

THE FORMATION HISTORY OF THE ARMENIAN–AZERBAIJANI BORDER LINE ACCORDING TO SOVIET TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS

S. R. DAVTYAN *

V. Brusov State University, Armenia

The article introduces the changes of the Armenian–Azerbaijani borders according to the 1920–1990s Soviet topographic maps. Several dozen maps published in those years have been visually studied. The monitoring of the border lines reflected on the maps proves that the territory of Armenia has continuously shrunk during the aforementioned period. In order to calculate the precise amount of loss, it is recommended to use geo-information technologies.

<https://doi.org/10.46991/PYSUC.2024.58.3.252>

Keywords: territory of RA, topographic maps, Armenian–Azerbaijani border, border line, enclave.

Introduction. Topographic maps play an important role in doing research in the fields of natural and social sciences due to their accuracy and informativeness. According to the laws in force during the Soviet years, each area was subjected to double topographical survey once in a certain time. As a result, topographic maps of different years and scales are currently available for the same area, which makes it possible to monitor a number of phenomena and processes. In that regard, the cartographic monitoring on the changes of the Armenian–Azerbaijani border line is particularly important, in which direction no research has been carried out in RA until now.

The analysis of the content of topographic maps shows that on the topographic maps published in the 1920–1940s the Armenian–Azerbaijani border is not displayed, it is missing or it is written to be disputed. In all the topographical maps of different scales published after 1940s, these borders are clearly depicted. The maps of different scales published in different years have been visually compared. The obtained results prove that the territory of Armenia has shrunk due to border changes.

Materials and Methods. The first topographical maps on the territory of Armenia were created during the years of the Russian Empire in the 1850s [1]. During the years of the Soviet Union, the creation and update of topographic maps continued constantly, as a result of which topographic maps of different scales were collected [2]. To date, however, there is no brief information about the areas covered

* E-mail: srdavtyan@mail.ru

by these maps, coordinate and height systems, scales, sheet numbering systems. Moreover, the existing few studies are contradictory [3–5].

Currently, the number of XIX–XX century topographical maps depicting the territory of Armenia in the archives of different states and private collections exceeds several thousands. The vast majority of them is preserved in the archives of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, in the Military History archives and other archives, as well as in the defense departments and archives of neighboring states.

The number of topographical maps preserved in the National Archives of Armenia does not exceed 150 sheets [6]. They refer to the maps created until the 20s of the XX century. There are also few maps related to that period in the National Library of Armenia [7], Fundamental Scientific Library of the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia, Matenadaran, a number of museums and elsewhere. The maps preserved in the state cartographic and geodetic fund of RA were created after the 1970s before the collapse of the USSR.

It should be noted that the maps of 1850–1940s are posted on the website of the Russian Geographical Society, where 5 and 10 verst map sheets with relevant databases are presented in separate sections [8]. In addition, many websites present separate sheets of topographical maps published from 1940s to present day [9, 10]. Topography was mainly conducted in the period of getting prepared for military operations, for example in the years preceding the Russian–Turkish and Russian–Persian wars (1877–1878), World War I (1910–1914) and World War II (1939–1945) [11, 12]. During those periods, the creation and publication of maps was irregular. The problem was regulated after World War II, when each topographic map sheet, with some exceptions, was updated once for a certain period of time, usually every 7–10 years. Currently, several maps of different scales are available for each area, which allows tracking the changes made in the area over time (landscapes, geographical names, road and river network, borders, etc.).

The borders formed during the years of the Soviet Union were depicted on the topographic maps of various scales published from 1920s to 1990s. Those borders were best reflected in the 5 and 10 verst topographic maps published in 1920–1940s and on 1 : 25 000, 1 : 50 000, 1 : 100 000, 1 : 200 000 and 1 : 300 000 scale topographic maps published in 1940–1990s.

Chronologically, the following maps depicting the region are distinguished:

1) 5 verst topographical maps (1 : 210 000), the sheets of which have been published several times in 1920–1941.

2) 10 verst topographical maps (1 : 420 000), the sheets of which have been published 2 or 3 times in 1920–1935.

3) 1 : 200 000 scale topographic map published in 1936–1938.

4) 1 : 25 000 scale maps published in 1940–1950s.

