

AZERBAIJANIAN OFFICERS AND MILITARY FORMATIONS IN THE 2nd HALF OF THE 19TH – EARLY 20TH CENTURIES

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Summary

The Azerbaijanis, like other Muslim peoples of the Russian Empire, were exempted from universal military service - the authorities considered it risky to entrust weapons to Muslims and train them in military affairs. But at the same time, they actively encouraged representatives of the noble families of the national outskirts of the empire to serve in the Russian army, and Azerbaijan was no exception. Emperor Nicholas I played a special role in the implementation of this policy. Azerbaijanis served in the elite units of that time: cavalry, which carried out deep raids behind enemy lines or developed an offensive, and in artillery, the most technically complex branch of the military and requiring deep knowledge. Therefore, the article devotes a central place to clarifying the number, social composition, principles of recruitment of the evolution of Azerbaijani military formations, the attitude of the tsarist government and command towards them, as well as consideration of military-political events in which the population of Azerbaijan took part.

Key words: *Azerbaijani irregular troops, Russian-Ottoman wars, Azerbaijani militias.*

Xülasə

Azərbaycanlılar da Rusiya imperiyasının digər müsəlman xalqları kimi ümumdünyə hərbi xidmətdən azad edilmədi - hakimiyyət müsəlmanlara silah tapırmağı və onları hərbi işlərdə öyrətməyi riskli hesab edirdi. Ancaq eyni zamanda, onlar imperiyanın millətçarındakı zadegan ailələrinin nümayəndələrini Rusiya ordusunda xidmət etməyə fəal kəşf etdirirdi və Azərbaycan da istisna deyildi. Bu siyasətin həyata keçirilməsində imperator I Nikolayın xüsusi rolu olmuşdur. Azərbaycanlılar o dövrün elit birləşmələrində: dümənxəttinin arxasına dərin basqınlar həyata keçirən və ya hücumu inkişaf etdirən süvari qoşunlarında, texniki cəhətdən ən mürəkkəb qolu olan artileriyada xidmət etdirildilər. Hərbi vədərin bilik tələb edir. Odur ki, məqalədə Azərbaycan hərbi birləşmələrinin sayının, sosial tərkibinin, hərbi birləşmələrinin təkamül prinsiplərinin, çar hökumətinin və komandanlığının onlara münasib təyin aydınlaşdırılması, habelə hərbi-siyasi hadisələrin nəzərdən keçirilməsi əsas yer tutur. Azərbaycan halisənə tirək edirdi.

Açar sözlər: *Azərbaycan nizamsız qoşunları, Rusiya-Osmanlı müharibələri, Azərbaycan milisləri.*

Azerbaijani military units in the 30–40s of the 19th century. Revealing the participation of Azerbaijani troops in the battles as part of the Russian troops, the researcher H. Ibrahimbeyli, relying on archival materials, calculated that in the 1st Russian-Iranian war, about 10 thousand horsemen and 12 thousand foot militia-Azerbaijanis took part in the Russian troops. In the Russian-Turkish war in 1806–1812, 3,700 Azerbaijanis took part in irregular cavalry formations.[1]

Not having sufficient forces to repel the attacks of the Qajars, the tsarist government willingly used local formations. Considering that the total number of Russian troops in the theater of operations by 1812–1813 did not exceed 12 thousand people (before 1808, its strength was 5,000 personnel), the importance of the participation of the Azerbaijani cavalry becomes clear. Azerbaijanis were formed into detachments of 20-70 people, stationed as posts to guard roads and important points. General Tormasov, recognizing the great importance of "native posts", wrote that "without them it is impossible to repel the enemy, and without horse patrols it is impossible to be forewarned of the movements of the enemy." [2]

He even drew up a document entitled "Recommendation to them (Azerbaijanis) as a people attached to the Russian government, courageous and useful in zealous assistance to the Russian troops". The Russian command especially appreciated the mounted detachments formed from the residents of the Kazakh, Shamshadil and Borchaly distances (*NB – administrative unit in the Russian Empire in the 19th century*).

