

THE CITY OF GANDZAK AS PATRIARCHAL RESIDENCE OF ALUANK*

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Abstract

In 552, Partav, the administrative center of Ałuank (Caucasian Albania, Aran) marzpanate, became the first episcopal residence of the finally established Patriarchate of Ałuank. However, in 789, the Catholicos of Ałuank had to leave the seat because the Arab *vostikan* residence was moved from Dvin to Partav. The patriarchal seat was settled for a short time at the fortress of Berdakur in Artsakh, and later, at the beginning of the 9th century, it was moved to Gandzak. So, in the 9th-12th centuries the city of Gandzak became the center of the Ałuank Patriarchate. In the 12th century, due to some political circumstances, the Ałuank patriarchal seat was moved to Charek, the Monastery of Khamshi, then to the Monastery of Metsaranits, Gandzasar (at the same time also to Tshalet), and then again to Gandzak. Because it was a patriarchal and important spiritual center, at different periods of time there were constructed and function a number of churches. According to the documents of 1849, the following Armenian Apostolic churches are mentioned in Gandzak: the Mother Church of St. Hovhannes, St. Gevorg, St. Astvatsatsin (St. Virgin), St. Gregory the Illuminator, St. Sargis, and in 1885 the number of Armenian Apostolic churches in the city was six. Historical documents state that even after the establishment of Soviet rule and the annexation of the territory to Soviet Azerbaijan, Gandzak continued to be one of the main spiritual and cultural centers for Armenians, a fact that was refuted after 1921.

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At the former patriarchal center, all the spiritual structures were gradually destroyed. The arguments received through the various information channels clearly indicate that at present the majority of Gandzak's Christian structures do not exist, and some are radically transformed and used for different purposes.

Keywords: AĻuank, Artsakh, Utik, Partav, Gandzak, Apostolic, Church, Catholicos, patriarchate, residence.

It is well-known that in 428 AD, as a result of the administrative territorial policy implemented by Persia, after the abolition of the Armenian Arsakid kingdom, Artsakh and Utik provinces of Great Armenia, which are also mentioned in historical sources as "Eastern Lands of Armenia" and "Eastern Armenian provinces", were left out of the Armenian regional government (marzpanate) and included in that of AĻuank.

And under these new administrative and political circumstances, the bishoprics of the Eastern Armenian Lands, as well as AĻuank itself, actually appeared as part of another administrative unit, to a certain extent separated from the direct control of the Armenian Church. Due to the deepening of the direct ties between the bishoprics in the created situation, as well as because of various external and internal problems, due to the unification of the episcopal seats of the Eastern Armenian Lands and AĻuank itself, in 552, the formation of the Patriarchate of AĻuank took place; the first seat of the newly established Patriarchate became the administrative center of the AĻuank region, Partav. However, in 789, the Catholicos of AĻuank had to leave the seat because the Arab *vostikan*'s residence was moved from Dvin to Partav. Thus, at the end of the 8th century and the beginning of the 9th century, the AĻuank (Albanian) Patriarchal seat was located for a short time in the territory of Artsakh, in the Berdakur fortress on the right bank of the Trtu-Tartar river (currently Martakert region), and later was settled in Gandzak.

According to written sources, the settlement Gandzak existed since ancient times. However, on the basis of the report by Movses Daskhurantsi, “a Khazr (*var.* Khalt) Patgos was cruel and merciless and was killed in a short time, and his son came to the world with the sword and captivity, and the church was burned by many fires and went to Baghdad. And again, by the order of the king and the treasury, he built the city of Gandzak in the year of 295, Arshakashen province” [8:331] an opinion was suggested in historiography, according to which the city was founded in 846. In our opinion, according to this report, by the order of the caliph of Baghdad, the son of the commander did not establish the settlement, but came back and rebuilt the destroyed settlement*. The written sources about the Catholicos of Ałuank settled in Gandzak also support the mentioned point of view. In particular, before the above-mentioned 846 and during the same period, albeit with interruptions caused by political circumstances, Hovhannes III (799-824), Movses (824, half a year) and David IV (824-852) Catholicos from Ałuank were enthroned in Gandzak.

And so, in the 9th-11th centuries, the Patriarchal seat of Ałuank was located in Gandzak. It was transferred here from Berdakur, although there is also a point of view according to which it was transferred from Partav to Gandzak immediately. Most likely, the following testimony of Matteos Urhayetsi was the basis of the mentioned point of view. “... And when Persia became stronger, the seat of the Patriarchate was changed to Gandzak, thus in our anthology we meet the following Catholicos of Ałuank: St. Hovhannes and St. Gevorg, St. Hovsep, St. Markos and St. Stepanos...”[17:248]. Taking as a principle this testimony of Matteos Urhayetsi, M. Barkhudaryants stated: “Then instead of Partav, Gandzak be-

* About the time of construction of the city of Gandzak, see in detail the works of V. Minorsky and A. Hakobyan. [24:46-47, 25:216-217].

comes a royal residence (seat of Amira); here is being moved the patriarchal residence of AĻuank, as well [3:371].” However, it should be noted that Gandzak became a royal residence (seat of Amira) in the middle of IX century, and the Patriarchal seat of AĻuank was taken out of Partav at the end of VIII century. Therefore, it was rightly located in Berdakur for some, albeit short, period of time, as Movses Daskhurantsi also testifies [8:345]. According to Matteos Urhayetsi, the Catholicos Hovhannes, Gevorg, Hovsep, Markos and Stepanos from “Armenian-AĻuank” supervised in Gandzak [17:248].

However, the mentioned list cannot be complete for the simple reason that Gandzak was the main and important Patriarchal seat of the AĻuank church for about three centuries, even with short interruptions. By combining a number of historical sources and the research based on them, one can conclude that in the period of the 9th-13th centuries, the following Catholicos supervised in Gandzak: Hovhannes III (799-824), Movses (824, half a year), David IV (824-852), Hovsep II (852-877), Samuel (877-894), Hovhannes IV (Hovnan, 894-902), Simeon II (902-923), David V (923-929), Sahak II (929-948), Gagik I (948-958), David VI (958-964), Petros I (964-982), Movses IV (982-988), Markos I (982-?), Hovsep III (?-1040), Markos II (1040-1077), Stepanos I (1077-1103), Hovhannes V (1103-1129), Stepanos II (1129-1131), Gagik II (Grigoris, 1139), Bezhgen (1133-1140), Nerses II (1149-1155), Stepanos III (1198-1214, this patriarch Stepanos III, upset by the persecution of Muslims, left Artsakh and made Handaberd his seat – M. B.), Hakobos (1214), Hovhannes VI (1215-1235), Nerses III (1235-1262)*.

* The supervising periods of some catholicos of AĻuank are presented A. Manucharyan’s adjustments. See [12:93]. See also [2:122-131]. Note that the chronology of A. Hakobyan is slightly different [25:436].

It should be noted that a number of the above mentioned patriarchs, obliged by political conditions, temporarily left Gandzak and, as B. Ulubabyan rightly pointed out: “The Ałuanian Catholicos, sometimes leaving Gandzak, also stayed in neighbouring monasteries, in the Dasn desert, in Khamshi Church of Miapor province of Utik, and again in Gandzak... And in all these cases, all the spiritual dioceses from the Eastern side of Armenia, as well as the Armenian and Ałuanian spiritual centers of Trans-Kurian or of former Ałuank (later be called Shaki, Shirvan, Derbend) were subject to the Patriarchate of Ałuank”[16:371] Matteos Urhayetsi reports that by order of Melikshah, the Seljuk commander Puzan Amira attacked and captured the city of Gandzak in 1088-1089. Catholicos Stepanos of Ałuank (1077-1103), who was in the city at that time, “...escaped peacefully with the help of God, because of being detained by the Armenian troops who were together with Puzan” [17:254]. However, after the death of Melikshah, as a result of extremely cruel treatment of the new rules, the activity of the spiritual prelicity of Ałuank became impossible, and Catholicos Stepanos was forced to leave Gandzak and settled in Syunik. Catholicos Stepanos I died in 1103 and was buried in Vahanavank: “I, Lord Stepanos, Catholicos from Ałuank, oppressed by Turks, came and rested to the church built by the Queens Shandukht and Katay”[6:89]. Stepanos Orbelyan also testifies to the fact of the death of Catholicos Stepanos in Vahanavank: “one morning and one happy Patriarch Stepannos from Ałuank came to the place and lived there, and one day died and was buried in front of the sanctuary” [20:241]. However, the historian does not provide information about the date of death. Matteos Urhayetsi, presenting the events of 1103, wrote: “Lord Stepannos, the Patriarch of Ałuank, died this year” [17:320]. In 1103, on the initiative of Armenian Catholicos Barseł, a meeting of bishops from Ałuank was held in Gandzak in order to elect a new Catholicos of Armenian Ałuank.

Hovhannes (Hovhannes VII) (1103-1130), brother of perished Catholicos Stepanos, was elected as the Patriarch [15:340].

In the first half of the 12th century, as a result of the weakening of the Seljuk central state, an indescribably difficult situation was created in Armenia, particularly in its eastern parts. The arbitrariness and periodic invasions of the local authorities had become unbearable. The unstable political situation was probably one of the reasons why the patriarchs of the Armenian Apostolic Church were not able to consistently monitor the transition of the Patriarchate of Armenian AĻuank and, as already mentioned, the Patriarchal chair remained vacant for the time being. It should also be noted that the sources report non-uniform information about the time when the Patriarchal seat of AĻuank was vacant, only emphasizing that Mkhitar Gosh counts that period as 8 years, and Kirakos Gandzaketsi indicates 25 years [4:199]. And so, Catholicos of Armenia Grigor III Pahlavuni (1113-1166) [21:254] sent Bishop Sahak of Karin parties to Eastern Lands of Armenia in order to ordain the Catholicos of AĻuank and to preserve the unity of the Armenian patriarchal power. King David of the Kyurikyan Kingdom of Lori, uniting the bishops in 1139 on the Feast of the Epiphany, convened a meeting under the chairmanship of Bishop Sahak, where Bishop Gagik from Armenian AĻuank was appointed Catholicos, being renamed Grigoris. “Then they ordained Gagik Catholicos, and named him Grigorēs, after the name of the Armenian Catholicos [4:200]”. According to Kirakos Gandzaketsi, the newly elected leader from AĻuank was from the family of Catholicos, and a group of influential clergymen of the time, including Tokaker's son Priest Grigor and David Alavkavordi, wrote a “wish letter” to Armenian Patriarch Grigoris”. “...and they sent a man with a letter to ordain him as a bishop, to ordain a bishop himself, and to give an order to ordain child Gagik as the Catholicos of AĻuank, so that a leader will perish in the world”[4:200].

From the content of the letter, it can be noticed that not only was the Armenian Patriarch making efforts for the unity of the Armenian Apostolic seat, but also the subordinate dioceses sought to receive the support and patronage of the Armenian spiritual leader. Among the quoted lines by Kirakos Gandzaketsi, the last thought is also worthy of attention: “for one leader to destroy the world”. The narrator, of course, was referring to the dire situation in the region, at the same time pointing out the role of the spiritual leader for the nation deprived of statehood. Therefore, the immediate ordination of a spiritual leader from Armenian Ałuank was also dictated by political conditions. Along with the Catholicos of Ałuank, 12 bishops are ordained according to the accepted rules [4:200]. According to the testimony of Kirakos Gandzaketsi, immediately after the mentioned event, in 1139, a great natural disaster happened, an earthquake. “In the year of 588 there was a strong earthquake and the city of Gandzak was destroyed, and a building that was on top of its inhabitants collapsed” [4:200]. Mkhitar Gosh also listed the provinces and cities that were turned into ruins, “O Armenian land and make it tremble, with the movement, there was a lot of destruction in many places in the provinces of Parisos and Khachen, in the plains and in the mountains, in the mountains and the capital of Gandzak is the ruin of a common man...” [1:365; 16:114].

As a result of the earthquake, a large number of churches and monasteries were destroyed in Gandzak as well. A natural disaster was followed with the raid of Choli's general from Persia to Gandzak in 1143, and after capturing the city, the latter also attacked Khachen province and, according to Gosh, “he took all the fortresses, destroyed churches and set fire to monasteries, exterminated nobles and captured soldiers” [1:386]. Samuel Anetsi also testifies about this: “...with hunger and sword and captivity, with hunting priests and holy testament and religious fell at my feet lawless” [19:132]. The Catholicos of Ałuank was forced to leave Gandzak. The patri-

archal seat was established for some time within the borders of the fortress called Charek: “to many sorrows and hardships, which it caused to the common people. All the people of the south, the sons of Ismael, even more than the Armenians and AĦuank of the world, because you were the king and the ruler. The Catholicos moved from AĦuank to another place, because he did not have a stable seat, until he came to a cave on the border of the fortress to call Charek, and he stopped and shepherded his flock [4:178].” Catholicos of AĦuank was even deprived of the right to enter Gandzak. Catholicos Stepanos of AĦuank (1155-1214) sent a chorepiscopus named Deacon to collect church taxes from Christians in Gandzak [4:179].

Gurji Batradi, the emir of Gandzak, knowing that the Water blessing day is a great church holiday for Christians, suggested the chorepiscopus to inform the Catholicos of AĦuank that he had to personally appear in Gandzak to bless the water so that the Muslims of the city could also experience that joy. Accepting the unexpected invitation, Catholicos Stepanos III left for Gandzak with his entourage. The Christian and Muslim population of the city arrived with the emir at the river bank, where the ceremony was to be held. When the Catholicos blessed the water by pouring the chrism into it, fanatical Muslims revolted against their emir and the Catholicos of Armenian AĦuank and arrested them. By the order of the viceroy sitting in Isfahan, the amira was deprived of power and sent to Isfahan, and the Catholicos was released in exchange for paying a large ransom. After this incident, Catholicos Stepanos, according to the testimony of Kirakos Gandzaketsi, no longer stayed in Gandzak, but found refuge in the Khachen area.

In 1993, immediately after the liberation of Karvatchar, among the stone inscriptions preserved in the territory of Handaberd fortress, S. Karapetyan found a tombstone (132×54×15 cm) containing important historical information related to the issue under study, the five-lined undated inscription on which states that here rests the body of Catholicos Stepanos

of Ałuank: “This is the grave of St. Stepanos – the Catholicos of Ałuank” [9:28]. After the death of Catholicos Stepanos, in 1195, the clergy from Armenian Ałuank ordained Hovhannes (1195-1235) as Catholicos in Gandzak, after receiving the consent of emir Omar of Gandzak: “And they brought him to the city of Gandzak to the ruler of Gandzak, whose name was Amir Omar, and begged him to give an order to ordain him as Catholicos” [4:181].

Due to political circumstances, the Patriarchal seat was then moved to St. Hakobavank of Metsaranits in a short period of time, from where it was moved and established in Gandzasar. In 1728, after the death of Yesai Hasan-Jalalyan, Bishop Nerses was consecrated legitimate Catholicos of Armenian Ałuank by Ejmiatsin. In the 1750s, Karabakh came under Muslim rule. The Catholicos Nerses of Ałuank also showed great support in the fight against Panah, who declared himself the Khan of Karabakh, and after the final establishment of Khan in Karabakh, he had to leave the territory and settle in Gandzak, where he remained until the end of his life. In 1763, “...Nerses the Catholicos, who was an old man” [11:643] died in Gandzak. He was buried in the southern vault of St. Hovhannes the Baptist Church in Gandzak. It was written on his tombstone: “This is the coffin of Saint Nerses and the Catholicos of Ałuank...” [5:227; 10:50]. After the death of Catholicos Nerses, critical situation arose again within the Catholicosate of Ałuank, because of the fight over the Patriarchal chair and the resulting division of the Catholicosate. In the same year of 1763, in Gandzasar monastery Bishop Hovhannes (1763-1786), a representative of the Hasan-Jalalyan family, was consecrated as the new Catholicos. But in the same year of 1763, in Gandzak Israel (1763-1808) was anointed as the Catholicos of Ałuank. In 1767, Israel moved from Gandzak to Karabakh, hoping to receive the support of local Ibrahim Khan. However, Hovhannes Hasan-Jalalyan of Gandzasar was recognized by Ibrahim Khan as Catholicos of

Aluank, and Israel had to return to Gandzak, where he continued his spiritual activity, leading the dioceses included in the domain of the Gandzak Khanate. In 1780, Israel settled in Halpat, taking over the administration of Halpat Diocese [13:152]. Thus, the documents of the time clearly testify to the fact of another split within the Catholicosate of Aluank.

In 1786, after the murder of Catholicos Hovhannes Hasan-Jalalyan in the prison of Shushi, his brother Sargis Hasan-Jalalyan had to leave Karabakh as a result of the persecutory policy of Ibrahim Khan and settled in Gandzak in 1791. Having received sufficient support from Javad Khan of Gandzak and Melik Mezhlum who took refuge there, with their support: “He was ordained as Catholicos in Gandzak, in Elizavetpol in the year of 1794” [15:348-349]. But in 1795-1796, during the destructive and deadly invasions of Agha-Muhammed Shah from Persia, Sargis Hasan-Jalalyan had to go to Georgia. Thus, with the departure of Catholicos Sargis Hasan-Jalalyan of Aluank from Gandzak, the page of the history of Gandzak as the patriarchal seat of Aluank was also closed. In 1804, after Gandzak became a part of the Russian Empire, the spiritual life in the predominantly Armenian city returned to a somewhat normal course. In 1862, the dome of St. Cross or St. Hovhannes the Baptist church, which was the former Patriarchal seat in Gandzak, was built with the funds of wealthy Aghajan Khachatryan and a nine-line inscription was made on the front side of the church. With the funds of brothers Mkrtych and Grigor Afanasyans, in 1857-1869, the church of St. Grigor Lusavorich was rebuilt. It was renovated again in 1904 according to the epistle of Catholicos of All Armenians Mkrtych Khrimyan [22:75]. During the period of being part of the Russian Empire, in 1804-1918, 4 Orthodox churches were built and operated in Gandzak. And since 1909, an Armenian church choir has also been operating [22:75].

Thus, historical documents state that until 1921, the annexation of Karabakh to Azerbaijan, Gandzak, however, remained for Armenians as one

of the most important spiritual and cultural centers of Armenians, a fact that was not recognized after 1921. The last bishop, leading the episcopal seat of Gandzak in the years of 1910-1926, Levon Priest Pseryan, had to hand in a resignation letter in 1926 [10:14]. Sargis Jalalyants, visiting Gandzak in the 30s of XIX century, described it as follows: “The city is divided into three parts? Kilisakand (translated meaning "Monastery village" – M. B.), Yerevanian’s Quarter and Norashen. It has three churches, the largest and most famous of which is the six-pillar church built by the Norashen people. In front of the church in Kilisakand is a four-columned brick porch built by priest Gevorg Gandzaketsi. This church has a white stone bell tower built in a very inconvenient place; it is surrounded by the houses of spiritual pastors” [23:153-154].

M. Barkhudaryants wrote about Gandzak at the end of the 19th century. “The building of the upper part of my city is old, especially the Armenian quarter called Kilisakand, in which the mother church of St. Hovhannes the Baptist is located, and the lower part is the Persian quarter, which is said to have been founded by Shah-Abbas I. Armenians have 1,600 families in my city, 4 churches: St. Hovhannes the Baptist and St. Lusavorich in the Armenian quarter, St. Gevorg near Nor-shuka, St. Virgin in Norashen or Yerevanian’s quarter” [3:178].

Exactly a century later, in the 1980s, S. Karapetyan, a researcher of Armenian historical monuments who visited the settlement, wrote: “...one can only assume how many churches Gandzak, which had a large Armenian population, and was the Patriarchal seat until the 9th-12th centuries, would have had. Meanwhile, by the year of 1989 the oldest of the known and preserved churches date back to the 17th century...” [10:47]. According to the documents of 1849, the following churches are mentioned in Gandzak: St. Hovhannes Mother Church, St. Gevorg, St. Astvatsatsin (St. Virgin) and St. Sargis, and in 1885, the number of churches in the city reached 6 [10:47].

According to S. Karapetyan's interpretation, Mother Church of St. Hovhannes the Baptist (1618) "has a three-nave basilica structure. The semi-circular vault under the sloping roof is supported internally by three pairs of columns. Eastern-side vestries are double-storied. At different times, a porch, vestibule and bell tower were added to the church from the west. As in the church itself, on the south side of the vestry on the first floor, burials were made in the vestibule in the 18th and 19th centuries, as well. Epitaphs of some of them were recorded and published. On the southern wall, below the sundial, were 4 lines: In the time of Catholicos Hovhannes, the year of 1633 St. Hovhannes Church was built" [10:47-48]. S. Karapetyan also thoroughly presented all the lithographs recorded by researchers of different times in the territory of the church, which, unfortunately, no longer existed at the time of the visit. According to T. Minasyan, valuable Armenian manuscripts were kept in the churches of St. Grigor and St. Hovhannes of Gandzak, among which were "writer Tuma's Gospel with parchment leather cover, which was entirely written in iron script, another Gospel, which was created in 1183 at the request of Hovsep in Drazark and had "honest parchment, fine pictures, a refined pen and a brilliant taste in fine art". The location of these two manuscripts is unknown; one of the treasures of St. Hovhannes Church was one of the masterpieces of the Armenian manuscript culture, "The Gospel of Keran and Hetum" (Matenadaran, Ms. № 6764). In 1283, on the occasion of giving her son Hetum a riding title, Queen Keran ordered and received a Gospel from Stepanos witer and presented it to the Skevra Monastery in Cilicia [14:71]".

In St. Grigor Lusavorich Church of Gandzak the "Gospel of St. Mary" was kept, used for the inauguration ceremony of presidents of the RA, which was written in the village of Banants and is attributed to the 7th century. The Gospel was moved from Gandzak to St. Ejmiatsin and Catholicos of All Armenians Vazgen I donated it to Matenadaran [14:75]. Arguments

received through various channels of information clearly indicate that nowadays the main part of the Christian structures of Gandzak simply do not exist, and some of them have been completely transformed and are used for different purposes. In particular, the oldest spiritual center and one-time Patriarchal seat in Gandzak, St. John's Church, was shelled by the Turkish army and was greatly damaged in 1920. And later, under the pretext of renovation, all the cross patterns and Armenian inscriptions on the walls were first scraped, and then plastered, painted and used as a concert hall for the city's chamber orchestra. The mentioned facts were recorded and photographed by S. Karapetyan in 1982. Thus, historical documents prove that even after the departure of the Ałuanian spiritual leadership from Gandzak until the establishment of Soviet system and the annexation of the territory to Soviet Azerbaijan in 1920, it continued to be one of the important spiritual and cultural centers for Armenians. However, after 1921, in this once Patriarchal seat and Armenian spiritual and cultural center all the Christian structures were gradually destroyed.

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ՆՍՏԱՎԱՅՐ**

Մելանյա Բալայան

Բանալի բառեր՝ Աղուանք, Արցախ, Ուտիք, Պարտավ, Գանձակ, առաքելական, եկեղեցի, կաթողիկոս, կաթողիկոսություն, նստավայր:

552 թ. վերջնականապես կազմավորված Աղուանից կաթողիկոսության առաջին աթոռանիստն էր Աղուանք մարզպանության (Առան, Ալբանիա) վարչական կենտրոն Պարտավը: Սակայն 789 թ. արաբ ոստիկանի նստավայրը Դվինից Պարտավ տեղափոխվելու պատճառով Աղուանից կաթողիկոսը ստիպված էր հեռանալ այնտեղից: Աղուանից կաթողիկոսական աթոռը կարճատև ժամանակահատված տեղակայվեց Արցախի Բերդակուր ամրոցում, իսկ IX դարի սկզբներին տեղափոխվեց ու հաստատվեց Գանձակում: Եւ այսպես, IX-XII դարերում Գանձակ քաղաքը դարձավ Աղուանից կաթողիկոսության կենտրոնը: Սակայն քաղաքական հանգամանքների պարտադրանքով Աղուանից կաթողիկոսական աթոռը

XII դարում տեղափոխվեց Չարեք, Խամշի վանք, Մեծառանից վանք, Գանձասար (զուգահեռ նաեւ՝ Ճալեթ), այնուհետև կրկին՝ Գանձակ:

Որպես կաթողիկոսանիստ ու կարևոր հոգևոր կենտրոն՝ Գանձակում տարբեր ժամանակներում կառուցվել ու գործել են մի շարք եկեղեցիներ: Համաձայն 1849 թ. վավերագրի՝ Գանձակում հիշատակված են հետևյալ եկեղեցիները՝ Սբ. Հովհաննես Մայր եկեղեցի, Սբ. Գևորգ, Սբ. Աստվածածին, Սբ. Գրիգոր Լուսավորիչ, Սբ. Սարգիս, իսկ 1885 թ. քաղաքի եկեղեցիների թիվը հասնում էր 6-ի:

Պատմական վավերագրերը փաստում են, որ Աղուանից հոգևոր առաջնորդի Գանձակից հեռանալուց հետո էլ մինչև 1920-ական թվականները՝ խորհրդային կարգերի հաստատումը, այնուամենայնիվ, հայերի համար Գանձակի Ս.Հովհաննես եկեղեցին շարունակում էր մնալ հոգևոր-մշակութային կարևոր կենտրոններից մեկը. մի իրողություն, որ սակայն բացառվեց 1921 թվականից հետո: Երբեմնի կաթողիկոսանիստ կենտրոնում աստիճանաբար ոչնչացվեցին հոգևոր բոլոր կառույցները: Տեղեկատվական տարբեր խողովակներով ստացված փաստերը ակնհայտորեն մատնանշում են, որ ներկա ժամանակներում Գանձակի քրիստոնեահենք կառույցների հիմնական մասը պարզապես գոյություն չունի, մի մասն էլ հիմնովին վերափոխվել ու կիրառվում է տարբեր նպատակներով: