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MAPPING ARMENIAN DIALECTS: STATE OF THE ARTS

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Abstract

The study of dialects is crucial for understanding the history of a language. Attempts to study Armenian dialects began in the mid-twentieth century and have included single-characteristic and multi-characteristic classifications. However, to this day, there are unresolved issues regarding the complex relationships between dialect units. The creation of a dialectological atlas is an essential tool for a comprehensive examination of dialectological issues. Many languages already have such atlases. Unfortunately, the investigation of Armenian, in this sense, is falling behind, and linguistic geography, which is a research method that can help to study the spatial distribution of linguistic phenomena, has only recently been applied in Armenian studies. Fortunately, efforts are currently underway in Armenian studies to create an Armenian dialectal atlas to fill this gap.

Keywords: Armenian language, dialect unit, dialect branch, linguistic geography, dialectological atlas

CARTOGRAFIANT DIALECTES ARMENIS: ESTAT DE L'ART

Resum

L'estudi dels dialectes és crucial per comprendre la història d'una llengua. Els intents d'estudiar els dialectes armenis van començar a mitjans del segle XX i han inclòs classificacions monocaracterístiques i multicaracterístiques. No obstant això, avui dia, hi ha qüestions sense resoldre

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sobre les complexes relacions entre les unitats dialectals. La creació d'un atlas dialectal és una eina essencial per a un examen exhaustiu de les qüestions dialectològiques. Moltes llengües ja tenen atlas d'aquest tipus. Malauradament, la investigació de l'armeni, en aquest sentit, s'està quedant enrere, i la geografia lingüística, un mètode de recerca que pot ajudar a estudiar la distribució espacial dels fenòmens lingüístics, s'ha aplicat recentment als estudis armenis. Afortunadament, avui es fan esforços en els estudis armenis per crear un atlas dialectal que cobreixi aquesta llacuna, i qualsevol intent per fomentar una pau duradora a la comunitat també ho ha de tenir en compte.

Paraules clau: llengua armenia, unitat dialectal, branca dialect, geografia lingüística, atlas dialectal

CARTOGRAFIANDO DIALECTOS ARMENIOS: ESTADO DEL ARTE

Resumen

El estudio de los dialectos es crucial para comprender la historia de una lengua. Los intentos de estudiar los dialectos armenios comenzaron a mediados del siglo xx y han incluido clasificaciones monocaracterísticas y multicaracterísticas. Sin embargo, hoy en día, existen cuestiones sin resolver sobre las complejas relaciones entre las unidades dialectales. La creación de un atlas dialectal es una herramienta esencial para un examen exhaustivo de las cuestiones dialectológicas. Muchas lenguas ya cuentan con atlas de este tipo. Desafortunadamente, la investigación del armenio, en este sentido, se está quedando atrás, y la geografía lingüística, un método de investigación que puede ayudar a estudiar la distribución espacial de los fenómenos lingüísticos, se ha aplicado recientemente en los estudios armenios. Afortunadamente, en la actualidad se están realizando esfuerzos en los estudios armenios para crear un atlas dialectal que cubra esta laguna, y cualquier intento por fomentar una paz duradera en la comunidad también debe tener esto en cuenta.

Palabras clave: lengua armenia, unidad dialectal, rama dialect, geografía lingüística, atlas dialectal

1. Introduction

The first steps towards the creation of Armenian dialect atlas were made by H. Acharyan, for whom the composition of the atlas has been a dream and was a final aim. "I had in mind the concept of composing a comprehensive atlas of Armenian dialects, in which even the position of each village in the dialectal group would be specified. Recently, the publication of the linguistic atlas of France, which was undertaken a few years ago, has been accomplished. Although such great undertakings cannot be even imagined, a simple linguistic atlas can be created" (Acharyan 1911: 14).

In 1972, G. Jahukyan published *The Introduction of Armenian Science of Dialects*, where he classified dialects according to their hundred phono-grammatical distinguishing characteristics. He selected 120 places, among which 1-72 are from Western Armenia and 73-120 from Eastern Armenia (Jahukyan 1972: 32). The classification of Armenian dialects into dialectical groups, held by the help of 100

characteristics, somehow characterizes the Armenian dialectal landscape. However, the uniting and distinguishing characteristics of dialectal units are not represented in maps, but rather in charts. As a result, the spatial distribution of language characteristics is not immediately obvious. Nonetheless, Jahukyan's work promoted further development of linguistic geography through the introduction of his multi-feature dialect classification.

