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Research paper

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THE EARTHEN VERTICAL OVEN (*T'ONIR*) IN THE TRADITIONAL CULTURE OF THE ARMENIANS OF MOUNTAINOUS KARABAKH (ACCORDING TO ETHNOGRAPHIC AND FOLKLORIC MATERIALS OF THE 19th-21st CENTURIES)

Abstract. This article explores the traditional customs and beliefs of the Armenians of Mountainous Karabakh or Nagorno-Karabakh associated with the *t'onir*, an earthen bread oven. The aim of the article is to present for the first time the ethnographic and folkloric features associated with the *t'onir* of Nagorno-Karabakh. The article uses the methods of fieldwork observations and typological analysis. Drawing on ethnographic and folkloric materials recorded from the late 19th to the early 21st centuries, as well as our own fieldwork, an attempt is made to describe in detail the unique features of the *t'onir* construction among the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh, the types of bread and other dishes prepared in it, and associated cultural practices. Karabakh folklore samples that preserve traces of distinctive concepts related to the *t'onir* are also examined in the article. The field research was conducted by Armen Y. Sargsyan between 2000 and 2020 in all regions of Nagorno-Karabakh, encompassing more than 50 settlements. The main conclusion of the article is that the ideas associated with *t'onir* among the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh, on the one hand, share similarities with those found in other ethnographic regions of Armenia and the Caucasus, and on the other hand, they exhibit distinct features – ranging from the unique construction of the *t'onir* to its specific ritual vestiges. In traditional Armenian culture, the *t'onir* was identified with the hearth and was believed to ensure the household's well-being and the unity of the family. This concept is especially prominent in formulaic expressions found in folklore (“formulaic folklore”).

Keywords: Nagorno-Karabakh; *t'onir*; *t'onratun*; “*t'onir* marriage”; bread; dish; belief; worship; folklore

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Исследовательская статья

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ЯМНАЯ ВЕРТИКАЛЬНАЯ ПЕЧЬ ДЛЯ ВЫПЕЧКИ ХЛЕБА (Т'ОНИР) В ТРАДИЦИОННОЙ КУЛЬТУРЕ АРМЯН НАГОРНОГО КАРАБАХА (ПО ЭТНОГРАФИЧЕСКИМ И ФОЛЬКЛОРНЫМ МАТЕРИАЛАМ XIX–XXI вв.)

Аннотация. Статья посвящена традиционным представлениям и обычаям армян Нагорного Карабаха, связанным с *т'ониром* — ямной хлебной печью, вмонтированной в землю. Цель статьи состоит в том, чтобы впервые представить этнографические и фольклорные особенности, связанные с карабахским *т'ониром*. В статье использованы методы полевых наблюдений и типологического анализа. На основе этнографических и фольклорных материалов, зафиксированных с конца XIX до начала XXI века, а также собственных полевых наблюдений, предпринята попытка подробно описать отличительные черты строительства *т'онира* у армян Нагорного Карабаха, а также традиции выпечки хлеба и приготовления других блюд в этой печи. В статье также анализируются образцы карабахского фольклора, в которых сохранились пережитки самобытных представлений, связанных с *т'ониром*. Полевые наблюдения проводились Арменом Юрьевичем Саргсяном в 2000–2020 годах во всех районах Нагорного Карабаха — более чем в 50 населённых пунктах. Основной вывод статьи заключается в том, что представления, связанные с *т'ониром* среди армян Нагорного Карабаха, с одной стороны, перекликаются с аналогичными воззрениями, распространёнными в различных этнографических регионах Армении и Кавказа, а с другой — отличаются рядом ярко выраженных особенностей, начиная от способов строительства *т'онира* и заканчивая специфическими культовыми пережитками. В традиционной культуре армян *т'онир* отождествлялся с очагом, символизируя благополучие дома и единство семьи. Особенно ярко эта идея прослеживается в фольклорных формулах.