Since these distances were administratively subordinated to Russian officials in Georgia by the Russian command, the detachments from these provinces are also indicated in the documents as "Georgian–Tatar" or simply "Tatar" cavalry. General Tormasov especially noted "the brave and zealous action of the elite 500 strong Kazakh cavalry"; "It is my duty to convey that the society of Kazakh Tatars, who inhabit the most important province in Georgia itself, distinguished themselves by zeal and loyalty during hostilities with the Persians." [3]

In the performances for the awards of horsemen from the regular cavalry, Russian officers, along with bravery and courage, noted "their hostility to the Persians", "disinterestedness". The detachments of the Shamshadil distance under the leadership of captain Nasib Sultan Shamshadil also distinguished themselves in battles: "The Shamshadil Tatars, brave by nature and, moreover, maintaining unshakable loyalty and zeal to us, were an excellent cavalry, which more than once beat the Persians together with the Russians." [4]

In the battles of 1812–1813, General Rtishchev repeatedly noted the "zeal and zeal" for the service of the Shamshadil people under the leadership of Nasib Sultan and the Borchaly people under the leadership of Ali–bek Dzegamsky. And although the detachments of irregular cavalry were recruited from Azerbaijanis and other regions, nevertheless, the Russian command preferred detachments of the above distances.

As Potto wrote, "the Tatar distances had taken on by this time (1810) the final character of a kind of Cossack settlements, obliged to protect the borders of Georgia from enemy invasion and to put up several thousand irregular cavalry in all expeditions to help the Russian regular troops." [5]

The increase in the number of irregular Azerbaijani detachments led to the fact that the Russian military command compiled a "Manual", which regulated the issues of guard and field services of these detachments. [6] Based on the results of combat activities, hundreds of Azerbaijani horsemen were awarded medals, occupational statuses, cash prizes, positions, ranks and honorary weapons.

After the end of the I Russian–Kajar (Iranian), and then the Russian-Turkish war, most of the irregular detachments were disbanded (the detachments that performed guard duty were retained). The lawlessness and injustice committed by the Russian administration in the "Muslim provinces" in the period between the two Russian–Kajar (Iranian) wars led to the fact that most of those who had previously served in the Russian troops, this time did not respond to the calls of the Russian military authorities, and some even joined the detachments of the rebellious khans and Abbas Mirza. And only a small part still made up the light cavalry of the Russian troops. These few detachments contributed to the war by taking part in all the battles, starting from the first day of the war.

So, on July 19, 1826, the Balykchai post, already abandoned by the Russian infantry, was beaten off by 300 Azerbaijani horsemen. [7] In staff captain Voronov-headed detachment, defeated on July 27, there were 166 Russian infantrymen and 200 Azerbaijani cavalries. The same ratio was in the detachments of Machabeli and Chavchavadze.

Unfortunately, tendentious and sometimes chauvinistic Russian historians of the 19th – 20th centuries tried not to notice the participation of Azerbaijanis, and therefore the losses of irregular detachments were not even included in the lists of casualties. And yet, the losses were significant. So, in the battles near Amamlam in the detachment of Prince Chavchavadze, 19 personnel out of 50 “Tatars” remained alive.[8]

Colonel Mashadi Kasum Aga, Major Ibrahim Kuli Aga, Captain Ismail Bek, Lieutenant Safarali Bek, translators Mirza Jamal, Mirza Mammad, Shukur Agha, “Shusha citizens, Tatars Kazim Ali Mardanoghlu, Mehdi Ibrahim oghlu, Zeynal Mashadi Khan oghlu, Zeynal Abdin, Mirza Rustam Khan Mashadi oghlu.”[9]

In the battles for Karabakh, Captain Mirza Adigezal bey distinguished himself, commanding a detachment of 360 people (60 Russian soldiers, 200 horsemen and 100-foot militiamen). Highly regarded by Yermolov for his courage, he was awarded a silver medal and presented to Dibich during his trip to the Caucasus.[10] His brothers Muhammedaga and Aliagha also participated in the battles.

