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Farming according to the Grand Defter of Gurjistan Vilayet of 1595

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ABSTRACT

The article describes the economic situation, in particular, the tradition of Georgian farming culture, in the south-western part of Georgia concurred by the Ottoman Empire in the XVI century and called Gurjistan Vilayet by the Ottomans. Gurjistan Vilayet covered a great area of south-western Georgia, with only small part of it being a part of Georgia and the remained territory being a part of the Republic of Turkey, the legal successor of the Ottoman Empire. The study is mainly based on the Grand Defter of Gurjistan Vilayet. In the course of the study, the geographical objects (villages, sites of ancient villages, sowing areas, etc.) given by the Defter were identified, systematized and classified and the GIS database and relevant maps was developed. The objects plotted on the map were identified by comparing with other sources that was used to identify the types and amounts of taxes set by the Ottoman for the population, group them thematically and draw the picture of the economic potential of the region. It was found that the Georgian economic tradition was solid and sustainably profitable, but the Ottoman ideological press had certain effect on it.

Keywords: Gurjistan Vilayet, Liva, Nahiyah, Ottoman Defters, XVI century, Farming.

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Introduction

Following the conquest of the southwestern part of Georgia by the Ottomans in the 16th century, a new administrative-territorial unit - "Gurjistan Vilayet" was formed, where Muslimization and gradual eradication of the remnants of Georgian culture started, though this process was slow and gradual. The first change made by the Ottomans on the occupied territories was the introduction of the Ottoman tax system, which was based on religious discrimination, in particular, the Christians paid higher taxes than the Muslims. This supported the substitution of the Christian faith with the Islam what was dangerous for the Georgian traditional culture in general. As to when the forced transformation of the Georgian traditional culture

started in the given area, how it developed and which areas it covered, is an important issue of a scientific study. It is virtually impossible to study this issue through scarce, old Georgian sources. Consequently, the old Ottoman documents are an irreplaceable source. The most important of them are the population census books.

"The Grand Defter of Gurjistan Vilayet" dated by 1595 is the first document translated and published in Georgian, which describes the political, socio-economic and cultural situation of this newly conquered territory of Georgia. The Grand Defter was a subject of interest of many scholars [1-6]. However, due to its diversity and information value, many interesting novelties are still found in the document.

Methods and initial data

The study is based on the Grand Defter of Gurjistan Vilayet of 1595 prepared by the Ottoman Empire and translated from Turkish to Georgian and published in 1941 by S. Jikia. The Turkish original of the Grand Defter of Gurjistan (hereinafter “The Defter”) was written on 490 quite large pages and is preserved at the Korneli Kekelidze Georgian National Center of Manuscripts [Fund # 478]. The document gives extremely rich and diversified data about the social-economic situation of then-time Georgia, regarding which S. Jikia, the translator and researcher of the Defter wrote: “*The feudal Ottoman Empire, owing to unequal forces, succeeded in isolating it from Georgia, which had the economic riches and traditions of high culture of the many-century-long history of Georgia*” [1].

“The map of Gurjistan Vilayet” [7], different-scale (1:100,000; 1:50,000) Soviet topographic maps, maps in the old verst system (scales: 1 inch: 5 versts and 1 inch : 10 versts), 3-dimensional Google Earth geo-images were also used as primary sources.

The given paper relies on the agricultural data given in the “Defter”, in particular, the information related to farming, which tells us about the kinds of crops the people of the given region grew and the geography and intensity of the given crops. The data the Defter are compared with the later data, including the ethnographic studies of the 20th century. The study used comparative, semantic, quantitative and retrospective mapping methods.

Object of the study

As per the Defter of 1595, Gurjistan Vilayet was divided into 8 Livas and 28 Nahiyah. These Livas are: Akhaltsikhe, Khertvisi, Akhalkalaki, Chrdili, Potskhovi, Petre, Didi-Artaani and Panak. According to the map compiled by Al. Aslanikashvili [7], there were 9 Livas and 37 Nahiyahs in Gurjistan Vilayet, although the Defter says that Oltisi Liva inscription was made sometime later [1], i.e. it does not belong to the Defter of 1595.