Ключевые слова: Нагорный Карабах; *т'онир*; *тонратун*; «венчание у *т'онира*»; хлеб; блюдо; верования; культ; фольклор

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Preface

The scientific relevance of this study is driven by two key factors. First, it examines a characteristic element of traditional national culture (specifically, Armenian) – the *t'onir* – within the context of a distinct historical and geographical region, accounting for its local features. While general studies rely on localized research, no specialized study to date has explored the complete set of ethnographic features associated with the *t'onir* or its analogues within a single region. Second, following the 44-day war in Karabakh in 2020 and Azerbaijan's military operation in 2023, Nagorno-Karabakh no longer has an Armenian population. As a result, displaced informants cut off from their natural environment will find it increasingly difficult to recall and reproduce their former ethnographic practices. The primary objective of this study is to introduce into scientific discourse the details of the ethnographic situation surrounding the *t'onir* in pre-war Nagorno-Karabakh – much of which was documented through fieldwork by one of the authors – and to provide a comprehensive cultural-linguistic analysis.

Ethnographic literature features a generally accepted classification of household appliances that utilize fuel energy. Based on the technology used to heat the baking surface and the positioning of that surface, six distinct types are recognized: a) open hearth; b) raised two-part stove with a lined hearth; c) the same type with a tiered stove heated by flames from the lower firebox; d) open stove mounted on stands or a tripod; e) subterranean wall-lined device acting simultaneously as a firebox and baking chamber (*tondyr*); and f) above-ground, wall-lined stove shaped like a truncated cone (*tarum*) [1, p. 15; 2, p. 130; 3, p. 77–78].¹ The last two types are internationally known as *tandoors*, which can take the form of either subterranean or above-ground vertical ovens.

The “Armenian tandoor” (*թոնիր* [*t'onir*], in the Karabakh dialect – *թոնրու* [*t'urun*] / *թոնրու* [*t'uʀun*] / *թորու* [*t'ōrun*] / *թորէ* [*t'ōrēn*]) is a vertical subterranean earthen oven used for baking bread, featuring a horizontal opening flush with the ground level. The *t'onir* has a cylindrical shape that widens toward the bottom. The earliest mentions of this word are found in Sumerian (^{im}tu-ru-na / bu-rin-na- [durun]) and Akkadian (*tinūri* / *tenūru*), where it referred to earthen ovens serving the same function [5, p. 5; 6, p. 12–13]. In Sumerian, the word is believed to be borrowed from pre-Sargonic Akkadian or another unidentified third language, which likely served as the source for the Akkadian form as well [6, p. 14]. Notably, in Sumerian texts, the word appears twice in the epic poem *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta*, directly within a context related to Aratta itself [7, pp. 49–96, lines 538–539, 541]. During the period of the Van Kingdom (Urartu), 9th–7th centuries BC, earthen subterranean ovens were used in the homes of ordinary people known from the archaeological site of Karmir-blur (*Teišeḫbaini*). The excavations showed that these ovens were located either at the center of the dwelling or near a wall. Grinding stones and stone mortars with pestles were found nearby. Excavations at Karmir-blur revealed both types of ovens: those completely embedded in the ground – still common in the region – and those slightly raised above ground level, typical of ancient Assyria [8, p. 173–174].² It is assumed that such ovens were used for baking bread, and it is noted that similar ovens have also been found in several Bronze Age fortresses in northeastern Armenia [9, p. 161].³

Today, above-ground clay ovens predominate in Iraq, Syria, and other parts of the Middle East, whereas subterranean earthen ovens used for baking bread remain most typical of Eastern Turkey, Armenia, and southern Georgia [5, p. 4; 16, p. 16]. Earthen ovens were also used in the southeastern regions of Azerbaijan at the beginning of the 20th century; however, above-ground ovens and flat metal bread-baking griddles known as *saj* are generally more characteristic of Azerbaijan [17, pp. 349–356]. The range of modified versions of modern tandoors extends from the Caucasus through Central Asian countries to the Punjab region of India and the Xinjiang region of China [18, p. 234; 16, p. 16, 17]. The earthen *t'onir* is universally characteristic of sedentary populations, whereas nomadic groups generally do not use earthen ovens for baking bread even after settling down [18, p. 234]. Classic examples of *t'onirs* are the earthen ovens used by Kurds, Armenians, and Tabasarans to this day [cf. 18, pp. 17–19; 19, pp. 105–106; 2, p. 130].

¹ For other classifications, see [4, p. 93–94]

² Bread ovens of the second type are still found today in southern Dagestan and Central Asia (see 10, p. 170, 172; 11, p. 257; 12, p. 175–177, etc.).

