishvili who in 1897 brought Kabala to modern Kakheti, in the upper reaches of the river Alazani, as well as with N. Karaulov, who was in 1908, allegedly "according to information Arabic geographers of the IX and X centuries", pointed out that Kabala was located in doline river Alazani, in one of

the gorges of the main ridge of the Caucasus [K.V. Trever 1959, p. 29]. Even after the period of Tsarist Russia, it was difficult to determine the location of Kabala [Babaev Ilyas 1990, p.13].

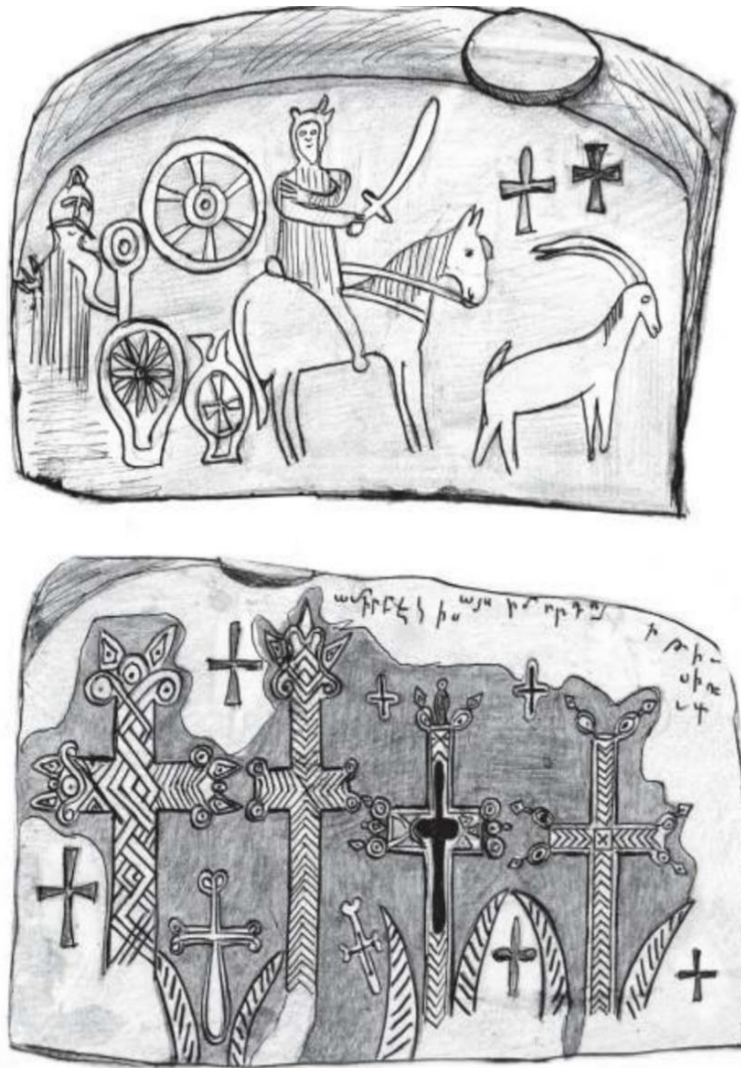
Until the 70s of the 19th century, excavations were carried out haphazardly and in an antiquarian manner. In 1866, Sergei Stroganov succeeded in banning treasure hunting in Russia [I.A.K. 2019, p.1464].

Archaeological research in the Caucasus took the form of shaping the Christian history of Georgia and Armenia. The name Albania is mainly referred to Greco-Roman sources but "Albania" or "Agovania" are unknown in the surviving written monuments of Georgia [Bakradze D. Z., 1890]. The struggle for the "Byzantine inheritance" unfolded, and the Caucasus with the "Christian Georgian and Armenian kingdoms" and principalities was involved in the orbit of this struggle [I.A.C. 2009, p. 661]. [Fig. 2]. The study of the antiquities of Erivan Governorate through the works of the IAC developed differently. Associate Professor of St. Petersburg University N.Marr, who became a corresponding member of the IAC in 1907, conducted archaeological research in the Kara, Kutaisi, Black Sea and Erivan provinces in 1887, 1889, 1892, 1893, 1899-1917 [I.A.C. 2009, p.692]. In the territory of Tbilisi governorate investigations were organized by D. Bakradze [I.A.C. 2009, p. 675].