In the battles for Cuba at the end of July 1826, a detachment of 300 horsemen from Cuba and the same detachment from the inhabitants of Shirvan participated. For participation in these battles, 24 Azerbaijanis were awarded medals, officer ranks were received by: Mirza Mammad Hussein bey Ismail bey oghlu (later rose to the rank of staff captain), Kambay bey (later captain).[11]

The rulers of the regions and kendkhuds (village foremen) Rahim bey Zardobsky, Mammad–Huseyn Lemberansky, Novruz Ali bey Alvendly, scouts Aburrahman, Mustafa actively participated in the battles.[12]

1,210 horsemen of irregular cavalry took part in the Shamkhor battle: moreover, in the lists of those who distinguished themselves under the leadership of Lieutenant Haji Mahmud Agha, more than 50 distinguished Azerbaijanis are indicated (of which about 20 are from the Bek class).[13] In his report, Madatov was forced to point out that the Azerbaijani soldiers "always demanded to be ahead and were unusually brave." Yermolov in letters to Paskevich noted the zeal of Azerbaijanis.[14]

58 Azerbaijani horsemen out of 300 who participated in the battle were awarded in the Battle of Elizovetpol. In September – October 1826, more than 15 Azerbaijanis from Guba and Shirvan militias distinguished themselves in the battles.[15]

Unfortunately, the Russian official historiography of the 19th century, and after it the majority of Soviet researchers, did not notice or downplayed the role of the participation of Azerbaijanis in the Russian troops. However, reports and letters from the highest commanding staff of the Russian army, notes and memoirs of Russian middle and junior officers showed that "the local Tatar cavalry was not without benefit was used in action." General Yermolov wrote that, "... due to the lack of cavalry in our country, it is necessary to look for funds in the Karabakh cavalry." Generals Abkhazov and Madatov were instructed to "recruit as many cavalries as possible from the Karabakh inhabitants." In battles, "mounted border guards made up of Azerbaijanis from the Karabakh province" distinguished themselves.[16]

As a result, "1000 selected and serviceable weapons and horses" riders of the Shirvan and Kub cavalry, up to 5 thousand "Muslim cavalry of the Borchaly distance" took part in the battles of 1827.

It is of interest to note that 3,000 Russian infantrymen, 1,000 Cossacks, 100 Georgian infantrymen, 100 Armenian infantry men and 5,000 riders of the Azerbaijani irregular cavalry took part in the famous battle of Ushagan, which took place in August 1827.

However, Russian historiography, when covering the battles, deliberately did not notice the formations of the “natives”, indicating only the number of Russians and Cossacks. As a result, in the works of Dubrovin, Potto, Shcherbatov and others, "small Russian troops" smashed "numerous hordes of Persians." And this despite the fact that the number of Azerbaijani horsemen in the Separate Caucasian Corps of the Russian Army in 1828, according to H. Ibrahimbeyli's estimates, was more than 12 thousand personnel. As a participant in the described events, Colonel Fredericks, wrote, “I consider it a debt of justice to say that the Muslims, despite the difficult tasks assigned to them, served faithfully and diligently, and their team, with the exception of the dead and wounded, did not decrease by a single person.”[15]

And the fact that at present a number of Russian historians in their writings do not cover the exploits of the Azerbaijanis at the beginning of the 19th century, demonstrated their continuation of the “glorious” traditions of the royal “pen-pushers”.

After the final occupation of Azerbaijan in 1828, the Azerbaijani Muslim cavalry regiments and the Kangarli cavalry detachment were disbanded. However, at the suggestion of Paskevich, who appreciated the courage of the Azerbaijani cavalry gained military experience, the Caucasian Muslim Cavalry Regiment was created from the Azerbaijanis.

With the consent of the emperor, Paskevich declared the regiment his personal bodyguard and summoned him to the Polish Empire, to Warsaw. The regiment, which served here to strengthen Russian power, was considered one of the most belligerent military units.

After the formation of the Dagestan Muslim Cavalry Regiment in the North Caucasus, the Caucasian Muslim Cavalry Regiment, consisting of Azerbaijanis, was renamed and became known as the Transcaucasian Muslim Cavalry Regiment. It was under this name that the regiment suppressed the Warsaw Uprising (1848), took part in the Hungarian march of Russian troops (to suppress the Hungarian revolution of 1848–1849), and was awarded the St. George flag - the highest insignia of military units in the Russian army.

Currently, this flag is kept in the Museum of the History of Azerbaijan. Although the government of the Russian Empire did not declare military service in the Caucasus, it looked for various ways to recruit Azerbaijanis for military service. At the same time, the principle of "creating additional troops at minimal cost" was taken as the main one. Amnesties were held in every province and some of them were recruited into military service at border checkpoints and border posts.

Maafs stationed along the Araz River and on the border with the North Caucasus were armed and built at their own expense, receiving 2 manats per month for military service, a portion of meat and food for the horse.