The area of Gurjistan Vilayet was 11 791 km² (excluding Oltisi Liva) [8]. The Livas of Gurjistan Vilayet occupied completely different areas as a result of their different natural conditions. After all, the borders between the Livas were fixed with mountain systems and river valleys. The biggest (Akhalsikhe) Liva was almost 4 times bigger than the smallest (Potskhovi) Liva. There were total 5 big Livas in the Vilayet: Akhalsikhe, Akhalkalaki,

Didi Artaani, Chrdili and Panak, while the area of 3 other Livas (Petre, Khertvisi and Potskhovi) was less than 950 km².

Main results

General features of agriculture. Regarding “The Grand Defter of Gurjistan Vilayet” of 1595, Sh. Lomsadze wrote: “*It shows us enslaved people deprived of all rights and grouped by villages and cities; the heads of the families who are referred to by their names and patronymics (as it was common in Turkey) ... the sites of ancient villages and cities, desolate and “empty of Rayah (peasant)”*” [8]. And truly, the Defter gives such a picture: almost 1/3 of the villages are deserted.

As per our calculations, there were 1070 objects named in the Vilayet (excluding Oltisi Liva), but only 726 of them had permanent residents, while the rest of the locations were deserted, i.e. were sites of ancient villages. The agricultural lands in these villages were used by the people from the surrounding villages who therefore paid relevant agricultural taxes. It is of these taxes; these villages were included in the Defter. Presumably, the Vilayet had much more sites of ancient villages that were completely abandoned not only by their permanent inhabitants, but also by the farmers from the neighboring villages, who would cultivate the abandoned land to gain harvest. Such state of affairs surely had an impact on the economy of the Vilayet as it is clearly seen by the statistics of the Defter.

The residents of Gurjistan Vilayet paid 64 different types of taxes, including 55 agricultural and 9 non-agricultural taxes. The highest taxes were paid by Akhaltsikhe and Didi Artaani Livas, and the least taxes were paid by Petre Liva (Fig. 1).

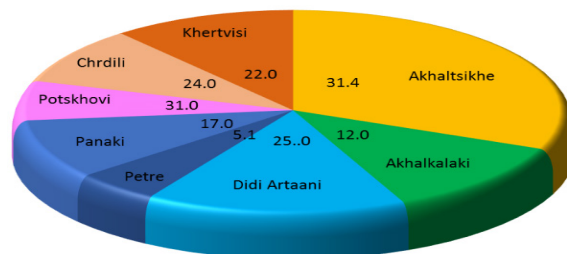


Fig. 1. Total taxes according to Livas (%)

The Vilayet paid a total of 9 391 732 akçe (the chief monetary unit of the Ottoman Empire and neighboring countries in XIV-XIX cc). Clearly, the highest taxes were paid by the biggest Livas, namely, the first three biggest Livas were: Akhalsikhe

(paying 2 942 868 akçe), Didi Artaani (paying 1 458 612 akçe) and Akhalkalaki (paying 1 120 480 akçe) Livas. The lowest tax (475,305 akçe) was paid by Petre Liva.

The situation will be completely opposite if calculating the total taxes by homesteads. On average, the population of Vilayet paid 593 akçe per homestead. Petre Liva was charged with a maximum tax (1657 akçe) and Didi Artaani Liva

paid the minimum tax (340 akçe), the former paying a 5 times higher tax than the latter meaning that virtually, the inhabitants of Didi Artaani Nahiyah must have had higher incomes. This is logical, since by then, Petre Nahiyah was already quite depopulated and most sites of ancient villages of all Vilayet were found on its territory (Fig. 2), while the situation in Didi Artaani Liva was “calmer” and this figure was close to the average value of the Vilayet.