³ These, however, should not be confused with round hearths, which were made of clay, slightly raised above the floor, approximately 50 cm deep, and primarily served a cultic purpose [cf. 13, p. 203; 14; 11, p. 27–35, pic. 2, 6, 7, scheme 1, p. 93, photo 3–5, p. 98, photo 15, p. 101, photo 21–22, p. 104, photo 28].

The method of constructing a *t'onir* [20, p. 40–42], the types and components of a *t'onir* [21, p. 81–83], the details of baking bread in a *t'onir* [22], the rituals associated with the *t'onir* [23, p. 62, 64], and the beliefs related to the *t'onir* [24, p. 59–61] have been described and discussed in the scientific literature of the 19th and 20th centuries.

In Armenian belief, the cult of the *t'onir* was identified with the cult of fire and the hearth; it was usually built in the center of the house and considered sacred [24, p. 14–15; 25, p. 39–49]. After the construction of the *t'onir*, a priest was invited to bless it [24, p. 59]. In Armenian mythological thought, the *t'onir* was regarded as a ritual miniature of a volcanic crater. Just as the mountain – as the axis of the world – connects the three main layers of the universe (the human world and the underworld), the *t'onir* was perceived as a path leading to the underworld, creating a link to the sanctified ancestors dwelling there [26, p. 11–12; 27].

Our ethnographic materials collected in Nagorno-Karabakh show that until the end of the 20th century—especially in winter—it was customary, after baking bread, for family members, neighbors, and friends to gather around the *t'onir*, sit nearby, and hang their feet into it to warm up and talk. Fairy tales, legends, and other folklore were often told around the *t'onir*. As a sacred space, bad language and cursing were forbidden in its presence.⁴

The structure of the t'onratun and t'onir

In most Armenian ethnographic regions, the *t'onir* was placed in one of the rooms of a multi-section house. This room was referred to as *q̄h̄uunn̄l̄* [*gəlxatun*] ‘head-house’, *h̄ūguunn̄l̄* [*hac'atun*] ‘bread-house’, *ūp̄uunn̄l̄* [*məratun*] ‘soot-house’, *ḡh̄uunn̄l̄* [*cəxatun*] ‘smoke-house’, or *ṛn̄l̄h̄uunn̄l̄* [*t'onratun*] ‘*t'onir*-house’ and was situated under the domed roof and the small garret window [see 28, p. 73–77]. However, in some areas, the *t'onratun* was built separately from the main house [21, p. 73]. In Nagorno-Karabakh, only a shallow hearth was constructed in the *head-house* (*ḡaradam*) or *ḡṛkoč* [*kəřkoč*] to heat the home [29, p. 181–182; 30, p. 103–104; 31, p. 84, 87], while a separate “house of *t'onir*” (*t'onratun*) was built in the yard or at some distance from the house, this building was known in dialectal forms as *ṛn̄l̄h̄uunn̄l̄* / *ṛn̄l̄h̄uunn̄l̄* [*t'urnatōn* / *t'urnatōn*] [32, p. 101; 21, p. 73; 33, p. 112; 34, p. 621]. Notably, when constructing a new home, the “house of *t'onir*” was built first, and it was where the family also spent the night⁵.

The “house of *t'onir*” typically covered an area of 10–20 m², with walls 1–1,3 m high, on which a triangular roof, usually covered with tiles (in the Karabagh dialect: *ḡṛh̄uunn̄l̄* [*k'irāmit*], cf. Russian *ке́рам*, Greek *κεραμ*, Turcic *kiremit*), rested on six pillars. The sides were typically open or woven with twigs and wire, sometimes covered with tin, slate, etc., and the entrance was closed with a door or simply by placing a bundle of brushwood.

The “house of *t'onir*” was often used not only for baking bread but also for storing firewood and various utensils. In most cases, it was built for the use of a large clan or neighborhood rather than a single family, with everyone sharing it equally.

Some families had a larger “house of *t'onir*”, up to 30–40 m², which were also used for storing grain in barrels and sacks, various agricultural tools, washing and drying, grinding grain, combing wool, and carrying out other household activities. When used for tasks unrelated to baking, the *t'onir* was simply covered with a wooden or tin lid (in the Karabagh dialect: *ḡṛh̄uunn̄l̄* / *ḡṛh̄uunn̄l̄* [*ḡəpəl* / *ḡəpəḡ*]), and the entire surface of the “house of *t'onir*” was utilized.