2. Armenian Dialect Atlas

In 1975, the Institute of Linguistics of the Armenian Academy of Sciences established a department of dialectology, which was led by H. Muradyan. Under his leadership, the Armenian Dialect Atlas (ADA) was created with the aim of documenting the various Armenian dialects. The collection of materials for the ADA began in 1976, according to "The Collection Program of Armenian Dialect atlas materials (later Program), which "fully takes into account comparable efforts of other languages and is enriched by several structural features" (Armenian dialectological Atlas 1985: 8).

The Program has been designed in that way that it can be used as a questionnaire, where dialectal features are presented as questions or sets of alternatives. The Program is unique because it does not follow the traditional order of linguistic presentation. It begins with lexical isoglosses, rather than phonetics, and ends with phonetic isoglosses. This approach has a practical advantage. The possibility of errors is greater at the start of a dialect registration, and precise phonetic registration is less crucial when isoglosses are studied from the lexical viewpoint.

3. The Program

The Program is comprised of three parts, each of which includes lexical, grammatical, and phonetic isoglosses. Materials have been collected for each place of

residence according to the Program. When several places have the same dialect, they have been introduced together in one notebook, indicating the residences. When filling out the dialect, a person provides some information about themselves, including whether the dialectal unit is their native one or not. The notebook also contains information about the individuals who helped fill out the dialect units. Their biographical data and the extent of their knowledge of the dialect are described in detail at the beginning of the notebook.

According to the Program at present about 500 dialectal units have been recorded both from Eastern and Western Armenia. Like the Eastern ones, the Western dialects materials were also collected in the Republic of Armenia with the help of Western Armenians who had fled there after the Armenian Genocide. In some cases, it was difficult to find individuals who spoke a particular dialect, as they were the only inhabitant of a certain area and the only speaker of that dialect unit.

4. The “File Maker” program

At present, as it has been already said, have collected around 500 dialectal units which have not been mapped yet. We have made an attempt to form 26 lingual maps for the first time. However, before we can create these maps, we need to first classify and computerize the collected material. For this purpose, we have chosen the “File Maker” program. Before we can begin computerizing the lingual material, we need to classify it according to its grammatical characteristics. We have grouped and classified the data based on the corresponding lingual characteristics. This has resulted in the isolation of various groups and subgroups. For instance, we have distinguished the first three groups based on the characteristics of the Present Tense of the Indicative Mood, taking into account the forms of Present Tense expressed in Armenian dialects. We have discovered that the Present Tense is formed using the Present Participle and the auxiliary verb, the present forms of old Armenian, and with the combination of the old Armenian present forms and the participle.

In the context of forming the present participle, there are three subgroups that consider the three participles involved in creating the present tense. Additionally, there are two subgroups that include formations using different particles. These three main groups are represented by different numerals and letters, while their subgroups are represented by variants of those letters or numerals, such as 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, and so on. Later they were replaced by conditional signs on the map. This is a crucial stage of computerization, as creating accurate maps of dialectical isoglosses is directly tied to it. The correct formation of computer fields is also important. It should express the material of the corresponding conjugation with all its subdivisions and include necessary data about those dialectical units, that have that conjugation.

Therefore, we have decided on the structure of computer fields in advance.

The computer fields are formed based on the following principles: number of dialectal unit (dialectal units was filled in separate copybooks, which have numbers), which indicates the column (e.g., 22), the locality of the dialect, which indicates the name of the column (Mush, Van), the name of the settlement (Hadgon), and finally, the number of verbal attributes (e.g., 626) based on the given examples (verbal attribute number by the Program). The last column provides the type of the number (1, 2, 3...) (Figure 1).

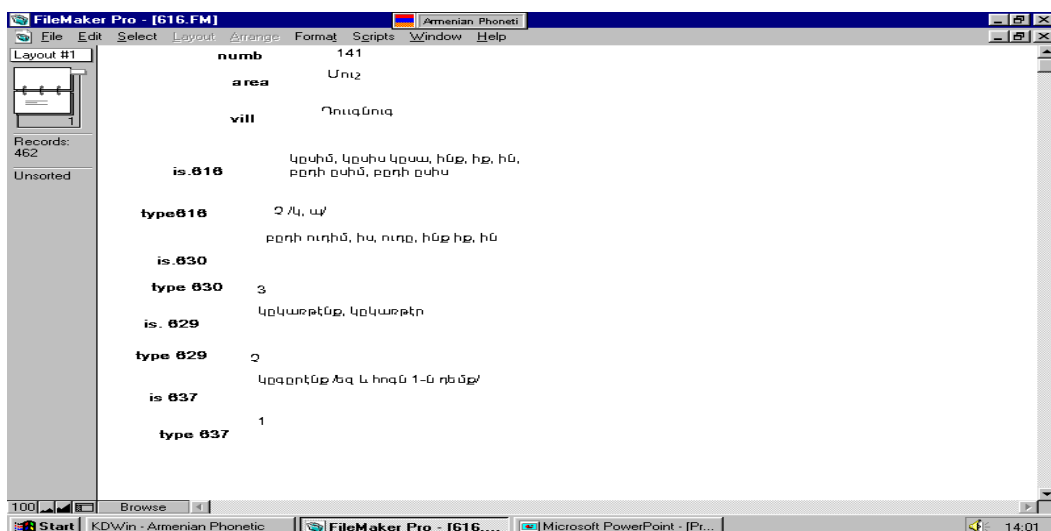


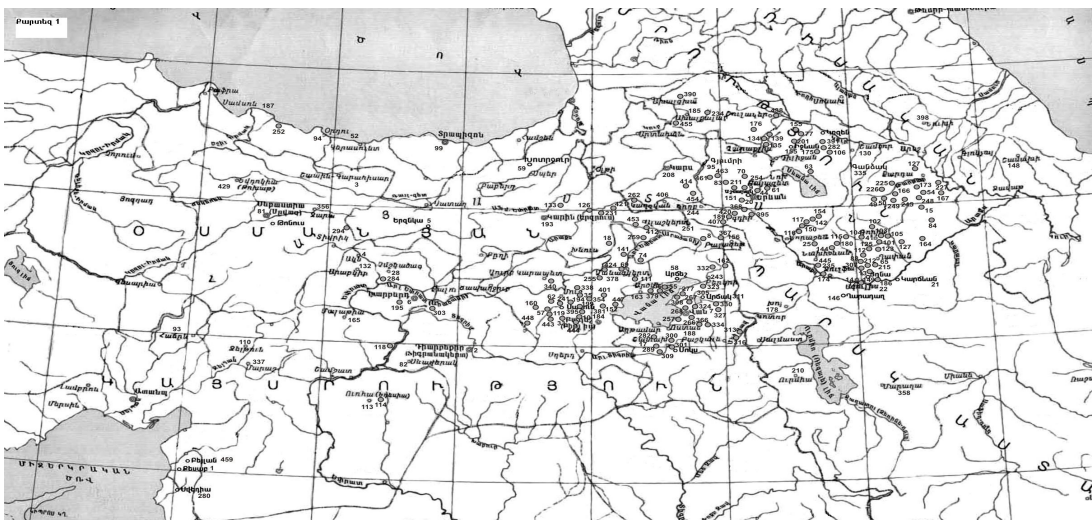
Figure 1. File Maker field for verb isoglosses 616, 630, 629, 637

Until today, we have computerized 500 dialectal units of verb comparisons, involving 612-662 numbers, and used the data to create maps. Later, they were replaced by conditional signs on the map.

5. Linguistic maps

5.1 *The main map*

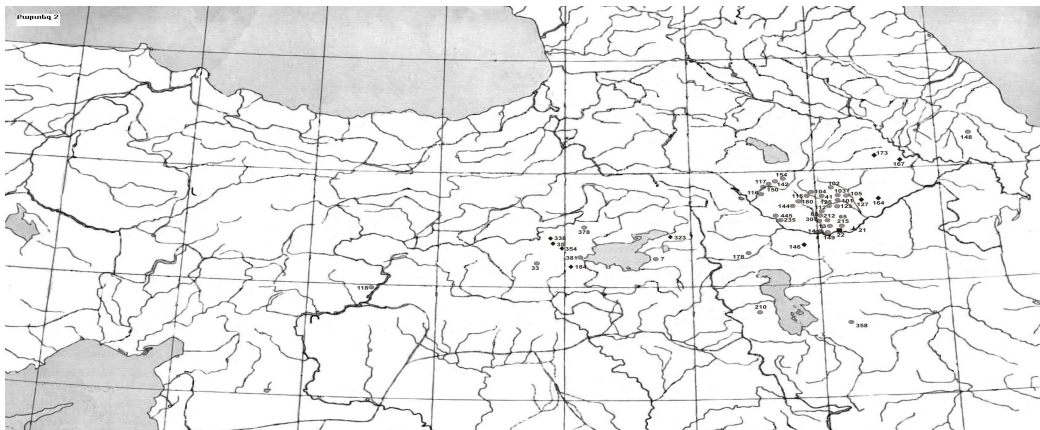
At first, a main map was created in which there are about 200 localities from Western and Eastern areas of Armenia as they existed in 1914. For the Western part, the map takes into account the administrative divisions that were in place at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, which included all provinces and localities in that area. The settlements on the map are numbered, for example, Mush has the number 338, Sasun-199, Yerznka - 5, Arabkir -132, and so on (Main map). The numbering corresponds to the numbers of speech notebooks collected by the Program These numbers make it easier to locate settlements on maps that only display numbers instead of names. The main map is followed by the maps presenting verb features. Each map is devoted to one of the lingual features and shows the areal borders of the given lingual feature. The title of each map reflects the content of the feature being mapped, and the limits of its distribution are shown with the help of conventional symbols.



