



Analytical Bulletin of Armenian and Regional Studies

ISSN: 1829-4502

e-ISSN: 2953-8254

Journal homepage: <https://analytical-bulletin.ccs.am/index.php/ab/index>



CENTER FOR CULTURE
AND
CIVILIZATION STUDIES
FOUNDATION

Haykuhi Muradyan, Nzhdeh Yeranyan

“Museum Losses Amidst the 44-Day Artsakh War: A Reflection on the Displaced Artifacts and Collections”

To cite this article: *Haykuhi Muradyan, Nzhdeh Yeranyan*. “Museum Losses Amidst the 44-Day Artsakh War: A Reflection on the Displaced Artifacts and Collections.” *Analytical Bulletin of Armenian and Regional Studies (CCCS)* 19 (2024): 7-24 DOI: 10.56673/18294502-hmn2024.19.2

To link to this article: **DOI:** 10.56673/18294502-hmn2024.19.2



Published online:

23 September



[Submit your article to
this journal](#)



MUSEUM LOSSES AMIDST THE 44-DAY ARTSAKH WAR: A REFLECTION ON THE DISPLACED ARTIFACTS AND COLLECTIONS¹

Haykuhi Muradyan²

Yerevan State University, Institute of Archaeology and

Ethnography of NAS

Nzhdeh Yeranyan³

History Museum of Armenian, Institute of Archaeology and

Ethnography of NAS

Abstract

The article addresses the challenges in preserving Artsakh's cultural heritage, focusing on museums impacted by the 44-day Artsakh war and currently controlled by Azerbaijan. Approximately forty private and state museums were left in territories occupied by Azerbaijani forces, with those that evacuated their collections facing significant preservation and display challenges. Detachment from their communities further complicates the situation.

It investigates war crimes against Artsakh's cultural heritage by Azerbaijan, examines international legal protections, and scrutinizes the fate of displaced museums and their communities. The study draws on interviews with museum directors, staff, and officials from Artsakh's Ministry of Education and Culture, and analyses videos shared by Azerbaijani users on platforms like TikTok, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Telegram.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 21 April 2024

Accepted 15 June 2024

KEYWORDS

44-day Artsakh war, museum, private collection, occupied territories, preservation, lost heritage, cultural artifacts, displacement, conservation challenges

DOI:

10.56673/18294502-hmn2024.19.2

Introduction

The large-scale war initiated by Azerbaijan against Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) people on September 27, 2020, evidently targeted not only the

¹ The research has been supported by the Science Committee of RA, under Grant [22YR-6A010].

² Yerevan State University, Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of NAS, email: haykuhi.muradyan@ysu.am.

³ History Museum of Armenian, Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of NAS, email: nzhdeh.yeranyan@ysu.am.

civilian population but also the tangible and intangible cultural heritage, as well as cultural and educational institutions within the unrecognised Republic of Artsakh.⁴ The deliberate destruction of cultural assets during and after the hostilities is categorically classified as a war crime according to numerous international conventions and declarations.⁵

The article examines the challenges related to the preservation of Artsakh's rich cultural heritage, with a particular focus on the difficulties of protecting museums during and after the 44-day Artsakh war. It highlights the specific issues faced by museums and private collections that came under Azerbaijani control due to the conflict.

The museum sector emerged as one of the most severely impacted areas of Artsakh's cultural landscape due to the war. Approximately forty private and state museums and collections were left in the territories occupied by the Azerbaijani military. The museums that managed to evacuate their collections from these occupied territories faced substantial challenges.

The challenges mainly revolve around the preservation and dissemination of cultural heritage. Key questions include determining appropriate locations for these artifacts, establishing the principles and contexts for their display, and developing effective methods for presenting them to the public.

The article first presents the establishment of the museum sector in Artsakh, highlighting the creation of new museums and their role in the

⁴ Following the collapse of the USSR, the former Soviet nation-state entity known as Nagorno Karabakh Autonomous Region (NKAR) as well as the Armenian-inhabited Shahumian region merged to form the Nagorno Karabakh Republic (NKR) (the 2nd official name was the Republic of Artsakh), with the capital city of Stepanakert. NKR declared its independence on September 2, 1991, in full compliance with the fundamental norms and principles of the international law. Following the Azerbaijani offensive in Nagorno-Karabakh on 19 September 2023, Artsakh agreed to dissolve itself by 1 January 2024, although later in exile it annulled this decree for being unconstitutional.