5) 1 : 25 000–1 : 200 000 scale maps published after the 1950s.

1. *The 5 verst (1:210 000) maps are presented in this way:*

E-7. Sheet covers the border starting from the border point with Georgia to the village of Nerkin Karmiraghbyur of today's Tavush Region. The sheet was published in 1931 and 1937. In both sheets the Armenian–Azerbaijani border lines are missing.

E-8. Sheet includes the part of the Armenian–Azerbaijani border from Nerkin Karmiraghbyur of today's Tavush Region to Daranak village of Gegharkunik Region. It was published in 1926, 1928, 1931, 1933, 1936, 1940, 1941. On the maps of 1926, 1928, 1931, 1933 the Armenian–Azerbaijani border is not reflected. On the map of 1936 the border is presented schematically. On the map of 1940 the borders are schematic and Artsvashen is a part of Azerbaijan. The map of 1941 does not indicate the accuracy of the borders and Artsvashen is included in the territory of Armenia as an enclave [13].

E-9. Sheet covers the northern part of the Armenian–Nakhichevan border. It has been published 4 times: in 1930, 1931 (2 times) and 1937. That border was not depicted on those maps.

Ж-8. Sheet covers the border passing through the Sevan mountains and the Eastern Sevan mountains. It was published in 1923, 1926, 1930, 1931, 1935, 1940, and 1941. On the maps of 1923, 1926 and 1930 the border line is presented. On the maps of 1931 and 1935 the border line is missing. On the map of 1940 the border line is presented schematically and on the map of 1941 it is presented without annotation [14].

Ж-9. Sheet covers the Armenian–Azerbaijani border starting from the Eastern Sevan mountains to the village of Agarak in the former administrative district of Kapan and the northeastern part of the Armenian–Nakhichevan border. It has been published 6 times: in 1926, 1930, 1931, 1935, 1937, 1941. The border is not presented on the maps of 1926, 1930, 1931, 1935. In the sheet published in 1937 the borders are presented schematically, in the sheet published in 1941 the borders are presented without annotation. On the map of 1941 Sev Lake is entirely in our territory. All lakes are in the territory of Azerbaijan. Another sheet of this map having no publication number is supposed to have been published in 1923, where the administrative divisions of the Russian Empire are presented: states, regions, provinces [15].

Ж-10. Sheet includes the part of Kaputjugh Mountain – the Araks River on the Armenian–Nakhichevan border and the part from village Agarak in the former administrative district of Kapan of the Armenian–Azerbaijani border to the Araks River. This sheet has been published 6 times: in 1923, 1926, 1930, 1931, 1935, 1937. On the maps of 1923, 1926 and 1930 only the Armenian–Nakhichevan border is presented and Karchevan is included in the territory of Nakhichevan. On the maps of 1931 and 1935 that border line is missing, and on the map of 1937 the Armenian–Nakhichevan and Armenian–Azerbaijani borders are presented schematically and Karchevan is a part of Armenia [16].

2. *The 10 verst (1:420 000) maps are presented in this way:*

- Sheet 118 covers the southern part of today's Azerbaijan, the northern part of Iran, Artsakh and the eastern part of Syunik. It has been published twice: the one in April 1921 and the other without a date. On the map dated in April 1921 the border line is missing. On the dateless map (it is supposed to have been published before 1923), a part of the Armenian–Azerbaijani border marked in red and printed using an imprint method passes through the downstream of the Hagari [17].

- Sheet 98 covers the northern part of Armenia, southern part of Georgia, and eastern part of Azerbaijan. It has been published 3 times during the Soviet Union: in May 1920, in November 1921 and in August 1932. There are no mentioned borders

on the first two published maps and on the map published in December 1932 the borders are presented as of August 1932 and the Armenian and Azerbaijani enclaves are not demarcated [18].

• Sheet 99 covers the southern part of Armenia, the area of Nakhichevan and the parts of Turkey and Iran bordering Armenia. During the Soviet years, this sheet of the map has been published 3 times: in October 1920, in November 1921 and in 1935. The border lines of states and provinces are presented on the maps published in October 1920 and November 1921. On the map of 1935 the Armenian–Nakhichevan (Sadarak is shared between Armenia and Nakhichevan) and the Armenian–Azerbaijani border lines (Sev Lake is completely in our territory) are presented [19].