Map 1. Main map

5.2 Maps

The second map (Map second) displays the presence of the Future Participle in various Armenian dialects. It indicates that this grammatical form is used only in small regions of the Eastern Armenian dialects. On the map, we can see four conventional signs that indicate that the Future Participle has four different expressions in Armenian dialects. The accompanying commentary provides a detailed list of the symbols, the corresponding types of Future Participle, and the areas where they are used. Based on this information, it can be concluded that the participle with the affix **ac** (mnalac em) is exclusively used in Agulis, while the participle with the ending **elu** or **alu** (gnalu or vazelu) is widely used in the dialects of the Eastern regions, forming future tenses.



Map 2. Map second

In the third map (Map 3) the use of the Perfect Participle in Armenian dialects is given. Through the various symbols and places on the map, it becomes clear that Perfect participle is widely used in the Armenian dialects and appears in several forms. Notably, the map indicates that the most widely used is this sign **◆**, which is common in the settlements of the Western area. By examining the explanations, we can

Armenian territories were changed and became Turkish after the genocide. This resulted in the majority of the population being erased and replaced. Even though geographic coordinates of the residential areas are present, the names of the places were changed, making it difficult to recognize the settlement. Therefore, it is hard to find all dialects of the Western area. Furthermore, many dialects of Western Armenia's territory were lost with their inhabitants, and it is impossible to find even a single inhabitant today. However, it is impossible to find data for all or even a significant part of the Western Armenian territories by solely relying on the help of the immigrants who found refuge in the Republic of Armenia.

The field of linguistic geography generally accepts the view that dialects spread outwards from the center towards the provinces. "If we travel from village to village, in a particular direction, we notice linguistic differences which distinguish one village from another. Sometimes these differences will be larger, or smaller, but they will be cumulative. The further we get from our starting point, the larger the differences will become" (Chambers & Trudgill 1980: 6). To create a dialect atlas, researchers usually select a grid of settlements that are equidistant from each other. In this case, it is not important to fill out the dialect units of all residences. However, this method is not applicable to Armenian dialects because of the periodic migration of the Armenian people. This migration has disrupted the natural spread of the dialects, making it difficult to establish a clear picture of their distribution. Therefore, the best approach for creating an atlas of Armenian dialects is to fill out the dialect units of all residences. This will allow researchers to identify those dialects that have been transferred to other places and to place them in their historical context during the cartography process (ADA 1982: 21).

Unfortunately, it is not possible to fully capture the Armenian dialects on a map due to the lack of available information, as well as the decline in speakers and the limited lifespan of the dialects. The number of people who speak these dialects is declining, and their existence is limited to a few years. Therefore, it is essential for Armenian dialectology to promptly register dialectal data with the help of individuals living in other parts of the world.

7. Conclusion

The dialectological maps of Armenian dialects, along with the dialectal units they contain, will illustrate the borders of linguistic phenomenon extension. These maps are not only linguistically significant but also hold historical and cultural value. They can shed light on a range of topics including philology, linguistics, historiography, and ethnography.

Creating these maps requires precise geographical and linguistic data, which includes accurate information about the distribution of dialects and the names of settlements. The updated information will help us not only in creating maps of dialects but also in building linguistic, cultural, and historical databases on that basis. However, research in these areas is still in its early stages in Armenia, and it is not always possible to obtain sufficient data from local sources and studies. Therefore, it is essential to explore countries with rich libraries and similar research to gather the necessary information.

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