In the mid-40s of the 19th century, a military institution was created in Azerbaijan, called the “guard”. The guards, referred to in the sources as "couriers", were responsible for the security of internal roads, watched important caravans and watched the yasavuls, which ensured state competition. The couriers, organized into groups in the frontier regions, were led by local bayis paid by the state.

In the late 1840s, guard slavery became one of the duties: in the Cilan area, for example, 400 couriers needed to be sent when 152 courier families were needed. In February 1847, a detachment of Azerbaijani volunteer cavalry was formed.

This group, using the example of Muslim cavalry regiments, consisted of 1170 cavalrymen (500 cavalries from Shusha, 350 from Shemakha, 100 from Sheki, 50 from Lankaran, 170 auxiliary cavalry).

In addition to these divisions, a special division has been created located in St. Petersburg. So,

along with the Dagli, Lezghin, Khevsur (Georgian) detachments, a Muslim (Azerbaijani) detachment was created in the emperor's special guard detachment.[19]

Adhering to their policy, the ruling circles of Russia sought to use Azerbaijani military units in the war against the Chechens and highlanders of Dagestan. Azerbaijanis, persecuted by the Russian authorities and therefore positively related to the struggle of the peoples of the North Caucasus, did not want to participate in this unjust war. Although some representatives of the feudal circles (for example, Ilisulu Daniyal Soltan) fought against the mountaineers, 120 Azerbaijani military units were mainly engaged in maintaining internal stability.

The situation changed immediately after Major General Daniel Soltan, who faithfully served Russia and faced injustice in response (forced resettlement and Christianization of both his personal and subordinate population), sided with Sheikh Shamil (June 5, 1844).

Seeing that many complaints and appeals remained unanswered, DaniyalSoltan moved to the North Caucasus along with Azerbaijanis who were dissatisfied with the policies of the Russian government and became a victim of Russian troops.

DaniyalSoltan, who later rose to the rank of deputy and became the right hand of Sheikh Shamil, led the largest military operations in the mountains and even in a letter to A. Vorontsov

it was written: “I don't understand, Mr. Daniyal, how his measures are not weakened. His personality is extraordinary! Alas, your predecessors did not appreciate it!”

The actions of DaniyalSoltan, who is considered a national hero in Azerbaijan, posed a real threat to Azerbaijan: the fighting in the Ilisu-Zagatala direction could engulf the country. Neither the Russian command nor the Azerbaijanis wanted this. Moreover, when the rebels liberated a village, they shot everyone who was in the Russian service and was loyal to the authorities.

As a result, a line of fortifications was laid on the northern borders of Azerbaijan, and detachments of local police and Russian troops were sent to the region. In heavy fighting, the mountain groups were driven back. It is interesting that, by special order of the command, the Azerbaijani troops were ahead of their Russian neighbors, as a result, both the highlanders and the Azerbaijanis suffered heavy losses, and the Russian troops suffered minimal losses.

In subsequent operations, cavalry militia units in Sheki, Shirvan and Guba fought not only in Azerbaijan, but also in Dagestan and Chechnya. In these battles, a detachment of the Shirvan cavalry militia (created on March 17, 1829, commander: Major Huseyn bek Shikhali bek oghlu) distinguished himself and was awarded an honorary flag (ranks, positions, orders and medals were awarded to the personnel).

In peacetime, the command of the army consisted of the cavalry regiments of the peoples, known as experienced cavalry. Such military units (Azerbaijanis, Kalmyks, Bashkirs, etc.), stationed in the central regions of the empire, were invaluable even when it was necessary to suppress uprisings.

How ethnically the regular troops were composed of Slavs, and therefore, when the Slavic population revolted, the command was very careful when sending regular units, both religiously (light cavalry, mainly consisted of Muslims) and militarily (fast, maneuverable, irregular). Mounted units were immediately sent to the scene, conducting long-range raids, launching surprise flanks, rears, and ambushes instead of lengthy and costly head-to-head attacks, operating in a large area of operation and political (never bargaining with insurgents), irregular light cavalry units were considered reliable.

For this reason, when revolutions broke out in Western Europe in 1848–1849 and the tsarist government committed itself to crushing revolutions in Eastern Europe, the Muslim light cavalry took the lead. During the fighting, these military units demonstrated their high combat capabilities.