3. *Each of the 1:200 000 scale topographic map sheets (11 sheets in total) has been published only once in 1936–1938s.* The numbering of the sheets corresponds to the system used today. The borders of Armenia and Azerbaijan were presented as of August 1938 based on the data received from the land construction departments. In general, the current situation is as follows:

- most part of Sev Lake, the village of Shurnukh and the entire road leading from Shurnukh to Kapan, Tigranashen (Kyarki) is in the territory of Armenia, Artsvashen is an enclave;
- in the territory of Armenia the Azerbaijani enclaves of Verin Voskepar and Sofulu–Barkhudarlu are distinguished;
- all lakes are in the territory of Azerbaijan [20–23].

4. *According to the sheet J-38-6-Г-6 of the 1:25 000 scale topographic maps published in 1947, Kyarki (present-day Tigranashen) is in the territory of Armenia.* According to that map, there were 29 houses in the village, it was connected to Sadarak by the only dirt road [24]. According to the publication of 1957, after the construction of the Yeraskh–Yeghegnadzor road, the village came across as being a part of Azerbaijan (Nakhijevan) [25].

5. *On the 1:25 000–1:300 000 scale topographic maps published after 1940s* many changes to the Armenian–Azerbaijani border are depicted, mostly to the detriment of Armenia. Despite the fact that according to all the constitutions of the USSR in 1924, 1935 and 1977, the territory of the union republic could not be changed without its consent, it is assumed that the general authorities, without the government of Armenia, under the guise of “confidentiality” of the maps (in the USSR topographical maps were considered “confidential”) could “gift” Armenian territories to Azerbaijan. The only legislative document referring to the change of some part of the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan, approved by the Supreme Soviet of the Armenian SSR, refers to May 9 in 1969 [26]. It is assumed that the land changes made until then were “legalized” by that decision. However, the changes made after that were not recorded in any legal act, we are not aware of other documents approved at the level of the Supreme Councils.

Even the joint protocol on demarcation and delimitation signed by the governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan on January 12 in 1988 was not approved by the Supreme Councils and, therefore, it could not be the basis for demarcation and delimitation. As a result of that, nowadays the topographical maps published before 1988 serve as a basis for demarcation and delimitation.

Results and Discussion. Thus, on the Soviet topographic maps published by the 1920s, no borders are presented between Armenia and Azerbaijan, the first schematic borders are presented in 1930–1935 and the revised borders are presented starting from 1937. In the 1930–1950s Azerbaijani enclaves were established in the territory of Armenia, the Armenian Enclave of Artsvashen was established in the territory of Azerbaijan. On the pretext of clarifying the Armenian–Azerbaijani border, territories covering an area of several square kilometers from the territory of Armenia were regularly given to Azerbaijan, while the opposite side “ceded” Armenia smaller areas. There were also cases when the territory was given to Armenia, then a part of it was returned to Azerbaijan. Those changes are clearly expressed on the duty maps, which were used during the years of the Soviet Union. It was a 1:100 000 scale map, on which important changes were noted, including changes in state borders, until the next edition, which was already published with changes. Each change was stamped in the map sheet by both parties and authenticated by signatures.

Since the period between two succeeding editions could last 7–10 years (according to the regulations in force during the Soviet years), the number of these changes could reach several dozen. Sometimes the changes were printed in the sheets of the previous edition, using the imprint method.

As a result of creeping “land usurpation”, at least two hundred km^2 area was seized from the territory of Armenia. The records of those changes can be restored through the analysis of topographic maps of different years and different scales. As an example, a few borderline changes are presented below.

