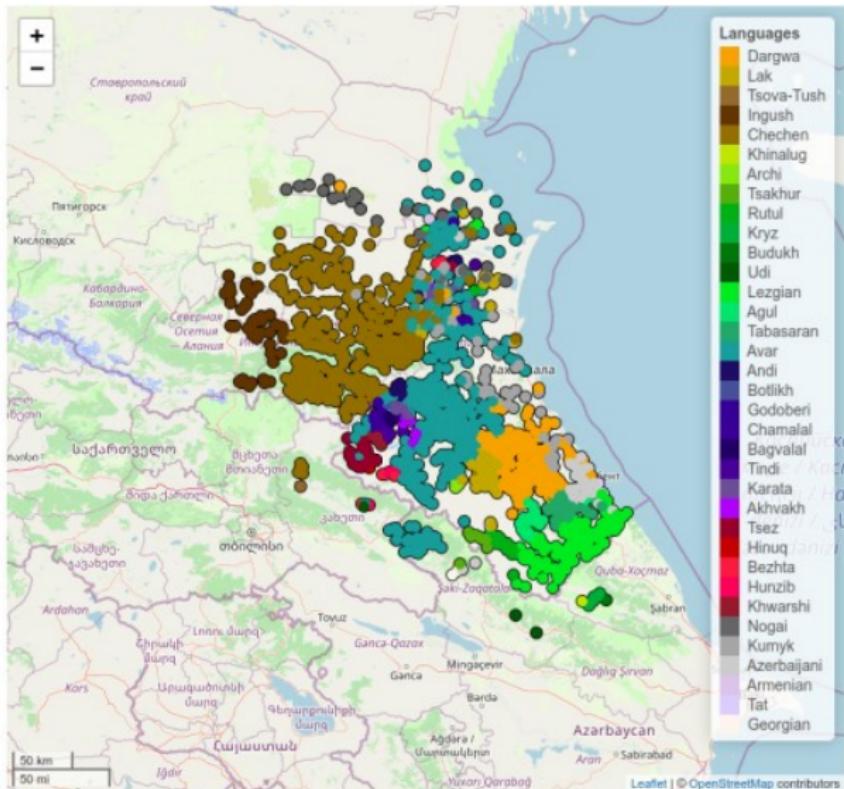


# Karabagly

## an Armenian village in Dagestan

Samira Verhees

ConLab seminar 11.05.2021



(See data and interactive maps.)

# Northern Dagestan

Historically inhabited by nomadic Turkic people and Russian colonists (cossacks) around Kizlyar



(Atlas of the Russian Empire, 1825)

# Northern Dagestan

- ▶ Plots of land in northern Dagestan allotted to kolkhozes of mountain villages for agricultural purposes, i.e. *kutans* (summer pastures)
- ▶ Recent migration from mountainous Dagestan ~ second half of the 20th century and exodus of Russians after the dissolution of the USSR

# Northern Dagestan

- ▶ Plots of land in northern Dagestan allotted to kolkhozes of mountain villages for agricultural purposes, i.e. *kutans* (summer pastures)
- ▶ Recent migration from mountainous Dagestan ~ second half of the 20th century and exodus of Russians after the dissolution of the USSR
- ▶ Some villages seem to remain mostly mono-ethnic and are a kind of satellites of their original village
- ▶ Many have become multi-ethnic
- ▶ Traditional laws restricting the sale of land to “others” do not seem to apply here

# Karabagly

1926

- ▶ 628 Armenians
- ▶ 4 Russians

2010

- ▶ 304 Armenians
- ▶ 275 Dargis
- ▶ 59 Russians
- ▶ 30 Lak
- ▶ 34 Other

(Census data via [Wikipedia](#).)

# Karabagly

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# Karabagly

- ▶ Karabagly was founded in 1786 by several families who fled from Nagorno-Karabakh, then the Karabakh Khanate (according to Wikipedia and the inhabitants of Karabagly)
- ▶ At the time, the Russian Empire stimulated the migration of Armenians to its southern frontier, to strengthen the Christian / pro-Russian presence in this part of the Caucasus, according to Магомедханов & Мусаева (2015)
- ▶ Armenians from Karabakh followed prior waves of migration to the North Caucasus from Persia (Волкова 1974: 193–211)

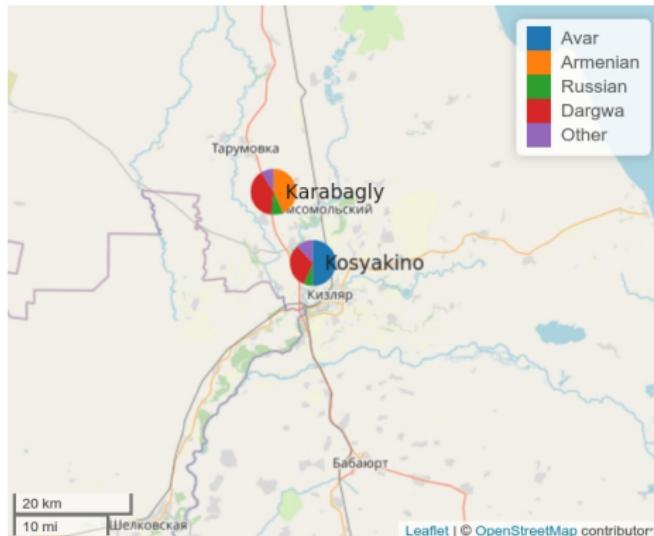
# Karabagly

The etymology of Karabagly as being derived from Karabakh seems obvious. However, my consultants in Karabagly said that “black gardens” (from Turkic) refers to the village’s grape plantations.