After the end of the Russian-Ottoman war of 1828–1829, the Transcaucasian cavalry-Muslim regiment, which distinguished itself in battles, consisted of Azerbaijanis and was initially deployed in various regions of the Caucasus.

The regiment sent to Poland in 1834 suppressed anti-Russian protests and was stationed in Warsaw. In 1848, a revolution broke out in Hungary, the regiment was sent to the borders of the

country, and in 1849, when the Russian emperor ordered the suppression of the revolution, the regiment was one of the first to cross the border. The suppression of the revolution took on the character of a war, as the Hungarians, who had a strong army and defeated several Austrian armies, were preparing for hostilities.

As soon as Paskevich, the commander of the Russian troops sent to Hungary, arrived in the region, he formed his own guard, consisting of fighters from the Transcaucasian regiment.

Having demonstrated high combat effectiveness, the regiment returned to Warsaw after the suppression of the revolution, then fought on the European front during the Crimean War (1853–1856) and in 1856–1857 fell under the reduction of post-war military units. For the courage shown during the suppression of the Hungarian revolution of 1848–1849, the regiment was awarded the Flag of Honor (with the sign of St. George).[16]

Azerbaijani military units during the Crimean War (1853–1856). In the midst of the threat of war, the Russian command began to create national military units. In 1853, the Separate Caucasian Corps consisted of 36 irregular troops and 4 squadrons, 121 of which were mainly from Western and Central Georgia.

They fought their first battle in the Crimean War on November 26, 1853 near the village of Bayandur (a detachment of two horsemen gathered from the population of Y. Elizavetpol). Despite them-paid efforts, in which Aghalarov distinguished himself, the group suffered heavy losses.

In the battle of Bash-Gadiklar (November 19, 1853), the Azerbaijanis also suffered heavy losses (most of them – Mohammad Jan Tikh Char oglu). M.Vorontsov, who was always biased towards the Azerbaijanis, exaggeratedly informed the emperor about these facts, stating that “the Azerbaijanis did not confirm the glory that they received in the war of 1828–1829, in this war” and stressed the need to attract Azerbaijanis to military service.

However, after Vorontsov's report, he received an official letter from Emperor Paskevich. In this letter, Paskevich, the initiator of the creation of the Azerbaijani regiments, analyzed the operations of November 1853 and concluded that "the failures of the irregular units are due to their misuse." He wrote that the advantages of the Muslim cavalry regiments were their high maneuverability and, as a result, their ability to suddenly strike at the enemy, as well as the ability to break away from the main body and make deep notes in enemy territory. During the November operations, incompetent Russian officers "used these units as line regiments and carried out frontal attacks on the fortified positions of the Ottoman Empire without the support of infantry and artillery." Paskevich proved that Russia does not have light cavalry units in the Special Caucasian Corps, and, as a result, it is impossible to conduct deep reconnaissance, attacks on the flanks and rear of enemy positions, deep raids on enemy territory and pursuit of the retreating enemy. For this reason, "Caucasian Tatars (Azerbaijanis), who are properly organized and create excellent ideal cavalry units, should be called up for military service."

It was necessary to take into account that Paskevich took a direct part in the battles and was a professional soldier, while Vorontsov was a civil servant and lived hundreds of kilometers from the front line.

As an example, consider the composition of the Azerbaijani regiments in 1828–1829. During the formation of the regiments, the Karabakh cavalry detachment was sent to the front line from Azerbaijan (commander: Colonel Faraj bek Aghayev). At the same time, amnesties in the Russian service were declared a reserve of the created regiments and were completely covered by the state. Thus, professional military units of Azerbaijanis took part in the Crimean War: the Elizavetpol and Karabakh volunteer cavalry detachments, the Bek detachment (200 cavalry, 30 auxiliary cavalry, commander-Kalbali Khan of Nakhchivan (Kangarli)), volunteer reconnaissance detachment (200 people).

The Armenian commander Loris Melikov was assigned to this group of 300 fighters, 30 auxiliary cavalymen and Azerbaijanis and, finally, to the Azerbaijani cavalry brigade, consisting of 4 Muslim cavalry regiments (commander, lieutenant Andronikashvili).

Four Muslim cavalry regiments of the Azerbaijan Cavalry Brigade arrived at the front line on

May 1, 1854. Each regiment, equal in security to the regular Russian regiments, was to have a headquarters commander, his deputy, 1 bek, 5 sultans, 5 deputies, 10 lawyers (officers), 500 cavalymen, 85 assistants (cargo carriers).

