


## ARTICLE

# The Historical Development of the Place Name in Armenian (Etymology of ‘Harzhis’ Sacred Area)

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## ABSTRACT

Armenian linguistics still has a lot to do in the field of onomastics. Many place names, tribal names, myth names, and names of objects with material cultural value have not yet received onomastic, historical-comparative, dialectological studies. However, they have historical value and contain important information. Place names are important in the study of Armenian Special Names, which contain a lot of linguistic, historical, ethnographic, and archaeological information about the region. Many place names in Armenian, which exist from prehistoric times, have not yet been studied. Harzhis settlement of Syunik region of the Republic of Armenia has received world recognition due to its sacred landscape. However, there is no study on the toponym until now. Comparing the results of the studies in the fields of different scientific disciplines, we tried to etymology the place name Harzhis. We reconstructed its initial version in the Indo-European proto-language, then compared the formal and semantic changes in the Urartian period, in ancient Armenian (grabarum), in the Syunik dialect

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area, with related languages. The prehistoric cave, the statues with religious significance, the traditions, and the findings preserved in the settlement are not yet complete to determine the period of existence of the Harjis settlement. Linguistic research allows us to conclude that the settlement is one of the first cultural centers of the Indo-European people in the South Caucasus and the Armenian Plateau.

**Keywords:** Onomastics; Place Name; Etymology; Armenian; Sacred Landscape

## 1. Introduction

Special names, with their quantitative and qualitative peculiarities, deserve great attention, especially in the life of such peoples, which are known for centuries-old history, culture, and linguistic traditions. The historical territory of the formation of the Armenian people, and the ancient and rich linguistic heritage have left us enough material for study, especially in the field of special names. Although Armenian linguistics has developed quite a lot and recorded many results in the field of world linguistic sciences, there is still a lot to be done in the field of onomastics. Many bibliographic data and materials related to onomastics need to be collected and studied. Even nowadays, little work is being done on the methodology of selection of special names, data in the field of Armenian nomenclature, internationalization of scientific research works. There are many special names in the Armenian language, the study of which is important and relevant not only for Armenians, but also for the international community. They include linguistic information of the prehistoric period, questions of choice of proper names and methodology. The material of our study specifically refers to the word of Indo-European origin, which turned into a place name, then underwent changes with the development of the language, changed from the name of the shrine to the name of the settlement, that is, we studied the 5000-year history of the special name, which includes several scientific disciplines of linguistics.

## 2. Study Methodology

The study of place names with historical significance covers most of the departments of linguistics, on that basis, good results can be obtained for the study by using historical-cognitive and historical-comparative methods.

However, for the study of Harzhis toponym, we also needed the empirical research method. Several times we visited Harzhis settlement, Syunik marz of the Republic of Armenia, old and new villages and surrounding settlements. Harzhis settlement is located in the Syunik Marz of the Republic of Armenia, in the Goris region, on the left side of the Vorotan River, at an altitude of about 1700–1730 m above sea level. The distance from Kapan, the regional center of Syunik marz, is about 79 km.

Typological and phenomenological methods were used during the work. Since the subject of the study has an interdisciplinary nature, it was necessary to observe the *Harzhi* place-name-concept with the method of diachronic and synchronic comparison, taking material not only from different times and language versions of Armenian (literary, dialectal), but also from the forms existing in other languages.

### 2.1. Entry

The settlement named *Harzhis*<sup>1</sup> (see the Armenian letter equivalents in the Appendix below), *Harzhik'*, *Yaji*, *Yaichi* (the place name *Yaji* || *Yayji* (dialectical version) was formed in the second half of the 18th century, around the period of 1770–1780. The residents relocated to the plateau, a former settlement, during the USSR, and gave it the name *Yaji*. In 1968, the village (see **Figures 1** and **2** below) was renamed and was called by the name mentioned by Stepanos Orbelean: *Harzhis* was first mentioned as *Harzhik'* in the Armenian bibliography in the work of Stepanos Orbelean, on the list of the settlements of *Tsgukk'* province paying taxes to Tatev<sup>[1–3]</sup>. Besides the area is certainly known to us from the inscription of Argishti II: *Tsuluki* || *Tsghuk*. It can be inferred that *Harzhis* played a key role in the region<sup>[4]</sup> as a sacred landscape (see **Figure 3** below) throughout Armenian history<sup>[5]</sup>. There is no any other place named *Harzhis* in Armenia. From