# My trip

- ▶ I spent two days in Karabagly with an Armenian family consisting of a wife and husband and their grandchildren
- ▶ The wife and husband were my main consultants: claims throughout this presentation are based on what they told me
- ▶ I also visited a Dargwa family in Kosyokino, which helped to get a clearer picture of how multi-ethnic settlements function in this particular area

# My trip



Other includes Lak and unspecified for Karabagly,  
and Lak, Kumyk, Azerbaijani, Lezgian, and unspecified for Kosyakino.

# Language

- ▶ Armenians in Karabagly still speak Armenian
- ▶ Most of them cannot read or write in Armenian
- ▶ On social media they write their own language using Cyrillics (or they write in Russian)

# Language

My consultant said that she:

- ▶ Can more or less understand literary Armenian
- ▶ Her husband and grandson have more difficulty understanding it
- ▶ A linguist visited Karabagly when she was still in school, and claimed that their dialect is closer to the literary standard than to both other Armenian dialects of Russia and the dialect of Nagorno-Karabakh

# Language

One of three short anecdotes I recorded with a consultant (a woman born in 1960).

(One day I will learn to add sound files to slides...)

# Language

- ▶ The ties with Armenia seem to be rather weak
- ▶ Perhaps because Karabaglyans do not read or write and are more oriented towards Russia
- ▶ Some of them travel to Armenia at some point out of curiosity

# Language

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- ▶ This practice was discontinued because there were not enough Armenian children in school

# Language

- ▶ For a while Armenian was taught in the local school as “native language”
- ▶ This practice was discontinued because there were not enough Armenian children in school
- ▶ The decline in the Armenian population of the village is due to migration for economic reasons (mostly to Kizlyar, Pyatigorsk, Yessentuki, and cities elsewhere in Russia)

# Native language

- ▶ Lessons in “native language” in Dagestan are limited to languages with a literary standard
- ▶ In villages where nonwritten idioms are spoken, a related literary language is taught as “native language” (e.g. Avar for Andic people)
- ▶ It is taught alongside Russian and English (in some cases also Arabic or Turkish), but takes up less time in the curriculum

# Native language

- ▶ In nearby Kosyokino the main ethnic groups are Avar and Dargwa
- ▶ Other groups are also present, but much less numerous
- ▶ As a result, both Avar and Dargwa native language lessons are offered at school
- ▶ Children who do not belong to either of these groups are taught “Russian as native language” instead (as distinct from regular Russian language classes)

# Language

- ▶ According to my consultants, Armenian is still spoken in the village and passed on to children
- ▶ However, many people move to other places where Russian is the dominant language
- ▶ During a holiday for which relatives who live elsewhere came to the village, I observed that the latter speak Russian by default
- ▶ All of them seemed to understand Armenian, but not all of them spoke it

# Culture

- ▶ The Armenians in Karabagly are Christian
- ▶ A (wooden) church was built in the village in 1905, and demolished in 1965
- ▶ There is a wish to rebuild it, but there are no concrete plans yet
- ▶ In the meantime, Karabaglyans go to the Russian church in Tarumovka, or to the Armenian church in Kizlyar

# Culture

- ▶ Three gravestones were salvaged from the old church
- ▶ They bear inscriptions in Armenian
- ▶ None of the local people seemed able to decipher them
- ▶ They claimed that some people who visited from Yerevan could not decipher them either

# Culture



# Culture



# Culture



See the link below for the full size images.

# Culture



Coloring easter eggs with a root called *orxanas*.

# Culture



Every year on May 2 people from Karabagly go to the cemetery to honor the deceased by eating and drinking with them. People return to the village en masse for this occasion.

# Culture

- ▶ Karabagly is known for its grape plantations (which used to serve wine factories)
- ▶ In the Soviet period, students were sent to Karabagly to do seasonal work there
- ▶ Currently it is more common to grow wheat or corn

# Culture

- ▶ Karabagly is known for its grape plantations (which used to serve wine factories)
- ▶ In the Soviet period, students were sent to Karabagly to do seasonal work there
- ▶ Currently it is more common to grow wheat or corn
- ▶ My consultants mostly rely on their farm
- ▶ They have fruit trees and a vegetable garden, and they grow grapes from which they make wine
- ▶ They also keep cows, buffaloes, pigs (!), and geese

# Multilingualism

- ▶ Besides Armenians, the population consists of Dargis, Avars, Nogais, and some others
- ▶ According to my consultants, 4-5 Dargwa families from Akusha have lived there for a while
- ▶ 10 more Dargwa families moved in recently
- ▶ 1 Avar family and 2 Nogai families also live there
- ▶ It seems they simply bought the property of Armenians who migrated to the city

# Multilingualism

- ▶ Mixed marriages (including marriages between Armenians and Dagestanians) have been practiced since the ~ 1960s-70s
- ▶ (Though I did not meet any mixed couples.)
- ▶ According to my consultant, studying in the city during the Soviet period played an important role in this development
- ▶ The village used to be strictly endogamous

# Multilingualism

- ▶ Everyone in the village used to have some command of Armenian, regardless of their ethnicity
- ▶ (The husband of the family at some point spoke Armenian on the phone to a Dagestanian neighbor)
- ▶ In addition, the Armenians spoke the language of other ethnic groups with whom they were in contact
- ▶ E.g. My consultant spoke Dargwa because she had Dargwa neighbors whom she was close to

- ▶ During my talk, Murad Suleymanov mentioned a 2009 **paper** by Arsen Hakobyan
- ▶ The paper states that the population of Karabagly was originally a Tat-speaking community that later shifted to Armenian
- ▶ Unfortunately, I was not aware of this paper beforehand

# References I

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