1. Sev Lake Area.

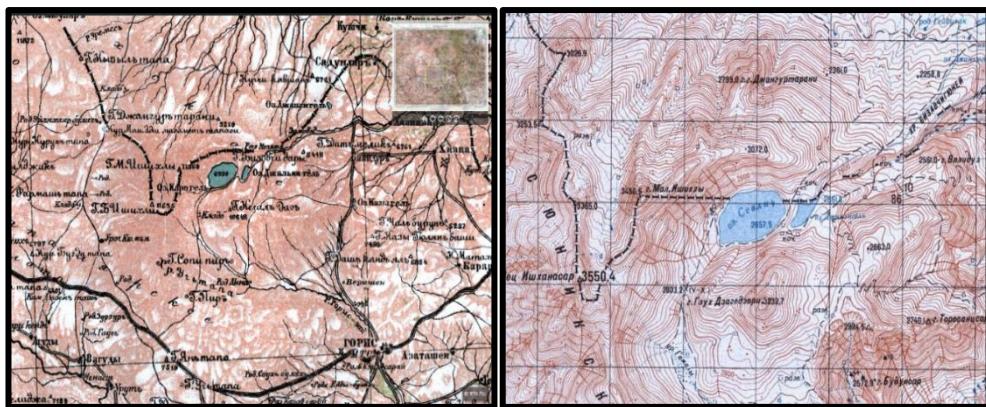


Fig. 1. The picture on the left shows the area of Sev Lake according to the 1 : 210 000 scale map of 1941. On the right picture the same area is presented according to the 1 : 100 000 scale map of 1975.

According to the maps of Fig. 1, in the 1940s Sev Lake was entirely in the territory of Armenia and in the 1970s a part of the lake was “given” to Azerbaijan [15, 27].

2. Tigranashen (Kyarki) Enclave.

According to the maps of Fig. 2, Tigranashen (Kyarki) enclave did not exist until the 1940s, it was given to Azerbaijan in the form of an enclave after the mid–1940s [22, 28].

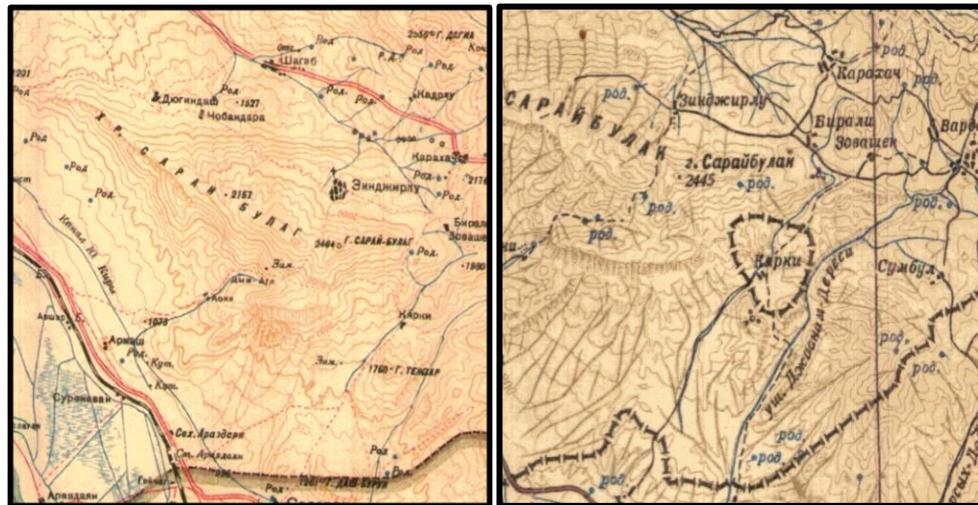


Fig. 2. The picture on the left shows the area of Tigranashen (Kyarki) according to the 1 : 200 000 scale map of 1937. On the right picture the same area is presented according to the 1 : 300 000 scale map of 1948.