<sup>1</sup>Armenian letter 'ժ' is transliterated *j* or *dz*. It is pronounced like the French *j* sound. In this article, *dz* corresponds to the Armenian 'ժ' sound, and the *j* sound corresponds to the Armenian 'ջ' sound.

an etymology perspective, the name of this community can be related to a number of place names from the past, including *Archis* (the Armenian Tavush region), *Harchonk* (the name of a village in Nagorno Karabakh (Artsakh), and *Archesh* (the Vaspurakan province, which is now in Turkey). Since there aren't many scientific etymological experiments with place names, we provide a lexical analysis and etymology of the place name within the context of an interdisciplinary study, using dialectal evidence, the vocabulary of the historical period of Armenian as a base, and potential parallels in other languages from both contemporary and transtemporal perspectives.

## 2.2. The Subject under Examination of the Harzhis Toponym and Its Perception

Because so many material cultural values have been discovered in the settlement of *Harzhis*, archaeologists have focused most of their attention on this area. We will attempt to present and ascertain the origin and significance of the place name using a combination of archeological data. Preliminary opinion indicates that the place name has survived throughout the settlement's ancient historical periods, before the place name was written down, and up to the present day. Evidence of prehistoric culture includes anthropomorphic statues, menhirs, numerous religious and residential monuments, graves, and material samples discovered in *Harzhis* (see **Figure 4** below).

We are dealing with prehistoric culture already, as evidenced by anthropomorphic statues<sup>[6]</sup>, menhirs<sup>[7, 8]</sup>, numerous religious and domestic monuments<sup>[9]</sup>, tombs<sup>[10]</sup>, and material samples discovered in *Harzhis*. The humanoid statues are dated to the end of the second millennium BC based on their general features, i.e. the first half of the 1st millennium BC. The nature-character of the anthropomorphic

statues has not been definitively determined: some believe they were dedicated to saintly ancestors or fertility rituals<sup>[6]</sup>. Furthermore, it is believed that the statues are native to the area<sup>[6]</sup>.

Upon comparing these archeological data with existing linguistic and folklore sources, we find that the settlement's name originated during an era when Armenian had already broken away from the Indo-European language family and was attempting to function as a distinct language (III BC after the millennium)<sup>2</sup>. Another possibility is that the place name has been kept because people have settled here permanently. Additionally, we are aware that the majority of the Indo-European population in the region-till this day-speaks Armenian and Iranian (Aryan) languages. This includes the South Caucasus, also known as Armenian Syunik Marz (of Armenia), Nagorno-Karabakh, the northern region of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and the historical Southern Atrapat. In the study's core, this fundamental fact permits the parallelization of material culture and the comparison of intangible cultural data, such as Indo-European, Urartian, Grabar (ancient Armenian), medieval literary Armenian data, and dialectal and non-Armenian linguistic material (particularly Iranian).

All of this, in our opinion, is significant for human history, especially for the historical problems of the area under study:

1. Which terms were chosen to construct a place name by a group of Indo-European people?
2. What modifications were made to Indo-European words under the Urartian (Kingdom of Van) era?
3. When analyzing topographical questions, were the toponyms mentioned in the Urartian cuneiform inscriptions special names or common words that described the region, environment, country, settlement, relief, etc.?

<sup>2</sup>We collected a number of narratives from *Harzhis*, some of which also refer to the place name. Traditions are valuable, but the material requires a different examination. Here we put two views on the origin of the place name.

The name of the village is connected with an old legend:

A boy from the neighboring village of Ltsen (now Sisian region of Armenia) goes along the river bank to Halidzor to bring salt. He notices a beautiful girl on the road, falls in love, pursues her for 7 days and catches her. Marries that girl whose name was *Harzhis*. The boy lives with *Harzhis* in that very area, from where the village named *Harzhis* originates.

According to tradition, the foreigners who came to the pastures of *Harzhis* had their eyes on the village of *Harzhis*. However, being afraid of the village head, they could not take over the village. One day, pretending to be friends, they invite the village chief to their house and make him drunk. In the morning, already sober, the village chief sees the village burned and destroyed. The village chief dies of a heart attack. A priest of Tatev saves only one girl and one boy from the destruction and massacre of the village. Armenians from neighboring villages unite and throw out the foreigners. The priest decides to rebuild the destroyed village through the boy. He builds the Holy Minas Church and a stone house, which is still there today and is called Hambu Ghab. The boy was married to a girl from Tateva, settling in a ruined village, and since the girl's name was *Yayji*, the village was named after her.