In total, only 500 regiments were formed, their commanders and deputies were appointed from Russian officers, but during the operations they were replaced by competent, knowledgeable and capable Azerbaijani officers (for example, after the first skirmishes, the commander of the 2nd regiment, Lieutenant Colonel Yadigarov, the commander of the 4th regiment and colonel I. Gutgashinli).

The 1st Muslim cavalry regiment consisted of the Muslim population of Karabakh, the 2nd - from the population of the Shirvan region (mainly Shemakha, Sheki, Lenkarani), the 3rd - Elizavetpol (mainly Elizavetpol, Gazakh, Shamshadil), 4-d - population of Irevan region.

To create a certain military glory, the regiments were awarded the banners of the Muslim cavalry regiments that participated in the war of 1828-1829.

New flags were designed for the Bay Brigade and the Volunteer Reconnaissance Group. Whether the Yelizavetpol and Karabakh volunteer cavalry units had flags is still unknown. By the way, 1000 Azerbaijanis, 150 Armenians and 150 Kurds were mobilized from the Yerevan region. This is one of the facts testifying to the ethnic composition of the province.

In addition to the above military units, the Borchaly volunteer detachment (300 cavalymen), as well as Azerbaijanis from the 17th and 48th Cossack regiments, took part in the hostilities.

Azerbaijani military units took an active part in the operations of the Crimean War. Thus, detachments of volunteers took part in the battles of Bayandur, Ali-Kilisi, Ashura, Bash-Gadiklar (autumn 1853). In the battles for the gravel hills (July 1854), the 4th Muslim cavalry regiment, Bek's squadron, took part. In the battle, as a result of which the Ottoman corps of the Beyazids was defeated, Ismail bey Gutgashynly, captain Ismail Khan, captain Hussein Sultan, lieutenant Kerbalai Khan, warrant officers Ali Khan, Pasha Khan, who worked at the headquarters of the Russian troops Khanjan Khan Mammad Qulu, distinguished themselves from the detachment of beys. The merits of his son were especially distinguished.

The main forces of the Russian troops, including all Azerbaijani military units, took part in the march towards Kars. In the battle of Kuruk-Dere (July-August 1854) on the southwestern slopes of the Garayal Mountains, the Azerbaijani cavalry brigade defeated 10 enemy infantry battalions and 2 cavalry regiments. Hundreds of Azerbaijanis were awarded for the battle, and the commander of the brigade, Colonel Andronikashvili, was awarded the highest order of the Russian Empire - the Order of Alexander Nevsky.

During the operation of 1855, Russian troops moved in three directions, while Azerbaijani units stood in all three directions. In the summer of 1855, Azerbaijani military units did not spend a single day in peaceful conditions; they participated in all large-scale battles.

In the main direction, units were sent on deep raids to destroy the rear of the enemy, and in the continuous battles of July and August, Azerbaijani units were used not only as light cavalry units, but also as line troops. In the first unsuccessful attack of the Russian troops (September 17, 1855), 8 hundred Azerbaijani units took part in the infantry, the 1st, 3rd, 4th regiments - in the cavalry, and the 2nd regiment ensured the blockade of the fortress. Due to the mistakes made by the general command, both regular and irregular units suffered heavy losses (35% of the personnel of the Azerbaijani regiments were out of action), but nevertheless showed courage. For example, the 3rd Regiment captured the fortifications of Chakmak (Çakmak), held them for 4 hours and retreated after seeing that the Ottomans faced a large number of superior forces and did not come to their aid.

In October, new fighters manned on a permanent basis were sent to the regiments from Azerbaijan, then the regiments were sent back to battle, and in November 1855, together with the Russian troops, they participated in the capture of Kars.

At the end of 1855, the Baku cavalry detachment was formed (commander - officer of the Imperial Guard detachment, cornet Dadash bey Bagir bey oglu, sent from St. Petersburg), the 5th Muslim cavalry regiment (from the population of the Shirvan province) and the 6th Muslim cavalry

regiment (from the Muslim population of Karabakh) could not take part in the hostilities. After the end of the war, in August 1856, the Azerbaijani military units were abolished, and the flags were transferred to the Caucasian Museum of Military Glory in Tbilisi (Georgia), and some of the officers were sent to regular military units. Most of the staff was released. Interestingly, at that time, the Russian command made a special statement to the Azerbaijanis, in which they highly appreciated their military service and stated that “soldiers are allowed to return home not because of dissatisfaction with their service, but because of the reduction of the army at the end of the war.”