The traditional *t'onir* in Nagorno-Karabakh is typically 1–1,5 m deep and 0,6–1 m in diameter. It is narrow at the top, convex in the middle, and slightly wider at the bottom. The firebox is made of clay and cylindrical or barrel-shaped, used for baking bread, *lavaš*, *gat'a*, and sometimes for cooking or grilling other dishes.

4 Sargsyan A.Y. Kherkhan village, Martuni region, 2002; reported by Roza Aghajanyan (1928–2009).

5 Sargsyan A.Y. Pletants (Blutan) village, Hadrut region, 2000; reported by Abrik Adamyan (1933–2006). Vaghuhas village, Martakert region, 2013; reported by Shmavon Musayelyan (1926–2018).

Making the *t'onir*

The *t'onir* placed in the center of the “house of *t'onir*” was typically made during summer.⁶ There were two main types: in-ground and above-ground. The above-ground type, which became especially widespread in the mid-20th century, was more convenient for baking bread, as the baker could stand while baking, rather than bending over. The second type was primarily constructed with clay walls, and the outer convex surface was covered with a layer of brick (in the Karabagh dialect: *քարիմ* [k'arp'uč], cf. Russian *купич* and Azerbaijani *kärpič*), at a height of 0.8–1 m from the ground. These *t'onirs* were also called *karas-t'onir*, i.e. ‘jar-*t'onir*’ and were particularly used in remote areas, such as fortresses, monasteries, threshing floors, and other locations far from settlements [35, p. 158–159].

However, the traditional and most widespread type was the *t'onir* placed in the ground, the preparation of which required a certain skill. When building a traditional *t'onir*, the first step was to sift the clay and mix it with water, leaving it for a day to allow for proper absorption. Then, it was mixed with a small amount of crushed straw and goat hair to prevent cracking during drying. Additionally, the straw and hair would later burn inside, leaving pores that helped retain heat. Using bare feet or wearing rubber boots, the mixture was constantly trampled (sometimes with breaks, for 2–3 days) until a homogeneous mass was achieved.⁷ The person who built the *t'onir* (usually a man, unlike some ethnographic regions, such as neighboring Zangezur [see 36, p. 164], where it was typically a woman) prepared the clay on a flat board or another device. By rolling it back and forth, beating it, and gently flattening it, they would form crescent-shaped cylinders, 25–30 cm long, 7–10 cm thick, and of the same width. In a hole previously dug, with a diameter larger than the *t'onir* itself, or by squatting on the ground, they would gradually place the cylinders on top of one another in a ring. Connecting them required dipping hands in water and beating the clay, pulling the sides up until the seams disappeared. At the same time, the cylinders were arranged in a checkerboard pattern, so each cylinder sat on top of two others.⁸

All this was done without rushing, so that the lower rows would dry out enough to support the weight of the upper rings. Up to 3–4 rings were added each day, and the remaining mud was covered with a cloth, and the next day it was pounded again. The space between the stacked cylinders and the earthen walls was filled with crushed pieces of broken ceramic ware and tiles and soil as a heat insulator, and a thick layer of clay mortar was plastered on top. Finally, the rim of the oven, which was thicker, was laid. The floor was usually not covered with clay plaster and was not paved. After the walls were completely dry, which took 20–40 days, depending on the weather, firstly low (so that heating occurred gradually and cracks did not form) and then strong fire was lit in the oven for hours until the walls were well baked, after which only by burning a stick or broken wood each time, the walls were heated and bread, *gat'a*, or food was baked. In some cases the walls of the *t'onir* were lined with brick, and in recent decades, *t'onirs* made by potters in workshops were simply installed⁹. Sometimes the walls of the pit dug for the *t'onir* were simply plastered with a thick layer of clay, although such *t'onirs* were not strong and after some time they cracked and collapsed.¹⁰

Often, a pipe or an air duct (in the Karabagh dialect: *սնդն* [səndü], Classical Armenian: սնուն [sntou]) 1.5 to 3 meters long, made of slabs, was installed at an angle, leading out from the bottom of the *t'onir*. The entrance to this duct was sealed with a device called *սնդնի* [səndül], usually a rolled-up piece of cloth, which could be opened when necessary to allow airflow and help light the fire.¹¹ The *t'onir* was generally covered with lids, often with bundle of brushwood placed on top¹². In addition to baking, the *t'onir* was also used simply for heating, as reflected in a tale we recorded in the Askeran region of Nagorno-Karabakh [37, p. 153–154].

In the 19th century, and possibly also at the beginning of the 20th century, once the *t'onir* was prepared and before bread was baked in it for the first time, a priest was invited to anoint the walls of the *t'onir* with myron and bless it [38, p. 116].¹³

6 Sargsyan A.Y. Pletants (Blutan) village, Hadrut region, 2000; reported by Abrik Adamyan (1933–2006). Krasni village, Askeran region, 2015; reported by Grisha Arstamyanyan (1933–2017).

7 Sargsyan A.Y. Sos village, Martuni region, 2020; reported by Artusha Ohanjanyan (1932–2020).

8 Sargsyan A.Y. Pletants (Blutan) village, Hadrut region, 2000; reported by Abrik Adamyan (1933–2006).

9 Sargsyan A.Y. (Blutan) village, Hadrut region, 2000; reported by Abrik Adamyan (1933–2006).

10 Sargsyan A.Y. Nengi village, Martuni region, 2019; reported by Manvel Asryan, born in 1939.

11 The same construction technique was widespread across all Armenian ethnographic regions (cf. 20, p. 41; 21, p. 82).

12 Sargsyan A.Y. Maghavuz village, Martakert region, 2020; reported by Suren Tsatryan (b. 1928).

13 In Zangezur, they did the same with a defiled *t'onir*. As Stepan Lisitsyan notes: “The belief that the earth is inhabited by k'ašk-s [= demons] probably played a role in this ritual, so the *t'ōrōn* [= *t'onir*] placed in the ground must be protected from their approach and evil influence” [36, p. 176].

The ritual significance of the t'onir

In historical Varanda (in the southern regions of Nagorno-Karabakh), in the mid-19th century, a “թոնրի պսակ” [t'onri pəsak], literally: ‘t'onir marriage’) was still sometimes performed, meaning that the t'onir essentially replaced the church. As a rule, this ritual was performed in the following four cases: 1) when there was no church in the village, 2) when there was a deceased person in the church, 3) when the bride or groom had been widowed earlier, and 4) when the church did not accept the brides (due to their minor age or the bride's indecent past) [38, p. 116].

During the ceremony of the *crowning of the t'onir*, candles were first lit around its edges. The bride and groom walked around the t'onir three times and stood on its western side, facing east. Then they knelt and kissed the t'onir three times. Afterward, the priest performed the wedding ceremony by tying a rope (in the Karabagh dialect: *կարմուր* [kənənč-kärmür] ‘green-red’) around the groom's neck and slightly above the bride's right wrist, connecting the ends with wax and marking it with a cross. At the end, the newlyweds kissed the t'onir again and returned – usually walking backwards when leaving the “house of t'onir”, so as not to turn their backs to the t'onir, which was considered a sin [38, p. 116–117; 40, p. 47; 31, p. 119]. Especially in the fortune-telling quatrains (in the Karabagh dialect: *ջանգԲլյում* [jangülüm]), the connection between the t'onir and marriage is alluded to through metaphorical images¹⁴.

In some cases, in villages without a church, other church services were also performed on the t'onir, for example, baptism [38, p. 117 comm., 148; 31, p. 127]. However, by the end of the 19th century, the “t'onir marriage” was replaced by the “hearth marriage” (*օջախի պսակ* [ožaxi pəsak]). The ožax-s were special sanctuaries, typically numbering two or three in each village. These did not differ in any significant way from the hearths of ordinary people's “head houses”; they were simply built in the houses of prominent families [38, p. 115–116; 31, p. 150–152]. After leaving the church, the bride and groom came to these ožax-s [38, p. 137; 31, p. 120–121]. The same phenomenon is also attested in other Armenian ethnic regions [41, p. 117]. In Nagorno-Karabakh and Zangezur, the bride worshiped the hearth of the house before leaving her father's home [42, p. 4]¹⁵, or the bride and groom performed this act together [31, p. 121].