3. Shurnukh Village and the Goris–Kapan Highway.

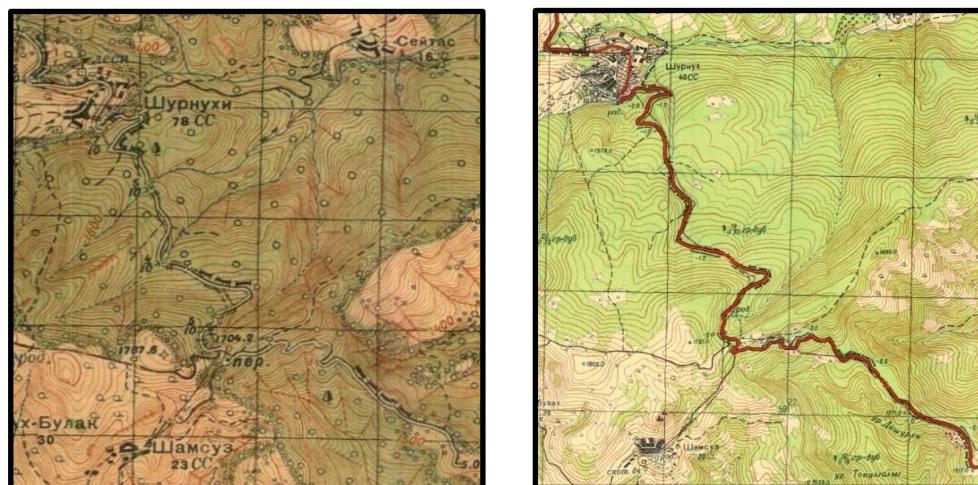


Fig. 3. Shurnukh Village and the Goris–Kapan highway. The picture on the left is from the 1 : 50 000 scale map of 1943, the picture on the right is from the 1 : 25 000 scale map of 1952.

According to the maps of Fig. 3, in the 1940s the borders of Shurnukh Village are uncertain and Goris–Kapan road is located in the territory of Armenia, and after the 1950s Shurnukh is in the territory of Armenia, and the Goris–Kapan road is a border between Armenia and Azerbaijan (if any linear object (road, river, stream, etc.) is a border, then the conventional sign of the border is placed on both sides of it. If the conventional sign of the border is placed only on one side of that object, then the adjacent area of the linear object belongs entirely to that side) [29, 30].