4. What archeological, historical, ethnographic, and linguistic difficulties can be addressed through the names of ancient settlements chosen? Most old settlement names are derived from simple names. An example of this would be the name of the settlement of Harzhis.

We have already had the chance to etymologize the term ‘grotto, lair, den’ (microtoponymy) for a prehistoric cave located in the Harzhis village (cavern: *Voren (Woren)*). A cave known as *Vorvan (Varvan)*, which translates to ‘grotto, lair, den,’ is located in the Hadrut region of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic<sup>[11]</sup>. The meaning and origin of these two names are the same. Since the place name was formed and retained by speakers of the Indo-European language family, micro-names date back to the same time when Armenian was still somewhat linked to the Indo-European base language (approximately IV-III millennia before Christ). The words *Voren* and *Vorvan* come from the same Indo-European root: *\*uer-* ‘to turn, twist, weave, curve, arch, bend’, compare: old Armenian *ora(y)*, Armenian Goris dialect: *vorel || verel* ‘to dig, to dig, to dig, to drill, to bury’, Old Icelandic *vrā* ‘corner, isolated place, circle, place’, as well as: *frōg* ‘cave; swamp; hiding place’<sup>[12]</sup>, Persian *gāry* (غار) ‘cave, hollow’, *gar || gal* (گر || لغا ( *u > g || g̃* and *r > l*)<sup>3</sup>) ‘cave, den’, in Indian Pali language *bila* ‘cave, cave’<sup>[13]</sup> (Indo-European *\*u > v(b)* and *\*r > l*). It is likely that the *j(dz)* (Armenian ‘*ǰ*’) and *n* (Armenian ‘*ū*’) sounds at the end of the Armenian words *vordz* ‘lair, lodge, hole’ and place name *Vor(e)n* are not grammatical remnants, but suffixes (perhaps it happened during the transition from Indo-European to Armenian or it is a taboo sound change).

A quick etymology experiment assumes that the dialectal place names of Harzhis and the Hadrut region of Nagorno Karabakh are proper names (ὀνομαστικόν) that originated around the same time period. Regretfully, we have not found any historical-archaeological research on Harzhisi Voren that could resolve the disagreements about the ancient site’s ownership and existence era. We are dealing with a cultural value that predated Christianity and existed before the second mil-

lennium, based on the linguistic material we have (*Voren || Vorvan*)<sup>4</sup>, which kept the form of the underlying language in the place name.

Regarding the material discoveries that we are aware of, the monuments-idols<sup>[8]</sup>, we presume that they could not have been unimportant throughout history. The hamlet can be referred to as the Pantheon of the Syunik (state of Armenia) Gods due to the quantity of anthropomorphic statues discovered thus far and their distinct construction. The meaning of the place name Harzhis should, in the first instance, be associated with connotations such as ‘secular, place of worship, temple, place of prayer’, based on this precise fact. Of course, the area contains other assets as well as natural ones. These should, however, be looked at separately or perhaps in a secondary manner. The monuments date most likely from before the Urartian period, although the other, richer archaeological cultural layer also mentions the Urartian period and its influence. Therefore, the Urartian region and influences from other languages should be viewed as intermediary substratum when attempting to determine the foundations of the Harzhis toponym. Since there hasn’t been an attempt to take the statues into account in the so-called ‘new comparative mythology’<sup>[14]</sup>, to parallel the historical mythological prototypes<sup>[15]</sup>, which are particularly reflected in the cultural heritage of various peoples of Indo-European origin, a different examination of the statues and the beliefs, ideas, conversations (folklore) related to them is necessary.



Figure 1. The settlement of Harzhis.

<sup>3</sup> Compare: in the sub-dialect of the village of Shikahogh of the Kapan dialect of Armenian, there is the word *ghan* (ղաւ), which means ‘bear’s den’. In the largest dialect group of Armenian, Syunik-Artsakh or the Karabakh dialect, the word *ghandagh* (ղաւնաղ), which means ‘long and deep pit, cave’, is common, compare it with the past word *handak || khandak* (ղաւնաղ, խաւնաղ) ‘pit’ transferred from Persian to Armenian.