T'onir in Folklore

As an integral part of traditional life, the t'onir is frequently mentioned across various genres of the folklore of the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh, including fairy tales, fortune-telling songs, ritual songs, proverbs, curses, and more.

In the fairy tales of the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh, the main household functions of the t'onir are usually highlighted: baking bread, cooking food, and providing warmth. In four versions of the fairy tale “The Werewolf Girl,” the heroine secretly leaves the cradle and eats the dough balls (*պնյ* [pül]) baked in the t'onir. In three versions, the vertical earthen oven is called t'urun in dialect, and in one version t'ōrēn [39, p. 53; 44, p. 14; 46, p. 60; 37, p. 105]. In another, very brief version of this tale, the father-in-law of the werewolf bride takes her wolf fur while she is sleeping and throws it into a burning t'onir, thereby breaking the spell that afflicted the bride and “calming” her down [39, p. 598–599].¹⁶

In another fairy tale of the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh, the t'onir becomes a symbol of prosperity and wealth. As the married couple prepares to bake *lavaš* and *gat'a* in the t'onir, they open its mouth and discover that it is filled with gold [37, p. 152]. Similarly, in one of the traditional songs, the t'onir, along with bread, symbolizes Armenian hospitality (Հայու աղ, / Հայու մաղ, / Հայու հաց, / Թուռնան կաց [Hayu al, / Hayu

14 For example: Հաց ու թխալ՝ բոց ա, / Ընգալ թորենը՝ թոց ա, / Իսի յարդ հի՛նչ անիւ, / Վէր կարդ կրգրկոց ա (I baked bread, it is white, / The bread fell, it is covered with dust, / What should I do with such a beloved, / If his (or her) coming is hidden) [43, p. 13–14, № 17]. Or՝ Թոռնանը կինի կուտանա, / Մանուկը կինի մուտանա, / Տո ինձանա վախճ մեր, / Մինն ինձ կարել չի մուտանա (There will be burnt bread in t'onir, / There will be a ring on the finger, / Don't worry about me, / No one can approach me [44, p. 190, № 83].

15 Petrushevsky, by the way, mistakenly identified the ožax and the t'onir, which had completely different functions in Nagorno-Karabakh and were located in different structures. Hamlet Petrosyan's article is devoted to this issue [see 45, p. 349–350].

16 In some tales of the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh, the positive hero throws the negative character into a burning t'onir by deception or in some other way and thus defeats him [39, p. 148; 47, p. 90], and in another tale, the hero hides himself in the t'onir to secretly follow the dragon [39, p. 389].

mał, / *Hayu hac*’, / *T’uřnan kac*] – Armenian’s salt, / Armenian’s sieve, / Armenian’s bread, / Take it out of the *t’onir*) [35, p. 173].

Conclusion

The data presented in this article may prove useful not only to ethnographers and folklore scholars, but also to cultural anthropologists, food historians, and architectural historians, as they offer practical insights into traditionally transmitted folk technologies. By integrating our own fieldwork with relevant regional and international studies, this research provides a comprehensive account of the *t’onir* based on 19th- to 21st-century data, offering a comparative benchmark for future studies on traditional bread-baking technologies across various regions.

The *t’onir* – the earthen bread oven of the Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians – differed in its everyday placement from those in other Armenian ethnographic regions. Unlike in other areas, where it was embedded inside one of the main rooms of a multi-section house (such as the “head-house”, “bread-house”, or “smoke-house”) beneath a domed roof with a smoke-hole, it was situated outdoors in the yard or set apart at a short distance, placed at the center of a specially constructed “house of *t’onir*” (*t’onratun*). Moreover, this building was frequently constructed not for a single household, but for an extended clan or neighborhood, serving as a shared communal space where neighbors gathered to bake and socialize.

The *t’onirs* of Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians were of two types: built in the ground or placed above it. The latter type became widespread only in the mid-20th century. Primarily, the *t’onir* had practical importance: it was where bread, *gat’a*, and other traditional dishes were baked, and where people gathered in cold weather to warm themselves and socialize. Traditional folklore performances also mainly took place around the *t’onir*.

In some folklore genres, the *t’onir* is perceived as a symbol of holiness. In ritual songs and riddles alike, the *t’onir* is sometimes identified with the church. Rituals performed at the *t’onir*, such as marriage and baptism, further emphasize the connection between the *t’onir* and the church.

Table 1. *T’onir* in Nagorno-Karabakh

Таблица 1. Тонир в Нагорном Карабахе

Names	<i>t’urun</i> / <i>t’uřun</i> / <i>t’õrun</i> / <i>t’õrēn</i>
Function	Earthen vertical oven
Size	1-1,5 m deep and 0,6-1 m in diameter
Location	In a special building separate from the house
Application	domestic ritual
Food prepared in <i>t’onir</i>	bread: <i>pəřōz</i> or <i>tuřnav hac</i> meals: roast, <i>ğap’lama</i> , <i>kurkut</i>
Rites	marriage baptism

Table 2. List of informants and fieldwork details

Таблица 2. Список информантов и сведения о полевой работе

	informant	born - de- ceased	birthplace	year of interview	place of inter- view
1.	Abrik Adamyan	1933- 2006	Pletants (Blutan) village	2000	Pletants (Blutan) village
2.	Roza Aghajanyan	1928	Kherkhan village	2002	Kherkhan village
3.	Grisha Arstamyan	1933- 2017	Krasni village	2015	Krasni village

4.	Manvel Asryan	1939	Nengi village	2019	Nengi village
5.	Amirbar Baghdasaryan	1937	Kolkhozashen village	2022	Kolkhozashen village
6.	Valya Danielyan	1939	Patara village	2019	Patara village
7.	Lusik Tovmasyan	1930-2020	Karintak village	2016	Karintak village
8.	Suren Tsatryan	1928	Maghavuz village	2020	Maghavuz village
9.	Tamar Hovsepyan	1934	Noragyugh village	2019	Noragyugh village
10.	Arkadi Mayilyan	1942	Hadrut city	2010	Hadrut city
11.	Shmavon Musayelyan	1926-2018	Vaghuhas village	2013	Vaghuhas village
12.	Yasha Nasibyan	1961	Yeghtsahogh village	2019	Yeghtsahogh village
13.	Tsovik Poghosyan	1936	Kaghartsi village	2014	Kaghartsi village
14.	Anzhela Sargsyan	1940	Sos village	2003	Sos village
15.	Angin Ohanjanyan	1937	Tumi village	2008	Tumi village
16.	Artusha Ohanjanyan	1932-2020	Sos village	2020	Sos village

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Fig. 1. A woman baking bread in the village of Aknakhbyur (Karabulakh), Askeran region, holding a “pillow” (*tēp*).
Photo credits: Lusine Margaryan

Рис. 1. Женщина выпекает хлеб в селе Акнахбюр (Карабулах) Аскеранского района, держа в руках «подушку» (*тєп*).
Автор фото Лусине Маргарян



Fig. 2. Freshly baked bread (*ḡawḡu huḡ* [t'aža hač] or *uḡḡoḡ* [pəřōz]) from the *t'onir*. Photo credits: Lusine Margaryan

Рис. 2. Свежеиспеченный хлеб (*тажа хац* или *пєрроз*) из тонира. Автор фото Лусине Маргарян



Fig. 3. *Gat'a* baking inside the *t'onir*.
Photo credits: Lusine Margaryan

Рис. 3. Выпекание *гаты* в тонира. Автор фото Лусине Маргарян



Fig. 4. A ball of kneaded dough (*պԵլլը ղ'Էլը* [pülə ɣ'ēt ərac]) placed on the *tēp*, ready to go into the *t'onir*.
Photo credits: Lusine Margaryan

Рис. 4. Сформованный шар теста (пюле йеэт эрац), уложенный на теп и готовый к помещению в тони́р.
Автор фото Лусине Маргарян



Fig. 5. The bread baking process.
Photo credits: Lusine Margaryan

Рис. 5. Процесс выпекания хлеба.
Автор фото Лусине Маргарян



Fig. 6. Bread baking on the inner walls of the *t'onir*.
Photo credits: Lusine Margaryan

Рис. 6. Выпекание хлеба на внутренних стенках тони́ра.
Автор фото Лусине Маргарян

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