⁵ While initial legal norms to prevent the destruction of cultural heritage emerged in the mid-19th century, significant strides in establishing an international legal framework for its protection were made in the latter half of the 20th century, largely attributed to the efforts of international organizations and coalitions. Various international documents and regulations stipulate that deliberate acts such as destruction, confiscation, and illegal appropriation of cultural heritage are classified as war crimes and grave breaches of International Humanitarian Law.

cultural life of the community. Additionally, the article discusses the law developed by the Republic of Artsakh on museums, including its regulations and impact on the preservation and management of cultural heritage. Then, the article documents recorded instances of cultural vandalism during and after the war, including bombing, destruction of museum collections, and embezzlement and focuses on strategies for preserving and protecting movable heritage, such as museum collections. Finally, we discuss the fates of museums that were evacuated due to the war, noting that these institutions and the communities they served have since become displaced. While the article discusses key international legal regulations and conventions that could potentially protect cultural heritage, it argues that these measures are insufficient to prevent Azerbaijani vandalism and aggression against Artsakh's cultural heritage. Our claim is that international regulations alone cannot stop the continued and deliberate destruction and appropriation of Armenian heritage by Azerbaijani authorities. The anti-Armenian policy of the Aliyev regime targets both immovable heritage—such as churches, monuments, and museum buildings—and movable heritage, including museum collections and libraries, with the intent of eradicating Armenian cultural presence in the territory.

The study is based on in-depth interviews carried out with museum directors, staff members, and officials from the Artsakh Ministry of Education and Culture. From 2020 to 2024, a total of 30 semi-structured interviews were conducted, focusing on museum collections and items. The research also involves an examination of videos shared by various Azerbaijani users on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok. This combined approach using primary sources offers a thorough insight into the challenges and experiences encountered by the museum sector in Artsakh, as well as shedding light on the actions and attitudes of Azerbaijani state entities toward cultural heritage in the region.

Development of the Museum Sector in Artsakh Post-First War

The absence of political recognition of the Republic of Artsakh, the ongoing conflict and security concerns it entails, isolation from international collaboration, and barriers to participating in global organizations have

consistently posed significant challenges for the preservation and global exposure of Artsakh's cultural heritage. These circumstances have often relegated cultural preservation efforts to secondary status compared to security and defense priorities. Nevertheless, since the ceasefire of May 1994, the Republic of Artsakh has endeavored to manage the safeguarding of its cultural heritage—both tangible and intangible—in the context of relatively peaceful conditions. This principle was enshrined in the legislative system of the Republic of Artsakh in the form of relevant laws.⁶

The Artsakh Republic passed the Law “On Museums and Museum Fund” on February 12, 1999. This legislation delineates the parameters within which the museum sector operates, including the establishment of both state and non-state museums, financial arrangements, procedures for curating museum collections, and the acquisition of cultural assets (refer to Museums and Museum Fund Law, Article 6, 7). Efforts were undertaken in the realm of museum and library advancement, aiming to acquire new exhibits, enhance museum and library collections, elevate the quality of services offered, and upgrade building infrastructure, property, and technical resources.⁷

A particularly notable development was the establishment of new state and private museums. In 2010, the “Tigranakert” Historical and Archaeological State Reserve, a non-commercial organization, was inaugurated. The museum showcased approximately 300 artifacts unearthed from the ancient site of Tigranakert. Notably, the museum welcomed around thirty thousand visitors annually (ill. 1).⁸ The museum showcased a selection

⁶ In particular, it should be mentioned the NKR Law on the Fundamentals of Cultural Legislation, June 18; NKR Law on Intangible Cultural Heritage-October 26, 2011; NKR Government Decision No. 748-N of November 29, 2010 "On Approval of the Concept of Art Education"; Law of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic "On Museum Fund" February 12, 1999; Law of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic "On Libraries" HO-36-N of June 27, 2013; NKR Government Resolution No. 890-N "On Approval of the Concept of Preservation of Intangible Cultural Heritage and Protection of Its Viability" HO-36-N of June 27, 2013; Decision of the NKR Government of June 18, 2013 380-A "On approving the program of cultural development in the NKR regions" etc. Hamlet Petrosyan, Haykuhi Muradyan, *Arts'akhi mshakutayin zharangutyuně hardzakumneri t'irakhum* (Yerevan, 2022).