*Fig. 2. Copper items and a glass lamp from churches opened in Tsebelda (1886, no. 6 a, l. 55-5)*

Archaeological researches were conducted only in the territories inhabited by the armenian and georgian population. In 1891-1907 Emil Resler conducted excavations in Elizavetpol province [I.A.C. 2009, p. 705]. [Fig. 3]



*Fig. 3. Excavations by E. A. Resler. The burial ground is near the village. Chenakhchi, engraved tombstone. Front and back sides (1897, d. 48, l. 239 vol., d. 240)*

### **Conclusions and perspectives of further research.**

In the 19th century the annexation of the Caucasus to Russia was followed by the formation of the history of the region against the backdrop of ancient Greek, Roman and early medieval Christian states. For this reason, the archaeological excavations carried out were based on antiquarian and ecclesiastical research. It can be said that no excavations have been conducted to study the history of the Muslim population of the region. Studies related to Albania have consisted of a controversial localization. Continuing research in this direction in the future is very important for the objective assessment of historical archaeological research conducted in the region.

## REFERENCES

1. Edward W. Said Orientalism, Vintage Books A Division of Random House New York 1978, 368 p.
2. Margarita Diaz-Andrew, A Word History of Nineteenth Century Archeology Oxford University Press Inc., New York 2007, 486 p.
3. IMPERIAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL COMMISSION 1859–1917, (1) SAINT-PETERSBURG, 2009, 1191 p.
4. D.S. Tkachenko, Formation of Military Archaeology of the Caucasus in the Context of Russian Orientalism of the 19th Century. 2022, p. 63-695. M. H. Van Herpen, The Rise of Russia's New Imperialism, ROWMAN& LITTLEFIELD, London 2014, 895 p.
5. George A. Bournoutian, Population of Persian Armenia Prior to and Immediately Following its Annexation to the Russian Empire: 1826-1832, Columbia University, April 24-25, 1980, 18 p.
6. Ch. King, The Black Sea - A History, Oxford University Press 2004, 296 p.
7. A.Jersild, Orientalism and Empire, McGill-Queen's University Press 2003, 288 p
8. Babayev, Ilyas Atababa oglu Cities of Caucasian Albania in the 4th century BC - 3rd century AD / I. A. Babayev; Academy of Sciences of the Azerbaijan SSR, Sector of Archeology and Ethnography of the Institute of History. - Baku: Elm, 1990. 234 p.
9. Tunyan V.G. On the history of the Armenian region, Historical and philological journal "Gitutyun", 2017, No. 1.-c, p. 21-40
10. Decree of March 11, 1836 of His Imperial Majesty to the Governing Senate on approval of the Regulation "On the management of the affairs of the Armenian-Gregorian Church in Russia"
11. Khalilov J. A., Material culture of Caucasian Albania (IV century BC - III century AD). Baku: Elm, 1984.- 236 p.
12. K. V. TREVER ESSAYS ON THE HISTORY AND CULTURE OF CAUCASIAN ALBANIA IV century BC - VII century AD PUBLISHING HOUSE OF THE USSR ACADEMY OF SCIENCES MOSCOW - LENINGRAD 1959, 419 p
13. IMPERIAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL COMMISSION 1859-1917, (2) SAINT-PETERSBURG 2019, 1612 p.
14. BAKRADZE D. Z., NOTES ON THE ZAKATAL DISTRICT, Caucasian Department of the Imperial Russian Historical Society, Book XIV, Issue 1. 1890