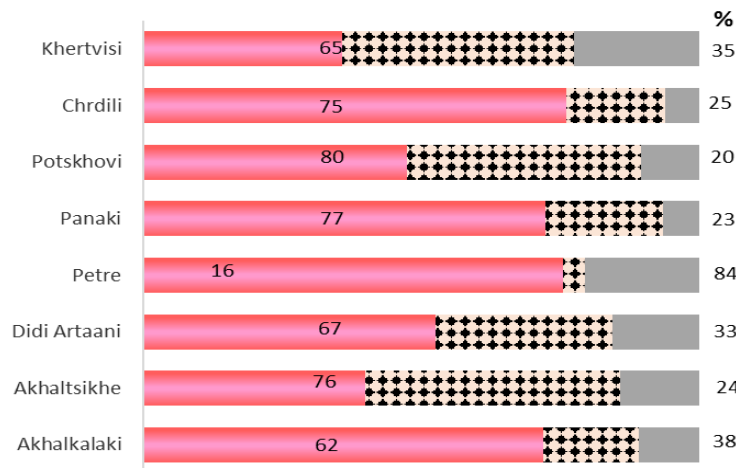


Fig. 2. Share of villages and ancient villages in Gurjistan Vilayet (%)

There was no big difference between the amounts and types of agricultural and non-agricultural taxes in different Livas (Fig. 3). An average difference for non-agricultural tax was 8.8%. There is a bigger difference in different

Nahiyahs and villages. All over the Vilayet, the maximum (56.0%) non-agricultural taxes were paid by Panaskerti Nahiyah of Panak Liva, while the minimum (2.9%) taxes were paid by Petre Nahiyah of Petre Liva.

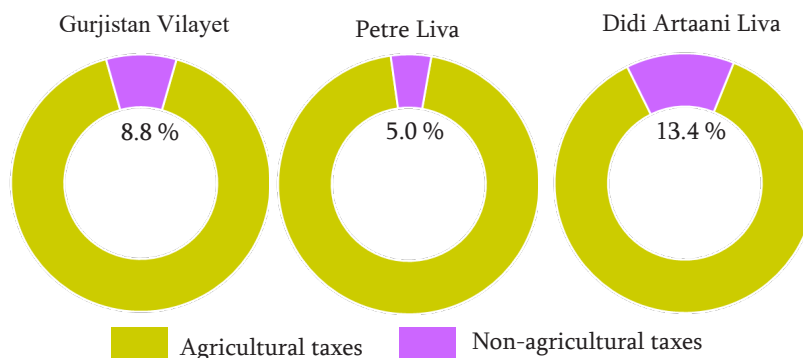


Fig. 3. Agricultural and non-agricultural taxes

There is an even greater disproportion between the villages. Across the Vilayet, the maximum (46.2%) non-agricultural taxes were paid by village Gura of Mzvare Nahiyah of Didi Artaani Liva. This was due to two circumstances: 1) the village had many (133) households with their majority being Christians who were consequently charged with

higher non-agricultural taxes (hispenje, murahasia), i.e. non-agricultural taxes. They account for the largest share (39%) of total taxes; 2) low tax on grain (wheat, barley), just 3600 akçe. This is a very low tax for the village for so many homesteads. For comparison, take village Zanazgomi with only 13 households paying exactly the same tax (3600 akçe)

on grain as big village Gura with many homesteads used to pay. At the same time, we would note that such a big difference in taxes between these two villages evidences a big difference in the incomes of the two. Village Zanazgomi had a much higher income, i.e. the natural conditions in this village were most favorable to grow grain.

Several agricultural branches were developed in Gurjistan Vilayet. The taxes in farming were much higher than in cattle-breeding (Fig. 4), with 92% and

8% specific weight ratios. This ratio varied more or less across the Livas, Nahiyahs and villages, with a particularly great difference between the villages. For example, in one of the estates of Mzvare Nahiyah of Didi Artaani Liva [“Defter”, p. 405, #3], the share of cattle-breeding was almost 27%. The situation is similar in village Patara Alabala of the same Nahiyah where the share of cattle-breeding was much higher than the average value of the Vilayet.