<sup>4</sup> Another ancient cave of Harzhis is called *Dghdghnatsak* (in dialect: *Dēghdēghnatsak*). None of the Armenian dialects have this word. We think that a loanword from the ancient period and existing in New Persian has been preserved in the speech of Harzhis: دغدغه (dāgdāge) ‘1. fear, fear, 2. khakhut’, from which ‘*degdigh+n+tsak*’, i.e., ‘terrible cave’.



Figure 2. The settlement of Harqhis.



Figure 3. The settlement of Harqhis (map).

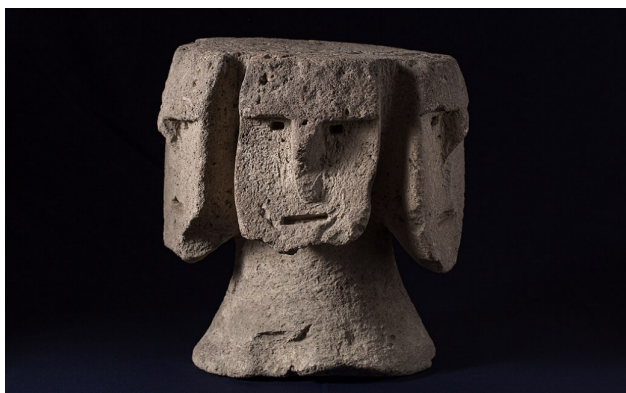


Figure 4. A five-faced statue dating back to the 2nd millennium BC. The statue represents the 5 deities. There are traces of five-faced idol worship in Indian, Egyptian civilizations.

### 3. The Distribution of Lexical Material

We think *Hardzis* || *Harzhik* > in the local dialect, the word *Ya[y]dzi* (Եւ(յ)ջի) (with the consonant *y* > *r*) is compound in the composition. We have compared the root with possible forms in other languages. The most common and possible version of them is the Persian word *harj* (هرج) ‘riot,

chaos’, which probably has an Arabic origin from the root *hrj* (جره) ‘to be in trouble, injustice, disorder’. This word probably comes from the Arabic root *hrj* (جره) ‘to be restless, wronged, in disorder’, which reached even India, compare: *harj* (हरि) ‘difficulty, trouble, inconvenience’.

Without a doubt, this word has nothing to do with the location named Harzhis and was only used due to the introduction of Islam. In addition to the answers to questions about archeological materials, we are attempting to determine the toponym’s time of occurrence. This approach worked well for our study of a number of other toponyms in the area, including *Goris*<sup>[16]</sup>, *Shurnukh*<sup>[17]</sup>, *Sindara* (during printing), *Kyäkop*’ (during printing), *Ėghverdzh*<sup>[18]</sup>, *Sirij*<sup>[19]</sup>, etc. It is necessary to believe that any correspondences between Turkic and Caucasian languages are accidental. Moving on to the toponym’s lexical composition, we will look at each element independently below: *h-arzh-is[k’]*. The part before the final component ‘-is || -ik’, *harzh*, is composed of the vowel *h*, which in the dialectal version could have turned into *y*, *y-a[y]j*. This question is solved by the dialectal testimony of Armenian: *harzh* || *ya[y]j*, where from the change of *h* > *y*, the shortened version of *a* is also used: *Yaji* || *Yä[y]ji*. Therefore, there is no doubt that the words *Yaji* and *Harzhis* have the same origin.

First, let’s examine a possible root: *[h]arzh* || *yaj/ch*.

We assume that the word *hardz* || *yaj* is one of the toponymic versions of the ancient Armenian words ‘statue, worthy’. Consequently, we test our assumptions.

A. *Harzh[an]* < *ardz[an]* (*huyrd[uł]-uyrd[uł]*) ‘statue, monument’. Let us state up front that many Armenian place names contain the word-component ‘statue,’ especially in the Syunik region: *Ardzanadzor* (statue valley), *Ardzanak’ar* (stone-statue) and others.

1. The *dz* (‘d’) in the root *[H]arzh* might represent a surviving form of the sound itself rather than the impact of old Iranian or a third language (*dz* > *[z]zh*). Stated differently, it aligns with the timeframe during which the shared cultural area was established<sup>[20]</sup> of the Indo-European peoples in the region, after the 3rd millennium BC, when Iranian versions of special names are also observed, respectively: *Syunik* > *Sisakan*, *Artsakh* > *[Ghara] Bagh, Bagh*, etc.<sup>5</sup> All

<sup>5</sup>In his examination of the proper name ‘Ardzan’, H. Hübschmann questions the derivation of *ardzan* from the meaning ‘stone, rock, statue’ (p. 321).



of this suggests that the name-place name was in use prior to the semantic division of the related words ‘arzh’ and ‘arz’, which have the same root. These assumptions may be justified by the fact that in the dialect area of Syunik-Artsakh, which has developed with territorial peculiarities and is in direct contact with the Iranian language branch, the changes *dz > zh* || *ch*<sup>6</sup> (*ā > d* || *ā*) are not regular.

2. One of the views of the origin of the word [*H*]ardz[an] ([<]uṛā[uṛ]) ‘statue’ can be that first there was a of Ardz[an] ‘statue’, then it became Arzh[an] (uṛd[uṛ]) ‘worthy, worth’. Iranian parallels (and not only)<sup>7</sup> mostly have words with *dz-z* (*ā-q*) versions: *derdzak* || *dā[a]rzi* ‘tailor’, *ardzak* || *hārzāk* ‘free, detached’ (compare also toponyms: *Vorzana* || *Ardzan*), and the transition of the word *dz > zh* was followed by the change *dz > z*, as a result of the terminating *s* retrograde change: [*h*]ardzanis > [*h*]arzanis > [*h*]arzhanis: With the summary of the *-an-* (*-uṛ-*) phonetic connection (abbreviated or without a suffix): [*H*]arzhis[*k*’].

B. *Harzh[an]-arzhān* (<uṛd[uṛ]-uṛduṛ) ‘worthy’. This variant appears to be a tempting choice because it does not include any phonetic changes. The semantic portion of the etymological word has an issue matching the toponymic and semantic concepts, which will be looked at later.

C. *Harzhis-Archesh*<sup>8</sup>. These two toponyms completely match in external, phonetic composition (the changes *zh-ch* (*d-ā*) and *s-sh* (*u-z*) can be characterized by the peculiarities of the regional language). *Archesh* toponym is mentioned from Uartian word URUARšāš(ku)<sup>[21]</sup>: *Art-sashku* > *Artchesh* (Uṛduwzpnı > Uṛāṭı)<sup>[21]</sup>. Following the Armenian-Semitic variants, the restored form \*arġeskho- (according to the development of Armenian language patterns) is chosen for the *Archesh* settlement, which comes from the Indo-European root \*arġ- ‘shiny, white’<sup>[22]</sup>. We think this is a realistic point of view, particularly when considering parallels with other languages.

In fact, Armen Petrosyan made significant revisions to the Archesh place name between 2006 and 2018 and came to a significant conclusion that also applies to the Harzhis sacred environment. Thus, the concept of mirroring some cosmic conceptions led to the naming of the settlement of Harzhis. The names of *Archesh* and *Harzhis*, two comparable villages, come from the term signifying ‘shiny, white’. In this instance, it is better to interpret it in terms of the ideas of the ancient world rather than taking it literally. This is because it refers to a precious, space-centered dwelling place-a sanctuary or sacred house<sup>9</sup>.

Our research shows that the terms that defined the earlier toponyms were created using geographical understandings.

Thus, about 30 km from *Harzhis* is the ancient sanctuary-observatory of *Karahunj*, which is known in the Armenian bibliography as *Bolorak* ‘ar’. It is composed of the words *bolor* ‘round, circular, turn’ and *k’ar* ‘stone’. It should be noted that in ancient Armenian ‘bolor’ also meant ‘axis of the sky’, that is, ‘stones forming the axis of the sky’. The interesting thing is that in the dialects of the Syunik area, the Indo-European root \*bhol- of *Bol-or-a-k’ar* has been preserved not with a secondary meaning<sup>[19]</sup>, but with a primary meaning: *pōl* ‘holiness, gratitude, respect’<sup>10</sup>.

The ancient settlement of *Artsvanik* (Kapan region of Syunikmarz) is located about 50 km away from Harzhis in a straight line. According to the study, the word *Yerits’vank* (> *Artsvanik*) is also related to the root ‘arts’, which is also mentioned in the Uartian inscription of *Ots’asar*. That area of Kapan region is famous not only for metal mines, metal processing and export, but also for pre-Christian sanctuaries. *Arts-* > *Arts-ien* > *Arts-vani-* > *Ērts-yvane-* possible changes, many items from the Uartian region found in the area create a basis for forming an opinion<sup>[23]</sup>. Accordingly, the ancient sacred landscape of Syunik is not one-centered and includes cultural layers of all *pre-Uartian*, *Uartian* and *post-Uartian* periods, as one of the environments of

<sup>6</sup>It is clear to us that the change of the word *ya[y]ch* || *j* (*ju[j]ā* || *g*) occurred after the change *dz > zh* (*ā > d*). In the Syunik-Karabakh dialect area of Armenian, there are words that are understood in different ways: *zh > ch* (*d > ā*): *patizh* > *patich* || *patitch* (*uṛuṇhā* > *uṛuṇhā*) ‘punishment’, *zh > j* (*d > g*): *mzhegh* > *mēnjēgh* (*ūḍlā* > *ūḥlā*) ‘mosquito’ etc.

<sup>7</sup>Compare in the Armenian word: *andznatur* > *əznatō* || *əznatur* (*uṛāḍuṛuṇnı* > *nqḷuṛuṇnı*) ‘addicted, given oneself up’.

<sup>8</sup>Archesh city is located in Turkey’s Van province.

<sup>9</sup>There is an assumption that in the Middle Ages, Harzhis was known for its lead (Plumbum) mine<sup>[24]</sup>.

<sup>10</sup>There is an old saying in the dialect: ‘don’t violate the sanctity’.

creation and creativity of the Indo-European people.

## 4. Examining the Secondary Forms of Toponyms (Derivative, Participle)

For the etymology of the toponym *H-arzh-is[ik']*, the secondary forms *h* and *is* || *ik'*, which, we assume, are attached to the two possible variants of the chosen toponym: *arzh* and *arz*.

A. In Armenian in general, and in the dialect area of Syunik-Artsakh in particular, the prepositional addition of the particle *h* is very common, which also bore the toponym *Harzhis* in the position before the vowel at the beginning of the word, as:

1. old Armenian words that have a *y* sound (addition) at the beginning of the word: *y > h*: *yarbel* > *harbel* ('get drunk'), *yardzak* > *härzäk* ('free'), *yishatak* > *hishatak* ('remembrance'),
2. compared to the old Armenian, the words starting with *e*: *er* > *hēr* (kyäl) ('to boil'), *erd* > *hērt* ('turn, queue, shift'), *erb* > *hēp* ('when'), *erinj* > *hērinj* ('heifer'),
3. mixed: some words starting with a vowel: *ēnker* > *hingēr* ('friend'), *olor* > *hilör* ('twisting'), *aner* > *hanēr* ('father-in-law'), etc.

There is no reason to deny that the *h* || *y* (addition) of the toponym *Harzhis* || *Ya[y]ji* may be a prefix carried by both native and borrowed words<sup>[24]</sup>: in ancient Armenian, the word *arzhān* ('statue') is also found with the prefix *y* (preposition): '*Baghakay z'Baghaam ehan zna yardzann Bahaghu*' ('*Բաղակայ զԲաղաամ էհան շնա արձանն Բաղաղմ*')<sup>[25]</sup><sup>11</sup>.

B. Coming to the last phoneme of the place name *Harzhis-is* || *-ik'* (*Harzh-is* || *Harzh-ik'*), we propose options:

1. it is probably the suffix of the old Armenian *-ay-k'*, *[H]harzh[an]ik' > [H]harzh[an]is > [H]harzhis[k']*, which is common in historical proper names: *ay > e > i* (compare: *Gorayk' > Goris[k']*),
2. it is probable that the suffix *-ik'* is composed of the

suffix *i* and the suffix *k'* || *s* of the old Armenian plural direct and accusative case of Grabar (Old Armenian), which is also spread in a derivative form in old toponyms (*Masis* || *Masik'*, *Yeghegis* || *Yeghegik'*)<sup>12</sup>. We lean towards the second option.

We prefer the second option. This is how the suffix *-esh* of the name *Arch-esh* is explained. It is derived from *-is* and is one of its variants.

We do not examine the homonyms of the Persian root *arzh* (from different regions of Iran), which did not particularly pass into Armenian, such as: *ārz* (عرض) 'fir, cypress; external form, quality, form' and so on.

## 5. Etymological Experiments

1. The Armenian word *ardzan* is mentioned among the words of unknown origin. It is considered possible to be of Iranian origin, but the appropriate form is not confirmed<sup>[26]</sup>. Among the variants, *arzh* is an Iranian loanword in Armenian: Pahlavi *arž* 'value', *aržān* 'valuable, worthy', which is of Indo-European origin<sup>[12]</sup> and is mainly used in Armenian and Iranian languages in the sense of 'value, valuable'<sup>[27]</sup>. If the source of the words *arzh-ek'*, *arzh-an* is Iranian, then its counterpart, passed from Indo-European to Armenian, should have been *aldz* or a variant in the form of *aghdz*, which is unlikely for a place name (the *l* || *l' > r* change is characteristic of Iranian loanwords). However, it is possible that *ardz* changed under the influence of Iranian languages, which had a substratum influence in the place name: *arzh* < \**alg<sup>w</sup>h* 'worth', which spread in Armenian with different meanings: 'monument, boundary stone, idol, obituary, tombstone, elaborate a stone, an inscribed monument'. The existence of the root *arzd* in the word *ardz* (*-agank'*) 'stone, rock, rock' is also probable, as our predecessors noticed<sup>[28]</sup>. On this basis, bringing together the generalities of the words *arzdān* 'statue' and *arzhān* 'worthy', it can be assumed that there is no significant counter-argument that would exclude their origin from the same base. As a result, we notice that it is possible that one of the variants of the place name of the roots *arzd* and

<sup>11</sup>In the 5th century, the Bible was partially translated and edited according to the Greek original. The place name 'Mot Baagh' found in the translation from Greek was translated as 'statue of Baal/rock from stone'.

<sup>12</sup>It is unlikely that the *-ay* of *-ay-k'* is also a suffix left over from the Iranian suffix *-āy > ay[k'] > e > i*, because in polysyllabic words, the change *ai > e > i* is almost never found in the position following the accent.

*arzh*<sup>13</sup> is *Harzhis*[k'], as a pre-Christian spiritual center of 'stone idols, values, idols', a place that, as we notice, also attributed to *Archesh*.

2. The place name *Harzhis* has a commonality in form and meaning with the Indo-European root *\*iag-*, from which the version of *Yaji*, widespread in the dialect vocabulary, becomes more likely. We know that Indo-European *\*i* weakens before stress in Armenian words, and the variants *i > Ø*, *i > y* may exist. This sound can also become *h* (<y) in Armenian: compare: *\*jeuġ-* > old. Prussian *yaudaty* 'to move' > old Armenian *yoyz* (> *huyz*) 'emotion'. From the phonetic analysis of the root *\*iag(ġ)-* recovered for Indo-European and its comparison with Indo-European cousin languages, the issue of *\*g* also becomes clear. If it is mainly present in Armenian with *k*, then its change *\*g > j* must have happened due to substratum influence, compare: Old Indian *yājati* 'to worship with prayer and sacrifice', [*satya-*] *yāj-* '[truly] worships', *yajñā-h* 'worship, sacrifice', Greek *ἅγιος* 'holy, consecrated'<sup>[12]</sup> or after the split of Indo-European common language, in a phase of independence of Armenian, *g > j* developed secondarily. These commonalities leave no doubt that Indo-European *\*iag-* corresponds to a form with the phoneme [*h*] *yaj*[*zh*], the root variant of which may be *\*iagwh-i-* 'place of worship, shrine, altar', compare Avestan *frāyazāite* [*fra-yāz*] 'worship; praise loudly, invoke', *daēvayasnanām* [*daēva-yas-na*] 'worshiper of the daeva (pre-Zoroastrian gods)'. We think that the other testimonies preserved in the Armenian bibliography are in favor of the issue of the substratum influence of the word, that they originate from the Indo-Iranian group of the same base<sup>[29]</sup>: *yazel* 'to sacrifice, to sacrifice', *yash* (*yash*[*t*] from the past form of participle<sup>[30]</sup>) 'sacrifice to idols' (compare: Avesta language [*daēva-*] *yāz*, *yāsna* 'worship, sacrifice, prayer'), 'sacrifice, especially of reconciliation, vow, gift, prayer'<sup>[31]</sup>.

## 6. Conclusion

Summing up the examination of the *Harzhis* || *Yaji* || *Yayji* versions, we notice that the mentioned points of view are more or less probable, and rejecting one or accepting the other unequivocally, in this case, is not only difficult, but

also inappropriate. From the point of view of the scientific evaluation of the place name with an early past and various linguistic states, however, it is certain that all versions point to the same concept: 'sacred place'. We note, however, that almost all of the points of view presented by us point to the fact that *Harzhis* is best known to history for its sacred area, anthropomorphic statues, menhirs, which, in our opinion, were deities or idols with ritual significance, and the place is a spiritual center.

As a conclusion, we should note that both names were formed in the historical area. It has been preserved by the Armenian ethnic group living here for thousands of years and has reached our days. We are inclined to the opinion that *Ardzik* > *Harzhik*, but also *Yaji* || *Yayji*, the dialect version of the base *\*iagwh-i-* 'place of worship, shrine, altar', which, like many words, has been preserved in the dialect area of Syunik-Artsakh. We noticed that the 'sacred area' is one of the centers of Indo-European culture, and the meaning of the place name is related to the religious-cult phenomena of the ancient period. In fact, the name of the area known for its sacred monuments in the historical period has been preserved and passed down to the present day, which is recorded in practice in many countries<sup>[32]</sup>.

It becomes clear from the study of *Harzhys* place name that:

1. Most of the ancient Armenian toponyms were derived from the natural feature of the place (rock, forest, mountain, valley, etc.), such as *Goris* - "land of valleys", *Kapan* - "mountain path", *Ishkhanasar* - "big mountain", etc.
2. From the etymological research of the place name, we notice that the place names given in the Urartian inscriptions, which refer to the area of Syunik, indicate:
  - a. the natural characteristic of the settlement, which was given before the Urartian period,
  - b. most of the toponyms were formed from an ordinary, common name, which later turned into a special name, a toponym,
  - c. The names mentioned in the Urartian inscription are read in Armenian, that is, they are names that existed from the pre-Urartian period, which underwent partial changes in the 9th–6th centuries BC, according to the linguistic situation or interactions,

<sup>13</sup> Compare: (ارزش) *arzeš*. 'value; importance; the general criterion for evaluating cultural relations in society, cultural values, monuments, etc.'



- d. Most of the historical names of Syunik are of Indo-European origin.

## Author Contributions

Conceptualization, M.K.; methodology, I.M.; software, H.K., G.G.; validation, V.K., G.M. and L.N.; formal analysis, M.K., L.N.; investigation, G.M.; resources, M.K., V.K., H.K.; data curation, I.M., G.G.; writing—original draft preparation, M.K., L.N., I.M.; writing-review and editing, M.K.; visualization, I.M.; supervision, M.K.; project administration, M.K.; funding acquisition, V.K. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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## Informed Consent Statement

Not applicable.

## Data Availability Statement

The research was carried out in the settlement-archeological site of Harzhis, which is located in the Syunik Marz of the Republic of Armenia. Access to research materials can be seen in dictionaries and in the studies that are indicated in our work.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors stated that there are no conflicts of interest.

## Appendix A

### ARMENIAN DISTRIBUTION TABLE

Ա-Ա	u-a
Բ-Բ	p-b

Գ-Գ	q-g
Դ-Դ	ŋ-d
Ե-Ե	t-e
Զ-Զ	q-z
Է-Է	t-ē
Ը-Ը	p-ē
Թ-Թ	p-t'
Ճ-Ճ	ʃ-zh
Ի-Ի	h-i
Լ-Լ	l-l
Խ-Խ	h-kh
Օ-Օ	ð-ts
Կ-Կ	l-k
Հ-Հ	h-h
Ձ-Ձ	ð-dz
Ղ-Ղ	ŋ-gh
Ճ-Ճ	ʃ-ch
Մ-Մ	u-m
Ի-Ի	j-y
Ն-Ն	u-n
Շ-Շ	ʒ-sh
Ռ-Ռ	n-o
Չ-Չ	ʒ-ch'
Պ-Պ	u-p
Ջ-Ջ	ʒ-j
Ռ-Ռ	n-r
Ս-Ս	u-s
Վ-Վ	u-v
Տ-Տ	u-t
Ր-Ր	p-r
Ց-Ց	g-ts'
Բ-Բ	l-w
Ու-Ու	n-l-u
Փ-Փ	u-p'
Զ-Զ	p-k'
Եւ-Եւ	t-l-ew
Եվ-Եվ	t-l-ev
Օ-Օ	o-o
Ֆ-Ֆ	ʃ-f
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Ու-Ու	n-l-ü
Ա-Ա	u-ä
Օ-Օ	o-ö

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