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THE PROVINCE OF ELIZAVETOPOL.

(From the *Transcaucasian Census of 1886, carried out by the Caucasian Statistical Commission.*)

BY NICOLAS DE SEIDLITZ,

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THE Province, or Government, of Elizavetopol lies between the Caucasus Mountains on the north and the river Araxes on the south—a river which also forms the boundary of Persia. It includes the eastern portion of the Little or Anti-Caucasus, and the transverse spurs which jut out into the country watered by the river Kura and its affluent, the Araxes.

The triangular strip of country bounded by these rivers was, in former times, inhabited by Armenians and Albanians (Aggovans), whose territory extended up to the southern base of the Great Caucasus, with Berdaa, in the valley of the Kura, as their chief town. The Aggovans, whose descendants, the Udines, at the present day occupy the villages of Vartashen and Nish, were quoted by Strabo as the third great people of the Caucasus, the Georgians and Armenians being the others. The Aggovans, from confessing the same religious faith, became closely assimilated to their neighbours, the Armenians, but accepted Islamism after their absorption by the Tartars, who, at the present time, form 56 per cent. of the whole population, the Armenians numbering 35 per cent., and the Udines only 1 per cent. The Udines number less than the Russians, who first penetrated into the country in the year 1828, and very nearly five times less than the Kurds (4·6 per cent.). The Province of Elizavetopol covers an area of 16,847 English square miles. The density of population to the square mile is 43·2—the fixed population numbering 728,251.

In 1873 the inhabitants numbered only 593,784. The increase in 1886 of nearly 24 per cent. was distributed as follows:—Among the inhabitants of the towns, 11·36 per cent.; among the rural population, 25·55 per cent. This large increase during the last thirteen years is the result not only of natural causes, but also partly of the better methods of enumeration adopted by the Census. Neither emigration nor immigration introduced any notable factor. Of the total population, 72,994 live in the towns (Elizavetopol, 20,294; Nukha, 25,894; Shusha, 26,806), whilst the remainder are distributed among the following eight districts:—Elizavetopol, 102,594; Aresh, 51,845; Jebrail, 46,402; Jevan-shir, 54,950; Sangesur, 123,997; Kasakh, 84,888; Nukha, 91,119; Shusha, 99,462. The rural population thus numbers 655,257 souls. Consequently, rather more than 10 per cent. of the population live in cities, and nearly 90 per cent. in the country districts. The few and little-populated towns of the province possess none of the characteristics of town life. In Elizavetopol the suburbs are buried among large orchards and vineyards, and those of Nukha among mulberry plantations; moreover, the inhabitants of both these cities have large fields

under cultivation. Shusha, on the other hand, being situated on a high rocky plateau, and enclosed by stone walls, consists of closely-packed houses.

The population is composed of the following ethnographical elements—7921 Russians, 1896 Germans, 2909 Tats (Iranians speaking a Persian *patois*), 33,819 Kurds, 229,340 Armenians, and 227 Gypsies. Here all belong to the Aryan or Indo-European stock. In addition, there are 1750 Jews, who among themselves speak the Tat dialect, thus proving that their ancestors migrated to this country with the Tats from Persia, probably at the time when, during the reign of the Sassanid Shapur (Sapor) II. (309 to 381 A.D.), the Persian domination spread northwards along the shores of the Caspian. These Jews are the sole representatives of the Semitic race, and live together in the village of Vartashen, in the district of Nukha; they carry on agriculture, grow tobacco, and act as retail tradesmen. Moreover, there are 4192 Kurins and 1521 Haputlis, speaking a similar dialect; these are Lesghians, who crossed the main chain of the Caucasus, and now live chiefly in the adjacent districts of Nukha and Aresh. Belonging ethnographically to the east Caucasian highlands are 7273 Udines, who are distinguished by their ancient culture and some traces of historical record. Numerically the dominating nationality is that of the Adarbaidjan Tartars, who number 364,235 souls, or 56 per cent. of the whole population of the province; they have close blood-relationship with the Aryans (Armenians and Udines), particularly in the district of Nukha.