Thus, Azerbaijan participated in the Crimean War not only with food and transport services, but also with military units. About 10-11 thousand Azerbaijanis were involved in military service: 6 thousand of them took part in the battles. Colonel Faraj bey Aghayev, major Ali bek Atabekov, aptain Vazirov, lieutenant Aghalarov, lieutenant Mammad Jan Tikh Char oglu, lieutenant Kalbali Khan of Nakhichevan from ensigns, ensigns Ali Khan, Pasha Khan, Yanibek Aghalarov, lieutenant of the Yerevan Carbine Regiment, Khanjan khan Mammad Qulu Khan oghlu from the General Staff, Dashdamir Gasimoglu from volunteer reconnaissance detachments (known as "ambush master"), colonel Ismail bek, colonel Muslim Gutgashynly from the cavalry regiment, Agha Vekilov, ensign Mirza Mamashad Sharif oghlu, private Ali Karim oghlu and others were repeatedly awarded orders and medals of the Russian Empire.[17]

Azerbaijani bek detachment (1853–1856). At the end of 1853, a squad (“druzhina”) of representatives of the Azerbaijani Bek dynasties of Yerevan and Nakhchivan began to form.

Kalbali Khan from Nakhchivan, who served in the cavalry units of the Russian army (he put forward the idea of creating a

detachment), was appointed the head of the detachment, and the detachment of 200 personnel numbered 123,400 cavalry.

In the spring of 1854, the "druzhina" conducted its first battles in the direction of Yerevan as a reconnaissance detachment of the vanguard (advanced) forces of the Russian troops.

From July 16, the detachment actively participated in the battles for the mountain passes near Lake Chingel. Dozens of outstanding officers and cavalymen of the "druzhina" were awarded orders and medals, including the Order of St. George Kalbali Khan, 4th degree.

During the battles of Kuruk-Dare and Kepri-Kov, as well as in the Black March of the Russian troops, the detachment carried out reconnaissance operations. The banner of the “Druzhina” was sent to Kalbali Khan by Emperor Nicholas I in 1854. In some sources, it is known as the "flag of Kalbali Khan".

Azerbaijani military units in the Russian–Ottoman war of 1877–1878. Historical sources showed that during the Russian-Ottoman war of 1877–1878, the Irevan cavalry militia, which consisted of the Muslim population of the Irevan region (that is, Azerbaijanis, since the Irevan Kurds were included in a separate Kurdish division), participated in direct hostilities as part of the Russian army, consisted of Muslims of the Elizavetpol province, a cavalry militia, a Borchaly detachment (about 150 people) and the Zagatala Muslim cavalry regiment. Several hundred Azerbaijanis were also part of the irregular cavalry of Alexandropol.

From June 1877, the cavalry units used in battles were committed as reconnaissance and raid units. The Zagatala regiment was used as a reserve in the battles of Zivin and Dayar. In the battles near the Bayezid fortress, detachments of the cavalry militia also distinguished themselves.

So, during the fighting, a small group of Russians was besieged by the Turks near the fortress. Distinguished by maneuverability, the Colonel Ismail Khan of Nakhchivan–headed militia detachments of Yerevan and Elizavetpol overcame the siege and reinforced the Russian detachment in the Bayezid fortress. The fighters, blocked by superior enemy forces, remained under siege for 23 days, despite the lack of water and food in the fortress and incessant attacks. Finally, the cavalry division (3 cavalry regiments and auxiliary units) under the command of Major General Kalbali Khan of Nakhchivan broke through the blockade.

Azerbaijani military units took an active part in subsequent battles (mainly, in the battles of Dali Baba, Khorum, Kenrik), and the largest battle of the war, the battle of Davaboynu, became a

victory for the Russian troops thanks to the efforts of the cavalry divisions of Major General Karlbali Khan of Nakhchivan and General Major Prince Amilakhvarov.

The Zagatala Muslim Cavalry Regiment, which took an active part in the war, was awarded the St. George flag (the highest collective award of the Russian Empire).

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