4. The Area of the Upstream of the Arpa River

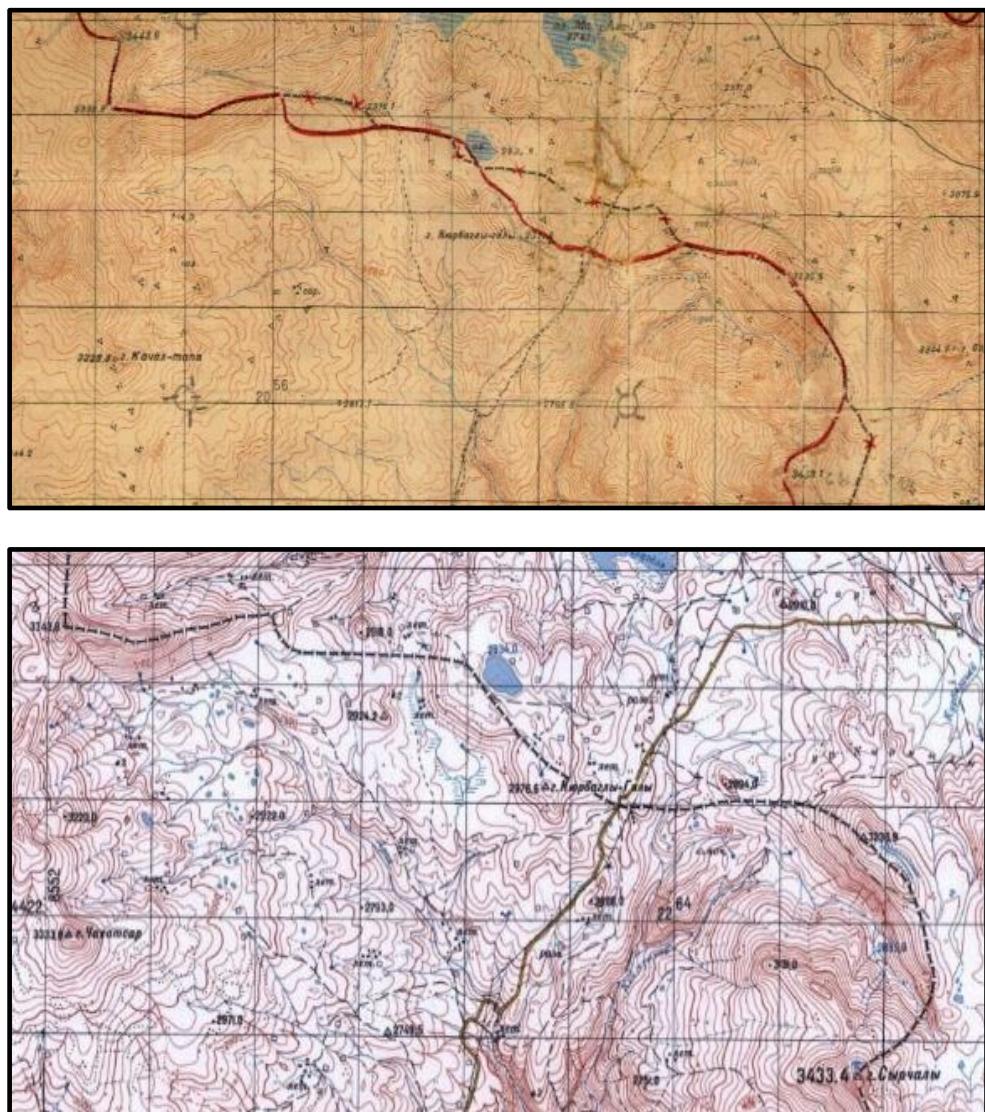


Fig. 4. The area of the upstream of the Arpa River. The picture above is from 1:100 000 scale duty map of 1943, and the picture below presents the same area according to 1:100 000 scale map of 1974.

The map of 1943 in Fig. 4 is a duty map, on which the changed borders are marked in red (the border change in this part was made at the expense and to the detriment of Armenia). On the map of 1974 the changes got an “official stamp” proving the occupation of Armenian territories [31, 32].

Since we evaluated the changes in the above-mentioned sections visually, the most accurate measurements of these appropriations can be obtained using the geo-information technologies.

Conclusion. The analysis of the Soviet topographic maps shows that on the maps published until the 1940s the Armenian–Azerbaijani border is either absent or

approximate. In 1920–1940s the territory of Armenia was shrunk as a result of “enclavation”, and after the 1940s, as a result of creeping “land usurpation”. The borders reflected on the maps published after World War II constantly changed to the detriment of RA. In that regard, it is especially important to study the duty maps, through which it is possible to find out all the border changes made after the 1940s.

To find out the legality of the territorial changes, it is suggested:

1. Search for materials related to territorial changes in the archives of the RA Supreme Council, their copies in the Cadastre Committee (duty maps). In case of their absence, request copies of materials and maps from the Russian Federation.

2. Compare the maps of different years using geo-information technologies, calculate the changes in the borders of Armenia and highlight the entire history of the Armenian–Azerbaijani border demarcation. To solve this problem, other maps published by various organizations of the USSR in those years should be used such as administrative and territorial-administrative maps of Armenia and Transcaucasia.

Received 04.10.2024

Reviewed 16.11.2024

Accepted 24.12.2024

REFERENCES

1. Davtyan S.R. Implementation of Cartographic Works by the Russian Military Authorities in Armenia from the Second Half of the 19th Century to the 1920s. *Scientific and Methodological Issues of the Contemporary Challenges of the Development and Distribution of the Economy of the Republic of Armenia and the Countries of the Middle Abroad*. Yerevan, Meknark (2017), 71–80.
2. Kudryavtsev M.K. *On the Cartography of the Territory of the USSR*. Moscow, Nedra (1974), 184.
3. *Physical Geography of the Armenian SSR*. Yerevan, Publ. of NAS RA (1971), 471.
4. Paffengolts K.N. *Geology of Armenia*. Moscow–Leningrad, State Publishing House of Geological Literature (1948), 976.
5. *Handbook of Water Resources*. Vol. XI: Transcaucasia. Leningrad, RIO TSUGMS (1935), 938.
6. Sargsyan K.S. Cartographic Documents in the State Central Archive of Armenian History. *Bulletin of Armenian Archives* 2 (1986), 171–175.
7. *Bibliography of the Armenian Cartographic Publications*. Yerevan, National Library of Armenia (2018), 163.
8. *Geportal of the Russian Geographical Society*. 04.03.2024.
<https://geportal.rgo.ru>
9. *Old Maps*. 04.03.2024.
<https://maps4u.lt/>
10. *Map archive*. 04.03.2024.
<https://retromap.ru>
11. Glushkov V.V. *History of Military Cartography in Russia (18th–early 20th century)*. Moscow, IDEL (2007), 528.
12. Azizyan A.N., Davtyan S.R. Military Geographical, Geospatial, and Cartographic Research in Armenia and Neighboring Regions. *Armenian Army* 2 (1996), 55–66.
13. Map scale 1:210 000. Sheet E. 8. Yerevan (1941).
14. Map scale 1:210 000. Sheet Խ. 8. Kirovabad (1941).
15. Map scale 1:210,000. Sheet Խ. 9. Shusha (1941).
16. Map scale 1:210,000. Sheet Խ. 10. Ordubad (1937).
17. Map scale 1:420 000. Sheet 118 (1921).
18. Map scale 1:420 000. Sheet 98. Tbilisi (1932).
19. Map scale 1:420,000. Sheet 99 (1935).