⁷ Petrosyan, Muradyan *Arts'akhi mshakutayin zharangutyuně hardzakumneri t'irakhum*, 35.

⁸ Hamlet Petrosyan, “Arts'akhi Tigranakerti hnagitakan t'angarani vodisakanč,” Proceedings of the history museum of Armenia, no 2 (10), (2022): 183-189.

of artifacts discovered during excavations since 2005, presenting some of the best examples. The history of city's discovery and the results of the monument's excavations were presented through various displays. Deep niches in the walls showcased some of the most remarkable ancient and medieval vessels, while glazed tables exhibited archaeological materials found in the immediate surroundings of the city. Display cases housed publications related to the excavations.⁹

In 2016, the Tevan Stepanyan Museum was established in Tumi village, serving as a branch of the local history museum of Hadrut named after Artur Mkrtchyan. The museum exclusively showcased exhibits related to the life and achievements of Tevan Stepanyan, a prominent state and military figure hailing from the village of Tumi (ill. 2).

The State Museum of Geology named after Grigor Gabrielyants was established in May 2014 and officially inaugurated on September 1 of the same year. The museum was established through the initiative of Professor Grigor Gabrielyants, a renowned Soviet geologist and doctor of geology and mineralogical sciences. Professor Gabrielyants generously donated his extensive collection of ores, mountain rocks, and organic fossil remains to Artsakh. The collection comprises 403 samples sourced from 40 different countries worldwide, including 20 regions within the Russian Federation (ill. 3).¹⁰ Additionally, the exhibition showcases ores and mineral resources collected from various regions of Artsakh. The museum's collection boasts approximately 400 exhibits, among which there are over 60 rocks and minerals sourced from diverse countries and mountain ranges worldwide. Visitors can marvel at numerous ores, rocks, and organic fossils of varying sizes, colors, and hues, showcased in specially illuminated display cases within the exhibition hall. Notably, the oldest exhibit dates back an astonishing 1.2 billion years. Some exhibits originate from different parts of Artsakh, with the oldest specimen dating back 146 million years.

⁹ Hamlet Petrosyan, Lyuba Kirakosyan, “Tigranakerti hnagitakan t'angaranē, *T'angaran (Museum)*, no2 (2010): 131-132.

¹⁰ Erazik Danielyan, Lusine Gasparyan, “Shushi k'aghak'i t'angarannerē,” *Transactions of the history museum of Armenia*, no 2 (10) (2022): 189-190.

In 2013, the Shushi State Museum of Fine Arts was officially opened, thanks to the initiative and support of Professor Grigor Gabrielyants. Over time, the museum's collection expanded through additional donations.¹¹ The museum occupied a building constructed on the site of Shushi's former caravanserai, preserving the architectural essence of the original structure (ill. 4). Comprising over 700 pieces, the collection featured artworks by esteemed artists such as M. Saryan, D. Burluk, K. Sommer, Carzou, E. Chahine, Jansem, H. Kojoyan, H. Hakobyan, R. Khachatryan, P. Kuznetsov, A. Shevchenko, A. Safokhin, D. Plavinsky, among others. Notably, the museum boasted a diverse array of donors, including contemporary artists from Artsakh, Armenia, Georgia, Russia, USA, France, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Madagascar, and various other nations, who contributed their creations to the museum. Furthermore, the museum's collection was enriched by artworks crafted by participants of the annual sculpture symposium.

In 2011, the private carpet museum of Shushi was established, housing a collection of 860 exhibits. Among these, 278 were antique carpets and rugs adorned with traditional Artsakh motifs. Additionally, the museum showcased household items dating from the 16th to the 20th century, pottery samples ranging from the 4th millennium BC to the 1st millennium AD, and paintings (ill. 5).¹²

“The Melik Mansion of Togh,” serving as a historical and cultural reserve museum, was nestled in the village of Togh within the Hadrut region of the Republic of Artsakh (ill. 6a,b). Established in 2013, the museum initially operated from the reception building of Melik Yegan. Subsequent to extensive excavation endeavors, the structure underwent meticulous restoration and was outfitted to accommodate museum exhibits. However, following the cessation of hostilities in the 44-day Artsakh war in 2020, the museum, along with its invaluable collection, fell under the occupation of Azerbaijan.

The museum's curated collection encompassed glazed vessels spanning from the 17th to the 19th centuries, complemented by an assortment of metal objects. Unearthed during excavations conducted

¹¹ Danielyan, Gasparyan, “Shushi,” 190.

¹² Danielyan, Gasparyan, “Shushi,” 189-190.

between 2011 and 2013 in the vicinity of the monument, these artifacts primarily spotlighted the rich history of Togh Village and its environs.

Of notable significance within the exhibition was the Heraldic flag associated with the Church of Surb Hovhannes in Togh. Originally a medieval church, it underwent transformation into a house of culture during the Soviet era. Post-independence and subsequent removal of the added wooden structure from the House of Culture phase revealed several noteworthy discoveries, including a crucifix (Heraldic flag), prominently showcased in the museum.

An especially significant find was the silver money treasure uncovered during the 2017 excavations. Selected coins from this treasure were prominently featured in the museum's display. Comprising 170 silver Abbasid coins from various local khanates and the Iranian Zand dynasty, the treasure hailed from diverse mints, including Gandzak, Shamakhi, Nakhichavan, Tabriz, and Rasht. Dating back to the penultimate Safavid ruler, Shah Tahmasp II (1722-1732), the earliest coins in the treasury were minted in Rasht in the 1139 Hijri year (1726-7), while the latest coins in the collection, dated 1188 (1774-5), originated from the mints of Gandzak and Shamakhi.¹³

The “Private Museum of Armenian Drams of Shushi” was established in 2018, showcasing a collection of 700 coins and banknotes (ill 7). Among these artifacts, the oldest was a silver coin dating back to the end of the 4th century BC, featuring Alexander the Great. Additionally, the museum displayed coins and banknotes from various historical periods, including those from the Armenian kingdoms of Tsopk, Tigran the Great, Artavazd II, and Cilician Armenia.

The expansion of the museum sector during relatively peaceful times played a crucial role in revitalizing community cultural life. Various annual events, such as those commemorating the International Day of Museums, Night of Museums, Days of European Heritage, and Librarian's Day, were

¹³ Nzhdeh Eranyan, Hamlet Petrosyan, “Toghi Sb. Hovhannes ekeghets’u hnagitakan hetazotutyán himnakan ardyunk’ner ě,” *Proceedings of the History Museum of Armenia*, no 2 (11), (2022): 31-40.

organized, further enhancing cultural engagement and appreciation within the community.

Museums in Artsakh played multifaceted roles as not only repositories of cultural heritage but also as vital centers for education and research. They became focal points for fostering curiosity and learning among schoolchildren, reflecting the community's strong interest in exploring and understanding their cultural heritage. The engagement of young learners with museum activities underscored the museums' significance as educational institutions that transcended traditional classroom settings.

To cater to this enthusiasm and promote learning, museums in Artsakh organized a variety of educational programs tailored to the interests and needs of their audience. These programs included thematic lectures and screenings of educational films, providing visitors with interactive and informative experiences. By offering engaging activities beyond static exhibitions, museums encouraged active participation and facilitated deeper exploration of various topics related to arts, history, and culture.

The involvement of schoolchildren in museum activities not only enriched their understanding of Artsakh's cultural heritage but also contributed to their overall educational development. By interacting with museum exhibits and participating in educational programs, students had the opportunity to enhance their critical thinking skills, expand their knowledge base, and develop a deeper appreciation for the cultural diversity and historical significance of their region.

Moreover, the role of museums as research centers further enriched the educational landscape of Artsakh. Through scholarly endeavors and research initiatives, museums contributed to the generation of new knowledge and insights into the region's cultural and historical heritage. Researchers and academics found valuable resources and opportunities for study within museum collections, fostering a culture of intellectual inquiry and academic exchange.

Overall, museums in Artsakh served as dynamic platforms for education, research, and cultural exploration, catering to the interests and curiosity of schoolchildren while also advancing scholarly inquiry and promoting a deeper understanding of the region's rich cultural heritage.

Until 2020, numerous state initiatives were launched to enhance the cultural landscape of Artsakh. Notably, within the museum development program, efforts were made to facilitate the participation of museum personnel from the Ministry in training courses and seminars held for museum staff in the Republic of Armenia. Concurrently, significant strides were taken in the advancement of museums and libraries, including the acquisition of new exhibits, the augmentation of museum and library collections, the enhancement of service quality, and the improvement of infrastructure and logistical support. Particularly noteworthy was the establishment of new museums such as the museums in Tigranakert, Kashatagh, and Shushi, among others.

Moreover, the Historical Environment Preservation Service of the Republic of Artsakh became an institutional member of the International Council of Museums (ICOM), facilitating collaborations and exchanges with ICOM specialists, who occasionally conducted training sessions for museum staff in Artsakh.¹⁴

These endeavors underscored the stability and development opportunities experienced by the people of Artsakh in the management of cultural heritage during the relatively peaceful years spanning from 1994 to 2020 (excluding the April 2016 four-day war and recurring violations of the ceasefire regime). Despite intermittent challenges, this period provided a conducive environment for the advancement and preservation of Artsakh's rich cultural heritage.

The museums during and after the 2020 War

As previously noted, museums emerged as one of the hardest-hit sectors in the cultural landscape of Artsakh due to the war. Details regarding the devastation and displacement of museums and collections primarily come to light through media surveillance and satellite imagery analysis.

According to satellite photos shared on August 14, 2021, by our partner “Caucasus Heritage Watch” on Facebook, alarming developments have been observed regarding the Park of Sculptures at the State Museum of

¹⁴ Lernik Hobhannisyanë amp’opel ē 2018 t’ ashkhatank’nerë, Aparazh, 12.02.2019, 15:12, <https://sq.ax/b4C>.

Fine Arts in Shushi. Reportedly, 51 artworks previously on display in the park have vanished, and the entire area has been completely cleared (ill 8).¹⁵ The fate of these sculptures remains uncertain, as it is unclear whether they were relocated or destroyed. Additionally, a video uploaded to YouTube by user İSMAYILLI RAYONU on August 14, 2021, suggests that the park, once adorned with unique artworks, is slated to be transformed into a football field.¹⁶

Contradictory information arises from a video shared by an Azerbaijani user in winter 2021, indicating that the exhibits in the Park of Sculptures at the State Museum of Fine Arts in occupied Shushi were still intact at that time.¹⁷

It's worth recalling that the Park of Sculptures was established through the initiative of Professor Grigory Gabrielyants and the efforts of renowned sculptor Vigen Avetis. The artworks showcased in the park were created during five international symposia named after Hakob Gyurjyan, a sculptor from Shushi, held between 2011 and 2017. A total of 62 figures crafted by 37 artists from various countries—including Italy, Belgium, Belarus, Egypt, Russia, India, China, Poland, Serbia, the USA, Croatia, Japan, Armenia, and Artsakh—were featured in the park, with 51 exhibited there and the remaining displayed in other districts of Artsakh. These sculptures, conceived in Artsakh, were gifted to the people of Artsakh.¹⁸

On August 18, 2021, a user named Ararathau shared a distressing video on their Telegram channel, revealing the unfortunate state of the Geological Museum of Shushi, now under the control of Azerbaijan. The footage depicts Azerbaijani soldiers causing damage to exhibits and museum artifacts. Additionally, the museum's roof appears to be destroyed, with debris covering the displays and valuable items preserved within (ill. 9).

¹⁵ The 51 sculptures in the park of the Shushi Museum of Fine Arts were removed, 10.03.2024, <https://wx.ax/6Pp>.

¹⁶ Şuşa şəhəri, bazar, avtovağzal, poçt Yeni video görüntü. Videonu bəyənməyi və paylaşmağı unutmayın, <https://nx.ax/3Ca>, view from 1:25 minutes (10.03.2024).

¹⁷ On the destruction of the State Museum of Fine Arts of the city of Shushi, 10.03.2024, <https://sq.ax/Or8>.

¹⁸ K'andakneri puraki bats'umə Shushium, 22.07.2019, <https://fd.ax/j5F>.

Established in May 2014, the Shushi Geological Museum was named after Professor Grigory Gabrielyants and showcased a remarkable collection of geological specimens gathered from across Artsakh, including ores and minerals. The museum boasted a diverse collection of 400 samples, with the oldest dating back 1.2 billion years, sourced from 48 countries and 20 regions of the Russian Federation. Most of these artifacts originated from the personal collection of Prof. Grigori Gabrielyants.¹⁹

During the 44-day war, efforts were made to protect the museum's main collection by relocating it to a bomb shelter. However, despite these precautions, the samples remained within the shelter and subsequently fell under the control of Azerbaijani military forces.²⁰ This situation has raised concerns about the preservation and safeguarding of the museum's invaluable cultural and scientific assets amidst the ongoing conflict.

On May 11, 2023, Ilham Aliyev, the president of Azerbaijan, visited the city of Shushi and attended the inauguration of a photo exhibition dedicated to Heydar Aliyev. The exhibition was held in the former Museum of Fine Arts of Shushi.²¹ A video documenting the event reveals significant changes to the museum's premises.²² Notably, sculptures previously located at the museum's entrance are now absent, and the exhibition halls appear devoid of any artworks. The current condition and whereabouts of the museum's collection, comprising valuable artistic and cultural pieces, remain undisclosed.

Azerbaijan's state policy against Armenian cultural heritage, removal of the museum's entire collection, coupled with the demolition of the sculpture park, raises concerns about the preservation and protection of the region's rich artistic and cultural heritage. The fate of these invaluable artifacts, steeped in historical significance, remains uncertain, prompting apprehension among cultural heritage advocates.

¹⁹ The State Museum of Geology named after Grigor Gabrielyants in Shushi, 10.03.2024, <https://gx.ax/5Jw>.

²⁰ Sara Petrosyan, Shushii t'angaranneri fonferē chtarhanvets'in iradruyunē skhal gnahatlu patcharov, 25.01.2021, <https://hq.ax/Kj2>.

²¹ On the destruction of the State Museum of Fine Arts of the city of Shushi, 10.03.2024, <https://sq.ax/Or8>.

²² Prezident Şuşada Yaradıcılıq Mərkəzinin açılışını edib, 01.02.2024, <https://wx.ax/f2J>.

The collection of some of the museums remained in the shelters of the museum, while the majority were kept in the exhibition halls. On the initiative of the Artsakh Ministry of Education, Science and Sports (now the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports), the exhibits of some museums were evacuated and moved to a safe place during the war. The Shushi Carpet Museum can be considered one of the best examples of an individual initiative to save a museum collection. Vardan Astsatryan founded the museum in 2011. The collection consisted of two parts. The founding private collection included old carpets of famous Armenian carpet weavers from different villages of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. The second part consists of old Armenian carpets that the founder found and bought from different countries around the world. This museum was a special educational, cultural, and research center. Due to the war situation, the founder of the museum moved to Yerevan more than a hundred displayed exhibits, leaving more than 200 carpets and other ethnographic items in the museum building.

The documented cases of damage refer to the 44-day war and the forced deportation of Armenians until September 2023. However, after September, when Armenians were forced to leave their homes and all of Artsakh came under the control of Azerbaijan, the fate of the museums and their collections remains unknown. In general, there are more than 30 state and private museums left in Artsakh, as well as the personal collections of many individual collectors and artists. Nothing is known about their status and condition at this time.

Preservation of museums and international instruments

Various international conventions, declarations, laws, and codes of ethics regulate and shape the legal systems for the protection of cultural heritage. From this point of view, three agreements can be singled out, which were ratified by both Armenia and Azerbaijan. They are:

1. The Hague Convention of 1954 for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, along with its two protocols adopted in 1954 and 1999. This convention aims to safeguard cultural property during armed conflicts and outlines guidelines for the respect and

protection of cultural heritage, including museums, libraries, and monuments.

2. The UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, adopted in 1970. This agreement seeks to prevent the illegal trade of cultural artifacts by implementing measures to regulate the import, export, and transfer of ownership of cultural property.

3. The UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, also known as the World Heritage Convention, adopted in 1972. This convention establishes an international framework for the identification, protection, and preservation of cultural and natural heritage sites of outstanding universal value, with the goal of ensuring their safeguarding for future generations.

The central theme of these conventions is the condemnation of targeting or intentionally destroying cultural heritage, recognized as an affront to world heritage and condemned by the global community. However, a significant limitation of these agreements, including similar ones, is their applicability primarily to internationally recognized states. In the case of Artsakh, where international recognition is lacking, these conventions may not offer practical utility. Consequently, the emphasis should shift towards ensuring the realization of cultural rights for the people affected. In this context, examining the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which classifies the deliberate destruction of cultural property as a war crime, appears more pertinent. This legal framework provides a basis for holding individuals accountable responsible for such actions, regardless of the state's international recognition status. Thus, prioritizing the enforcement of international criminal law can offer a more effective avenue for addressing violations of cultural heritage rights in regions like Artsakh.

Conclusion

Despite the existence of numerous international laws, conventions, and established practices aimed at safeguarding cultural property in conflict zones, cultural heritage remains profoundly vulnerable. Heritage represents

the culmination of values forged through the formation of cultural identity, embodying a community's sense of belonging and attachment to its land. Consequently, during times of conflict, cultural heritage becomes a prime target for attacks and bombings, as its destruction is intricately linked to eradicating the community's ties to the territory.

Analysis reveals that the deliberate targeting of cultural heritage during and after conflicts serves to obliterate the cultural evidence of the population's territorial identity. Cultural heritage encapsulates the collective history of a community and preserves the memories that reinforce its connection to the land. It is this deep-rooted significance that renders cultural heritage a strategic target in conflicts.

The intentional destruction or appropriation of cultural heritage not only inflicts tangible damage but also undermines the intangible bonds that bind communities to their ancestral lands. Therefore, preserving cultural heritage becomes imperative not only for safeguarding tangible artifacts but also for protecting the cultural identity and collective memory of communities affected by conflict. Efforts to protect cultural heritage must address not only the physical preservation of artifacts but also the broader social, psychological, and emotional dimensions of heritage that contribute to community resilience and cohesion.

Azerbaijani mechanisms of appropriation and destruction of cultural heritage operate in several directions. Essentially, we can identify three directions of encroachments on Armenian cultural heritage: appropriation, denial of "Armenianness," and destruction. Immediately after the signing of the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh ceasefire agreement posts appeared on social networks, presenting a number of Armenian cultural monuments and churches as Caucasian Albanian. The Azerbaijani propaganda machine aims to appropriate Armenian cultural values in this way. The most vivid example is Dadivank (see: "Now comes a Karabakh war over cultural heritage"). It is no coincidence that Azerbaijan appointed Rafik Danakari, an Udi national, as preacher of Dadivank. At the initiative of the Azerbaijani authorities, Azerbaijanis and Udis visited and prayed in Dadivank (see: "Azerbaijan declares Dadivank Udi"), which we believe was a political goal to "slander" Armenian monuments and deprive them of their "Armenianness."

Thus, the Armenian tangible and intangible cultural heritage, cultural and educational values remaining in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, are facing the danger of destruction. If the relevant international structures do not take steps to save Armenian culture, the magnificent churches, monuments, Melik houses, museums and museum collections, ethnographic items, cultural houses, and other treasures of Artsakh (remaining on the Azerbaijani side) may disappear from the world heritage.

References

- Petrosyan, Muradyan, *Arts'akhi mshakutayin zharangutyuně hardzakumneri t'irakhum*. Yerevan, 2022.
- Petrosyan, Hamlet, “Arts'akhi Tigranakerti hnagitakan t'angarani vodisakaně,” *Proceedings of the history museum of Armenia*, no 2 (10), (2022): 183-189.
- Petrosyan Hamlet, Kirakosyan Lyuba, “Tigranakerti hnagitakan t'angaraně,” *T'angaran (Museum)*, no2 (2010): 131-132.
- Danielyan Erazik, Gasparyan Lusine, “Shushi k'aghak'i t'angarannerě.” *Transactions of the history museum of Armenia*, no 2 (10) (2022): 189-190.
- Eranyan Nzhdeh, Petrosyan Hamlet, “Toghi Sb. Hovhannes ekeghets'u hnagitakan hetazotutyann himnakan ardyunk'ner ě,” *Proceedings of the History Museum of Armenia*, no 2 (11), (2022): 31-40:
- Lernik Hobhannisyaně amp'opel ē 2018 t' ashkhatank'nerě, *Aparazh*, 12.02.2019, 15:12, <https://sq.ax/b4C>.
- The 51 sculptures in the park of the Shushi Museum of Fine Arts were removed, 10.03.2024, <https://wx.ax/6Pp>.
- Şuşa şəhəri, bazar, avtovağzal, poçt Yeni video görüntü. Videonu bəyənməyi və paylaşmağı unutmayın, <https://nx.ax/3Ca>, view from 1:25 minutes (10.03.2024).
- On the destruction of the State Museum of Fine Arts of the city of Shushi, 10.03.2024, <https://sq.ax/Or8>.
- K'andakneri puraki bats'umě Shushium, 22.07.2019, <https://fd.ax/j5F>.