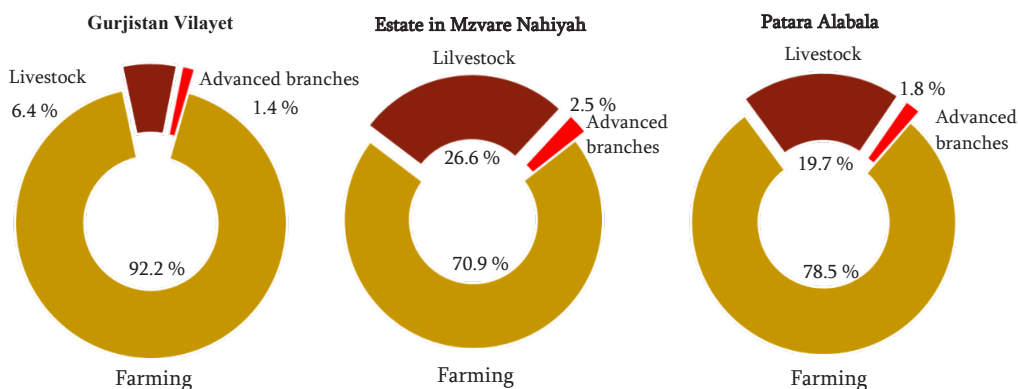


Fig. 4. Branch structure Gurjistan Vilayet

Grain-growing was the most developed branch all over Gurjistan Vilayet. The total of 5,954,870 akçe that is almost 64% of the total tax and 86% of the agricultural tax, was paid by the Vilayet. The highest tax (2,025,492 akçe) was paid by Akhaltsikhe Liva, which accounted for more than 1/3 of the relevant Vilayet tax. Didi Artaani Liva ranked the second (with 923,986 akçe). Both of these Livas paid almost 1/2 of the entire tax. Petre Liva was charged with the least tax (50,750 akçe).

However, a homestead-based calculation gave a completely different picture. The highest tax on cereals per household was paid by Petre Liva (1450

akçe), with all other Livas felling much behind it. This tax was the least (341 akçe) in Didi Artaani Liva. Such a large imbalance with the major agricultural crop is the sign of different economic standing of the population. In this respect, Petre Liva was in the most unfavorable situation.

As it is clear from the taxes, the people grew 4 cereal varieties: wheat, barley, rye and millet. The most important cereals were apparently wheat and barley. The total wheat tax was 2,994,912 akçe and the total barley tax was 2,635,172 akçe. These crops were grown in all Livas and Nahiyahs (Fig. 5).

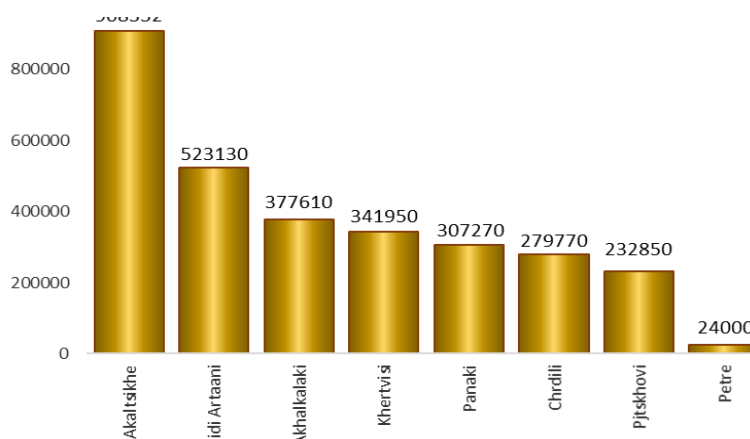


Fig. 5. Taxes on wheat according to Livas (Akçe)