20. Map scale 1:200 000. Sheet K-38-XXVIII. Kazakh (1937).
21. Map scale 1:200 000. Sheet K-38-XXXIV. Nor Bayazet (1937).
22. Map scale 1:200 000. Sheet J-38-III. Bayazet (1937).
23. Map scale 1:200 000. Sheet J-38-V. Aghdam (1936).
24. Map scale 1:25 000. Sheet J-38-6-Г-6. Birali (1947).
25. Map scale 1:25 000. Sheet J-38-6-Г-6. Birali (1957).
26. *Decision #69 of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Armenian SSR, May 23, 1969. On the Approval of the Demarcation of Certain Border Sections between the Armenian SSR and the Azerbaijan SSR. Bulletin of the Supreme Soviet of the Armenian SSR 9 (1969), 178.*
<https://tert.nla.am/archive/NLA%20AMSAGIR/HSSHGerxortex19661989/1969/9.pdf>
27. Map scale 1:100 000. Sheet J-38-21. Goris (1975).
28. Map scale 1:300 000. Sheet II-J-38. Nakhichevan (1948).
29. Map scale 1:50 000. Sheet J-38-21-Г. Karahunj (1943).
30. Map scale 1:25 000. Sheet J-38-21-Г-г. Shurnukh (1952).
31. Map scale 1:100 000. Sheet J-38-8. Jermuk (1943).
32. Map scale 1:100 000. Sheet J-38-8. Jermuk (1974).

Ս. Ո. ԴԱՎԹՅԱՆ

**ՀԱՅ-ԱՇԽԲԵԶԱՎԱԿԱՆ ՍԱՀՄԱՆԱՎԱՐԱԿԱՆ ԶԵՎԱՎՈՐՄԱՆ
ԴԱՏՄՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ ՀԱՏ ԽՈՐՀՐԴԱՅԻՆ ՏԵՂԱԳՐԱԿԱՆ ՔԱՐՏԵԶՆԵՐԻ**

Ամփոփում

Հոդվածում ներկայացված է հայ-աշխբեզանական սահմանների փոփոխություններն ըստ 1920–1990-ական թվականների խորհրդային տեղագրական քարտեզների: Վիզուալ եղանակով ուսումնասիրվել են այդ տարիներին հրատարակված մի քանի տասնյակ քարտեզներ: Զարտեզներում արտացոլված սահմանագծերի մոնիթորինգը վկայում է, որ վերոհիշյալ ժամանակաշրջանում ՀՀ տարածքն անընդհատ փորձացել է: Կորուստների ճիշտ չափերը հաշվելու համար առաջարկվում է կիրառել գեոինֆորմացիոն տեխնոլոգիաներ:

С. Р. ДАВТЯН

ИСТОРИЯ ФОРМИРОВАНИЯ АРМЯНО-АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНСКОЙ ГРАНИЦЫ ПО СОВЕТСКИМ ТОПОГРАФИЧЕСКИМ КАРТАМ

Резюме

В статье представлены изменения армяно-азербайджанской границы за период 1920–1990-х годов согласно советским топографическим картам. Визуально изучено несколько десятков карт, изданных в те годы. Мониторинг линий границ, отраженных на картах, доказывает, что территория Армении в течение вышеупомянутого периода постоянно уменьшалась. Для того чтобы правильно рассчитать размер потерь, рекомендуется использовать геоинформационные технологии.