As regards the division of the population according to religious faiths, the Mussulmans number 61·8 per cent. (Shiites, 36·5 per cent.; Sunnites, 25·1 per cent.; Ali-Allahi, 0·2 per cent.). The Ali-Allahi profess an ultra-Shiite creed, by accepting Ali, the son-in-law of Mohammed, not only as his successor, like the Shiites, but in venerating him as a divine personality; hence their name of Ali-Allahi. They are not acknowledged by the other Mohammedans. They number only about 1925 souls, and live exclusively in the district of Jebrail.

The geographical distribution of the Sunnites and Shiites has for the first time been accurately given in the map (10 versts to an English inch) accompanying our work on the results of the last census in the province of Elizavetopol, on the occasion of the introduction in 1887 of compulsory military service.

In the neighbouring province of Baku the Sunnites extend from Daghestan (a province which is inhabited exclusively by this sect) to the river Kura. The Shiites are found only on the shores of the Caspian, dwelling within a narrow zone as far north as Derbend. In the province of Elizavetopol the Kura likewise forms the boundary of these two sects. South of this river the inhabitants of the canton Samukh, in the district of Elizavetopol, are included among the Sunnites, and more or less considerable communities of them are to be found in the district of Kasakh, on the frontier of the Tiflis province, and in the district of Jebrail, on the river Araxes. Isolated adherents of the Sunnite creed are also found on the right bank of the Araxes, who have survived the influence of the neighbouring Persians.

The Armenians in the province of Elizavetopol inhabit chiefly the slopes of the Little or Anti-Caucasus and the districts of Nukha and Aresh, and the steppe region of Boz-agh, which stretches in a parallel direction to the main chain of the Caucasus. The Tartars occupy the whole of the fertile plain of the Kura and the mountain districts behind the Armenians up to their alpine pasture-lands. This district promises to become in the near future a very productive wine-producing country, owing to the proximity of the Trans-Caucasian Railway.

Our census of the population brought out very interesting data respecting the numerical relationship of the male and female inhabitants of the province of Elizavetopol in respect of nationality. The province, in common with the whole of Cis- and Trans-Caucasia (with the sole exception of the northern half of Daghestan), belongs to the land zone—beginning in North and Central Asia (Siberia and Turkestan), and comprehending, besides the Caucasus, the whole of Southern Russia, Roumania, Transylvania, Servia, Greece, and Italy (apart from Sicily), the southern half of France, the valley of the Rhine, and Belgium—where, in contrast to the rest of Western Europe and European Russia, the male population exceeds the female. In the whole province of Elizavetopol the female population equals only 77·61 per cent. Divided according to nationality the female population bears the following proportion to the male population: Germans, 103·23 per cent.; Jews, 94·88 per cent.; Udines, 91·34 per cent.; Russians, 90·96 per cent.; Armenians, 82·79 per cent.; while the Adarbaidjan Tartars, who are so numerous, show a percentage of only 73·71. This disproportion is to be attributed—apart from errors in the census—to the oppression of women by the Tartars, more especially by the nomadic tribes; moreover, boys have far greater attention shown to them in their infancy.

As the data obtained by the census are far more complete concerning the male population than as regards the female population, which is merely numbered, it is only possible to group the male population according to age and nationality. As regards age, according to the generally accepted groups, we find that, though the nationalities differ little from each other, they present a contrast to the people of Western Europe. Taking the groups 0 to 15 years, and 16 to 20 years, the province of Elizavetopol shows an increase over the corresponding European statistics, but a decrease from the age of 21 onwards, which is still more marked in the groups from 60 years and upwards.

This hasty sketch of the census, though confined only to the province of Elizavetopol, might be extended to the other provinces of the Caucasus by means of the data already collected, but I do not expect the whole work will be completed before 1890.