As already mentioned, the highest was the wheat tax amounting to 2,994,912 akçe, i.e. ½ of the cereal tax. The cereal tax was particularly high (908,332 akçe) in Akhaltsikhe Liva, accounting for almost 1/3 of the Vilayet wheat tax. This tax was similarly high in Didi Artaani (523,130 akçe) and Akhalkalaki (377,610 akçe) Livas. The aggregate data of all three Livas are over 60% of all Vilayet taxes. Thus, the given Livas were the main wheat “producers”. The least tax (24,000 akçe) was paid by Petre Liva. The forested Nahiyah of Didi Artaani Liva paid the highest tax (227,000 akçe). It was followed by Akşehir Nahiyah of Akhalkalaki Liva (221,110 akçe). With this tax too, none of Nahiyahs of Akhaltsikhe Liva is ahead of others what is easy to explain: Akhaltsikhe Liva occupied a large area and was administratively divided into many (8) units so that the total value was distributed among those units.

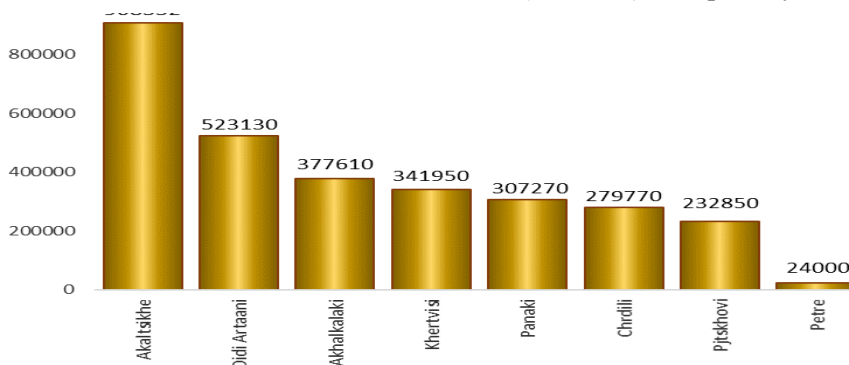


Fig. 6. Taxes on barley according to Livas (Akçe)

Rye and millet must have been much less important, as evidenced by tax amounts. This is evidenced by the fact that the sum of taxes on two cereal varieties paid by the Liva was less than the taxes paid by individual Nahiyahs (Akhaltsikhe, Akhalkalaki, Didi Artaani and Khertvisi) on wheat. A total of 230,936 akçe was paid as a rye tax by whole Vilayet. A particularly high tax (116,600 akçe) was paid by Akhaltsikhe Liva, which was more than ½ of the total rye tax of the Vilayet. This was an exceptionally high value, in proof whereof it may be said that this tax was almost 3 times higher than that of Akhalkalaki Liva (41,320 akçe) ranking the second. Akhalkalaki (39.8 akçe) and Khertvisi (39.3 akçe) Livas paid the highest tax per household and the least tax (0.9 akçe) was paid by Artaani Liva. The least common cereal was millet and a total of 93,850 akçe was levied on it making only 1.5% of all cereal taxes. As millet was the least common crop, Didi Artaani and Chrdili Livas did not pay any tax for it. This tax was very small for Petre and Akhalkalaki Livas and not all Nahiyahs of

The second leading crop was barley. A total of 2,635,172 akçe, i.e. more than 44% of cereal tax was levied on it. At the same time, alongside with barley, wheat accounted for the largest share of the grain tax (almost 95%) in Gurjistan Vilayet. Like wheat, barley was grown in all of Livas and Nahiyahs (Fig. 6). The highest barley tax was paid by Akhaltsikhe Liva (more than 1/3 of the barley tax of the Liva). With this tax too, Didi Artaani Liva ranked the second (397,776 akçe), Khertvisi Liva ranked the third (305,120 akçe) and Petre Liva paid the least tax (26,000 akçe). However, with this value, the latter exceeded the corresponding wheat tax. Of Gurjistan Vilayet, Petre Liva was the only one where the barley tax was higher the wheat tax. The situation was completely different with total barley tax per homestead, where the maximum tax per household (743 akçe) was paid by Petre Liva and the minimum tax (111 akçe) was paid by Didi Artaani Liva.

other Livas paid it. Akhaltsikhe Liva paid the highest tax (67,620 akçe) making more than 72% of total rye tax. All Nahiyahs in the said Liva paid this tax, with Ude Nahiyah paying the highest tax. The tax was also high (16,400 akçe) in Panak Liva.

Several studies were used to establish that Georgia is located in the geographical area where wheat crops were cultivated as evidenced by 6 endemic wheat species and their varieties found in Georgia [10; 11; 12]. A special role in this respect was played by historical Meskheta or the region where Gurjistan Vilayet was located for some time. Such cereals as wheat and barley were widely used by the people until the mid-XX century [13]. Alongside with the endemic wheat varieties, more than 50 botanical forms of barley are found in Georgia [14]. The fact of wheat and barley species and their varieties having survived to the industrialization epoch proves their great importance for Georgian farmers, and “The Grand Deftar of Gurjistan Vilayet” clearly proves its importance.

They also grew **legumes** in Gurjistan Valayet.

The legumes, alongside with the cereals, played an important role in the agricultural life of the Georgians. Legumes are known to be rich in proteins and to be very important for living organisms. In Georgia, “in the past, people traditionally did not eat meat every day, and fasting prohibitions of the Christian religion played quite an important role in it. Therefore, the deficit of meat proteins in human food was compensated by the products rich in legume proteins and nitrogenous substances” [15]. Thus, the legumes have been known in Georgia since the ancient times. A total tax of 26 755 akçe was levied on the legumes in Gurjistan Valayet. This is a very low figure compared to cereal tax. At the same time, only 3 Livas were charged with legume tax: Akhaltsikhe (24,965 akçe), Panak (120 akçe) and Khertvisi (1690 akçe).

The Defter shows that 3 legume varieties were grown to Gurjistan Vilayet: peas, lentils and broad beans. Peas (accounting for 43% of total tax on legumes) and lentils (35%) must have been widely spread. Only the residents of Akhaltsikhe Liva paid taxes on broad beans. The highest tax on all three legume varieties was paid by Ude Nahiyah of Akhaltsikhe Liva accounting for almost 1/3 of the tax on legumes in Akhaltsikhe Liva. Particularly high taxes were paid by villages: Uraveli and Tskordza, paying 2.5-3 times higher legume taxes than other villages.

Flax must have been another important agricultural crop. With the exception of Petre and Panak Livas, all of its Livas were taxed. The total tax amounted to 23,294 akçe. Particularly high tax on flax (11,550 akçe) was paid by Akhaltsikhe Liva making almost ½ of its total taxes. At the same time, flax must have been a widely spread crop in Liva as its tax was paid by all Nahiyahs. Of villages, the maximum tax (250 akçe) was paid by village Kvemo Pamaji of Chrdili Nahie of the same Liva. Flax tax was similarly high in Akhalkalaki Liva (4408 akçe).

Vegetable-growing was one of the most advanced branches in Gurjistan Vilayet as evidenced by the size of its total tax and the vast majority of villages paying it (Fig. 7). The population of the Vilayet paid a total of 84,731 akçe on vegetables accounting for more than 1/5 of the total taxes on farming (except cereals) what was quite a big value. In fact, the vegetable patch tax must have been even higher. In particular, 2 more taxes should be added to this value: 1) the tax levied on sowing areas (57,330 akçe), which obviously refers to arable lands, i.e. vegetable patches and orchards, and 2) tax levied on fruits and vegetables (4811 akçe), which makes it impossible to determine the exact share of vegetables, but we can probably assume tax of ½-½ per each. This means that the share of vegetable-growing and gardening was taxed by a total of 142 261 akçe, i.e. making more than 1/3 of the total taxes on farming (excluding cereals).

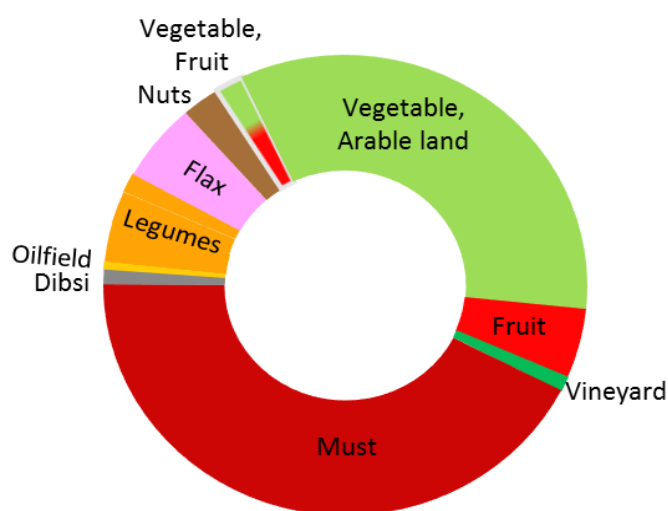


Fig. 7. Some land taxes (excluding wheat)

As M. Svanidze wrote, based on the XIX-century data, alongside with vegetables and watermelons, they grow pumpkins, dill, cabbage, melons, celery, garlic, mint, carrots, coriander, savory, beets,

onions, etc. all over Principality of Samtskhe [4]. It is not excluded that the listed products were the traditional agricultural crops of this region and they were grown even in the XVI century.

The highest tax on vegetables and watermelons was paid by Akhaltsikhe Liva (28,127 akçe), accounting for almost 1/4 of total taxes on vegetables in the Vilayet. It was followed by Didi Artaani Liva (18,221 akçe). Elsewhere, the maximum vegetable tax alone was 9000 akçe. Of the Nahiyahs, the highest tax (8024 akçe) was paid by the forested Nahiyah of Didi Artaani Liva. All over the Vilayet, the vegetable tax averaged 6.7 akçe per household. The highest (14.3 akçe) tax was paid by Petre Liva, and the least tax (3.8 akçe) was paid by Panaki Liva.

The vegetable tax was levied in fact on every village. The only exceptions are a very small village with 2 or 3 households, or estates, where not all types of taxes were enlisted. Consequently, it may be said that vegetable-growing was common everywhere, although it seems that it was not equally developed everywhere, and hardly survived at the devastated locations, where the Ottoman officials had not even mentioned it. The highest taxes were paid by some villages, with the first three villages of Klde of of Mzvare Nahiyah of Akhaltsikhe Liva (790 akçe), village Okami of Akshehir Nahiyah of Akhalkalaki Liva (600 akçe) and village Panakis Rabati of Panak Nahiyah of Panak Liva (534 akçe). It is noteworthy that these villages are not large, with the number of households of 20-38. Therefore, per household tax was high there (15-30 akçe). An opposite picture is seen in some other villages with more households where the vegetable tax is much lower, e.g.: the villages of Panak Nahiyah of Panak Liva: Bariq (with 42 households paying vegetable tax of 150 akçe), villages Zemo Arsenak and Shua Arsenak (with 138 households paying 242 akçe) and village Kotik (with 40 households paying 150 akçe).

Viticulture and fruit-growing must have been one of the most advanced branches in Gurjistan Vilayet as evidenced by several circumstances, primarily the taxes on fruit, vineyards and must. The highest land tax (almost 1/2 of all taxes) excluding cereals was must. The fruit and vineyard tax proportions were much lower.

Vineyard tax was levied in 3 Livas and made total 1951 akçe. The maximum tax was paid by Akhaltsikhe Liva (871akçe) and Panak Liva (550 akçe). Khertvisi Liva ranked the third (410 akçe). All three of these Livas accounted for 95% of the vineyard tax. It is also interesting to note that the vineyard grew in the Livas located farther south, i.e. where today the local people do not grow vines. Such Livas are Akhalkalaki and Potskhovi. In proof, we cite the relevant data from “Meskhetian

Chronicles of the Psalter”, the same as “Meskhetian Chronicles” (XVI c.). There is also a reference where the village of Oloda, located in the south-western part of modern Akhalkalaki Plateau, is mentioned. It was located at an altitude of 1900-1940 m above sea level. The document states that in addition to fruit-growing and cattle-breeding, viticulture was also developed in the area [16]. This is confirmed by later sources as well: “According to Ballas, in 1895, there were only 10 vineyards of 3 dessiatines in Akhaltsikhe Province” [17]. Another interesting fact is that Didi Artaani Liva located even further south was charged with vineyard tax. These issues need further in-depth study.

A higher (20 395 akçe) than the vineyard tax was levied on fruit. Akhaltsikhe and Khertvisi Livas had to pay the highest taxes (16 046 and 2075 akçe, respectively), although Akhaltsikhe Liva was still leading, paying 8-9 and even several tens of times higher tax than other Livas. Particularly high taxes were paid by Atskuri (3930 akçe), Chacharaki (3350 akçe) and Mzvare (2430 akçe) Nahiyahs.

It is interesting to note that must (grape of fruit juice) was similarly high in Akhaltsikhe and Khertvisi Livas. Two Livas: Didi Artaani and Panak did not pay fruit tax. The latter is of a particular interest, since the Liva paid vineyard tax and must, but not fruit tax. This evidences the intensive development of viticulture in the region.

Gurjistan Vilayet paid 179,540 akçe as must. This tax varied a lot across the area (Fig. 8). The Livas in the northern and southern parts of the Vilayet paid the taxes, while the Livas in the central part were not taxed. Only 2 Livas (Didi Artaani and Oltisi) paid this tax. 3 Livas (Akhaltsikhe, Khertvisi, Panak) were charged with the highest tax, with Akhaltsikhe Liva ranking the first paying 90 440 akçe. This tax for Akhaltsikhe Liva was twice as much as in Khertvisi Liva, which ranked the second. It was these 3 Livas paying the major proportion of must (92%).

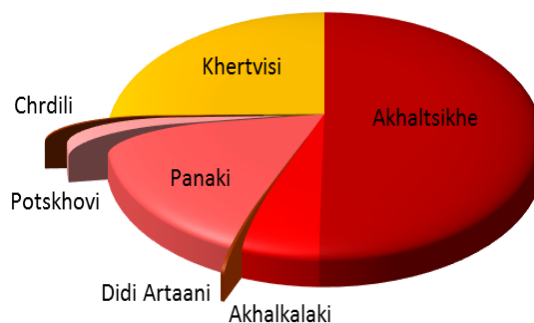


Fig. 8. Taxes on must according to Livas

Conclusion

The analysis of the statistical data given in the Defter evidences that farming was a leading branch in Gurjistan Vilayet, where grain-growing was particularly important. Grain-growing was more or less common in all Livas and Nahiyahs. There were two other advanced agricultural branches in the area: fruit-growing and vegetable-growing. Vegetable-growing seemed to be developed all over the region, particularly in Akhaltsikhe and Didi Artaani Livas. An exception was Petre Liva, who was depopulated that diminished many agricultural sectors. Fruit-growing and viticulture were developed in all Livas, but showed more imbalance. Fruit-growing and viticulture were particularly well developed in Akhaltsikhe, Akhalkalaki and Khertvisi Livas.

It is known that farming has always been the most important branch in Georgian agriculture. The data of the Defter evidence that farming in southwestern Georgia, which was conquered by the Ottomans by the end of the XVI century, was quite a well-developed field of agriculture. The Defter evidences that although the conquest of the region reduced the population and hampered the development of the region, it did not harm the Georgian agricultural traditions as evidenced by the diverse and highly productive cereals and legumes in the region. The data of the Defter also evidence quite well-developed viticulture in the given region proving that the Georgians firmly maintained this traditional branch.

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