- The State Museum of Geology named after Grigor Gabrielyants in Shushi, 10.03.2024, <https://gx.ax/5Jw>.
- Sara Petrosyan, Shushii t'angaranneri fonferë chtarhanvets'in iradrutyunë skhal gnahatlu patcharov, 25.01.2021, <https://hq.ax/Kj2>.
- On the destruction of the State Museum of Fine Arts of the city of Shushi, 10.03.2024, <https://sq.ax/v2O>.
- Prezident Şuşada Yaradıcılıq Mərkəzinin açılışını edib, 01.02.2024, <https://sq.ax/8Rt>.

**ԹԱՆԳԱՐԱՆԻ ԿՈՐՈՒՍՏՆԵՐԸ 44-ՕՐՅԱ ԱՐՑԱԽՅԱՆ
ՊԱՏԵՐԱԶՄԻ ԸՆԹԱՑՔՈՒՄ. ՏԵՂԱՀԱՆՎԱԾ ՑՈՒՑԱՆԱՌԻՇՆԵՐ
ԵՎ ՀԱՎԱՔԱԾՈՒՆԵՐ**

*Հայկուհի Մուրադյան
Երևանի պետական համալսարան, ԳԱԱ Հնագիտության և
ազգագրության ինստիտուտ
Նժդեհ Երանյան
Հայաստանի պատմության թանգարան, ԳԱԱ
Հնագիտության և ազգագրության ինստիտուտ*

***Բանալի բառեր**՝ Արցախյան 44-օրյա պատերազմ, թանգարան,
մասնավոր հավաքածու, գրավյալ տարածքներ, պահպանում, կորսված
ժառանգություն, մշակութային առարկաներ, տեղահանումներ,
պահպանության մարտահրավերներ*

Հոդվածում քննարկվում են Արցախի հարուստ մշակութային ժառանգության պահպանման հետ կապված մարտահրավերները՝ հատուկ ուշադրություն դարձնելով Արցախյան 44-օրյա պատերազմի ընթացքում և դրան հաջորդած շրջանում թանգարանների պաշտպանության խնդիրներին: Հատուկ ուշադրություն է դարձվում այն թանգարաններին և հավաքածուներին, որոնք հակամարտության հետևանքով հայտնվել են աղբբեջանական վերահսկողության տակ:

Թանգարանային ոլորտը պատերազմի պատճառով դարձավ Արցախի մշակութային լանդշաֆտի ամենամեծ վնաս կրած ոլորտներից մեկը: Մոտ երեսուն մասնավոր և պետական թանգարաններ ու հավաքածուներ մնացել են աղբբեջանական զինուժի կողմից օկուպացված տարածքներում: Այն

թանգարանները, որոնց հաջողվել է տարհանել իրենց հավաքածուները օկուպացված տարածքներից, դրանից հետո բախվել են զգալի մարտահրավերների: Դրանք հիմնականում պտտվում են մշակութային ժառանգության պահպանման և տարհանման խնդիրների շուրջ: Հարցեր են ծագում այդ արժեքների տեղակայման համար համապատասխան վայրերի, դրանց ցուցադրման սկզբունքների և համատեքստերի, ինչպես նաև՝ դրանք հանրությանը ներկայացնելու մեթոդների շուրջ:

Հետևաբար, հողվածը ուսումնասիրում է երեք հիմնական ասպեկտ: Այն

ա. ներկայացնում է 44-օրյա պատերազմի ընթացքում ադրբեջանական զինուժի կողմից Արցախում մշակութային ժառանգության դեմ իրականացված ռազմական հանցագործությունները,

բ. ուսումնասիրում է միջազգային իրավական մեխանիզմները, որոնք կոչված են այս ժառանգությունը պատերազմի ընթացքում և դրանից հետո պաշտպանելուն,

գ. մանրամասն ուսումնասիրում է այն թանգարանների ճակատագիրը, որոնք ստիպված են եղել տարհանվել պատերազմական վտանգների պատճառով, քանի որ նրանք, իրենց սպասարկած համայնքների հետ միասին, տեղահանվել են:

Ուսումնասիրությունը հիմնված է Արցախի կրթության և մշակույթի նախարարության թանգարանների տնօրենների, աշխատակիցների և պաշտոնյաների հետ իրականացված համապարփակ հարցազրույցների, ինչպես նաև՝ տարբեր ադրբեջանցի օգտատերերի կողմից տարածված տեսանյութերի վերլուծության վրա: