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ALBANIAN MONUMENTS OF KARABAKH AND EAST ZANGAZUR

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This book has emerged from the necessity to enlighten a broader audience about Azerbaijan's history, including the Albanian Christian heritage, which represents one of its most remarkable chapters. It also delves into the historical background and present state of the Albanian monuments in Karabakh and East Zangazur that preserve the finest examples of this heritage, while also addressing the facts of their falsification. Another objective of this book is to compile all Albanian monuments in the region into a single publication, accompanied by a general historical context for each. The book offers a historical background for over a hundred Albanian architectural monuments found in Azerbaijan's Karabakh and East Zangazur lands up until the late twentieth century, with some of them having been subject to scientific research. Additionally, it compiles and summarizes historical-ethnographic, archaeological, and architectural materials related to the region's Albanian monuments. It is important to note, however, that this compilation is not an exhaustive representation of all the Albanian monuments in the region.

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**Historical sites and churches belonging
to Caucasian Albania are our historical
and cultural heritage.**

We are protecting these churches.

Ilham Aliyev

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	5
Aghdam district	25
Khojaly district	36
Khojavand district.....	52
Tartar district.....	118
Kalbajar district	137
Jabrayil district	198
Gubadli district.....	201
Lachin district	205
Zangilan district	229
Albanian monuments of karabakh and east zangazur list	233
References	236

PREFACE

The Karabakh and Zangazur lands, both integral parts of Azerbaijan, boast a centuries-long historical and cultural heritage, making them a cradle of global culture. These regions house unique cultural monuments of global importance, representing all periods of Azerbaijani history. The historical and cultural monuments of the ancient Karabakh and Zangazur lands showcase the most vibrant aspects of Azerbaijani history. Often hailed as the country's jewels, these regions abound with rare architectural monuments from Caucasian Albania and its history, spanning thousands of years. The lands of Karabakh and Zangazur are home to exceptional examples of Albanian Christian architecture.

Between 1992 and 2020, Azerbaijan faced one of the most significant invasion tragedies globally due to separatist efforts aimed at detaching Karabakh and East Zangazur from the country. For almost three decades, the historical Azerbaijani lands were occupied by the Republic of Armenia. During this period, the Azerbaijani people confronted numerous global issues, including illegal settlement, ethnic cleansing, cultural genocide, environmental damage, and the demolition of historical monuments in the Karabakh and Zangazur regions. Armenian terrorists pursued this policy in full view of the international community. The casualties of the occupation extended beyond Azerbaijani citizens, encompassing numerous historical and cultural landmarks, sacred sites, and temples with histories spanning thousands of years. Throughout the years of occupation, the Armenians endeavoured to eradicate all traces of Azerbaijan's

material and cultural heritage and obliterate the historical memory of the people within the Karabakh and Zangazur territories. The extensive destruction of historical and cultural monuments in the region was accompanied by the looting, vandalism, and desecration of religious sites, as well as the illicit transport of valuable components of these monuments to Armenia. Throughout the occupation, some of the most precious examples of Azerbaijan's extensive and rich archaeological, architectural, cultural, and religious history were lost to destruction.

During the 30-year occupation and aggression, the Republic of Armenia not only demolished Islamic monuments in Karabakh and East Zangazur but also pursued a policy of falsification and Armenianization of Albanian Christian landmarks, which served as historical reminders of Caucasian Albania, Azerbaijan's ancient state. Throughout this period, the abundant treasures of Caucasian Albania's material and cultural heritage were plundered, with many of them being entirely destroyed. The Armenians, who have been striving for the Gregorianization of Albanian Christian monuments since the 19th century, the latter part thereof in particular, falsified numerous Albanian Christian monuments, churches, and monasteries. The architectural structures of monasteries and churches of Albanian Christian heritage underwent alterations and falsifications under the guise of restoration, and were adapted to align with the Gregorian church, and inscriptions and cross-stones were looted and transported to Armenia. All the Albanian symbols on Albanian monuments,



Ganjasar Monastery (12th century), Vangli village, Kalbajar

which represented the history of the Azerbaijani people, and the artistic and engraved stone artefacts of Albanian monuments in Karabakh and East Zangazur, were replaced by false Armenian inscriptions. Hundreds of architectural monuments, such as monasteries, chapels, and basilicas from Caucasian Albania, were reintroduced to the world as Armenian cultural monuments under the Armenian Church.

The Armenian aggressors' actions against the material and cultural heritage of the Azerbaijani people were executed under a deliberate policy of cultural genocide, intending to annihilate the nation's culture and historical memory. Cultural heritage embodies the national, cultural, and historical wealth of a people, and the approach to

preserving it serves as an indicator of a modern, civilised society. Destruction or acts of vandalism against another nation's cultural heritage are prohibited by international laws and conventions. UNESCO adopted a resolution concerning the protection of cultural heritage through the introduction of criminal liability for the damage inflicted on monuments during wars arising from the collapse of the Soviet Union, and in the late 20th century and beyond. Although the UNESCO resolution acknowledged the destruction of monuments as a crime against humanity, the international community turned a blind eye to the devastation and falsification of globally significant monuments in Karabakh and East Zangazur during the Republic of Armenia's occupation. No practical steps were taken to prevent these acts of vandalism.

The material and cultural artefacts of the Albanian Christian heritage in Karabakh and East Zangazur hold significance not only for the Azerbaijani people but also for global culture. Regrettably, during the occupation by Armenian nationalists, all Albanian monuments in Karabakh and Zangazur were either Armenianized or destroyed. Most of these monuments suffered irreversible damage at the hands of Armenian nationalists.

According to the 'List of immovable historical and cultural monuments of worldwide significance', the 'List of immovable historical and cultural monuments of national significance', and the 'List of immovable historical and cultural monuments of local significance' approved by Resolution No. 132 on August 2, 2001, by the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 144 historical and cultural monuments, including Albanian churches, chapels, and monasteries in Karabakh and East Zangazur, have been registered by the state. However, the number of unregistered monuments in the region is higher. The mass registration of historical and cultural monuments in Azerbaijan initially took place in the 1970s and 1980s, but it only included the Albanian monuments in Karabakh and East Zangazur to a limited extent. During the Soviet era, significant obstacles hindered the state registration of Albanian monuments, particularly those in Karabakh, and impeded Azerbaijani researchers from conducting research in the area. As a result, only a small percentage of the Albanian monuments in Karabakh were registered during the Soviet era, partially due to pressure from the Soviet government.

In the late 20th century, on the brink of the Soviet Union's collapse, Armenia's aggressive war against Azerbaijan over new territorial claims resulted in all monuments within the Karabakh and East Zangazur regions falling out of Azerbaijani control. The fate of the material and cultural monuments in Karabakh, including East Zangazur, was placed in jeopardy. During this period, the Armenians who occupied the lands of Karabakh and Zangazur seized the opportunity to Armenianize historical and cultural monuments in the area. Amid the war, it was impossible to protect Azerbaijan's historical and cultural monuments, including Albanian ones, which had become captives within their homeland due to Armenian aggression. As a result, numerous historical and cultural monuments in Karabakh and East Zangazur went unregistered by the state. Given these circumstances, it is evident that there were more Albanian monuments in Karabakh and East Zangazur than official figures suggest.

The victory of the Azerbaijani people in the Patriotic War for Karabakh and the restoration of historical justice in 2020, caused Armenia's plans to acquire Azerbaijan's cultural heritage to fail. Because of the determined policy carried out by Ilham Aliyev, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and the military might of the Azerbaijani Army, Karabakh and East Zangazur were liberated from Armenian occupation, and the Azerbaijani state succeeded in restoring its territorial integrity. Along with our territories, the monuments that were captured by the Armenian invaders were also liberated from the Armenian occupation. Like all other pieces of Azerbaijani historical heritage in Karabakh and Zangazur, Albanian Christian monuments were also taken

under state protection. President Aliyev stated that all monuments in liberated territories are now protected. The President highlighted that, in relation to Christian religious and cultural monuments in liberated territories in particular, no one should doubt that they are under proper protection. In his address to the people in the Alley of Martyrs on November 8, 2020, he said: “Today, after the end of the war, some leaders from Western countries are raising the issue of Christian temples in the liberated lands under Azerbaijan’s control. No one should worry; all the temples across our territory are our historical heritage. “

Caucasian Albania (the fourth century B.C. and the early eighth century A.D.) is an ancient Azerbaijani state, which has left a profound imprint on Azerbaijan’s history of statehood. The

Albanians, founders of this state, were indigenous people of the Caucasus who played an important role in the Azerbaijani people’s ethnogenesis. Albanian monuments, churches, and monasteries represent the historical and cultural heritage of the Azerbaijani people. The Albanian Christian monuments in Karabakh and Zangazur are tied to the Albanians, ancestors of the Azerbaijani people, not to the Armenians who resettled there over the last two centuries. From the fourth century B.C. to the early eighth century A.D., the Albanian ethnic group inhabited Caucasian Albania, which existed within Azerbaijani lands. They continued to live in territories of ancient Albanian provinces like Artsakh, Syunik, Uti, Shaki, and Kambisena as part of Azerbaijani states, such as the Sajids, Sallarids, Garagoyunlu, and Aghgoyunlu, from the ninth to the nineteenth centuries. Although



Khudavang (Dadivank) Monastery Complex, Vank village, Kalbajar

the Albanian Christian heritage lost its statehood and religious status during the Arab conquests, it maintained a unique position in the moral culture of the Azerbaijani people.

Regarding the history of the Albanian Apostolic Church, which some Armenians have attempted to claim as their own with dubious intentions, it is essential to note that its foundations were laid in the first century. Azerbaijan is among the countries where the first Christian communities emerged. The Albanian Church is an Apostolic Church founded by Jesus Christ's apostles during the early years of Eastern Christianity's spread. The first converts to Christianity in the South Caucasus were the Albanians, who played a role in the ethnogenesis of the Azerbaijani people.

The names of the Apostles Bartholomew, Thaddeus, and St. Elishe, a disciple of Thaddeus, are associated with the rise of Christian communities in Caucasian Albania. In the first century, Elishe left Jerusalem for Albania, preached Christianity there, and established the first Christian church in Albanian lands, specifically in Gis (present-day Kish village, Shaki district). This church, one of the first Christian churches in the Caucasus, still stands in the Kish village of Shaki in Azerbaijan and has been preserved to this day, thanks to the tolerant traditions of the Azerbaijani people. St. Elishe, founder of the Kish Church, is one of the most venerated saints in Caucasian Albania. Numerous stories about St. Elishe still circulate among the people in the Shaki-Gabala region, where he preached Christianity. In honour of St. Elishe, many churches and monasteries have been established not only in the Shaki, Gabala, and Oghuz regions of Azerbaijan but also in the Khojavand, Tartar, and Kalbajar districts in Karabakh and Zangazur.

Following the collapse of Caucasian Albania due to Arab conquests in the eighth century, the insidious policies of the Gregorian church led to the restriction of the Albanian Apostolic Church's activities by the Arab Caliphate for many years. However, the Albanian Apostolic Church regained its autocephaly after the decline of the Arab Caliphate in the ninth century and continued to exist until the early nineteenth century. When the Russian Empire took control of the Etchmiadzin Gregorian Church in the nineteenth century, the Gregorian Catholics sought to abolish the Albanian Church, with which they had historically competed. After the Treaty of Turkmenchay between Russia and Iran divided Azerbaijan in 1828, Armenians, who settled in the Caucasus en masse with the support of Tsarist Russia, aimed to appropriate the Albanian Christian heritage to fabricate their own history in the Karabakh lands. As a result of the colonial policy pursued by the Russian Empire in the Caucasus since the nineteenth century, Armenians who settled in Azerbaijani lands, including the Iravan Khanate, Zangazur, and Karabakh, began to appropriate all the Albanian temples in those regions and destroy historical evidence related to the Albanian heritage. Despite their lack of deep-rooted history in the Caucasus, for over two centuries, they not only acquired Azerbaijani lands but also sought to distort Azerbaijan's history, detach the Albanian heritage from it, present themselves as the indigenous people of the Caucasus, and claim that Azerbaijanis were non-indigenous people in the region.

One of the main reasons why the Armenian Catholicosate was able to appropriate monuments of Albanian Christian heritage was the religious policy of the Russian Empire in the Caucasus during



St. Elishe Monastery (5th century), Tapakand village, Tartar

the nineteenth century, the abolition of the Albanian Apostolic Church by the Russian Synod in 1836, and its subordination to the Armenian Gregorian Church. This had significant repercussions on both the Albanian Christian culture and the religious and ethnic state of the last Christian Albanian generations. With the abolition of the Albanian Church in 1836, the Armenianization of Albanian churches and the last Albanian generations began. Rich libraries in large monastery complexes, such as Ganjasar and Khudavang, belonging to the Albanian patriarchs and the ancient archive of documents of the Albanian Apostolic Church from the Middle Ages were destroyed. Subsequently, from the mid-nineteenth century, the subordination of Albanian monasteries and churches, which had been operating prosperously, to the Armenian

Church began to deteriorate. Makar Barkhudaryan, who travelled throughout Azerbaijan and classified all Albanian churches in the late nineteenth century, stated in his 1895 work that monasteries with vast economic scope and land, such as Ganjasar, Khudavang, Gtichavank, and Great Aran, had been in prosperous condition until 1828. The author noted that he had witnessed the rapid decline and destruction of those monasteries and churches.

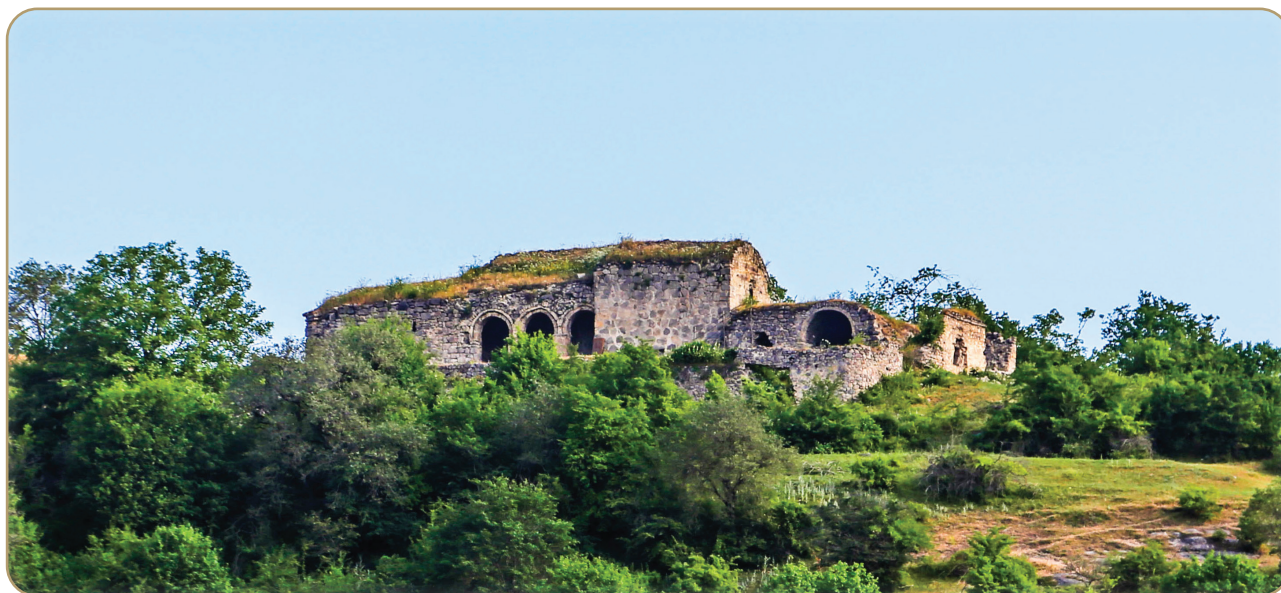
Following the Synod's decision in 1836, the main target of the Armenian Gregorian Church became the Ganjasar Monastery, which was the last residence of the Albanian Patriarchate in Karabakh. All manuscripts and valuable documents of the Albanian patriarchs in the Ganja Monastery were transported to Etchmiadzin. Makar Barkhudaryan

mentioned the theft of valuable manuscripts from the Ganjasar Monastery in the late nineteenth century. According to the author, Patriarch Sarkis, the last patriarch of the Albanian Church from the dynasty of the Khachen Prince Hasan Jalal, wrote in his notes about the mysterious disappearance of the archives of the Ganjasar Monastery en route to Etchmiadzin.

The Gregorian Church, relying on the support of the Russian Empire and acquiring all the riches and archives of the Albanian Church, manipulated all archive materials as they desired and discarded those that did not align with their goals to adapt the rich Albanian Christian heritage to Gregorian culture. The Armenian Catholics permanently destroyed the Ganjasar archives of the Albanian

Patriarchate, meaning that all the Albanian sources obtained from the late nineteenth century were falsified copies with added Armenian texts. Even the titles of works, such as Mkhitar Gosh's Law Code and Kirakos Gandzaketsi's History, which were valuable examples of Albanian sources, had been altered. They even falsified the names of Mkhitar Gosh's work, retitling it the Armenian Law Code, and Kirakos Gandzaketsi's work was renamed the History of the Armenians. The destruction of so much Albanian literature still stays under wraps.

From the nineteenth century onwards, the Armenian Church either completely destroyed the construction inscriptions and other valuable components of the Albanian churches and



Great Arran Monastery (9th century), Kolatak village, Kalbajar

monasteries that had fallen into ruins and been looted by the Armenian Church, especially the Albanian cross-stones in temples, or altered them to conform to the Armenian Church. It is worth noting that ornaments and symbols of the Caucasian Albania are unique and only typical of the Azerbaijani lands. Cross-stones, grave monuments, and marking stones from Albanian heritage are primarily rich in composition, and feature artistic ornaments that reflect pre-Christian beliefs, natural forces, and unique local drawings. The Albanian cross drawings and artistic compositions include various components of Turkic beliefs, worldview, traditions, and culture, such as the cult of the Moon and the cult of the Sun. Compositions of Albanian crosses often represent the symbols of the elements of nature: the connection between heaven and earth, light, the tree of life, and fertility. Such unique images on Albanian cross-stones are not found in other cross images. These rich Albanian images, artistic ornaments, and motifs are still alive in domestic traditions, national ornaments, and even in the patterns of carpets belonging to the Azerbaijani people.

It should be noted that, as the Caucasus has been a settlement for Turkic peoples since ancient times, the Turkic ethnic component has played an essential role in Caucasian Albania and the Albanian churches throughout history. The study of inscriptions found in large Albanian churches in Karabakh, such as the Ganjasar, Khudavang, and Great Arran monasteries, has revealed the existence of many Turkisms in these Albanian monuments. These inscriptions made it clear that the Albanian Christian people of Karabakh were native Turkic speakers who followed Christian rules in church

life while preserving Turkic traditions and folklore in their daily lives. Following the collapse of Caucasian Albania in the eighth century, small Albanian principalities revived from the ninth to the twelfth centuries, especially the Khachen principality, which then became one of the significant centers of Turkic Christian emergence and development in the South Caucasus in the Middle Ages, starting from the twelfth century. During the reign of Hasan Jalal Dola, one of the most outstanding representatives of the Albanian-Khachen principality in the thirteenth century, Albanian princes established kinship relationships with both the Kipchaks and the Mongols. Hasan Jalal's mother, Khorisha Khatun (Hurishah Khatun), was of Turkic Kipchak descent. It is worth noting that Bishop Barkhudaryan, who provided information on Christian monuments in Karabakh in the nineteenth century, mentioned the names of representatives of the Khachen dynasty, including Khachen Prince Hasan Jalal, his wife Mama Khatun, his son Atabey, Arzu Khatun, Gochubey, Tursun, Seyti, Avag, Shams, Altun, Aghbukh, Garagoz, Ruzukhan, Mina Khatun, Nazli Khanum, Aygun, Aykut, Mamakhatun's grandson Arkan, and Kutlu Bey, in dozens of inscriptions in the territory of the Albanian Church. The church inscriptions depicting these engraved names made it clear that most representatives of the Khachen dynasty were of Turkic origin. The fact that, along with the Turkic names of Albanian princes and princesses of the Khachen principality, Turkic titles such as Khatun, Bey, Malik Ata, Khachen Atabey, and Ulubey were also mentioned in the construction inscriptions of the Albanian temples, surely indicates the ethnicity of those who established such monuments. The Turkic origins of the Khachen princes and their



Aghoghlan temple (6th century), Kosalar village, Lachin

family members is one of the critical facts that proves the reliance of the history of the Albanian princes in Karabakh on Turkic roots. Indeed, recent studies of the Ganjasar inscriptions revealed an inscription that contains Turkic writings in the monastery. According to experts, there once were inscriptions on the walls of the Ganjasar temple that contained Malik's memoirs for his grandchildren, as well as ancient Turkic words like "ezgi," "shamar," and "sakin." This information shows that the Turkic culture and Turkic people played a major part in mediaeval Albanian heritage in the Karabakh region.

The architectural structure of Caucasian Albanian monuments is unique and includes several characteristic elements, features, and

construction and layout styles, which completely differ from Armenian religious architectural monuments. As the millennial Albanian state was one of the territories to which Christianity first spread, all types of Eastern Christian architecture developed there. Throughout the Middle Ages, as in all regions of Northern Azerbaijan, Albanian Christian monuments, basilicas, and chapels that had a characteristic architectural style for their age and were distinguished by their specific structures, were established in the Karabakh and Zangazur lands. Therefore, Armenians have always sought to alter the architectural structure and interior of the Albanian monuments that are living archives of Albanian heritage, in order to impose ownership over Albanian ethno-cultural heritage since their settlement in the Caucasus.



Main inscription of Ganjasar monastery (13th century) Vangli village, Kalbajar. The phrase at the bottom of the inscription "During the patriarchal reign of the Albanian Catholicos Nerses" confirms that the temple belongs to the Albanian heritage.



Beshikdagh/Vankasar Monastery (5th century), Shahbulag village, Aghdam

They destroyed valuable inscriptions that reflected vital pages of Albanian history, bibles and memoirs contained in these religious books, and artistic ornaments reflecting Albanian traditions, ways of life, and ancient beliefs from the walls of Albanian monuments. The Armenians were not satisfied with this, so they destroyed the monuments and replaced them with new ones under the guise of restoration, ultimately resulting in their original appearance being lost.

The practice of distorting the history of Caucasian Albania, looting Albanian churches (particularly crosses and other elements of Albanian churches in the Karabakh region), and altering the ornaments and symbols of the Albanian period continued into the twentieth century during the Soviet era. The Armenians demolished Albanian crosses during the Soviet era, not just in Karabakh and Zangazur, but throughout all of Azerbaijan's territory, including Gazakh, Tovuz, Gadabay, and Dashkasan, and replaced them with fake Armenian crosses. All of the cross-stones from Caucasian Albania were stolen and transported to Etchmiadzin.

During the Republic of Armenia's 30-year occupation of Azerbaijan's Karabakh and East Zangazur territories beginning at the end of the twentieth century, the region's Albanian Christian monuments were completely falsified and severely damaged. Illegal construction work was carried out on many historical architectural monuments, including the St. Elishe Monastery (Tartar), Aghoghlan Monastery (Lachin), Khudavang Monastery (Kalbajar), Amaras Monastery (Khojavand), and Ganjasar Monastery (Kalbajar) during these years. The temples' original

appearance was altered, valuables were looted and transported to Armenia, and Albanian symbols and ornaments on their walls were erased or falsified. Armenian occupiers attempted to change the ethnic affiliation of Albanian monuments by interfering with their architectural style, distorting the epigraphy of construction inscriptions, and replacing them with Armenian texts. The modifications in the architectural style of Albanian Christian monuments in these areas caused the monuments to lose their original appearance. Many spectacular Albanian material and cultural artefacts created by the ancestors of the Azerbaijani people were completely destroyed in Karabakh and Zangazur during these years of occupation.

Ganjasar Monastery, regarded as one of the gems of Christian architecture in Caucasian Albania, is among the monuments that suffered severe falsification during the occupation. The architectural structure of the monastery complex was damaged, and the inscriptions and artistic pieces on the interior and facades of the monument were removed and replaced with various animal figures and inscriptions in Armenian. It is worth noting that in the early twentieth century, the Soviet scientist and academician of Udi origin, Joseph Orbeli, revealed the facts of the Armenianization of Albanian monuments in Karabakh in his work on inscriptions in the Ganjasar Monastery, as well as the actions of the Armenian Church that distorted these inscriptions. However, due to intense pressure during the Soviet era, the author was forced to withdraw his work. Orbeli's work serves as crucial evidence revealing the falsification and Armenianization of the Albanian Khachen principality's heritage in the Karabakh region.



These double cross-stones placed side by side in the bell tower, with two circular khonchas over each other and a cross in the form of a tree of life, were taken to Etchmiadzin. Vang village, Kalbajar



St. Stephen's Church (13th century), Tugh village, Khojavand



*Three Infants Monastery (17th century),
Chilaburd village, Tartar*



*Shalva Chapel (15th century),
Shalva village, Lachin*

It is incriminating evidence that exposes the Armenian falsification of the Albanian Christian heritage. Fortunately, the Armenians were unable to completely destroy this significant work during the Soviet era. It, along with related documents, is preserved in the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences. A copy of this scholarly work was brought to Baku from Saint Petersburg in 2011, thanks to the efforts of Azerbaijani researchers.

During the Soviet era, Armenian Catholics sought permission to restore Ganjasar with the intention of completely destroying the epigraphy of the ancient Albanian temple, but this attempt was prevented by strong opposition from Azerbaijani scholars. However, the Armenians, who felt at ease following the occupation of Karabakh and East Zangazur in the late twentieth century, removed the majority of the inscriptions that confirmed the monument's Albanian origin. Inscriptions that were extremely valuable for studying the history of Caucasian Albania were removed from the walls of Ganjasar Monastery and replaced. This falsification is easily discernible when comparing photos of the Ganjasar Monastery taken in the late twentieth century. The inscriptions on the monument exhibit significant differences from their previous appearance, and the majority of the stone slabs engraved with Albanian texts have been substituted with new ones. Experts have concluded that most of the stone slabs with inscriptions at Ganjasar are not the same as those used in medieval Albanian architecture. Instead, they were brought to the church from elsewhere.

Albanian inscriptions made in 1240 by Hasan Jalal Dola, the prince of Khachen, remained in Ganjasar Monastery until the late twentieth century. Georgian linguist and scientist Zaza Aleksidze fully translated this thirteenth-century Albanian epigraphy. The phrase “Albanian Catholicos” appeared in an epigraphic inscription on the temple’s wall, confirming that the Albanian Catholics held the highest rank - the title of patriarch - in the Christian world. According to the inscriptions in the monastery, Hasan Jalal built the church for the Albanian people. This information confirmed the existence of the Albanian ethnos until the nineteenth century, as well as the ownership of these lands by the Albanians. The Ganja inscriptions make it clear that the Albanian Church, blessed by Jesus’ apostles, maintained its autocephaly in the thirteenth century. However, during the years of occupation, particularly between 2000 and 2011, Armenians were particularly active in falsifying the Ganjasar monastery complex. Dozens of new graves and cross-stones were erected in the monument’s courtyard and the monastery cemetery, the Albanian cross-stones in the surrounding area were damaged or destroyed, new Armenian cross-stones were erected, and the monument’s external and internal appearance was severely damaged. The tombstone of the Albanian Khachen prince, Hasan Jalal Dola’s grave inside the complex, was defaced in 2011, and many of the artistic ornaments on the stone were destroyed. During these years, the architecture of the monastery’s facade was tampered with during repair work to the roof and interior of the monastery, including

the addition of elements that do not correspond to the original architectural features of the monument.

During the occupation, tombstones with artistic designs and carved patterns from the sixth and thirteenth centuries, as well as ancient steles in the Aghoghlan Monastery’s area, were looted and taken to Armenia. Over the thirty-year occupation, the majority of Albanian architectural monuments in Karabakh and Zangazur were repurposed into military supply depots. The Armenian Armed Forces used the Ganjasar Monastery as a meeting point and weapons depot. The monastery’s facade has since been severely damaged.

The St. Elishe Monastery, mentioned in seventh-century sources as one of the most valuable monuments in the Karabakh region, also fell victim to Armenian falsification. The grave of the Caucasian Albanian king, Vachagan III, and the Albanian epigraphy were entirely destroyed in this ancient Albanian monument. The falsification of the Gregorian cross-stones placed by the Armenians in various parts of the temple during the occupation is evident, and similar falsifications have been uncovered on all Albanian monuments in Karabakh and Zangazur. The rich artistic ornaments of the Albanian monuments in the region were removed, their epigraphy was falsified, and new Armenian gravestones were erected in the courtyards of the monuments. To alter the original appearance of many Albanian monuments, even the walls and roofs of historical architectural monuments were completely demolished and rebuilt, erasing the distinctive features of the Albanian Christian temples.



*Church of St. Jacob,
Kolatak village, Kalbajar*



*Khatirvank Monastery (13th century),
Qozlu village, Kalbajar*

The Armenian forgers, acting with impunity during the years of occupation, went even further by producing imitations of Albanian cross-stone ornaments in the 2000s. They placed these fake cross-stones collectively in the areas surrounding all Albanian temples and presented this forgery to the world as ancient Armenian artefacts. From 2000 to 2005, Armenian scholars didn't hesitate to claim that hundreds of Albanian monuments in Karabakh and Zangazur belonged to Armenian culture. The goal of presenting all the Albanian churches, monastery complexes, and chapels in Karabakh and Zangazur to the world was to completely destroy and erase Albanian culture and introduce them to the world as Armenian monuments. The occupiers intended to use this as a means to justify their claims to Azerbaijani territory and persuade the rest of the world to believe their lies. The Armenian invaders, who captured the territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan through war, declared most of the Albanian historical and cultural monuments as Armenian, in violation of international conventions.

Today, hundreds of historical and architectural monuments, such as the Khamshivank Monastery in Boyuk Garamurad, Gadabay, Avey Monastery in Gazakh, Kilsadag, St. Elishe Church and Jalut Monastery in Gabala, Lekit Temple and Gum Basilica in Gakh, Edti Kilse in the village of Kotuklu, Pipan basilica in Zagatala, the Kish Temple in Shaki, and the Bayan Monastery in Dashkasan, are protected by the state. However, most of the Albanian churches and monasteries in Karabakh and Zangazur, which are historical monuments of thousand-year-old Caucasian Albania that were beyond the control of the Republic of Azerbaijan, were destroyed. Meanwhile, hundreds of other

Albanian temples were damaged, destroyed, falsified, and presented to the world as Armenian churches during the occupation. Now, it is well known that the Azerbaijani people have strived to preserve their cultural heritage, including Albanian Christian heritage, throughout history. For centuries, Christian churches in all regions of Azerbaijan have coexisted in a tolerant environment alongside Islamic monuments. In all regions of Azerbaijan, such as Karabakh, Shaki-Zagatala, Gakh, and Gadabay-Dashkasan, Albanian Christian churches have been respectfully preserved by Azerbaijani states like Garagoyunlu, Aghgoyunlu, and Safavid at all times, even during the emergence and formation of Islamic culture, as well as during the development of the modern Republic of Azerbaijan. This tolerant environment is specific to the Azerbaijani people and has continued to the present day. Albanian monuments in the Karabakh and Zangazur lands, including hundreds of temples, churches, and monasteries from the rich Caucasian Albanian architectural heritage in Gabala, Gakh, Shaki, Zagatala, Gadabay, and Dashkasan, represent magnificent material and cultural samples created by Azerbaijani ancestors and have been preserved as material and spiritual heritage for centuries.

During the occupation of the Karabakh and East Zangazur territories by the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Azerbaijan sought to draw the global community's attention to the defacement of their historical monuments at the hands of Armenian aggression. However, during the years of occupation, Western countries overlooked the barbaric looting and destruction of thousands of Azerbaijani monuments, including

Islamic shrines and cemeteries in the region, the complete destruction of 63 out of 67 mosques, and the falsification of globally significant historical architectural monuments of Albanian Christian heritage by Armenian terrorists.

In 2020, the Azerbaijani people restored their territorial integrity by liberating the ancient lands of Karabakh and Eastern Zangazur that had been under Armenian occupation for nearly 30 years. This was achieved under the leadership, strategic policy, and diplomatic prowess of Ilham Aliyev, the Victorious Supreme Commander-in-Chief, and the Azerbaijani Army. It's worth noting that when withdrawing from the occupied territories, Armenians who didn't adhere to the terms and conditions of the peace agreement of November 10, 2020, engaged in acts of destruction against these monuments. They disassembled valuable parts, steles, and frescoes of historic architectural monuments and unlawfully moved them to Armenia. The world witnessed Armenians removing Albanian Christian artwork from the Khudavang monastery complex, including ancient frescoes, cross-stones, and even the church bell from the Arzu Khatun Church, transporting them to Armenia.

Today, thanks to the successful military and economic policies of the Republic of Azerbaijan, peace and stability have been restored in the Karabakh and Zangazur regions. However, to conceal its criminal acts committed during the occupation of these territories, Armenia, along with its supports, is attempting new global manipulations over Christian temples, engaging in propaganda in the area of religious and cultural heritage against the Republic of Azerbaijan. They make



Hochaz village, Lachin



*Badara Monastery of the Saviour
(13th century), Khojaly*

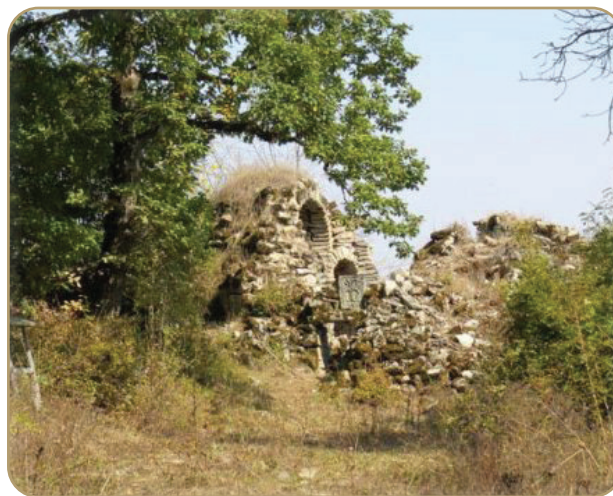
ill-founded claims about Armenian ownership of religious and cultural monuments belonging to the Albanian heritage in liberated territories. They even attempt to involve UNESO in this matter. The global community, which ignored the vandalism committed by Armenians against monuments in Karabakh, particularly Muslim ones during the occupation, is now expressing concerns primarily about Christian monuments in Karabakh, despite the total destruction of historical, architectural, and religious monuments from the entire Islamic period. The outcry surrounding the supposed threat to Christian heritage, churches, and temples in the liberated Azerbaijani lands is nothing more than hypocrisy. Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, rightfully criticised the whole world community, including UNESCO, for this injustice and double standards: “Why didn’t UNESCO raise this issue for 30 years? We have repeatedly appealed. These appeals have been documented in letters. We suggested that UNESCO’s new leaders send a mission. We expect a mission to come to occupied lands to see how they have ruined our historical monuments. All our religious monuments were destroyed by the enemy. The world remained silent on this for 30 years. We have repeatedly raised this issue, raised it in the international arena; our historical and religious monuments have been destroyed and insulted”.

During his address to the Azerbaijani people on the liberation of Kalbajar on November 25, 2020, President Ilham Aliyev highlighted the Armenian falsification of Albanian monuments and called for the global community’s attention to this issue. He said, “A look at history is enough, and anyone can see that in the 1830s, Tsarist Russia abolished

the Albanian Church, gave all its property to the Armenian Gregorian Church, and Armenian priests and their patrons then began to appropriate these churches. Their main task was to purge Caucasian Albania's history."

Not only Albanian Christian monuments, but monuments of all religions and the material and cultural heritage of every nation, are preserved in the modern Republic of Azerbaijan. The First Vice President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Mehriban Aliyeva, specifically highlighted the restoration of destroyed religious monuments as part of the revitalization of the liberated territories, saying, "We will restore the cultural heritage, not only of Islamic origin but of all religions as a whole." As President Aliyev said, mosques and churches are the historical treasures of Azerbaijan. The head of state has repeatedly stressed in his speeches on Christian religious and cultural monuments in liberated territories that Azerbaijan, as a state, preserves and restores them all, and the world is aware of this commitment.

The Azerbaijani state has created favourable conditions for the Udi people, the last representatives of Christian Albanians, to worship in their churches. The Heydar Aliyev Foundation restored two Albanian temples, Chotari and the Church of the St. Mary, in the village of Nij in the Gabala district, where the Udi, an ancient Albanian tribe, lived compactly, and opened them for the Udis. The Azerbaijani President noted during a meeting with representatives of the Albanian-Udi Christian Community that the Udi people, with their rich historical heritage, now have the opportunity to worship in both the Gabala district and the liberated territories, including Khudavang and Aghoghlan.



*Seven Doors Monastery (7th century),
Susanlig village, Khojavand*

The liberated Khudavang Church has been returned to its rightful owners, the Udi brothers.

The barbaric destruction and falsification of Azerbaijan's history and material and cultural monuments by Armenians is a global concern, as it represents a crime committed by Armenian nationalists against all humanity. Those responsible must be held criminally liable for these actions. Following the liberation of the Karabakh and East Zangazur lands, President Ilham Aliyev visited religious monuments that had been destroyed by Armenians, and informed the global community that these monuments, which have been mostly or partially destroyed, will be restored. He vowed that all of our historical monuments will always be protected by the state, and that the Caucasus Albanian churches are our national treasures. While in one Albanian church destroyed by the Armenian occupiers in the village of Hunarli during his visit to

the Hadrut and Khojavand districts, Aliyev declared to the world that Armenians have destroyed these monuments as they don't consider them their own, saying, "The Armenians wanted to Armenianize this Albanian church and wrote inscriptions in Armenian here, but they failed. It is our ancient historical monument. They have created a false history for themselves in our ancient lands. But they failed because we exposed them. The fact that this church, the Albanian temple is in this condition, again shows Armenian fraud. If it were an Armenian church, they would have renovated it. Some criticise us for not taking good care of Christian monuments. It was Armenians who brought it to this condition."

Modern Azerbaijan is one of the most exemplary countries in the world in terms of ethnic and religious tolerance and multiculturalism. Azerbaijan is considered one of the main centres for tolerance and multiculturalism throughout the world. Historically serving as a bridge between Eastern and Western cultures, it is renowned for its uniqueness in the Islamic world, keeping tolerant and multicultural values alive and promoting the advancement of inter-religious and inter-civilizational dialog. For many centuries, various ancient religious and unique monuments, temples, and shrines have been protected by both the state and community. In addition to mosques, churches, and synagogues, all religious places of worship are able to operate in a tolerant environment in both the capital city, Baku, and in regions across the country.

One of the significant aspects of the restoration, reconstruction, and revival work launched in the Karabakh and East Zangazur territories liberated after the 44-day Patriotic War in 2020 is the unbiased study and promotion of historical monuments,

particularly the Albanian Christian heritage in these lands, and their international recognition. It is crucial to showcase the results of the barbarism committed by Armenians in the Karabakh and Zangazur territories, and the genocidal policy carried out against the Azerbaijani people, history, and culture to the global community. As President Aliyev has repeatedly said, Azerbaijan possesses a substantial scientific database and a wealth of literature on this issue. As President Aliyev has repeatedly said, there is a sufficiently large scientific database and a great volume of literature on this issue in Azerbaijan. These sources are and must be communicated to the scientific community, and to the global community as a whole.

With the restoration of peace in the region by the Republic of Azerbaijan, there is now a unique opportunity for an unbiased and comprehensive scientific study of Albanian Christian monuments in Karabakh and Zangazur, which has not been possible since the nineteenth century. Important tasks on our agenda include registering each Albanian monument by providing a historical background and their current state, developing scientific publications based on the analysis of the historical roots of the issue, specifically revealing facts of falsification and looting of churches and monasteries that serve as the living archive of Albanian ethno-cultural heritage, and communicating historical realities regarding Albanian monuments of Karabakh and Zangazur to the wider global community.

The Republic of Azerbaijan has made significant strides in the study and promotion of Caucasian Albanian heritage. A large group of researchers, including foreign experts specialising in Albanian studies, are working in this field. Azerbaijani

researchers, in collaboration with their foreign counterparts, have conducted extensive studies, uncovering detailed archive documents and factual materials related to Caucasian Albanian heritage. Many undeniable facts about the falsification of Albanian monuments in the liberated Karabakh and East Zangazur territories, as well as in the territories of the Republic of Armenia, which was established within the lands of historical Azerbaijan, have been discovered. Today, the results obtained from the study of Albanian churches and monasteries in Karabakh and East Zangazur reveal that the ideas propagated by Armenians and pro-Armenian researchers in the global scientific community regarding the non-existence of the Caucasian Albanian state and Albanian ethnos are entirely false. Inscriptions in monasteries such as Khudavang, Ganjasar, and Amaras, which were the residences of Albanian Catholicoi, provide valuable information that proves the existence of the Albanian ethnos, the Albanian Church, and the Albanian principalities in the Middle Ages in the Karabakh territories. In particular, undeniable evidence has been gathered about the existence and activity of the Albanian Apostolic Church that existed in Azerbaijani lands for centuries and the Albanian Ganjasar Catholicosate as its successor. It is crucial to communicate these historical truths regarding Caucasian Albania and Albanian Christian heritage to the global scientific community, as the unbiased study of the history and cultural heritage of Caucasian Albania is the strongest response to the ill-founded claims of our notorious neighbour that has an eye on Azerbaijani lands. Armenian chauvinists who make unfounded territorial claims against the Republic of Azerbaijan have attempted to claim ownership of the millennial heritage of Caucasian Albania, which has been an

ancient state of Azerbaijan for centuries, and portray the historical heritage of the Albanian Apostolic Church and Albanian Christian monuments as Armenian to justify their acts of aggression. The global scientific community should not allow the Armenianization and introduction of Albanian Christian heritage as that of Armenians.

This book stems from the need to communicate to a broader audience the facts about the history of Azerbaijan and its Albanian Christian heritage, one of its richest historical periods, and the past and current status of Albanian monuments in Karabakh and East Zangazur, which house the richest pieces of this heritage. This publication offers a historical background for over a hundred Albanian architectural monuments found in the Karabakh and East Zangazur territories up until the late 20th century and presents evidence of their falsification. Additionally, the book compiles historical, ethnographic, archaeological, and architectural materials related to the Albanian monuments in the region. However, it is important to note that this publication does not provide an exhaustive list of all the Albanian monuments in the region. This is due, in part, to the fact that the separatist movement aimed at separating Karabakh from Azerbaijan and the subsequent occupation of the region by Armenia since the late twentieth century have hindered the state registration and study of historical Albanian architectural monuments. Future studies in the liberated Karabakh and Zangazur territories will undoubtedly uncover additional Albanian monuments. In this context, registering, restoring, and preserving historical and architectural complexes from the Albanian cultural heritage that were destroyed by Armenians in the

Karabakh and East Zangazur regions is one of the primary research priorities moving forward. It is important to note that despite the end of the war, the Republic of Armenia, which occupied Karabakh and East Zangazur for many years, continues to pose a serious threat to regional security by refusing to provide a map of the mined areas. This severely complicates the identification, quantification, and determination of the general state of damaged monuments in the liberated territories, as well as the collection and analysis of data on falsified Albanian

monuments from a historical and cultural point of view. Following its reunion with its historical and cultural heritage, the state of Azerbaijan, despite difficulties and obstacles, took many historical and architectural monuments, including Albanian monuments, under state protection. Therefore, the Karabakh and Zangazur lands, like all regions of Azerbaijan, will soon become a place of open, tolerant, and multicultural values for all humanity.

Author

AGHDAM DISTRICT

The Aghdam district, situated in the heart of Karabakh at the foot of the Karabakh Mountain Range, is a region in Azerbaijan with a rich and ancient history. Aghdam is the first urban settlement in the Caucasus and one of the regions where numerous essential historical monuments are found. The earliest human settlements in these territories can be traced back to the Eneolithic period, which spanned between the 6th and 4th millennia BC.

In Caucasian Albania, the ancient Azerbaijani state, Aghdam was a central region. During the Caucasian Albanian era, this historical land was among the most densely populated regions. The Gargareans, one of the most ancient and powerful tribes of Caucasian Albania, inhabited the Gargar River basin, which is located in the Aghdam district.

These territories were known as the country of the Gargareans during the ancient and early medieval ages, named after the ancient Albanian tribes. The Gargarean tribe's name is still preserved in the region's toponymy, such as Gargarchay and the Gargar plain.

The Republic of Armenia, which has attempted to steal territories from Azerbaijan throughout its existence, founded a state here by taking some parts of Azerbaijan's ancient territories in the early 20th century with the support of the Soviet Union. Becoming particularly active in the late 20th century, the Armenians intended to occupy the Karabakh region, an integral part of Azerbaijan. The Aghdam district was the first victim of Armenia's merciless war against Azerbaijan starting in February 1988.



The ancient territory of the Aghdam district was rich in monuments



Beshikdagh / Vankasar Monastery (5th century), Shahbulag village

Tens of thousands of Azerbaijanis, who were forcibly driven from their ancestral lands in Armenia by these inhumane atrocities, first sought refuge in the Aghdam district in late 1988. In 1993, a large part of the Aghdam district was occupied as a consequence of offensive operations by the Armenian Armed Forces. On November 20, 2020, the Aghdam district was liberated without any military operation thanks to the outstanding diplomatic skills of Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, and the determination of the Azerbaijan Army and people.

The territory of the Aghdam district is rich in architectural and artistic monuments with ancient histories, reflecting various historical ages, including ancient settlements like Uzerliktapa, Leylatapa, mediaeval tombs in Papravand and other villages, a 12-cornered tomb near the Khachen-Derbent village, a historical and architectural monument in the Abdal-Gulabli village, the Shahbulag Mosque, Karabakh khan Panahali Khan's palace, Shahbulag Fortress, and the Aghdam Juma Mosque in particular, which is one of the monumental examples of Karabakh's unique religious architecture. However, the district was demolished during the occupation, and these important historical and architectural pieces were destroyed. The area became an endless desert, replete with the ruins of buildings destroyed during the occupation.

The Aghdam Juma Mosque, which was a key place of worship for Azerbaijanis before the occupation, was brutally damaged and defaced. The mosque's minarets were entirely taken down from the inside, and all the decorations and equipment were looted and transported to the Republic of Armenia. The interior and exterior walls of the

mosque were covered with derogatory and insulting expressions, and words against the people and nation of Azerbaijan. The prayer hall and auxiliary halls of the mosque were used as stables for cattle and pigs by Armenians during the occupation.

The Armenians even carried out illegal archaeological excavations in Aghdam during the occupation, particularly in the area surrounding the Shahbulag Fortress, for various purposes. All historical buildings within the Shahbulag Fortress, including mosques and hammams (baths), were destroyed by Armenian aggressors, and they used the Shahbulag Fortress, built by Karabakh khan Panahali Khan in 1751-1752, as a church. Illegal excavations then increased in this territory, particularly after 2005. Various public organisations in Yerevan, along with the Armenian government, provided funding for these illegal archaeological excavations in the Shahbulag Fortress. The Shahbulag Fortress, however, retained its original interior despite all of the alterations that were made under the guise of "repair."

Albanian monuments of the Aghdam district

The Aghdam district territory covered the central provinces of the former Caucasian Albania. The archdiocese of Partaw, as well as the diocese of Great Kuank in the Albanian Church, were located in these territories. Ancient Albanian temples could be found in the Kangarli, Sofulu, Balligaya, Magsudlu, and Salahli villages of the Aghdam district, particularly in Shahbulag village. There was a monastery known as Vankasar (5th-7th centuries) built in honour of the Albanian king Vachagan

III near Shahbulag village, on the right bank of the Gargarchay River in Aghdam. This ancient Albanian temple located on the top of Beshikdagh is also known as the Beshikdagh Temple after the name of the mountain. Beshikdagh Monastery (5th-7th centuries) was the main temple of the diocese of Great Kuank. As early as the 19th century, Barkhudaryan reported that there was an Albanian bishopric and an ancient church in the territory of Shahbulag (Бархударян, 1895, s.33).

There were many ancient Albanian temples in the area around the Shahbulag Fortress. According to Barkhudaryan, there was an ancient church in the Hasangaya village near Barda on the left bank of the Tartar River (Бархударян, 1895, s. 33).

The Gavurgala Basilica is another ancient Albanian temple that existed in the territory of Aghdam (6th century). In the 1960s, Azerbaijani archaeologists carried out excavations in the settlement of Gavurgala in the Sofulu village of Aghdam and discovered the remains of the Gavurgala Basilica, which existed in the territory of the diocese of Partaw.

The Kichan Monastery in Balligaya village is one of the Albanian monasteries in the Aghdam district.

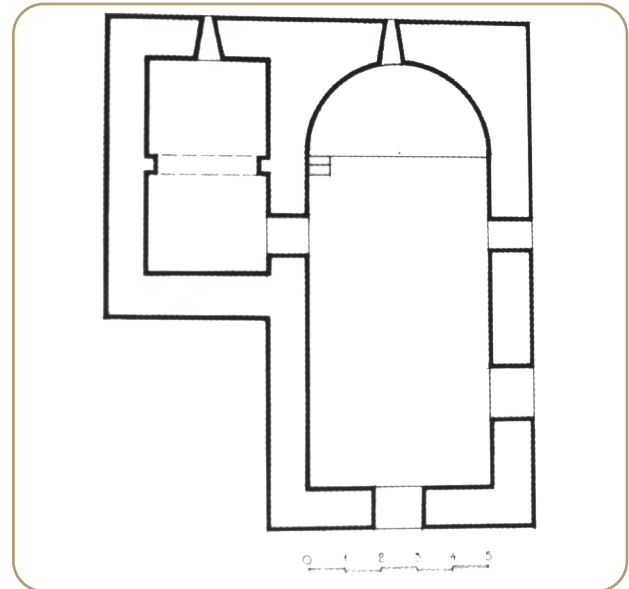
A significant part of the rich treasure of archaeological, architectural, and cultural significance of the centuries-long history of Caucasian Albania was completely destroyed during the 30-year occupation of the Aghdam district by the Republic of Armenia. Along with the destruction of Islamic monuments, a policy of

falsifying and Armenianizing Albanian Christian monuments was conducted during these years of occupation, during which the vast majority of the Albanian monuments in the district were completely destroyed in an attempt to Gregorianize them. There has been a sustained effort to do so on the part of the Armenians since the 19th century, especially during the Republic of Armenia's occupation of Aghdam in 1993–2020, when some of the monuments were also falsified and misrepresented as Armenian churches, reflecting the deliberate policy of cultural genocide.

Albanian temples are a part of the Azerbaijani cultural heritage in its definition as a representation of the national cultural and historical wealth of a nation. In the modern world, the preservation of cultural heritage and respectful attitudes towards it serve as a sign of a civilised culture. International laws and conventions prohibit actions such as the destruction of one nation's cultural heritage by another. The biggest treasure of the centuries-old history of Caucasian Albania has been destroyed in Azerbaijan's Karabakh and East Zangazur regions, as well as in the Aghdam district, over the past 30 years. All Albanian signs on Albanian monuments, historical relics of the Azerbaijani people, were destroyed, and hundreds of stone pieces were looted and transported to Armenia. In Karabakh, hundreds of pre-Christian and Christian Albanian monuments were destroyed, and wall inscriptions were erased and replaced with Armenian texts. Chapels, basilicas and hundreds of other architectural monuments from the Caucasian Albanian period were then falsely reclassified under the status of Armenian churches.

List of Albanian monuments in the district

- Temple (6th century), Kangarli village
- Gavurgala (6th century), Sofulu village
- Beshikdagh / Vankasar Monastery (5th century), Shahbulag village
- Kichan Monastery (12th century), Balligaya village
- Temple (15th century), Magsudlu village
- Temple (16th century), Salahli-Kangarli village
-



Plan of Gavurgala Church



The ancient territory of the Aghdam district was rich in monuments

GAVURGALA CHURCH (6th century), Sofulu village

Gavurgala Church is located in the Sofulu village of the Aghdam district. During excavations in the ruins of the Gavurgala settlement, remnants of this ancient Albanian church were discovered. The Gavurgala Church was discovered by archaeological excavations in the Sofulu village in 1958 (Вайдюв, 1965, s. 168-178). The Gavurgala Basilica was located in the area of the diocese of Partaw/Barda, which was established in the 5th century by Vache II, the ruler of Albania, and given the name Perozabad (Partaw/Barda) in honour of the Sassanid king, Peroz.

The Gavurgala Basilica is a 6th-century monument that represents Albanian architecture. Due to the architectural and compositional characteristics of the building, it is believed that the Gavurgala Church was constructed prior to the Arab conquests, around the 6th century (Мамедова, 2004, s. 38).

The building's walls were constructed using two rows of stones filled with lime mortar, in keeping with the typical style of Caucasian Albanian architecture. Since ancient times, Albanian architects had experience constructing walls of this kind. In Azerbaijan, this type of masonry was discovered in the area of Kultapa II in the second millennium BC. The fundamental distinction of the Gavurgala structure is that the stones used were well-carved (Мамедова, 2004, s.38). Although the roof of the Gavurgala Basilica has not been preserved, the remains of the construction discovered during archaeological excavations revealed that the doors were arched, and the building had a two-layer arched ceiling.

BESHIKDAGH /VANKASAR MONASTERY (5th century)

The Beshikdagh Church is an Albanian basilica from the 5th to 7th centuries. Makar Barkhudaryan referred to this ancient Albanian temple as having been built by Vache II, a ruler of Caucasian Albania from the Arsacid dynasty (Бархударян, II к. s.266). According to Barkhudaryan, during the reign of Vache II, there was a cross-shaped monastery called Vankasar on the height of Beshikdagh, in the area of the church. The author also mentioned that the church was also called Beshikdagh (Бархударян, II к. s.400-404). According to legend, an infertile woman bore a child after praying in the ancient monastery at the top of the mountain. The woman fled to a monastery to hide her baby from Arab invaders, and raised it in a stone cradle. People believe that since then, this mountain has been called Beshikdagh ("beşik" and "dağ" meaning cradle and mountain, respectively). According to Barkhudaryan, the name



Beshikdagh / Vankasar Monastery (5th century), Shahbulag village

“Beshikdagh,” both referring to the mountain and the monastery, stems from this ancient legend (Бархударян, 1895, s.400-404).

Thus, Beshikdagh has been a temple visited by people as a sanctuary for centuries, especially for the treatment of infertility, with many women visiting Beshikdagh to wish for a child. According to legend, snakes protected this mountain and the babies there, but according to Yampolsky, there really were many snakes in the area of Beshikdagh (Ямпольский, 1962, s.201). Yampolsky was the first researcher to have determined that the Beshikdagh Monastery was an Albanian monastery by comparing it to other Albanian churches from the early Middle Ages (Ямпольский, 1960, s.246-250). Azerbaijani archaeologists also examined the Beshikdagh monument in the 1960s (Геюшев, Ваидов, Гулиев, 1973, s.41-42.)



*The Beshikdagh Monastery
was presented as an Armenian church
during the occupation of 1993-2020*



The Beshikdagh monument is a domed church from the early Middle Ages that was built in a style typical of religious buildings in Albanian architecture during the 8th–10th centuries. The monastery has small dimensions, but thick walls of hewn grey limestone.

Like the Gadabay Church, the Beshikdagh monument has a cross-dome-shaped layout. Three of the cross's four square-shaped sides are semi-circular on the inside. The length is 10 metres from east to west and 9.15 metres from north to west. There are entrance doors on the other three parts of

the cross, excluding the west wall (which has a high window). The rectangular doorways, which were made of anchor stones and at the same height as the wall, are seen as having been a part of its pedestal. The entire building rests on a single-step plinth made of hewn limestone (Мамедова, 2004, s.80). The walls are joined to the four pylons that hold up the cross's dome. In the centre of the model hall, they join with arches to create a square under the dome above which is a dome with a tiled roof.

The Beshikdagh Monastery was presented as an Armenian church during the 1993–2020 occupation.

KICHAN MONASTERY (12th century), Balligaya village

The Kichan Monastery is located in Balligaya village, which is included in the Sirkhavand village administrative territory in the Aghdam district. By 1992, it had become part of the Aghdara district, but following its elimination, the Kichan village, which was part of the Aghdam district, was renamed Balligaya on December 29, 1992.

The ancient monastery complex in the village dates to the 12th century, with the oldest inscription discovered on one of the cross-stones in the area of the church dating back to 1191. In total, ten inscriptions were discovered in the Kichan Monastery, which was restored in the middle of the 18th century, according to one of the monument's inscriptions.

Due to its construction technique, horseshoe-shaped apses and other features, the Kichan Monastery bears the characteristics of the Caucasian Albanian churches from the 5th-7th centuries. According to Professor Gulchohra Mammadova, a

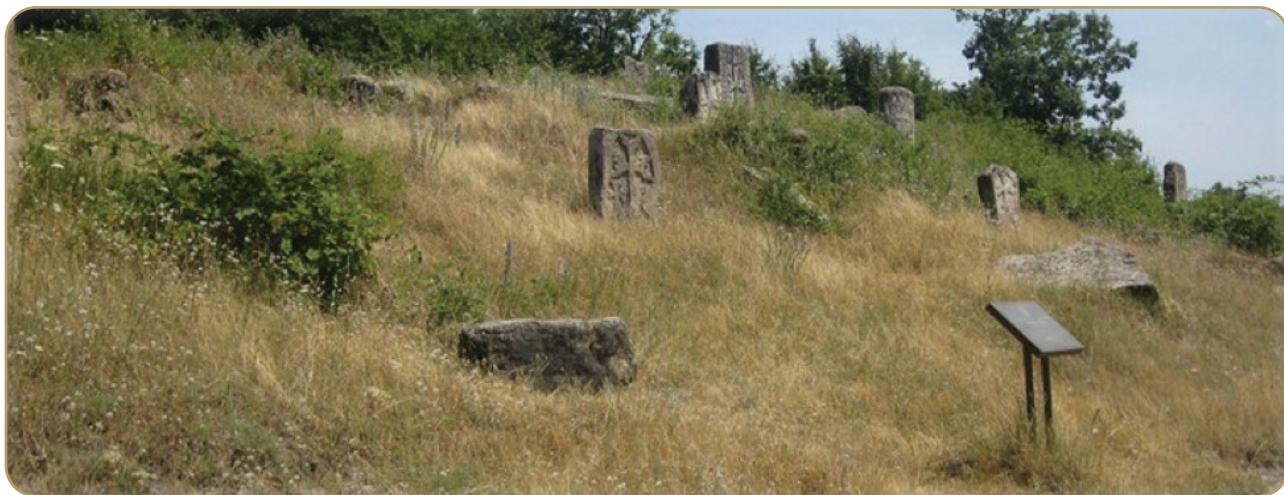
Doctor of Architecture who studied the features of the Kichan Monastery Complex, the hall churches with arched ceilings to which the main church buildings are attached by side rooms from the south and north, are unique to the architecture of Caucasian Albania and do not exist in the architecture of neighbouring peoples (Мамедова, 2004, s.88). The main characteristic that sets the main church of the Kichan Monastery apart from other Albanian churches is that the church building is shaped like a cross as a result of the connection between the side rooms of the monument and the main church. Improving the composition, building new rooms, and adding architectural components all follow the general trends in the growth of Christian architecture during the 9th–11th centuries (Мамедова, 2004, s.88-89). Thus, in the ninth century, early mediaeval churches that had been destroyed or damaged began to be restored and expanded on a large scale as a result of the weakening of the Caliphate. To that

end, rectangular side rooms were added along the width of the building to extend the volume of the small hall churches.

The Kichan Monastery Complex is reminiscent of the ancient Albanian church of Mamruk, which was built on the top of the Armatay Mountain near the village of Gulluk in the Gakh district, and the village of Mamruk in the Zagatala district. By constructing two small rooms between the side rooms and the portals of the side aisles, the architects of the Mamruk Church and the Kichan Monastery were able to use the space allocated for the church more effectively. The emergence and development of this architectural style in Caucasian Albania are linked to the spread of single-nave hall churches across the country from the early Middle Ages and, later, the adaptation of churches to new religious requirements in accordance with the changing

requirements of Christianity in the country (Мамедова, 2004, s.89).

The small monastery complex consists of two churches, a large dining hall, a narthex, monastic cells, and a large cemetery. The most significant structure in the Kichan Monastery Complex is the main church, which has an arched roof and a horseshoe-shaped apse. Two enlarged side rooms in the monastery complex, which join the church from the north-east, also have a similarly shaped apse. The eastern part of the narthex is connected to the side rooms by a small door, with a large arched wall separating this part of the narthex from the other part. On the west side, a narthex was constructed next to the church building. The architect used the space between the narthex and the church to create two more small rooms.



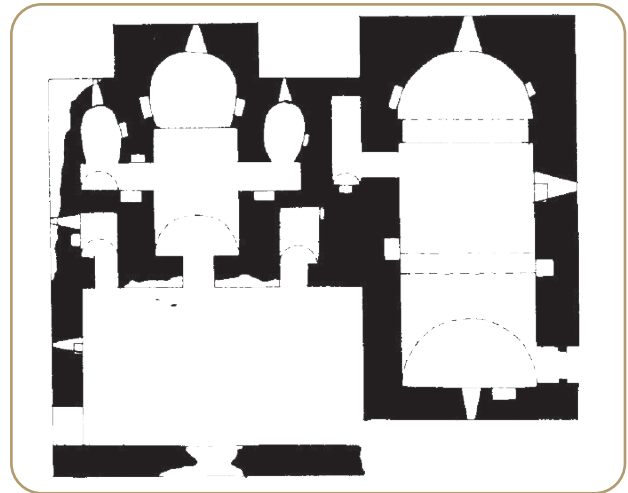
Ancient tombstones near the Kichan Monastery. Balligaya, a mediaeval village at the western foot of the hill where the monastery is located.

The walls of the church building are made of rough-hewn local stones and plastered with lime mortar from the inside. The inside walls of the church have seven niches. One element that makes the church distinctive is that the part of the altar that leads to the arch is shaped like a half-shield. The second church building, included in the monastery complex, is located on the south side of the complex. This monument, which has the structure of an arched hall church, was renovated in the middle of the 18th century, according to the inscription. On the church's north wall, a small additional room was constructed. All of the church's walls were built from rough-hewn

cobble stones, with the exception of the support arches, which were constructed from well-hewn stone blocks. Instead of a tympanum, a cross-stone with a typical ornamentation from the 12th-13th centuries was used at the entrance to the church. The dining room, with dimensions of 7.6 by 4.9 metres, is located in the complex's southern corner, and there are many niches in the arched ceiling and walls of the hall. Monastic cells are arranged in a line next to the dining hall. At the western foot of the hill where the monastery is located, there is a large mediaeval Christian cemetery.



*An ancient tombstone
near the Kichan Monastery*



Plan of the Kichan Monastery

KHOJALY DISTRICT



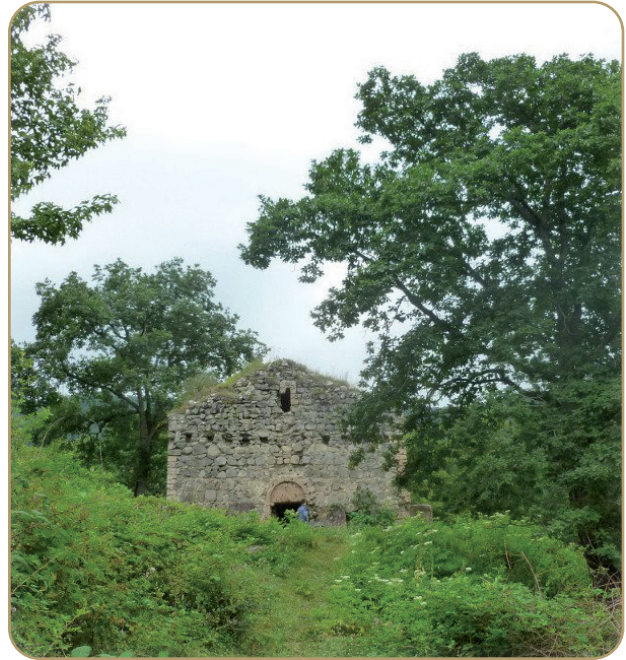
The Khojaly district of Azerbaijan is situated 10 kilometres from Khankendi, on the Aghdam-Shusha and Asgaran-Khankendi roadways. The district was established on the basis of the Asgaran district on November 26, 1991, and the Armenian Armed Forces occupied it in 1992. Following the Second Karabakh War, Khojaly is temporarily controlled by Russian peacekeepers in accordance with the tripartite statement signed on November 10, 2020.

The Khojaly genocide is one of the most devastating tragedies that the Azerbaijani people faced in the 20th century, along with the Khatin, Lidisa, and Oradur genocides. This horrifying event was perpetrated by the Armenian Armed Forces during the Karabakh War when they ruthlessly attacked the besieged people of Khojaly on the night of February 25-26, 1992. The Armenian forces, supported by the military equipment of the 366th Regiment, a Soviet army unit stationed in Khankendi, surrounded Khojaly from all sides and brutally massacred the civilians.

The victims of the Khojaly genocide, the most terrible and bloodiest tragedy of the Karabakh conflict, have been commemorated annually by the people of Azerbaijan. Following its liberation in 2020 under the leadership of Ilham Aliyev, the victorious Supreme Commander-in-Chief of Azerbaijan, the victims of the Khojaly genocide were, for the first time, commemorated in Khojaly. A memorial ceremony was held for the Khojaly victims in the ancient Albanian temple, the Aghoghlan Monastery,

located in the Lachin district. There, members of the Albanian-Udi Christian community lit candles for the Khojaly victims' souls and prayed for the souls of the martyrs.

Khojaly-Gadabay archaeological cultural pieces from the 14th-7th centuries BC, stone box graves, mounds and necropolises from the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages, and valuable findings like beads on which the name of the Assyrian king Adad-Nirari (807–788 BC) was inscribed, were discovered in the territory of Khojaly, which is rich in historical and cultural monuments. Cultural pieces from the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages (8th-7th centuries BC) were discovered in these territories as a result of archaeological excavations during the 19th century. Various types of pottery, weapons (swords, daggers, spears and arrowheads, battle axes), jewellery made of gold, bronze, cockle, agate, glass, and paste, bronze work tools, horse weapons, and other valuable pieces were discovered in mounds in Khojaly.



*Holy Saviour Monastery (13th century),
Badara village*



There were also numerous ancient and religious architectural monuments in the territory of Khojaly, as well as ram and saddle-shaped tombstones, tombs from the 14th-18th centuries, the Asgaran Fortress built by Karabakh khan Panahali Khan, and hundreds of holy shrines such as the “Sanctuary of Seyid Jalal,” the “Grave of Seyid,” the “Sanctuary of Jahan Nene.” The name of the Asgaran Fortress can be traced back to ancient Albania, and Aski Aran means “Ancient Aran.” The Asgaran Fortress, located on the right and left banks of the Gargar River, includes two fortifications. The tower on the right bank consists of double-layered stone walls, while the tower on the left bank, whose walls are 2-3 metres thick, is square in shape.

The Armenian Armed Forces destroyed all historical, cultural, religious monuments, cities and villages in the Khojaly district, which they occupied in 1992. The most ancient historical monuments in the city of Khojaly, cemeteries, holy shrines, and many religious monuments in the villages of Karkijahan, Kosalar, Jamilli, and Meshali were demolished, and in the Karkijahan settlement alone, three cemeteries were completely ploughed. An ancient Muslim cemetery from the 14th century, many ram-shaped stones, public shrines such as the “Sanctuary of Mahammad Agha,” the “Sanctuary of Darili,” “Alam Tree” (Kosalar village), the “Grave of Seyid” (Meshali village), the “Sanctuary of Seyid Jalal,” the “Sanctuary of Jahan Nene,” and other historical and architectural monuments such as the “Dome of Haji Ali” (14th century), a circular tomb (1356), and the Asgaran Fortress (18th century) were seriously

damaged during the 30 years of occupation. Indeed, most of them were completely destroyed.

Albanian monuments of the Khojaly district

The Khojaly district was one of the territories that was rich in Albanian architectural monuments, like other Karabakh regions. There are many ancient Albanian temples in dozens of villages in the district, such as Shushakand, Chanakhchi, Khansikh, Khachmaz, Badara, Daghyurd, Khanabad, and Karkijahan. In many of these villages, it would not be uncommon to find two or more Albanian temples. Indeed, in the Meshali village of the district, there were five Albanian temples, including the Seven Churches, the Durpasu Church, the Church on the Burgun Rock, the “Church in the Small Water”, and the “Church in the Land of Avaz” before the occupation.

In Chanakhchi village, there were two Albanian temples from the 10th-11th centuries. A circular temple dating from 1356–1357 in the city of Khojaly, as well as ancient Albanian temples in the villages of Karkijahan, Ulubab, and Pirjamal, were recorded.

The Khojaly district was one of the territories rich in Albanian architectural monuments, such as temple complexes built in the Khachmaz village in 1100, in the Khansikh village in 1122, in the Armudlu village in 1202, in the Shusha village in 905, and in the Badara village in the 7th century, as well as an Albanian temple constructed in the 13th century in the Khanabad village.

List of Albanian monuments in the district

- Albanian temple (905), Shushakand village
- Albanian temple (1065), Chanakhchi village
- Albanian temple (1100), Chanakhchi village
- Albanian temple (1122), Khansikh village
- Albanian monastery (12th century), Khachmaz village
- Albanian temple (17th century), Khachmaz village
- Ochkavank Monastery (12th century), Badara village
- Albanian temple complex (12th century), Badara village
- Monastery of the Saviour (13th century), Badara village
- Baghirkhan Temple Complex/Bovurkhanavank (12th century), Daghdaghan village
- Monastery Complex of St. George (13th century), Khanabad village
- Albanian temple (13th century), Daghyurd village
- Albanian temple (1202), Armudlu village
- Round temple (1356-1357), Khojaly city
- Remains of the ancient Albanian Church, Karkijahan settlement
- Seven Churches, Meshali village
- Durpasu church, Meshali village
- Church in the Small Water, Meshali village
- Church on Borgun Rock, Meshali village
- Church in the Land of Avaz, Meshali village
- Temple, Ballija village

ALBANIAN TEMPLE (905), Shushakand village

In the Shushakand village of the Khojaly district, there was an ancient Albanian temple built on the left bank of the Gargar River in Shushakand in 905. The 19th-century author Makar Barkhudaryan provided information about this ancient temple, writing that there was an inscription on the wall of the door of St. Stephen's Church in Shushakand. According to the inscription, the church was built in honour of all those who died for the Albanian Patriarchate (Бархударян, 1895, s.120). A 15th-century inscription was discovered on a cross-stone in the ancient Albanian church on the other side of the valley. According to the inscription, this cross-stone was erected by a priest of the church named Goch in honour of his mother, Aziza (Бархударян, 1895, s.120). The Turkic origins of the



Remains of the Albanian temple, Shushakand

names of Khachen rulers and their family members, as well as the Christian population of Khachen and even the monks, appear to be reflected in the recorded inscriptions on all of Karabakh's Albanian temples. This is one of the key pieces of evidence proving that Karabakh is deeply rooted in Albanian-Turkic history.

According to the ceasefire agreement signed on November 10, 2020, the fate of this ancient Albanian temple during the 30-year occupation is uncertain, as the Khojaly district is temporarily under the control of Russian peacekeeping forces.

ALBANIAN TEMPLE (1065), Chanakhchi village

Azerbaijanis were forcibly driven from Chanakhchi village by Armenian separatists as early as 1989. The Armenian armed forces occupied Chanakhchi from 1992 to 2020, but the Azerbaijani armed forces liberated it on November 9, 2020.

In the past, the village of Chanakhchi was the centre of one of Karabakh's five Albanian melikdoms,

called Varanda. There were two Albanian temples in Chanakhchi village. Barkhudaryan made it clear that the meliks of Varanda built a monastery with the tombs of the Melik-Shahnazar dynasty on the site of the ancient Albanian temple in the village of Chanakhchi. According to the author, the son of Melik-Shahnazar, the melik of Varanda from the village of Chanakhchi built a church here (Бархударян, 1895, s.109).

The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan listed the Church of the Virgin Mary, located in a steep rocky area to the south-west of the village of Chanakhchi, as a historical and architectural monument of national importance. The only remaining parts of the fortress walls that previously surrounded the monument on its west side are the ruins of walls and towers.

Although the temple was built in 1065, it was discovered that the church is actually an ancient basilica-style building from the 5th-7th centuries. A new church was built in the 17th and 18th centuries on the foundation of this ancient church, according to a stone inscription on the arch of the Church of the Virgin Mary's entrance door. The new building was mostly constructed from the remains of the ancient church, and ancient tombstones were also used in its masonry, along with the architectural components of the ancient building.



Chanakhchi Albanian temple (1065)

The length of the cross-shaped church on the site of the ancient complex is 11 metres; its width is 9 metres, and its height is 7 metres. The prayer hall's arched ceiling is supported by elegant pylons and arches, and there is an entrance door on the west side of the church. The south wall has two window spots, and the east wall has three. The church's narthex is a square-shaped, 6-metre-long, 9-metre-wide structure with an arched ceiling. The church's narthex was used as a family mausoleum for the Melik-Shahnazar dynasty. Here are the graves of Albanian meliks from that dynasty, including Mirza

and Huseyn, as well as their wives.

This ancient Albanian temple was constructed using rough-hewn local stones in accordance with the construction techniques of most Albanian churches. The interior of the church was also rich in cross-stones of various sizes. Three cross-stones measuring 2x1 metres that decorate the building's southern facade were damaged, but have survived to the present day. Unfortunately, the ornamental inscriptions on these cross-stones, which provided a record of ancient Albanian history, were removed by the Armenians and replaced.

ALBANIAN TEMPLE (1100), Chanakhchi village

Another Albanian church in Chanakhchi village is located in the centre of the village and has been listed by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan as a historical and architectural monument of national importance. The church is believed to be from the 12th century.

The construction of new, larger churches started in the 9th century along with the restoration and expansion of the early mediaeval churches that had been destroyed and damaged due to the weakening of the Caliphate. Christians in Caucasian Albania during this time constructed new types of religious buildings, such as the church in the village of Chanakhchi, due to the spread of Christianity and the necessity to expand the capacity of temples.

The Church of the Mother of God in Chanakhchi village is a rectangular-shaped, three-nave basilica. Such temples took a long time to build, and three-nave basilicas and domed temples persisted into the late mediaeval centuries in the territory of Caucasian Albania (Мамедова, 2004, s.50).



*Albanian temple (1202), Armudlu village.
The temple was illegally renovated during
the occupation.*

There were ancient manuscripts, copies of the Bible written on parchment, valuable relics, and cross-stones with rich artistic ornaments from the 1600s in the church. The memoirs in the Bible which was preserved in the church until the 19th century provided information about the years of religious activity of the Albanian patriarch, Petros (1653-1675) (Бархударян, I, с.89).

The book “Artsakh” by Makar Barkhudaryan, which was published in Baku in 1895, provides a wealth of information about the bibles and memorabilia therein, which were preserved in Albanian churches in Karabakh in the late 20th century. Barkhudaryan’s book makes it evident that there were only a few copies of the Bible in Albanian churches in some regions in Karabakh. It is possible to learn about the activities and names of the Albanian Catholicos who led the Albanian Apostolic Church in the 16th-18th centuries thanks to the memoirs in these Albanian Bibles, which provide valuable information about the activities of the Albanian Catholicosate.

One of the few churches in the 19th century that contained an Albanian Bible with memoirs was the Chanakhchi Church. The memoirs, which are inscribed on the first and last pages of the Bible in the church, include information regarding the Albanian patriarch Petros’s years of religious activity (1653-1675) (Бархударян, I, с.89). It appears that the Albanian Bibles were used not only for religious rituals but also as a sort of historical chronicle created by Albanian religious figures. These memoirs served as a valuable source of information about the settlements, the lives of the Albanian Christians living there, their political and economic conditions, and the Albanian diocese.

The memoirs in the Albanian Bibles made it possible to follow the actions of the Albanian Catholicos until the 18th century. As a result, the Armenian Church went to great lengths to destroy all memoir-containing Albanian Bibles in the 19th century. Unfortunately, the copy of the Bible that was preserved in the Chanakhchi Church until the 19th century, was also destroyed.

ALBANIAN MONASTERY (12th century), Khachmaz village

The monastery is located on the top of a high mountain near the village of Khachmaz, providing a broad view of the Amaras Monastery and the territory of Fuzuli from its vantage point. The monastery was constructed on the site of an ancient temple from the early Middle Ages.

Barkhudaryan provided information about this historical architectural monument in the 19th century. The author discussed the Shoshka Monastery, which

was constructed on the top of a mountain close to the village of Khachmaz, mentioning that it was from an earlier period and restored at various times. According to Barkhudaryan, the foundation of the church makes it clear that it was from an earlier period. The monastery was reconstructed in the 17th century despite being severely damaged in the centuries that followed. Many stones and old cross-stones from the old building were used to make the church’s masonry.

The monument was built from unhewn white stones and restored at various times. The one-nave, basilica-shaped church has a rectangular floor layout. In the east of the prayer hall, there is an altar apse. The arched ceiling of the hall is supported by two pylons. Crosses were used to decorate the altar in the church. There are also three windows, as well as a door opening to the narthex from the west, which has not survived. Barkhudaryan stated

that the monastery's dimensions were 9 m 18 cm in length and 6 m 25 cm in width, and it had an altar, 3 windows, and a door. The altar in the church was decorated with various crosses (Бархударян, 1895, s.93), and rough stones were used to make the masonry, while well-hewn stones were used to build the windows, doorways, arches, and pylons. Around the church, the remains of many demolished structures were discovered.

BAGIRKHAN TEMPLE COMPLEX / BOVURKHANAVANK (12th century), Daghdaghan village

The Bovurkhanavank, or Bagirkhan Temple Complex, is a historical and architectural monument located in the Daghdaghan village of the Khojaly district. Due to a resolution passed by the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated August 2, 2001, the monument from the 12th century was added to the list of historical and cultural monuments of global significance. The Daghdaghan village is currently under the control of Russian peacekeeping forces, according to a tripartite statement dated November 10, 2020.

The monastery, which was named after the Bovurkhan Mountain, is located 1700 metres above sea level in a forested area on the mountain. The monument's name is pronounced 'Bagirkhan,' 'Burukhan,' and 'Bovurkhan.' As the monastery was reconstructed on the site of an ancient, abandoned building in the 17th century by Melik Baghir (Bagr), a member of the Melik Shahnazar dynasty that ruled in Varanda in 1646, the name of the monastery is linked to his name. The temple is referred to as the Bograkhan Monastery by Makar Barkhudaryan, who

also noted that it was constructed to the southeast of the aforementioned mountain (Бархударян, 1895, s.100).



*Bagirkhan Temple Complex.
Daghdaghan village of the Khojaly district*



Fortress walls surrounding the monastery



Remains of fortress walls

The architectural structure of the monument is unique and original. The Bovurkhanavank Monastery complex includes a church and several residential and domestic structures. The fortress walls enclose the temple and encircle an area measuring 40 by 18.5 metres. On the north side, the thick fortress walls are replaced by rocks. Many of the monastery's buildings have survived despite being partially or entirely demolished.

On the east side of the complex, the single-nave basilica has retained some of its original beauty. The ceiling of the church, which measures 9 by 5.6 metres, stands on a single column, and two square-shaped niches were added to the semi-circular altar apse of the long prayer hall. There is a monastic cell on the west side of the complex, near the fortress walls. The building's only door, which is located on the east wall, leads into the monastery's courtyard and connects it to other buildings. The only window in the room is on the east wall, opposite the door.

Unhewn rough stones were used in the construction of the single-nave church with an arched ceiling, as is common in the construction of most Albanian churches. Several niches were added to the interior walls of the room.

At the west end of the complex's fortress walls, a large circular tower is located. The oval-shaped room inside the tower is still in its original state. The room's 2.4-metre-diameter walls are lined with five windows that are spaced equally apart. There is a long corridor leading from this room to a large hall with dimensions of 10.6 by 3.5 metres. There are four monastic cells of the same dimensions and shapes east of the hall, along the wall. There are no windows in two of the four cells with arched ceilings. Despite the fact that Makar Barkhudaryan claimed to have seen two cross-stones with inscriptions in the monastery's area, these stones have not survived (Бархударян, 1895, s.100).

BADARA MONASTERY **(12th century), Badara village**

The village of Badara, which is located at the foot of the Karabakh Range, was listed among properties owned by the Karabakh khan, Ibrahim Khan. According to the tripartite statement signed on November 10, 2020, based on the results of the Second Karabakh War, the Russian peacekeeping forces currently control the village of Badara, which was occupied by the Armenian Armed Forces from 1992 to 2020.

The village of Badara is one of the areas of the Khojaly district that is rich in Albanian monuments. Three Albanian monuments were listed in the village, one of which is the Badara Monastery, located 7-8 km from the village centre in a forested area. The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan listed this monument as a historical and architectural monument of national importance.

Twelve epigraphic texts and inscriptions found in the area of the complex say that the monastery was built between the 12th and 13th centuries. Cross-stones from the years 1156, 1165, 1193, and 1216 were discovered in the Badara monastery's area, all heavily ornamented with cavalry drawings. According to Barkhudaryan, there is an ancient tombstone at the entrance of the church in Badara village (Бархударян, 1895, s. 140).

The monastery complex consists of thirteen religious and domestic structures in total. There are also the ruins of four more buildings in the complex, all of which have been damaged to some extent. All the structures' roofs have collapsed, and cracks have formed on the walls of some of them. All the buildings are single-nave and covered with arched roofs. Rough-hewn stones were used in the construction of the buildings.



Badara Monastery (12th-13th centuries), Khojaly



One of the striking features of the monastery complex is the rectangular altar apses. Such apses, characteristic of the early mediaeval Caucasian Albania, can be found in the monuments of Sheki, Zagatala, Karabakh and Syunik (Мамедова, 2004, s. 68).



The monument was severely destroyed by Armenians when the territory was under occupation between 1992 and 2020, and a large number of fake cross-stones constructed by the Armenians under modern conditions were buried inside and around the monument.

OCHKAVANK MONASTERY (12th century), Badara village



Ochkavank is the second Albanian historical-architectural monument located in the village of Badara. It is located on top of a moss-covered rock in an inaccessible mountainous area, surrounded by a high density of rare tree species. The distance between Badara Monastery and Ochkavank Monastery is 7-8 km through a forested area.

According to the inscription in the Ochkavank Monastery, the monument was built at the latest in the 12th-13th centuries. The inscription mentions Arzu Khatun, the Khachen Prince's wife. The names of the Khachen's princes are mentioned on the cross-stones in the church building of the Ochkavank Monastery. Despite the writings on the inscription found in the church being rendered unreadable, it was possible to determine that they date back to the 12th-13th centuries based on the names of Khachen's princes and Vakhtang's wife, Arzu Khatun.

The monastery complex includes a church, several dilapidated buildings, and an ancient cemetery. The church building, a one-nave basilica with an arched ceiling, has been better preserved. There are two auxiliary rooms on the north side of the prayer hall of the church. The church's entrance door is located on the western wall. There are spaces for two windows on the east wall and one on the north wall. There are four niches in the church walls.

The church building of the Ochkavank Monastery, like other monuments in the village of

Badara, was constructed of unhewn rough stones in line with the construction techniques of most Albanian churches.

The ultimate fate of the monument is unknown, as the village of Badara, which was under the occupation of the Armenian Armed Forces between 1992 and 2020, came under the control of the Russian peacekeeping forces in accordance with the tripartite statement signed on November 10, 2020, following the Second Karabakh War.

MONASTERY OF THE SAVIOUR (13th century), Badara village

The Monastery of the Saviour is another historical and architectural monument located west of Badara. Due to serious damage to its building inscription, the date of its construction could not be determined. Specifically, the first line, which usually indicates the date of construction in an inscription,

was completely removed. However, Albanian Catholicos' names mentioned in the inscription prove that the complex is an ancient religious centre. The monument is believed to have been the centre of the Khachen principality since the second half of the 13th century, having been transferred here from



Badara, Monastery of the Saviour, 13th century



Albanian Church (13th century), Khanabad village

the Khanabert fortress in the second half of the 13th century, following Hasan Jalal's death (Мкртчян, 1989, s.160).

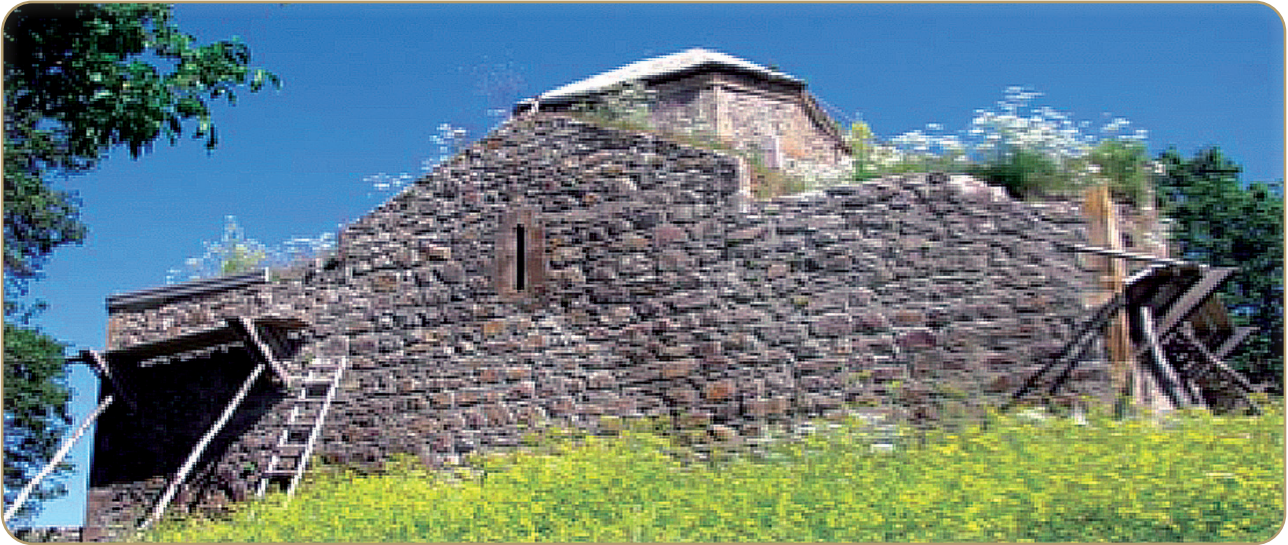
The monastery, which was formerly the primary temple of the ancient settlement, is the only building left among the ruins. There are hundreds of cross-stones in the ancient cemetery around the church. The main church of the monastery is a three-nave basilica measuring 11.3 by 9.7 metres. There is an altar and several auxiliary rooms around it in the prayer hall. There are two triangular niches on the east wall of the church. There are entrance gates on the south and west walls. Unhewn rough stones were used in the masonry of the church in accordance with the construction techniques of most Albanian churches.

The fate of the monument is unknown, as the village of Badara was temporarily taken under the control of Russian peacekeeping forces, according to a tripartite statement signed following the Second Karabagh War on November 10, 2020.

ST. GEORGE'S MONASTERY (13th century), Khanabad village

St. George's Monastery, located in Khanabad village in the Khojaly district, has been registered as a historical and architectural monument of national importance by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Barkhudaryan writes that the territory of Khanabad village belongs to the Ganjasar monastery. According to the author, there are ancient tombs in Khanabad village containing rich ornamentation and crosses (Бархударян, 1895, s. 147-148).



St. George's Monastery (13th century), Khojaly district, Khanabad village

Barkhudaryan also reports that the building inscription of the monastery dates back to 1263. However, the inscriptions on the walls of the church show that it was repeatedly rebuilt and reconstructed over the centuries. More than ten inscriptions were found in the territory of the church, the text of which indicates that reconstruction works were carried out throughout the 16th and 17th centuries.

The main church of the monastery is shaped like a three-nave basilica. There are three-story auxiliary rooms on the east side of the church, and the remains of a dilapidated narthex on the west facade. There was a tombstone in one of the chapels around the building.

The prayer hall of the monastery is 8 by 11.9 metres, and has a simple interior. The horseshoe-

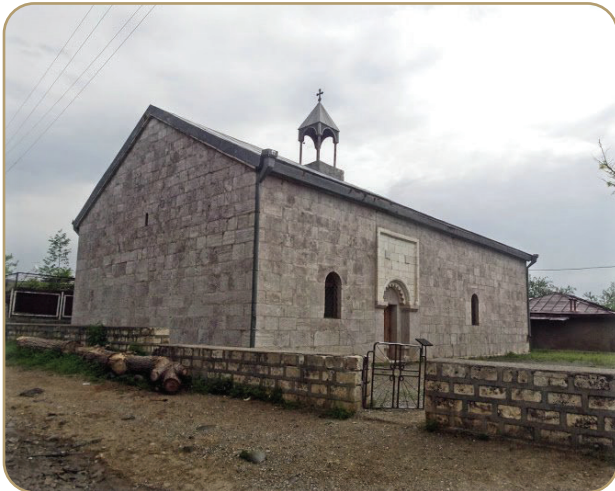
shaped altar cornice is decorated with ornaments. Finely hewn stones were used to construct columns, pylons on the front of the wall, arches, apse frames, niches, and window-door spots. Rough-hewn stones were used in the masonry of the other parts, and the floor of the prayer hall was paved with stones.

There are also monk cells and other domestic buildings in the courtyard of the monastery. The complex is surrounded by strong fortress walls and circular towers at each of the four corners.

However, the fate of this ancient Albanian temple during the period of the 30-year occupation is unknown, as the Khojaly district is temporarily under the control of Russian peacekeeping forces according to the ceasefire signed on November 10, 2020.



Albanian temple (13th century), Khojaly, Daghyurd village. The monument was deprived of its original appearance under the pretext of renovation during the years of occupation.



Khojaly, Ballija village. The architectural structure of the monument belonging to the Albanian period was greatly altered during the years of occupation

ALBANIAN TEMPLE (17th century), Khachmaz village

According to Barkhudaryan, there were two churches surrounded by cross-stones in the village of Khachmaz (Бархударян, 1895, s.93). One of them is Shoshgavang Monastery and the other is St. Stepanos Church. St. Stepanos Church is a small domed building that is 13.9 m long and 9.32 m wide. The engraving on the east wall of the church bore the following words: *I, master Usay (Hussein) and Geykurg built this church in memory of Isman (tsmihan)*. The date of construction is 1651 on the stone facade of the door (Бархударян, 1895, s.93). According to Barkhudaryan's work, the church had two ancient psalmic manuscripts written on parchment. It is known that one of the psalms was compiled by Bishop Atanas, who wrote the foreword to the commentary of the Prophet David. Some pages of another psalm are missing. These memoirs contained valuable information about the Albanian Christian population and the activities of the Albanian Catholicos. Therefore, the Armenian Church ensured the destruction of all the memoirs in the religious books of the Albanian churches in the 19th century.

ALBANIAN TEMPLE (13th century), Daghyurd village

Daghyurd village in the Khojaly district was named Sarushen after the settlement of Armenian families who immigrated from Iran in the 1890s. The village has been called Daghyurd since December 29, 1992, and has remained under the occupation of the Armenian Armed Forces since 1991.

Barkhudaryan provides information about the ancient church in the Sarushen (Daghyurd) village, stating that it was restored several times (Бархударян, 1895, s. 93). The monument dates back to the 12th-13th centuries.

The Armenian terrorists targeted the monument with long-distance heavy artillery in 1991, damaging the walls. In 2014, the Armenians then deprived the monument of its original appearance under the pretext of repairing it in order to cover up their crimes. During the restoration, a two-metre wall was added to the left side of the monument, and the front side of the building was expanded by the same size. The roof of the building was raised by more than 50 cm. Thus, the historical monument lost its original appearance.



Khojaly, Garabulag temple

Remains of the Albanian temple in Pirjamal village.

The name of the village is associated with the name of Pirjamal, a sacred place that once existed here. Barkhudaryan mentions the ruins of an ancient church in the village of Pirjamal in his work on Karabakh monuments. The author mentions a shrine called Koba in the village of Pir Jamal, where

the remains of an ancient church can be found. A saint named Pir Jamal was buried here. The shrine is visited by both Muslims and Christians, and it is said that Saint Pir Jamal's sister was buried in the sacred place between the Asgaran fortress and Nakhichevanik village (Бархударян, 1895, s.117).

ALBANIAN TEMPLE, Ballija village

The Albanian architectural monument in the village of Ballija was also illegally renovated during the occupation by the Armenian Armed Forces

from 1992 to 2020. The architectural structure of the monument of the Albanian period was substantially changed in 2017.



President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva and their daughter Leyla Aliyeva in the Albanian temple in the liberated Hunarli village of the Khojavand district. 15 March 2021

"This is an ancient Albanian temple. This temple will also be returned to our Udi brothers. Armenians wanted to Armenianize it as well, but they did not and will not succeed. From now on, the state of Azerbaijan will protect this Albanian temple..."^[1]

***Ilham Aliyev,
President of the Republic of Azerbaijan.***

^[1] <https://president.az/az/articles/view/50893>

KHOJAVAND DISTRICT

Following a resolution passed by the Republic of Azerbaijan on November 26, 1991, the Khojavand district was created on the basis of the Martuni and Hadrut districts. Khojavand was the ancient name of this region, appearing in the tax records of the Karabakh Province until 1823. Subsequently, these territories were known as Ashaghi Garanlig until 1946, named after the Garanlig Mountain and the Garanlig River.

The Khojavand district was occupied by the Armenian Armed Forces in 1992 and was liberated on November 9, 2020, by the Azerbaijani Army.

One of the cradles of human civilization lies in the Khojavand district, which is rich in monuments that reflect the history and culture of the Azerbaijani people. Every stone, rock, and cave in Khojavand is a real living witness to history. The region is one of the earliest human settlements and is full of ancient, mediaeval, and modern historical architectural, and cultural monuments of international and national significance. The 1.5-million-year-old Azikh Cave, near the village of Salakatin in the Guruchay Valley, and the ancient Taghlar Cave, are located in this region. Khojavand is one of the regions with the richest history, where unique examples of culture such as ancient settlements, early urban developments, magnificent fortresses, tombs from a range of eras, and stone sculptures of rams can be found.

During nearly 30 years of occupation, Armenian aggression led to the destruction of hundreds of cultural and religious monuments in the district. Many of these Azerbaijani historical, architectural, and cultural monuments, both Christian and Islamic, were well-preserved in Khojavand before the occupation, as they were throughout the entire Karabakh region. However, numerous shrines, including the Argunash Fortress, the Rzagulu Bey Tomb (13th century), the Damirov, Daghdaghan, and Jijim sanctuaries, the shrine of Bahramli, the tomb of Seyid Rza, and numerous other priceless cultural and religious monuments, were destroyed as a result of Armenian aggression. The Armenians either deliberately destroyed or severely damaged the historical and cultural monuments of Khojavand, particularly the Islamic historical monuments in the region.

The historical and architectural monuments in the Khojavand district were freed from Armenian captivity as the district was liberated by the Azerbaijani Army in 2020, under the leadership of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan and supreme Commander-in-Chief, Ilham Aliyev. These historical and religious monuments are now being restored, just like other liberated historical, cultural, and religious monuments in Karabakh.

The Albanian monuments of the Khojavand district

During the nearly 30-year occupation, the Armenians committed their heinous acts throughout Karabakh, including in the Albanian temples in Khojavand. Most of the Khojavand district's historical and cultural monuments were vandalised by the Armenians.



“Khojavand is a place with a very rich nature; there are mountains, forests, rivers everywhere, it seems like heaven. Historical monuments, bridges, and the famed Azikh cave and Taghlar cave - these are located here.”

**Ilham Aliyev,
President of the Republic of Azerbaijan**

During his visit to the Fuzuli and Khojavand districts on March 15, 2021, President Aliyev visited the Albanian temple in the Hunarli village of the Khojavand district, one of hundreds of Albanian temples that were damaged during the Armenian occupation and defaced with fake inscriptions on their walls. The President declared to the whole

world the miserable condition of this ancient Albanian temple, and how it had been desecrated by the Armenians. He said, “The fact that this church—the Albanian temple—is in this condition again shows Armenian falsification. If it were an Armenian church, they would have repaired it. Some criticise us for not taking good care of Christian monuments. It was Armenians who brought it to this condition... They destroyed it, ruined it and even burned the door... How are Christian monuments protected in different parts of Azerbaijan!? In a while, they will see how we renovate this ancient Albanian church. Temples belonging to all religions in Azerbaijan are protected by the state, built by the state, and the whole world knows that. The world should know Armenians’ savagery...”^[1]

It should be noted that the majority of the Albanian Christian monuments in Azerbaijan are located in the Khojavand district. In terms of Albanian monuments, the district’s territory is one of the richest in Karabakh. There are five Albanian monuments, including the ruins of the Palace of Dizak Meliks, in the village of Tugh alone. Khojavand is a region containing dozens of Albanian temples, such as Gtichavank, Amaras, and Red Church, as well as fortresses and ancient Albanian cemeteries. After Christianity became the state religion of Caucasian Albania, Albanian churches and monasteries were built there. In Khojavand, there are also defensive fortifications and fortresses from the Albanian period, such as the Amaras Monastery, the Church of St. Stephen (Tugh village), the Gtichavank Monastery, the Church of St. Mary, the Church of St. John (Tugh village), the Seven Doors (Mohranis) Monastery (Susanlig village), the Khutudara Monastery (Bina), Red Church (Tugh

village), the Monastery of St. John (Boyuk Taghlar), and Kavakavank (Zoghalbulag). Among them, the Amaras Monastery from the fourth century is of special importance. This ancient Albanian church was one of the main Christian centres in Albania until the Ganjasar Monastery was built in 1238.

The construction and renovation of Albanian churches and monasteries in Khojavand was fast, particularly between the ninth and thirteenth centuries, following the weakening of the Caliphate. The Principality of Khachen rose in Karabakh during the revival of Albanian churches in Azerbaijan. As Khojavand was included in this principality, the construction of Albanian churches and monasteries was revived in the region. Between the 10th and 13th centuries, Albanian churches and monasteries were restored and built in the region. Tugh village, in the Khojavand district, which was the centre of the Albanian Dizak Melikdom, was particularly rich in Albanian monuments. In this village alone, there are five Albanian monuments and the remnants of the melik’s palace.

Despite the fact that many Albanian temples and fortresses from the Albanian period had been preserved for centuries in the Khojavand district, they were falsified by Armenian vandalism throughout the period of occupation.

The Albanian monuments in the Khojavand district, like all Albanian monuments in Karabakh, were falsified under the guise of “repair,” and the Armenian invaders attempted to adapt them to the Gregorian Church. They severely damaged the Albanian temples in Tugh village, as well as the Palace of Dizak Meliks and many ancient Albanian

^[1] <https://president.az/az/articles/view/50893>

cemeteries. These Armenian vandals attempted to deface and Armenianize architectural monuments from the Albanian period, which were rich in unique ornamentation and plot carvings, by modifying their wall inscriptions and artistic elements. During this period, the Armenians reconstructed, enlarged, and raised altars of all the ancient buildings' walls. Their aim in falsifying Azerbaijani places of worship and historical monuments was to justify their occupation by promoting these monuments as examples of Armenian culture. But despite these attempts to Armenianize Albanian Christian monuments in the region, historical references and the unique architectural characteristics of the Albanian temples support the fact that these monuments are in fact examples of Albanian material culture.

List of Albanian monuments in the district

- Amaras Monastery (4th century), Jutju village
- Khutudara Monastery (5th-6th centuries), Bina village
- Katarovank Temple (4th-6th centuries), Chaylaggala village
- Bri Monastery Complex (5th-7th centuries), Chorakli village
- Seven Doors Monastery (7th century), Susanlig village
- Red Church (10th century), Tugh village
- Monastery of St. John (10th century), Boyuk Taghlar
- Albanian Temple (1170), Hadrut settlement
- Church of the Holy Mother of God (12th century), Hunarli village
- St. Elishe Monastery (12th century), Chartar village
- Church of St. Stephen (12th), Tugh village
- Church of St. John (13th century), Tugh village

- Church of St. Mary, Tugh village
- Church of the Holy Mother of God (12th century), Chorakli village
- Gtichavank Monastery (13th century), Taghlar village
- White Cross Church (13th-14th centuries), Chinarli village
- Mavas Monastery (13th century), Gavahin village
- Temple (14th century), Kharkhar village
- Kavakavank, Zoghalbulag village
- Church of St. Mary (17th century), Taghaser village
- Church of St. Gregory (17th century), Zavadig village
- Albanian temple, Kandkhurd village
- Basilica, Chiraguz village
- Albanian temple, Aghjakand
- Albanian temple, Atagud village
- Albanian temple, Banazir village
- Albanian temple, Khirmanjig village
- Albanian temple, Anaku village
- Albanian temple, Zamzur village
- Albanian temple, Malikjanli village
- Albanian temple, Bulutan village
- Albanian temple, Edilli village
- Albanian temple, Aghbulag village
- Albanian temple, Tak village
- Albanian temple, Azikh village
- Albanian temple, Dolanlar village
- Albanberd Church, Garakand village
- Albanian temple, Sur village
- Albanian temple, Uchoghlan village
- Albanian temple, Gizilgaya village

Fortresses and castles

- Palace of Dizak Meliks (18th century), Tugh village
- Ktish Fortress (10th century), Tugh village
- Kuratagh Fortress, Dudukchu village

AMARAS MONASTERY (4th century), Jutju village

One of the most significant religious and cultural centres of Caucasian Albania in Karabakh was the Amaras Monastery, which was constructed during the Caucasian Albanian period on the right bank of the Amaras River in the Mugan Plain and is one of the most significant examples of Christian architecture in Azerbaijan. The monastery is located in the Jutju village of the Khojavand district.

The village of Jutju, which was formerly known as Machkalashen by December 29, 1992, was included in the Sos village administrative division of the Khojavand district. Jutju has been the official name of the village since 1992, following

the Resolution of the Milli Majlis of the Republic of Azerbaijan which restored some of the historical names of some settlements in the country.

Amaras is one of the first Christian temples in Albania, and the Amaras monument is the most ancient three-nave basilica from the early Christian period in Caucasian Albania. According to archaeological research, the Amaras Monastery was rebuilt in the 10th century on the foundation of an ancient temple that dates back to the 4th century, with modest additions in the same architectural style. It was founded by Gregory the Illuminator IV, one of the preachers of Christianity. Gregory preached



Amaras Monastery (4th-6th centuries), Jutju village

Christianity in Albania from the 4th century, particularly in the Haband province, which included Amaras. When Christianity was first emerging as the state religion of Albania, Amaras was one of the first points of activity there. At the beginning of the 4th century, the Amaras province was owned by the Gregory the Illuminator. Amaras, which eventually became a monastery complex, served as Caucasian Albania's bishopric centre. According to the 7th-century author Movses Kaghankatvatsi, who provided information about the Amaras Monastery, Gregory the Illuminator, who preached Christianity in the province of Haband, founded the monastery constructed near the city of Amaras. The province of Haband, including Amaras, belonged to Gregory, according to ancient authors. He established

the Christian church here (Göyüşov, 1975, s.28). His descendant, St. Gregory, was appointed the first Catholicos of Albania in about 325–330 (Göyüşov, 1975, s.37). Gregory was ordained as an Albanian bishop at the age of fifteen, according to Kaghankatvatsi. The disciples found the body of Gregory, who was martyred in 337 while preaching Christianity in the country of the Maskuts, took him to the city of Amaras in the Haband province, and buried him in a church built by his great-grandfather Gregory. According to the Albanian chronicler, St. Gregory found his eternal peace in a chapel on the north side of the church (Kalankatuklu, I k. f.30).

According to studies, the Amaras Temple was a great religious centre that had been inhabited by priests even before Christianity. It is believed that



Amaras Monastery was one of the most revered temples in Caucasian Albania from the early Christian period



The Amaras monastery complex is surrounded by rectangular fortress walls with round towers at its four corners.



Entrance to the Monastery through the fortress wall



Monastery yard

there was a Moon temple in the city of Amaras, which is known as Amare in ancient records (Страбон, XII, s.522). During the excavations on the site of the Amaras temple, an Azerbaijani archaeologist, Rashid Goyushov, who studied the monuments of Karabakh in 1968, discovered the location of the ancient temple and concluded that it was older than all the nearby monuments. (Göyüşov, 1970, s.62; Göyüşov, 1975, s.27). He discovered the column socles that were typical of Hellenistic culture, along with artefacts, and the remains of the temple dating back to the first century AD (Göyüşov, s.38). This ancient temple had served as a place of religious worship since the second century BC. With a few minor additions, the plan of the temple in the shape of a domed basilica replicates the ancient temple's layout from the fourth century. The remains of the Shendagh temple, discovered on the top of a mountain near the Amaras temple, where only a part of the foundation survived, are also attributed to Antiquity (Göyüşov, 1975, s.50).

According to written sources and ethnographic studies, the Amaras temple was a place of pilgrimage for local people even before Christianity. Kaghankatvatsi, an author of historical works on Albania from the seventh century, wrote that Amaras, located near the ancient Albanian places of worship of Ziyarat Mountain and Holy Mountain, was often visited by the sick and infertile. They would take soil from the ground where the saints were buried, and would find themselves healed (Kalankatuklu, I k, X f.). This monastery was unique in that, even after the spread of Islam in the territories of Caucasian Albania, it was accepted as a holy place - a shrine - by both Christian and Muslim people.

According to the 19th-century author Barkhudaryan, there was an ancient tomb under the temple's pulpit (altar), which was the tombstone of Gregory the Illuminator, the first half-mythical patriarch and Catholicos of Caucasian Albania. The location of the tombstone was regarded as the most important ancient shrine among the local people. Both Christian and Muslim people used to visit the shrine, and even Azerbaijanis from the most remote villages went to see it (Бархударян, 1895, s. 229).

Ethnographic research conducted in the region at the beginning of the 20th century revealed that the location of Gregory the Illuminator's tombstone at the temple of Amaras was considered the church's most significant holy place. (Ямпольский, 1962, s. 35). Regardless of their faiths, local people with fever and infertile women believed that they were healed in the temple of Amaras, where the tombstone of the first half-mythical patriarch of Caucasian Albania was (Catholicos) (see: Ямпольский, 1962, s.35). People believed that those who took the soil from the place where the saints' bodies were buried would be healed. Even among the Karabakh's people, the fertility of the Amaras land was mostly associated with Gregory's burial (Göyüşov, 1975, s.23). The main place of pilgrimage was a large stone slab placed vertically under the pulpit of the temple. Pilgrims would sacrifice a cock at the entrance and inside the temple. Indeed, there were the remains of many candles and the feathers of sacrificed cocks on the tombstone inside the temple (Ямпольский, 1962, s.228). On Sundays, people from the surrounding areas used to travel to the valley to offer sacrifices and worship. People who visited sacrificed cocks, and they would then lay their heads on the stone



Entrance to the Monastery through the fortress wall



Interior of the Amaras Monastery



Interior of the Amaras Monastery



A reworked gravestone of St. Grigoris

pillars and sleep. Mostly, those who wanted to know about the future would visit the shrine. (Ямпольский, 1962, s. 35).

According to Barkhudaryan, people also visited an ancient tomb near the Amaras temple (8-9 m away). It was covered in cross drawings and regarded as the Prophet's tomb. The nineteenth-century author mentioned that the Utis had lived in this region once and that the temple was their ancient church (Бархударян, 1895, s. 33).

Before the occupation of Karabakh in 1992-1993, the Amaras temple was a place of pilgrimage for the local people. The monastery was one of the holiest temples in Caucasian Albania since the early days of Christianity.

Due to its architectural structure, the Amaras Monastery is the most ancient three-nave basilica of early Christianity in the territory of Caucasian Albania. Three main eras of construction were identified on the basis of archaeological research: 4th century, 10th century, and 19th century. Despite multiple construction, demolition, and reconstruction works, the modern temple retained some of its original appearance. It should be mentioned that Vachagan III the Pious (487-510), the king of Albania who built several temples in the 5th century, renovated the old temples alongside the new churches. The Amaras temple was among them.

Christianity was persecuted and Albanian temples were destroyed during the Sassanid conquest of Caucasian Albania in the 4th–5th centuries, resulting in the death of St. Gregory at the end of his missionary activity in Caucasian

Albania. The cleric's disciples buried him in a secret location inside the Amaras temple, which had been established by his grandfather. According to Kaghankatvatsi, the place where Gregory was buried was not marked, because the disciples were afraid that his body would either be destroyed by robbers, or removed and buried elsewhere.

During the reign of Vachagan III, when the Albanian Church prospered at the end of the 5th century, the Amaras Church was restored like other Albanian churches. While conducting the restoration, the body that was hidden in the church site and forgotten was discovered during the Sassanid rule of St. Gregory, who founded the church by the order of Vachagan III. According to sources, the Albanian king Vachagan III constructed a chapel on St. Gregory's tomb and named it the "Chapel of St. Gregory." According to the Albanian author Kaghankatvatsi, following this, Gregory found his eternal peace in the chapel on the north side of the church in Amaras (Kalankatuklu, 1,10).

Sources say that when the Albanian king Vachagan III visited the Amaras Monastery after the restoration of the temple, he crossed the river on foot, not by the bridge over the Amaras River, as a sign of respect to Gregory. According to the Albanian chronicler, while going to and coming from Amaras, Vachagan III accompanied the palankeen on foot (Kalankatuklu, I k. f.30).

The Amaras Monastery became the main shrine of the country from the 5th century on, during the reign of Vachagan III, the king of Caucasian Albania. According to Kaghankatvatsi, every year, people from surrounding provinces gathered there and celebrated the day in a solemn way. The majority of the remains of Gregory's body, which were claimed



The destroyed gravestone of St. Grigoris, who was the Catholicos of Albania in the 4th century



One of the round towers of the fortress walls surrounding the Amaras monastery

to have been discovered in Amaras, were kept there, while some were distributed in pieces to all Albanian bishops and shared by the churches. Some of St. Gregory's remains were also given to the Aghoghlan temple in the Lachin district.

Between the 5th and 7th centuries, Amaras became one of the most important religious centres in Caucasian Albania. The temple holds a significant position in the history of Christianity in the Ancient East, and the monastery served as the eparchy's centre from the 430s, fulfilling this function until the 19th century.

Amaras became the centre of the local people's national independence struggle during the Arab conquests of Caucasian Albania in the 7th century. The territory of Amaras was chosen as the fortress of the Albanian king Esayi Abu-Muse against Arab troops during the 7th century. The Amaras valley

was also a shelter for the Albanian king Javanshir and separate Beylagan rulers between the 7th and 8th centuries.

In the history of Amaras, the 8th and 9th centuries were periods when many political events occurred. At this time, the Amaras temple played a significant role in both the country's religious and secular affairs, and the high priest of the Amaras temple attended all church gatherings.

In 836, Amaras was the shelter for Babak, the leader of the well-known national movement. Even though the fight against Arab conquests during the 7th and 9th centuries resulted in the destruction of some parts of the temple, it was later restored in the 9th century with the support of Esayi Abu-Muse, the ruler of Beylagan, when the Caliphate began to fall.

Throughout the centuries following the 9th century, the Amaras Monastery Complex was renovated several times. After the decline of the Caliphate in the 10th century, the Amaras Monastery, like other Albanian temples, was restored and expanded in accordance with Albanian architectural traditions. The results of archaeological excavations also show that the temple was rebuilt in the 10th century (Göyüşov, 1975, s.45)

There was no significant change in the history of Amaras between the 10th and 13th centuries. However, in the 13th century, during the invasions of Azerbaijani territories by the Mongols, the city of Amaras was also destroyed. In 1223, the Mongols looted the Amaras Monastery and seized its treasure. St. Gregory's walking stick, which dated back to the 4th century and was preserved in the monastery, and a large golden cross decorated with precious stones, were among the valuable assets taken.

The monastery continued to function as a place of worship despite losing its administrative and political significance after that.

A garden was created in honour of St. Gregory in Amaras in the 13th century at Jalal Dola's request, according to an inscription that was once in the Amaras Monastery (Göyüşov, 1975, s.24). Timur's conquests hit Amaras again 50 years later, in 1387, and the temple fell into disrepair and lost its beauty in the 14th century.

The rise of the Albanian melikdom of Varanda in the second half of the 16th century marked the beginning of the monastery's second prosperous period, and the monastery, which was expanded during the establishment of the Albanian melikdoms, was reconstructed, becoming the holiest shrine of the Varanda melikdom. The bishop's residence was constructed on the territory of Kharkhar village. According to Barkhudaryan, the bishopric of the Varanda melikdom was Amaras, and sometimes the Kochiz temple (Бархударян, 1895, s.4).

Shahnazar II, the melik of Varanda, completed the construction of the monastery and constructed fortification walls around the complex in the 18th century. The complex was expanded with a significant number of new rooms, chambers, and other household buildings during this period, under the supervision of Shahnazar II.

The Amaras Monastery has a rectangular layout, and the corners are fortified by circular towers. Chambers and rooms for living quarters and household facilities were constructed along the fortification walls surrounding the yard of the monastery. An additional room line separated the church yard from the monastery's domestic area. The fact that this room was constructed with unhewn



During the occupation, illegal repairs were carried out on the Amaras monastery, and significant alterations were made to the architectural structure of the monument.

stones added solidity to the monastery's fortification walls. The western end of the south wall is where the entrance door to the monastery's yard is located. The complex's main building, the church, is positioned in the middle of the yard, with its entrance door on the west side. There is a six-column bell rotunda at the western end of the double-pitched roof of the Amaras Church. The church's entire facade is covered with stone slabs.

The main temple building, a long basilica with dimensions of 15.9 by 11 m, is located in the centre of the monastery complex. The four square-shaped columns support the arched ceiling of the naves through the construction of arches between them. The altar includes a long horseshoe-shaped apse and similar-shaped rooms on both sides. The church has

the shape of a three-nave basilica (23.9 by 13.5 m). The prayer hall has an arched ceiling and is split into three sections by two pairs of columns. There are small rooms with a rectangular layout on both sides of the apse, both of which are covered by arched ceilings. As St. Gregory's tomb is located under the pulpit, the rooms' depth reaches 5 metres. The only entrance to the church is to the west, and three large, wide windows (outside width 1.4 m, inside width 2m) mounted on the walls provide good lighting for the prayer hall.

The complex is encircled by rectangular fortification walls with a length of 85 m, a width of 5.9 m, and a height of 5 m, with circular towers placed at each of the four corners. Living rooms, chambers and other domestic buildings were constructed along the entire perimeter of the castle walls from the inside. The yard is divided into two parts by a long line of rooms to the east of the church. The Church of St. Gregory, the main building of the complex, is located in the centre of the great western part, with the doors of all the living quarters in this section leading to the church. The high priest's two-story residence is located in the south part of the church. There are work rooms, kitchens, and warehouses in the small civil-type eastern yard. The only way to access the area of the monastery complex is from the southeast.

The tomb of St. Gregory, who was the Catholicos of Albania in the 4th century during the adoption of Christianity in Albania and is therefore recognized as the first Catholicos, is located in the chapel under the Amaras Church. The tomb is rectangular (3.7 by 1.9 m) and has two doors with a height of 3.5 m on the south and west sides (the west door is now sealed). The wall across from the stairway heading down from the southern entrance, and Gregory's headstone are both decorated with a bishop's crown, walking stick, and cross-shaped geometric and floral

patterns. The principal shrine of the monastery is thought to be the grave of St. Gregory, which is placed in the crypt.

The rotunda has six columns rising above the double roof, and is the bell tower for the church. There were three such domed rotundas on the roof of the monument prior to the last rebuilding of the church. The two smaller ones were in the east and west corners, while the largest one was in the centre.

The Amaras Monastery, like all Albanian churches, started to fall apart after the Catholicosate of Albania was abolished in 1836. "It was heart-breaking to see this church, which served as the Albanian Catholicos' residence, turn into a ruin," said Barkhudaryan (Бархударян, 1895, s. 104). After 1836, the building was severely damaged, and rebuilt on the same foundations in 1858. In the 19th century, the complex acquired its current look. With the exception of stones with reliefs and epitaphs from the previous temple that were used in the masonry, the builders completely changed the architectural composition of the previous temple as well as its interior and external decoration during the reconstruction of the Amaras Monastery. Gregory's tombstone was destroyed, and a new tombstone was placed in the church's northern nave in 1898.

This ancient Albanian monument was entirely falsified as a result of the monastery's reconstruction by the Armenian Gregorian Church in 1858, and the monument's ancient inscriptions, including a stele from 925 in the monastery's area, were destroyed. The tympanum of the portal on the church's west facade and the small window above it are surrounded by stones with reliefs, and a cross is placed under the fronton. Almost no decorations remained on the other walls of the church (Мамедова, 2004). All of this followed the abolition of the Albanian

Apostolic Church by the Russian Synod in 1836, and the subordination of the Amaras Monastery and other Albanian monasteries and churches to the Armenian Gregorian Church. After the abolition of the Amaras Monastery in 1836, Etchmiadzin intended to Armenianize the Amaras Monastery, like all Albanian churches, by falsifying it.

During the Soviet era, some components both inside and outside the monument continued to be removed or replaced. Even though the Soviet government allowed Armenians to operate in some churches and monasteries in Nagorno Karabakh following the 1988 resolution, this was stopped by the Azerbaijani government's protests. Two days after the illegal opening of the Amaras Monastery's doors to visitors, the Azerbaijani military intervened (David B. Barrett, ... 200, p.92 (876)).

However, the Armenians then had the opportunity to falsify the monastery during the period of 1992 to 2020, when Karabakh was under the occupation of the Armenian Armed Forces. In 2000, Armenian vandals started making significant changes to the Amaras Monastery's architectural structure because they believed they could declare ownership of the monument by removing or altering its components. The inscriptions on the Amaras Monastery's walls were completely altered, the arch of the monastery's entrance door was destroyed and reshaped, and even the tombstones inside the monastery were replaced. On the monument's walls, there were several fake stones and crosses that claimed Armenian ownership of the monument. Gross alterations were also made to the building's interior.

The illegal repairs in the Amaras Monastery Complex were suspended for a short time after the agreement between Azerbaijan, Russia, and Armenia was signed on November 10, 2020, but they resumed as a result of the Russian Peacekeeping Forces taking control of the territory in which the monument is located. A report dated July 31, 2021, from the Armenian press makes it clear that Sherly Avedian, the head of the Centre for Historical Churches of Iran, was funding this act of vandalism in the Russian peacekeeper-controlled Amaras Monastery in Karabakh. The report also includes an agreement between L. Karakhanyan, the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Armenia, and Iran about Iran's payment of the funds required for repairs to the Amaras Monastery. This action should be considered Armenian aggression against the cultural heritage of Azerbaijan.

The Armenian government's actions are in violation of international law and relevant provisions of the Geneva Convention, as well as the agreement dated November 10, 2020, made between Azerbaijan, Russia, and Armenia. It is regrettable that the Russian peacekeepers allowed such falsifications to occur. It is necessary to draw their attention to the provisions of the UNESCO Declaration of 17 October 2003 adopted in Paris, stating that a state that intentionally destroys or fails to take appropriate measures to prohibit, prevent, stop, and punish any intentional destruction of cultural heritage of great importance for humanity, bears the responsibility for such destruction, to the extent provided for by international law (39, VI).

KHUTUDARA MONASTERY (5th-6th centuries), Bina village

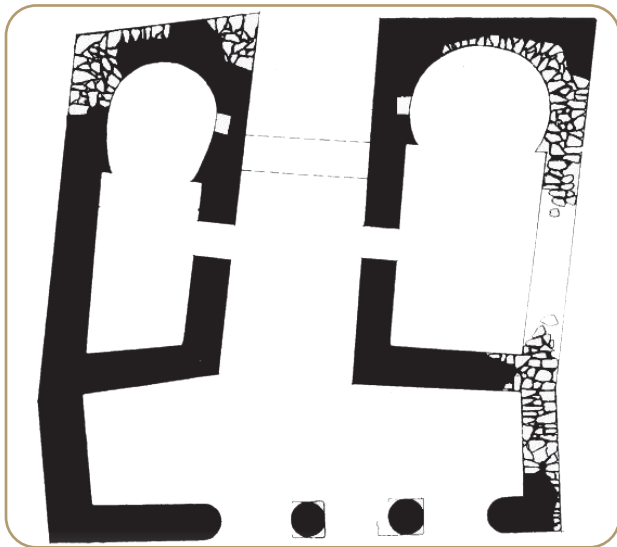
The Khutudara Monastery Complex is located in the Khojavand district's village of Bina, which was known as Domi until 1992. According to its structural characteristics, it is believed that the Khutudara Monastery Complex was established between the 5th and 6th centuries. The two churches of the complex are in better condition, and both are in the shape of a single-nave basilica, which was the traditional architectural style for Albanian temples in the early Middle Ages. Both churches are rhombic-shaped with unequal sides and a horseshoe-shaped apse. The churches are connected by a rectangular corridor, which is a rectangular-shaped 6 by 3.7-metre hall that runs from east to west. The corridor once had a roof, and was designed as a continuation of the three-arched hall, whose remains have survived to the present day. This important

architectural component, which functioned as a link between the entire complex, was also used in the Palace of Khachen, and later in melikdom palaces.

The church on the south side of the corridor is a single-nave basilica measuring 8.5 by 4 metres. The hall with its rectangular layout is finished with a horseshoe-shaped apse on the east side. The hall of worship has a deep niche, and the church's only door opens from the north. The church has no windows, and the only source of light is the door to the corridor. However, it is thought that the church is now illuminated via a hole in the partially ruined arched ceiling.

The second church is a smaller, rhombus-shaped single-nave basilica positioned to the north of the corridor. There is a horseshoe-shaped apse and a square-shaped niche in the south wall of the church. As with the first church, there are no windows in the second church. The church's door is on the south wall.

In general, the architecture of the churches is similar to that of the Mingachevir Church Complex, the Pipan basilica, the Seven Doors Monastery, and the Vaghuas and Hayravank churches. All of the buildings in the complex are made of coarsely hewn stone, with the exception of capitals, tympanums, columns, and arches, in keeping with the style of most Albanian churches. The masonry technique used in the walls of the Seven Doors Monastery in the neighbouring village of Susanlig was applied in the construction of the 140–200 cm-thick walls. Around the monastery are remnants of fortification walls, as well as chapels and domestic structures.



Plan of the Khutudara Monastery

KATAROVANK TEMPLE (4th-6th centuries), Chaylaggala village

The Katarovank temple is located in the Khojavand district, between Chaylaggala and Kohna Taghlar villages. The territory where the Katarovank Monastery is located was occupied by Armenian Armed Forces on October 2, 1992, and liberated in 2020.

This historical and architectural monument is located on the top of the Ziyarat Mountain, 2150 metres above sea level, in the south-east of the Karabakh Range. In his book "The History of the Aghuans," Albanian historian Kaghankatvatsi refers to the Ziyarat Mountain as 'Dizapayt.' The Albanian chronicle referred to the Dizapayt Mountain and the monastery of Kataro in relation to events that occurred no later than the fifth century. According to the author, before Abas was elected spiritual overseer

of the land of Albania (596 - M.P.), the chapels on Dizapayt Hill in Kataroy Vank were burned down (Kalankatuklu k.II, f.34).

Commenting on the activities of St. Gregory, Kaghankatvatsi noted that Sanesan (Sanatruk), the king of Maskut, did not appreciate his preaching of Christianity. Under the order of the king, St. Gregory was martyred on the plain of Vatnean on the Caspian coast by being tied to a wild horse (Kalankatuklu, Ik.X f). Sanesan's sons, who adopted Christianity, took the saint's body and fled to Chola, the centre of the Albanian Catholicosate, together with other Christians from the country of Maskuts. Sanesan, in pursuit of his sons, reached Chola, destroyed the city and churches, and burned the holy books there (Kalankatuklu, Ilk. f. XIV). The persecuted Christians



The Katarovank temple is located on top of the Ziyarat Mountain, 2150 metres above sea level



*Katarovank temple
(4th-6th centuries), Chaylaggala village*



During the occupation, illegal repairs were conducted to the temple, and the roof was built with completely modern materials



After the illegal reconstruction, the Armenians presented this monument as an Armenian church.

fled into the centre of Caucasian Albania and hid in the province of Haband, while King Sanesan's sons hid on the Dizapayt Mountain and settled there. There were 3,870 men there, including the brothers, all living on Dizapayt. However, Maskut soldiers, led by Sanesan, reached the province of Haband in pursuit of those who had escaped, and burned down the Katarovank Monastery, where they were hiding. (Kalankatuklu, II. V f).

Even though the monastery's name is referenced in sources in relation to events that took place in Caucasian Albania between the 4th and 6th centuries, the present-day building was constructed in the 17th century. None of the monastery's ancient buildings survived. Researchers believe that the 17th century church was not even built on the foundation of the ancient buildings.

The Ziyarat Mountain has always been a place of worship for the local people, and until the 20th century, it remained an ancient place of worship for both Christians and Muslims, regardless of their religious affiliation (Ямпольский, 1962, s. 92). The Ziyarat Mountain was a sanctuary where mostly infertile women visited, like all the mountains sanctified in the territory of Azerbaijan. Visitors to the Ziyarat Mountain either ate the soil or mixed it with grains of wheat and barley, and burned it at home. They believed that if there was a grain of wheat among the burnt ashes, a boy would be born, and if there was a grain of barley, a girl would be born (Ямпольский, 1962, s. 92). As in all shrines in Azerbaijan, there were sacrificial stones on the Ziyarat Mountain. Visitors lit candles on them, recited vows, and made food offerings. By 1992, a stone statue with a human figure, located near the Soltan Spring near the Ziyarat Mountain, had also become a place of pilgrimage for the local people.

According to Barkhudaryan, there are remnants of pre-Christian temples located on top of Ziyarat Mountain. According to a popular legend, Gregory ascended the mountain and spent the whole night praying in the temple on its peak when he first spread Christianity to the area (Бархударян, 1890, s.32-33). There was a monastery and a castle on the mountain in the 19th century, and Barkhudaryan wrote that the monastery was called Kataro. Sanesan's three sons found refuge in this monastery (Бархударян, II), which is located near the Seven Doors Monastery. However, we do not have information about the history of the church on the mountain.

The Katarovank temple is in the form of the chapel, which is one of the most popular forms of Albanian architecture. The construction style of the chapels has its own features. Although the chapels served as small temples on the side of the caravan routes, they are in fact memorial structures. There are chapels with and without altars. The walls of these chapels are usually decorated with symbolic stones displaying elegant patterns.

These kinds of buildings were not just for worship. The chapels were built on caravan routes

so that people could rest and relax after a hard day's travel, take shelter from the cold and rain, and spend the night if it got dark while traveling.

The building of the Katarovank church, whose final restoration period dates back to the 17th century, was a single-nave basilica with a rectangular shape, covered by a double-sided roof. Local, coarsely carved stones were used in the construction of the building in line with the construction techniques of most Albanian churches. Half of the northern wall was under ground, and the southern wall was built on bare rock.

Like all Albanian monuments in the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan, the original look of the Katarovank temple, which was erected on the Ziyarat Mountain, was destroyed when the Chaylaggala and Taghlar villages were under occupation from 1992 to 2020. The church was deprived of all its decorative elements and in 2015-2016, illegal repairs were carried out by the Armenians, and the roof was built with completely modern materials. The monument was then presented by Armenians as an Armenian church.

BRI MONASTERY COMPLEX (5th-7th centuries). Chorakli village

The Bri monastery complex is located in the Chorakli village of the Khojavand district, and was built on a greyish hill. This historical-architectural complex was registered by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan as a monument of national importance.

Although the inscriptions regarding the

construction history of the complex date back to the 12th-13th centuries, the remains of more ancient buildings found in the area show that the monument is actually older. Nowadays, it is a ruin, but the architectural elements of the complex show that the church is one of those that was named after the Albanian king Vachagan III. Remains of ancient buildings - rectangular stelae, ornamented tiles,

cornices, capitals from the 5th-7th centuries, and column bases with the forms and features of early mediaeval architecture are scattered throughout the area where the Bri Monastery complex is located, all pointing to the ancient history of the building.

Kaghankatvatsi writes that Vachagan III built as many churches as there are days in a year. It seems that the Bri Church was one of them, an ancient temple built on the site of an early mediaeval Christian, or perhaps pagan religious complex.

Four churches, a narthex, three niches decorated with cross-stones, the ruin of a chapel, the remains of a domestic structure and a mediaeval necropolis have survived from the monastery complex.

The first church in the complex, built in the

early Middle Ages, is located on a hill, in a north-easterly direction, near the narthex. The church is a small, single-nave hall, which was built on the site of an older pagan sanctuary. The pedestal of the stele, which has not survived, two column caps, three column bases decorated with geometric and floral patterns typical of Caucasian Albanian architecture, and several equilateral crosses were found among the ancient architectural ruins in the area of the church. The frame of the door located on the west facade of the church was decorated with interlocking squares and crosses.

The second church belonging to the complex adjoins the first church on the east side. Like the first church, which is small in size, the second church is also a single-nave basilica with a rectangular shape.



*Bri Church (12th-13th centuries), Chorakli village.
Ruins of the complex that have survived to the present day*

The third church is located at the top of the hill, 4 metres west of the narthex. The floor of the hall was completely covered with tombstones in this single-nave basilica. The semi-circular tympanum was decorated with a composition of crosses and rhombuses. There are images of two birds in the upper corners of the portal, and the composition is reminiscent of St. John's Church in Ganjasar Monastery, as well as the ornamental composition on the altar stone found in Mingachevir. The surface of the wall is decorated with carved cross images. There are two inscriptions next to the bird images, dating back to the 13th century and providing information about the architect and the construction of the church. The text of the inscription from 1270 indicates that the cross-stones were erected during the reign of Bishop Nerses. The architect mentioned in the first inscription is also the architect of a large niche at the southern foot of the hill that holds the cross-stones. The pediment part of the stele was destroyed. According to Barkhudaryan, who studied this complex in the 19th century, there was an inscription in the lower part consisting of six long lines on eight stones arranged in a row. Four cross-stones were placed inside the niche.

The fourth church in the complex is located on the southernmost side, near the village, at the foot of the hill. The roof of the church, which is smaller than the other three churches, has collapsed. Dozens of cross-stones of different sizes and shapes were used in the construction of the western facade. The only doorway on the wall has a patterned frame. The semi-circular tympanum is decorated with a cross pattern on a chess image, and a figure of a peacock is placed on each side of the tympanum. This composition bears the characteristics of the

architecture of Albanian religious buildings.

There was a five-line building inscription in the upper western corner of the wall. A stone slab bearing the initials of the first words of the sentences was destroyed. It is known that all Albanian inscriptions begin with the words, "I, Albanian," but as with all inscriptions on the Albanian churches, the first words on the Bri Church were falsified and removed. The inscription indicates that the church was erected before 1235, during the reign of Albanian Catholicos Hovhannes and his younger brother Nerses. There is a memorial inscription from the architect next to this inscription.

The complex's narthex is connected to the western facades of the first and second churches and serves as an entrance to both. The narthex consists of four intersecting arches, which is typical



Peacock composition

of early Christian churches and Byzantine basilicas. This narthex also shows that church portals have a parade feature. Like most monastery narthexes, it was used both as a crypt and as a place for religious and political meetings. In the eastern part of the narthex, in large niches surrounded by arches, there

were cross-stones, tombstones, and a patterned stele.

There were six cross-stones in the niches on the east wall of the narthex's interior, and around the cross-stones were several plates bearing images of people in their national costumes, amid scenes of life.

CHURCH OF THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD (12th century), Chorakli village

Another Albanian temple is located in the village of Chorakli, Khojavand district - the Church of the Holy Mother of God. The church is located right in the centre of Chorakli village, near the school building. This historical and architectural monument has been registered by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan as a monument of national importance.



*Church of the Holy Mother of God (12th century),
Chorakli village*

Although no construction inscriptions have been found in the church, the date on the four richly decorated cross-stones on its territory allows us to determine that the church was already functioning in the 12th century. The church was built in the 16th-17th centuries on the site of an older religious complex.

The building is in the shape of a single-nave basilica, and has an arched roof. The dimensions of the church, which has a rectangular structure, are 12.6 by 6 metres, and well-carved local stones were used in its construction. There are auxiliary rooms on both sides of the apse, and the main entrance to the church is on the south side. However, there was an entrance door on the north wall that was eventually filled with masonry. It is possible that the church was connected to the mausoleum-chapel or another building on the north side, through the north gate. The two-sided roof of the church is supported by arches on pylons facing the walls.

THE SEVEN DOORS MONASTERY (7th century), Mohranis/ Susanlig village

The Seven Doors Monastery is located near the village of Susanlig in Khojavand (3.5 km), at the foot of Yukhusan Mountain, in the middle of

a forested area. According to research, the main church of the monastery was built in about the sixth century. The fact that the church belongs to this period is also confirmed by its architectural style (see: Мамедова, 2004, s. 76). The Seven Doors Monastery is also known in scientific literature as the Mohranis Church, after the former name of the village of Susanlig. Barkhudaryan calls the church 'Mohranis' or 'Seven Doors Church' and writes that it is located at the top of a mountain, above the village (Бархударян, 1895, р.75). The monument is near Gtichavank Monastery.

The monastery belongs to the early Middle Ages when, according to legend, it was built in memory of seven brothers who died fighting for the freedom of their country, by their only sister. Known as a memorial to the seven, this Albanian temple was one of the region's largest shrines. Visitors to the shrine used to light seven candles in honour of the brothers, and the grave of the sister is also in the courtyard of the temple, near the spring. It is known as the "Sister's Tomb" shrine. There, as with all Azerbaijani shrines, sacrificial lambs, pledged as a vow, would first be walked three times around the monastery before being slaughtered. Today, this ancient ritual is performed in all the shrines of Azerbaijan, as well as in Albanian Christian temples. Even the ancient Albanian temple in the village of Nij in Gabala has a special altar stone for performing such a sacrificial ceremony. Christian Udis would also sacrifice a sheep at religious ceremonies at the Komrad shrine in Gabala.

Due to the structure of the main church building, the complex has no comparative in the architecture



*Seven Doors Monastery
(7th century), Mohranis village*

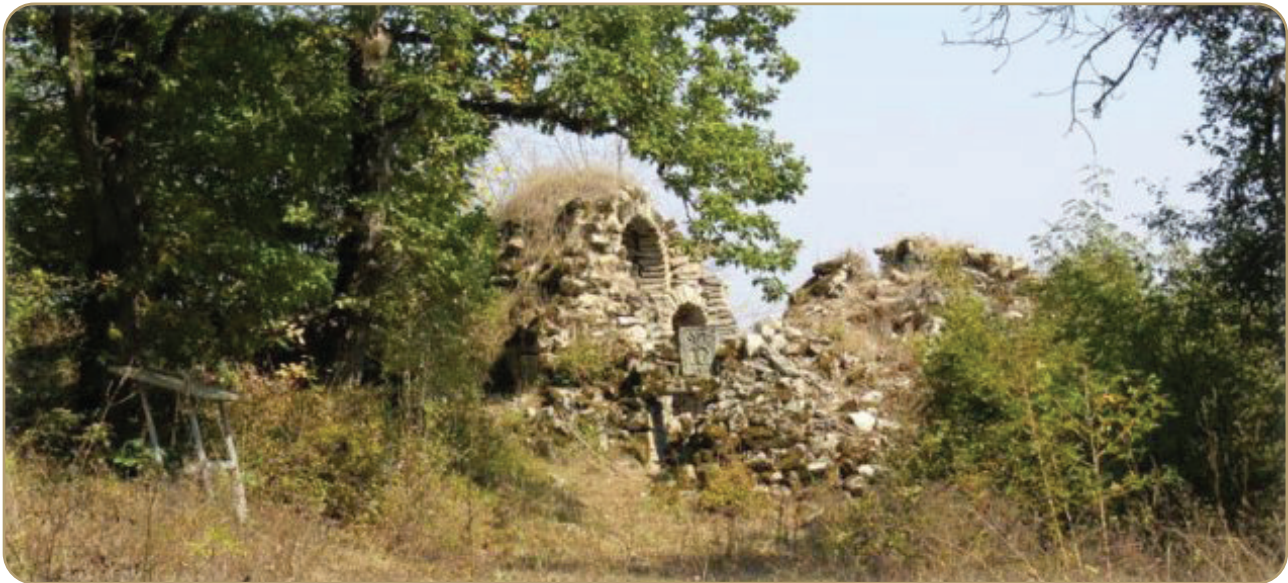
of the South Caucasus (Мамедова, 2004, s.75). The monument has an unusual architectural style and differs from other Albanian temples with a central dome.

The architectural structure and construction style of the monument sharply distinguishes it from the monuments of the 5th-6th centuries. This shows that the date of the construction of the temple is much older. The Seven Doors Temple is a monument with a special architectural structure, and its equivalent is not found in other parts of Azerbaijan. Due to the structure of the Mohranis Church, built in a circular shape, it is shown as a monument closer to the Lekit Church in the Gakh region, where the circular winding part is connected with the tetraconch (Мамедова, 2004, s.75).

The monastery complex consisted of three large and several small buildings. In comparison with the other two structures, the church building has survived in relatively good condition to this day. The narthex building, believed to have been built during the Middle Ages, has completely collapsed. Only the lower masonry layer of the walls of the second building, which was used as a service building, has survived. The third building is the main church building of the monastery, and the remains of the narthex and other buildings join it from the northwest. There are the remains of several residential sites scattered near the site of the temple.

The part of the church under the dome is surrounded by four horseshoe-shaped apses and four niches. The apses are 2 metres wide and about

the same depth. The diagonal niches are 3 m by 1 m in size, each facing the centre of the hall. Apses and niches are connected with circular pilasters, which are not found in other monuments of this type. The pilasters on the outer arches of the niches are decorated with a unique ornamental belt. The main church of the monastery is a tetraconch with four corner niches (Мамедова, 2004, s.75). The shapes of the arches and conches, the absence of beams in the conches, the external semi-circular (non-multilateral) shape of the apses and the decorative character confirm that construction of the main church of the monastery dates back to the sixth century (Мамедова, 2004, s. 76). Although niches are purely decorative and do not serve as passages to small rooms or corridors, they significantly expanded



The Seven Doors Monastery Complex consisted of three large and several small structures.

the internal volume of the church visually, which was subject to the idea of centralism. There is also a smooth transition from the conches to the niches. Those who enter the church can observe the whole interior space and the circular spaces that smoothly intersect with each other (Мамедова, 2004, s.76).

The etymology of the name of the monastery is associated with the names of the seven brothers and the seven apses of the church (excluding the apse at the door). Thus, seven apses of different sizes were built in the temple, reminiscent of seven doors. The apses of the church are horseshoe-shaped, which is typical of Albanian architectural traditions. The dome of the church is surrounded by four horseshoe-shaped apses and four niches. Each of the four main apses is folded in the form of a horseshoe and protrudes slightly into the building. The conch arches, which are placed on the dome ribs of fine and coarsely carved stones, bear the same shape. The five arches stand on a simple impost in the form of a folded rod above the five arches. The impost of the altar arch is a bit more divided. Such decoration is characteristic of many temples of the Caucasian Albanian architecture of the early Middle Ages. The construction of the church is based on rough stone and lime mortar, in accordance with the construction techniques of most Albanian churches.

The only entrance to the church is 1.06 m wide and is located on the west side of the church. The entrance tympanum is also preserved. Since the church was severely damaged, nothing was left of the upper part of the entrance. The southern and northern walls are better preserved, and the masonry of the northern apse up to the tympanum has survived. Lighting was ensured by means of apses



Entrance to the Seven Doors Monastery



The altar in the yard of the Seven Doors



Remains of the Monastery



*St. John's Monastery
(10th century), Boyuk Taghlar*

and windows placed on a tympanum (Мамедова, 2004, s.75). The only preserved window and door frames in the northern apse are made of carved stone without patterns.

The external layout of the church is composed of four large and four small arches, completely in line with the internal division. The temple is small, slightly curved and almost cylindrical in shape, with a tympanum and a dome, giving it a majestic but secular appearance (Мамедова, 2004, s.76).

During the occupation, Armenians severely damaged and falsified the Seven Doors Temple, as they did to the other Albanian churches and monasteries in the region. On the monument's entrance door, new cross-stones were erected, and inscriptions in the modern Armenian language were inscribed on them with an iron tool. The cross-stone was obviously transported there from somewhere else. This is another falsification committed by Armenia against our cultural values in the territories that remained under their occupation for 30 years. The fake cross-stones in the temple area and their inscriptions bear no association with the period when the Seven Doors Temple was built, or with the temple itself.

Unfortunately, these falsifications were made in all of the Albanian temples, including Amaras, Khudavang, and Ganjasar. Albanian temples are the cultural heritage of Azerbaijan, and national and historical wealth of the people. International laws and conventions prohibit any people, nation, or peoples or nations from destroying, demolishing, or vandalising the cultural heritage of another nation.

ST. JOHN'S MONASTERY (10th century), Boyuk Taghlar village

St. John's Monastery is located in the village of Boyuk Taghlar in Khojavand district. This historical and architectural monument was constructed in a mountainous, forested area ten kilometres north of the village of Boyuk Taghlar. From the south, steep rocks surround the complex. Hard rocks surround the monument area on the eastern side, while to the north, the rocky area is replaced by a plain. Fortress walls were constructed to protect the monastery from attacks coming from the north and west, which were the monastery's undefended sides.

The inscriptions on the cross-stones discovered from the old remains indicate that the monastery was operating at the latest from the 10th century on, and according to one of the inscriptions, the monument was built by the Bishop of Amaras in 997, when a monk by the name of Kirakos was its head. Another inscription dates from the year 1228.

There are two parts to the complex. One group of buildings is located at the corner of the steep rock, while another group is located to the north of the yard. The first group consists of three religious buildings, and the second includes a church surrounded by double-layered walls. The church building, which has a long layout and a narthex, is particularly separate from the other buildings.

It is impossible to determine the church's exact area because it was completely demolished. However, the cross-stones with artistic ornamentation that came down from the church walls,



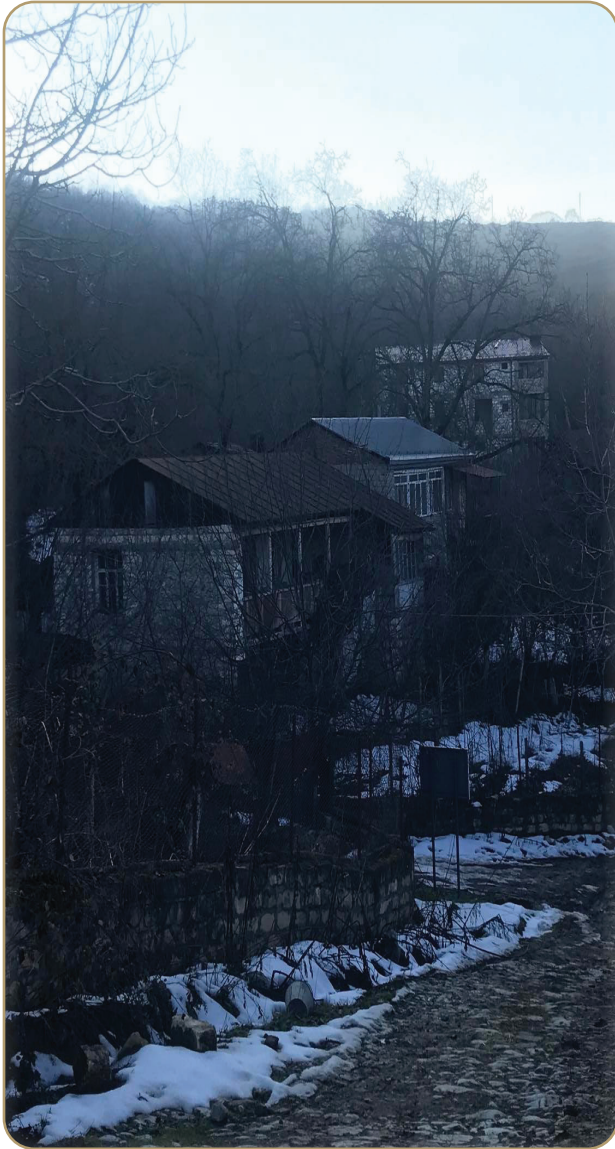
*Hadrut settlement,
2021*



*Albanian Church (1170),
Hadrut settlement*



The interior of the church



*Hunarli village,
2022*

and the capital building with its archaic design, both provide information regarding the antiquity of the building. The lower masonry layers of church's walls, apse, and portal can still be seen in the ruins. A 1.5-metre-thick, double-layered high defensive wall surrounds the church building. The church itself was rectangular in shape, with sides measuring 6.5 by 3 metres. A staircase made of basalt slabs was constructed from the door of the fortress walls to the church, because the building was constructed on high ground.

A square-shaped building with dimensions of 9 by 9 metres lies in ruins on the southwest side of the church. The masonry of the building was constructed using large, well-hewn stone blocks, and the remnants of cornices and other ornamental components have survived to the present day.

ALBANIAN TEMPLE (1170), Hadrut settlement

Hadrut is located in the Qozluchay Valley near Argunash Mountain. The territory of Hadrut was in the Dizak province, where there were several monuments from both ancient times, and the early and mediaeval Christian ages.

The Albanian temple is located in the centre of the Hadrut settlement. The church was built in 1170, according to the inscription that was once erected in the area of the temple.

Currently, the inscription is not in the church area.

CHURCH OF THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD (12th century), Hunarli village

The Church of the Holy Mother of God is an Albanian historical-architectural monument located in the Hunarli village of the Khojavand district. According to Russian sources from the 19th century, the Hunarli village was formerly known by the name 'Zakuri' or 'Zakurli.' Although the village was formally known as Zakirli since 1992, it was renamed Hunarli (meaning "skilled") on November 20, 2020, by decree from the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, following the liberation of the village by the Azerbaijani Armed Forces on November 7, 2020.

The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan listed the Church of the Holy Mother of God in the village of Hunarli as a monument of national importance. Only the main church building has survived from the ancient monastery complex that once existed here. The church is situated in the middle of the orchards in Hunarli.

According to the inscriptions on the walls of the Church of the Holy Mother of God, this monastery has been in existence since the 12th century. The inscription on one of the church's oldest cross-stones dates to "the year 1198." According to another inscription on the church tympanum, the building was restored in 1682 on the foundations of the old church. The convex decoration of the church's portal indicates that it belongs to a later period. In the centre of the semi-circular tympanum is a small cross, and on the sides, there are inscriptions on the restoration



*Church of the Holy Mother of God
(12th century), Hunarli village*



*From the outside, the church is rectangular,
and from the inside, it is a domed basilica.*



On March 15, 2021, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva, and their daughter Leyla Aliyeva visited the Albanian temple in Hunarli village.



First Vice President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Mehriban Aliyeva, at the Albanian temple in Hunarli village

of the church. According to these inscriptions, the old church was restored in 1682 (Бархударян, s.73).

On the outside, the church is rectangular, and on the inside, it is a domed basilica. The interior of the church was plastered with lime mortar. For the building of the arches, niches, and altar cornices, well-hewn, blue-toned stones were used, while the other masonry was carried out using local rough-hewn stones. The thickness of the walls is more than one metre. The construction of the auxiliary rooms built around the altar, the altar itself, and the stairs leading to the roof from both sides, is identical to the architectural style of the corresponding parts of the main church of the Gtichavank Monastery. There is an artistic ornament in the shape of a snake relief, believed to be from before the Middle Ages, on the ceiling of the auxiliary room on the left side of the church.

The exterior of the church allows us to determine that it was once finished with a dome. According to Barkhudaryan, who provided information about the Church of the Holy Mother of God in the 19th century, “there was a dome above the arches, but it was destroyed in modern times. It’s believed there was the monastery’s main church here, but afterwards it became a regular church” (Бархударян, 1895). Specifically, the church’s prayer hall has a volume that is typical of hall-domed churches, as well as a square under the dome built to support it. The dome’s architecture is believed to have played a significant role in church building in Caucasian Albania, beginning in the early Middle Ages, when domes started to be added to churches with hall compositions as a result of the development of dome architecture and the spread of the interpretation of

the dome as a celestial sphere. In fact, domed hall churches first appeared in Caucasian Albania in the 7th century (Мамедова, 2004, s. 42), and in the 9th and 10th centuries, multiple forms of pre-existing architectural types were created, leading to the development of dome architecture. This progression can be seen in the Caucasian Albanian architecture of the 5th and 7th centuries (Мамедова, 2004, s. 94).

The Armenians attempted to Armenianize this ancient Albanian church during the occupation years of 1992-2020. The church was severely damaged, and its walls were adorned with fake inscriptions, as was the case with all the material, cultural, and religious monuments in Karabakh and East Zangazur territories. As a result of the 44-day victory of the Azerbaijani Army, not only were the territories of Karabakh and Zangazur liberated from occupation, but Azerbaijan's historical and cultural heritage was also rescued from Armenian vandals.

President Aliyev witnessed the miserable condition of the Albanian temple in the Hunarli village of the Khojavand district during his visit to the Fuzuli and Khojavand districts on March 15, 2021, and saw how the Armenians had insulted the ancient Albanian temple with fake inscriptions. He said in this regard, "The fact that this church – the Albanian temple – is in this condition again shows Armenian fraud. If it were an Armenian church, they would have repaired it. Then there are those who criticise us for not taking good care of Christian monuments. It is Armenians who brought it to this condition. They destroyed it, ruined it and even burned the door. How are Christian monuments protected in different parts of Azerbaijan!? In a while, they will

^[2] <https://president.az/az/articles/view/50893>



Udi Albanian Christian Community at the Albanian temple in Hunarli village, November 4, 2021

see how we renovate this ancient Albanian church. Temples belonging to all religions in Azerbaijan are protected by the state, built by the state, and the whole world knows that. The world should know and see Armenians' savagery in our mosques. There were 67 mosques in the liberated lands, of which only two remain in a semi-demolished state. They used them for various purposes. The Albanian church was also brought to this condition".^[2]

Large-scale construction works are currently being carried out in the liberated territories of Karabakh and Zangazur with the aim of restoring important historical, cultural, and religious monuments. The Udis, who have maintained their Albanian Christian traditions to this day thanks to

the tolerance of the Azerbaijani people, visited this historic Albanian church in the village of Hunarli in November 2021. Here, they performed a religious

ritual, lit candles, and said prayers for the spirits of the Azerbaijani soldiers who gave their lives to liberate these territories.

ST. ELISHE MONASTERY, Chartar village

The St. Elishe Monastery is a historical-architectural monument located in the territory of the Chartar village in the Khojavand district. The monastery is located in a high, mountainous area to the south of the Chartar village. This corresponds to Barkhudaryan's description of the ruins of a monastery that was built in honour of Elishe on top of a mountain in the area between the villages of Sos (present-day Jutju) and Quzey Chartar.

The monastery's main church was constructed on the site of an older church. The main church, the

only church in the complex, is referred to as St. Elishe Church in inscriptions. According to Barkhudaryan, the ancient church was erected on two columns. The precise construction date of the ancient church is unknown.

According to an inscription from the 12th century discovered in the area of the monastery, this location was one of the most significant shrines in the province. The church was built in 1124 in honour of St. Elishe, the first Catholicos of Albania, as well as Ganjasar (Бархударян, 1895, s. 107). The church was repaired in 1236 "in honour of the Khanim," according to the epigraphic inscription that was on the altar of the church in Guney Chartar. The name of "Master Tony," the man who erected the church, was mentioned on the inscription. According to Barkhudaryan, in the monastery, there was an ancient cross-stone with an epigraphic inscription. The cross-stone was taken from a tombstone around the church and brought here. The inscriptions on it made it clear that this ancient cross-stone was a memorial stone of the family of Mirzakhan, who was a descendant of the Melik Shahnazar dynasty consisting of Gulashmar, Mumkhanim, Nazli, and others (Бархударян, 1895, s.105). The inscription reads, "I, an Aghuan, erected this stone for the salvation of my family, my wife Nazli, my sons and daughters" (Бархударян, 1895, s.107). Additionally,



St. Elishe Monastery, Chartar village

it is evident from Barkhudaryan's descriptions of the churches in Karabakh that word "Albanian" (Aghuan) and names of Turkic origin can be found in almost all inscriptions in the region. This is one of the crucial facts demonstrating the Turkic roots of Karabakh's Christian Albanian dynasties.

It is evident from the inscription on the wall's front part that a new church was built there in the 17th century, on the site of the demolished earlier church. A large number of ruins of the older building, cross-stones, tiles decorated with ornaments and domestic scenes, and stones with inscriptions were used in the masonry of the wall.

Architecturally, the St. Elishe Church, with its two pylons and arched ceiling, is characteristic of the late mediaeval era. There are rectangular-shaped auxiliary rooms on either side of the altar. On the inside of the walls, there are three large niches. The church's only entrance is located on its western wall. Arches, pylons, frames for windows and doors were built from well-hewn stones. Other sections of wall were constructed using unhewn basalt stones. Even though the church's walls were plastered with lime mortar from the inside, the plaster has only survived to the present day in some parts.

The main place of worship was the ancient tombstone located inside the monastery. There were various ornamented cross-stones and ancient tombstones around the monastery, which is located among pine and birch trees.

An ancient Bible was kept in this church in the village of Quzey Chartar, according to Barkhudaryan (Бархударян, 1895, s. 108). As a matter of fact, the Albanian Bibles kept in Albanian churches served as a valuable source not only of religious rituals, but also of the study and transmission of the history of the Albanian Church as a kind of historical chronicle compiled by Albanian religious figures. In particular, the memorabilia contained in these books served as a continuation of the tradition of documenting Albanian history in the form of chronicles, and served as an important source for defining the time in which they were written. According to the writing on the pages of this Bible, the Albanian Apostolic Autocephalous Church was independent until the 19th century. This made it possible to follow the Albanian Catholicoi's activities up until the 18th century. As a result, everything from the Albanian monasteries, including the Albanian Bibles with their notes, started to disappear after the Albanian Catholic Church was abolished by the Tsarist government's decree in 1836, and the monasteries were demolished. Additionally, the Albanian Bibles with their memorial inscriptions were destroyed by the Armenian Church. According to Barkhudaryan, there were only a few Albanian Bibles in some churches in Karabakh in the late 19th century, one of which was in the St. Elishe Monastery in the village of Chartar.



Tugh village, 2022



The President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, visited the village of Tugh along with representatives of the district community during his visit to Khojavand district. October 9, 2021.



*"The restoration concept of Tugh village is being prepared..."
Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan*

Albanian monuments of the Tugh village

“Tugh village has always been and will continue to be an Azerbaijani village. This is an ancient Azerbaijani land.”

***President of the Republic of Azerbaijan
Ilham Aliyev***

The village of Tugh, which stands out for both its antiquity and the wealth of historical and cultural monuments, has played a significant role in the country's history and culture. The history of Tugh village dates back to very ancient times. “Tug”/“Tuq”, a word with Turkic roots that means “peak” and “flag,” is also connected to the name of one of the well-known Kipchak tribes.



St. Stephen's Church (12th century), Tugh village

One of Karabakh's most ancient villages, Tugh is recorded in the events of the 8th century. In order to defend himself against Arab invaders in the 8th century, Beylagan's ruler took refuge in the well-known Ktish Fortress near the Tugh village.

During the Karabakh Khanate, the village of Tugh served as the district's capital, and it was the cultural centre and capital of the Dizak district until 1939.

The Albanian meliks' residence in the Dizak district was in Tugh. Melik dynasties such as the Malikyeganovs, the Malikaslanovs, the Jahangirlis, the Mehdibeylis, the Aslanbeylis, the Gulmammadlis, the Talibkhanlis, the Budaglis, the Selimbeylis, the Jafarlis, and the Valiushaghis lived there. The palace of Dizak Meliks, and the properties of Aga bey Malikaslanov and Mahmud bey Malikaslanov remain in the village to this day. One of the first authors of “Karabakhname,” Mirmehdi Khazani, was buried in the Tugh cemetery.

Tugh village is particularly rich in monuments from the Caucasian Albanian period. St. Stephen's Church (12th century), St. John's Church (13th century), the Church of the St. Mary, the Red Church, the Palace of Dizak Meliks (18th century), and Ktish Fortress at the top of the Tugh Mountain are only a few of the important historical and architectural monuments in the village.

The Armenian Armed Forces occupied the village of Tugh between 1991 and 2020. A significant portion of the village's historical monuments and ancient cemeteries were destroyed and rendered useless during this period. Under the guise of restoration, these monuments were falsified, given a new appearance, and presented as pieces of Armenian culture.

One of the Albanian monuments that the Armenians severely vandalised was the Albanian church, which is located in the centre of the village of Tugh and dates back to the 12th-13th centuries. A large number of new tombstones were placed all around the church, the monument's entrance door was demolished and renovated, the roof of the church was covered with an iron sheet, the artistic ornaments on the wall were removed, and the inscriptions were updated.

The Palace Complex of Dizak Meliks in the village of Tugh was altered from its original historical appearance during the occupation, and the Armenians altered the building's architecture by erecting a number of illegal structures in this historical architectural monument.

Following its liberation by the Azerbaijani Armed Forces on November 9, 2020, a new era for Tugh village and for Karabakh, and Zangazur as a whole, began. On October 9, 2021, on the first anniversary of the liberation of the Hadrut settlement from occupation, President Aliyev visited the village of Tugh with representatives of the community of the Khojavand district, and informed the residents that a separate concept for the restoration of Tugh had been designed.^[3]

^[3] <https://president.az/80az/artides/view/53402>



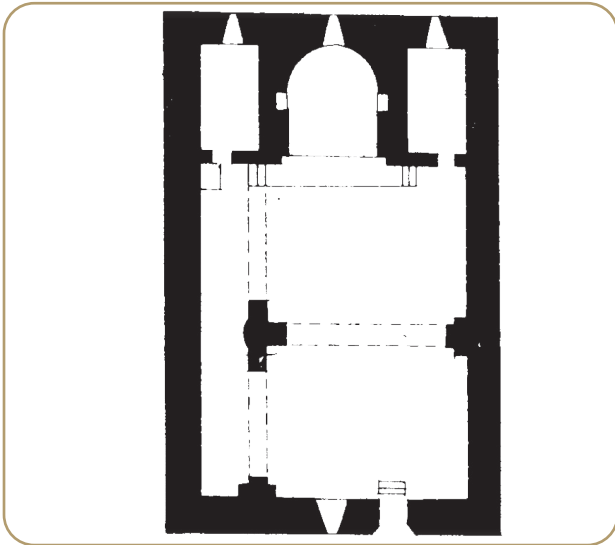
Inside St. Stephen's Church



Large cross-stones deployed on the walls of St. Stephen's Church



St. Stephen's Church



Plan of St. Stephen's Church

ST. STEPHEN'S CHURCH (13th century), Tugh village

St. Stephen's Church is located in the area of the ancient cemetery on the southwest side of Tugh village. The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan has listed the church as an architectural monument of national importance.

Although the precise construction date of St. Stephen's Church is unknown, it is clear from an inscription discovered in the church area that the temple was constructed in the 12th century on the site of the earlier building. Melik Yegan and his son, Melik Yesai, repaired the church in 1747, according to an inscription on the church's tympanum, which Barkhudaryan read and recorded (Бархударян, 1895, s.77). According to Makar Barkhudaryan, the church is quite old and was constructed in about the 12th century. The inscription on the tympanum makes it clear that the church had previously existed and was renovated by Melik Yegan and his son. The church was built on the site of an ancient pagan shrine, like many other Albanian temples. Additionally, it is believed that in the Middle Ages, there was a monastery complex there. The church was constructed on the foundation of an older temple, like many of the Albanian monuments in Karabakh. The church was built on the site of an ancient pagan shrine, like many other Albanian temples. Additionally, it is believed that in the Middle Ages, there was a monastery complex there. The church was also restored during several historical eras, including the 14th-15th and the 16th-18th centuries. During the restoration, the remains of the ancient building were used alongside other construction materials.

Here, the remains of ancient walls were found, covered with a variety of ornaments, motifs, cross-stones with inscriptions, and other remains from old buildings. The white tuff stones typical of Albanian architecture were used in the masonry of the foundation of the church.

The church has a rectangular floor layout, an arched roof (12 by 7.8 m), an altar and auxiliary rooms on the eastern side. The church's walls were constructed of carved and rough-hewn stones, which were also used for the facade cladding, while well-hewn stones were used for the masonry of arches, as well as window and door frames. The monument has one window on the front and three small windows on the back, which illuminate the interior. The unusually shaped pylon in the centre of the church divides its volume into two sections, one of which contains ancient graves. The church's altar is 50 cm high, and the floor of the church is 1.5 metres below the ground level because of the area's relief features.

Large cross-stones were erected on either side of the entrance to St. Stephen's Church. In general, cross-stones were used in the construction of the church's walls, which were mostly made of rough-hewn stones and covered with cross-stones with equilateral Albanian crosses. Inscriptions were found on many of the cross-stones, and there were ancient gravestones with rich artistic ornaments covered in moss, in the yard of the ancient church. The stones were covered with many horseman, hunter, and musician motifs. Around the church, there are dozens of ancient gravestones that include numerous artistic scenes adorned with Azerbaijani national ornaments. Local Azerbaijani people used to

come to this Albanian church, which was constructed on the site of the ancient pagan temple, to visit it as a sanctuary or shrine and slaughter cocks there.

There were 51 cross-stones on the church's walls. The equilateral ancient Albanian crosses and the classical compositions of the 13th century are represented chronologically by these heavily ornamented cross-stones. There were hundreds of ancient tombstones with rich plots in the mountainous area around the church, many of which contained images of warriors, hunters, and musicians from the time before the occupation (Мкртчян, 1988, s.78).

The majority of the monument currently remains under the ground, and the majority of the left wall's stones were demolished. The monument is in terrible condition, and its grass-covered roof is about to collapse.



St. John's Church (13th century), original look



St. John's Church, 2021. The church's original look was altered when it was subjected to illegal restoration work by Armenians during the occupation, and a great number of gravestones taken from elsewhere were erected around it.

ST. JOHN'S CHURCH (13th century), Tugh village

There is another historical Albanian temple, St. John's Church, in the centre of Tugh village. The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan listed it as a monument of national importance.

St. John's Church is a basilica from the early Middle Ages. Similar to St. Stephen's Church in Tugh village, this church was also erected on the foundation of an earlier building. The current church building was constructed in the 13th century on the site of an ancient temple. According to Barkhudaryan, the building's foundation has a longer history and was constructed no later than the 13th century (Бархударян, 1895, s.75). The remnants of huge column bases can be seen just above floor level on the right side of the church apse, in front of the entrance to the auxiliary room.

According to an old inscription on the entrance door, Melik Yegan of Dizak restored the roof of St. John's Church in 1736. The following was written on the inscription on the church's wall: "In 1736, the roof of the St. John's Church was restored by Melik Yegan, son of Vardapet Gukas. Everyone who reads it, should say at least once: May God have mercy" (Бархударян, 1895, s. 74). The inscription, however, is no longer there.

St. John's Church was constructed in a steeply sloping area. While the church's eastern wall is entirely open and its foundations are visible from that side, the western wall is totally embedded in the rock. Consequently, the western wall only has



Tugh village, 2022.



The door in St. John's Church's south wall leads to a small courtyard with ancient tombstones.



There are sarcophaguses with representations of horsemen, musicians, domestic scenes, crosses, and headstones with artistic motifs on the church grounds.





Tugh village, 2022.

one window, while the eastern wall has three. On the south wall, the sole door to the church leads to a small yard encircled by stone fortress walls. The hall's ceiling, measuring 12.9 by 21.7 metres, is supported by four pylons made of local stones. The masonry of the southern wall was constructed using square stones that were well-hewn, while the other walls utilized stones that were partly hewn. The sides of the roof have a high incline because of the arched ceiling's height. It is generally similar to the church in the Chanakhchi village of Khojaly, due to its general features and proportions.

A circular tower encircles the yard's southeast side, and beautiful views of the whole village, as well as surrounding gardens and mountains, can be



The door in St. John's Church's south wall leads to a small courtyard with ancient tombstones.



Members of the Albanian-Udi Christian Religious Community performed a religious ritual, lit candles, and prayed in St. John's Church as they did in other Albanian churches, 2021



St. Mary's Church, Tugh village



seen from the location. On the south side of the yard, there is a two-story building. The second floor's door leads to the yard, while the first floor is only visible from the yard.

There are various sized sarcophaguses richly decorated with human figures in the area of the monument. The long, narrow chapel constructed on the left side of the church is where Melik Gukas, Melik Yegan, Melik Aram, and Melik Yesaya from the Melik dynasty were buried.

During the Soviet era, this Albanian church in the centre of Tugh village served as a club, but it was illegally restored by Armenians during the 30-year occupation. The church's original appearance was altered as a result, and it was thereafter used as an Armenian church. Around the church, there are a lot of tombstones that were brought from another location. The monument's entrance door was demolished and replaced, the church's roof was covered with an iron sheet, the ornamental images on the walls were removed, the wall inscriptions were updated, and a bell tower was added to the structure.

The Albanian Udis, the last representatives of the Albanian Church, visited this ancient Albanian temple in 2021, after many years. The members of the Albanian-Udi Christian Religious Community, which keeps the Albanian Christian traditions alive in the tolerant and multicultural Azerbaijani society, performed a religious ritual, lit candles, and said prayers in St. John's Church, as they did in other Albanian churches.

St. Mary's Church, Tugh village

Another Albanian monument, St. Mary's Church, is about 200 metres above the St. Stephen's Church in Tugh village, at the foot of a mountain. The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan has listed it as an architectural monument of national importance.

The church is located in an area encircled by high walnut trees, near the ancient cemetery in the northwest part of Tugh village. The local population called this part of Tugh "the Qizlar (Girls) Plain." According to Yampolsky, the Catholicos prohibited cutting down any sacred trees in the Tugh Monastery in the 19th century, as they believed that it would bring bad luck (Ямпольский, 1962). Like other Albanian churches, it was also built on the site of an older building. According to Barkhudaryan, the neighbouring churches and cell remnants were part of the monastery that previously existed in this area.

Architecturally, the church is shaped like a simple rectangular church-hall with 3 by 2-metre-

long sides. Since nearly half of the church is under the ground, it is impossible to enter through the door on the southern wall. The prayer hall, apse and auxiliary rooms are also partially under the ground. The back wall of the church that was made of rough-hewn stones is entirely embedded in the mountain, and the roof of the building is connected to the mountain. Major parts of the other walls are also under the ground. There is a cross-stone on the side entrance door of the church. As in all Albanian temples, the altar is 50–60 centimetres high. There were numerous monastic cells, remnants of previous domestic structures, and gravestones near the church, and there are three graves inside the temple. Many tombstones and sarcophaguses are located in the yard of the church. One bears the inscription, "Here is the grave of Melik Bahtam (M.P.) son of Melik Yegan, the Melik of Dizak district." During the occupation, the monument deteriorated to the point where it is now in danger of crumbling.

RED CHURCH (10th century), Tugh village

Red Church is located on a small hill between the Tugh and Bina villages of the Khojavand district. The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan listed it as a monument of national importance.

The church's building inscription dates back to the 10th century and was discovered on the west door of the church. The inscription reads: "I, Voski, the daughter of Musa, constructed the house of God in the summer of the year 1000 during the rule of Gagik, the son of Musa, to protect my soul and the souls of my parents" (Бархударян, 1895, 1 к., s. 75).

Red Church is not only significant in terms of its architectural and artistic worth, but it is also significant as the monument with the earliest dated inscription that has retained the names of important Caucasian Albanian historical figures.

With a total length of 11 metres and a width of 6.45 metres, the church building is a small basilica. In contrast to the single-nave basilicas of the period prior to the Arab conquest, Albanian architecture was distinguished by its smaller dimensions in the 10th century. The Red Church is an example of



this type of building. The economic and political foundation of Albanian religious architecture was changed during the Arab conquest due to the loss of Christianity's statehood in Caucasian Albania, the deprivation of the official ideology, the sharp decline in the number of worshippers, and the gradual de-ethnicization of the Albanian population. At this time, smaller, simpler chapels were constructed in the former Caucasian Albanian territory, and there

was a significant decline in the number of Christian religious architectural buildings. Red Church was one of the churches that were constructed during this time out of rough-hewn stones, with two doors on its south and west walls (Мамедова, 2004).

The church's roof and south wall have both been damaged. The ruins of other buildings that once surrounded the church can be seen, as well as the remains of the fortress walls that surrounded the hill.

GTICHAVANK MONASTERY (10th-13th centuries), Taghlar village

The Gtichavank Monastery is located on a hill in front of the village of Taghlar at the north-eastern foot of Tokhasar Mountain. The monastery was constructed in a densely wooded location on the right bank of the Guruchay River, and is a historical monument that dates back to the 13th century. However, in the 19th century, it was shown that the monument was constructed earlier thanks to the discovery of the remnants of an older church

inside the monastery. One of the cross-stones with ornaments on the church's walls dates back to the year 1000 (Barxudaryan I k. s. 76), which proves that the current monastery was built on the site of an ancient church.

Gtichavank Monastery expanded during the 13th century as a result of new buildings and additions. A new era in Albanian architecture began

in the 14th-16th centuries with the rise and transition of Albanian Christian culture to a new stage of prosperity. Many of the Albanian monuments included in Azerbaijan's architectural wealth were built during and before this period, especially beginning in the 13th century. The Albanian kings in Karabakh, where the principality of Khachen flourished, spent a lot of money on the construction of palaces, defence and religious facilities, as well as monasteries during this period. These complexes became the centres of cultural and social life in many provinces. The Gtichavank Monastery became one of these religious and political centres in the 13th century.

Gtichavank was one of the main religious and political centres of Karabakh. It became one of the most famous monastery complexes in the Caucasus, particularly under the rule of the meliks of Dizak,



*Gtichavank Monastery
(10-13th centuries), Taghlar village*



Gtichavank Monastery was one of the key religious and political centres of Karabakh



Aside from the church, there are additional structures on the monastery's grounds.



Avan and Yegan. According to Barkhudaryan, the Gtichavank Monastery was a bishopric of the Dizak Melikdom (Бархударян, 1895, s.4). In his work, Kaghankatvatsi made reference to the Gtichavank Monastery.

Several inscriptions were discovered in the monastery's area, and important information about the region's mediaeval ages is revealed by inscriptions and cross-stones placed on the monastery's walls. According to the inscriptions, the early monastery buildings were destroyed following the Arab conquest of Azerbaijan, and the monastery was constructed in the 13th century, during the Mongol conquests, when the country was in the midst of a terrible disaster. Construction work started in 1241 and was completed in 1248. Bishop Sarkis founded this church in 1241, according to an inscription on the monastery's north wall. The inscription reveals that the church's construction was completed in 1248 (Бархударян, 1895, s. 77). The Mongols, who are referred to as archers, are also mentioned as having damaged the monasteries in the inscription. The two bishop brothers, who served at the Amaras Monastery, moved to the Gtichavank Monastery after it was destroyed, and they built the monastery's cathedral church on the basis of the ruins of the old church, according to the text of the inscription on the northern wall of the church building. The church was constructed during a hard time when the tribe of archers (i.e., the Mongols) left the entire country in ruins and destroyed Amaras, as is stated in the inscription.

Two cross-stones with artistic ornaments were located on the right and left sides of the monastery's entrance door, one to the south dating back to 1246 and the other to the north dating back to 1717.

The earlier cross-stone was constructed in honour of the monastic priest, and the dome was built in honour of Saya, a resident of Tugh, and his wife, Heriknaz, according to the text of the later cross-stone inscription (Бархударян, 1895, s. 77).

There are tombstones of several bishops and Albanian feudal lords in the monastery complex. According to one of the monastery's inscriptions from 1747, a bishop was appointed to the Gtichavank Monastery with Melik Yegan's blessing. It is clear from the inscription that the tombstone in the monastery belonged to the church's priest.

The inscriptions in the monastery area also refer to the lands that were given to the church by the heirs of the Dizak meliks, in addition to detailed information about the date of the church's construction and the restoration of the complex: "The properties in many areas such as Hakari (Zangilan), Beylagan, and Dizak are mentioned in the areas extending from the Alban River to the Araz River (Бархударян, 1895, s. 81). The villages of Tugh, Mohranis, and Akhullu are listed as belonging to the monastery lands at the end of the inscription. However, the monastery lands were completely looted and destroyed in the 19th century (Бархударян, 1895, 1 к. s. 77). The author wrote with sadness that this magnificent monastery was gradually being destroyed and the monastery's lands were completely looted (Бархударян, 1895, 1 к. s. 78)

The cathedral church is the complex's main component. With double wall pylons and two-story rooms on both sides of a semi-circular apse, it is a rectangular building measuring 10 by 7.5 metres from the outside, and a central domed building from the inside. The apse, which is accessed by stone stairs, leads to the second-floor entrances of

rooms. The vaulted arches connect the pylons in front of the wall and support the church's dome, which is not particularly sharp, but is rather high. The hand fan-shaped roof of the dome, which was built from two-tiered roof bricks, was positioned above a cylindrical tholobate. Two triangular niches were used to embellish the cathedral's facade. The window spots have a rectangular frame decorated with ornaments. Both on the outside and inside, the church's walls have a rather simple view. The church has maintained its original appearance to the present day. Some of the architectural and decorative motifs of the church are reminiscent of those in the Amaras and Ganjasar monasteries.

Local yellowish stones were used to construct the church, but masonry work with red bricks can be seen on the walls of the church, which is the result of restoration carried out in the 17th century. In addition to the church building, there are other buildings in the monastery complex. According to Barkhudaryan, the large narthex next to the church is older than the church building. The columns built on the northern side of the rather large narthex not only added volume, but they also increased the narthex's internal volume. The narthex, constructed in the manner of the majority of Albanian churches with rough-hewn basalt stones and covered with an arched ceiling, served not only as a meeting area but also as a crypt. The narthex's floor is covered with the gravestones of religious figures who served at the monastery, and several local meliks. Each of the finely-carved gravestones, several of which are located inside the church, also has inscriptions on them.

The church and narthex are also joined from the north by a smaller church building. A drop arch encircles the top of the single-nave hall church, with

a rectangular layout and an altar. Through the south exit, the church is connected to the narthex, meaning that both the churches located inside the complex share the same narthex.

The ruins of residential buildings and fortress walls around the complex have survived to the present day on the complex's western side. Because of years of neglect, the cemetery located around the monastery has been partially buried, and only the tops of the gravestones can be seen.

There were numerous cross-stones with ornaments in the monastery's area, and the masonry of church walls also made use of many of these. The date 1000 was inscribed on one of the cross-stones built into the walls of the church. The most ancient of the numerous cross-stones with rich artistic ornaments spread across the monastery area dates

to the 9th century, while the most recent dates to the early 19th century. According to this information, no cross-stones have been made since 1828.

In the Gtichavank Monastery, there were cross-stones that were notable for their fine ornaments and excellent artistic composition, positioned on the right and left sides of the cathedral church's entrance door. These cross-stones aren't in the church now, but one of them is currently on display in the church in Etchmiadzin after being taken from the monastery's area to Etchmiadzin, Armenia during the Soviet era.

Repairs were made to the Gtichavank Monastery in 2007 by Armenian falsifiers, who violated the rules for restoring historical monuments. The monument's architectural structure was changed illegally, the inscriptions were removed, and the stones were taken to the Matenadaran Museum in Armenia.

WHITE CROSS CHURCH (14th century), Chinarli village

White Cross Church is located in the Chinarli village of the Khojavand district. The village was known as Vank while it was under the occupation of Armenia from 1992 to 2020. President Aliyev changed the village's name to Chinarli after it was liberated by the Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Although the precise year of construction of this historical-architectural monument near the Aghoghlan Church is unknown, based on various architectural details, it is known that the church was operating at the latest in the 14th century. The cross-stone, which is located inside the church under the northern arch, was erected in 1333 (Бархударян,

1895, s. 66). In the church building, an inscription from the 11th century was discovered (Ямпольский, 1962, s. 105). The church was restored in 1735, according to the inscription on the narthex's portal tympanum, and there were further inscriptions in the church about its construction and the placement of the bell tower. Currently, however, there are no such inscriptions. According to the inscription discovered in the bell tower of the church, the tower was constructed in 1674. The inscription on the ornamented cross-stone in the niche on the west side of the bell tower is from 1348.

Like other Albanian temples, White Cross Church was a place of worship for Azerbaijani

people. Pagan shrines and sanctuaries became Christian temples once Christianity was adopted as Albania's official religion in the 4th century. Archaic sanctuaries were replaced by Christian churches and monasteries. White Cross Monastery was one of those sanctuaries, not only for residents of the village, but also for people traveling from up to 100 kilometres away (Ямпольский, 1962, s. 105).

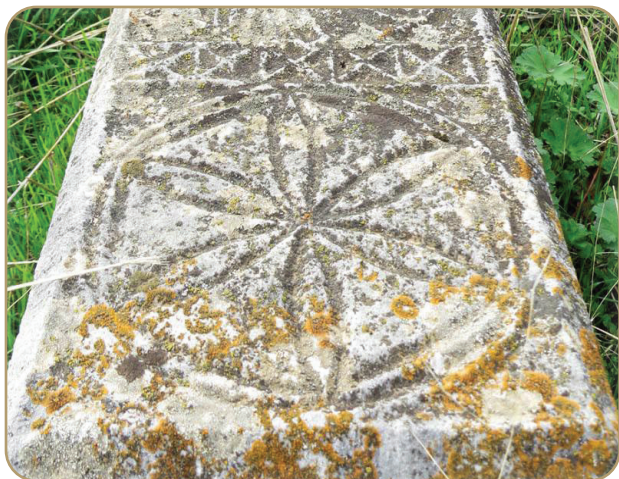
According to legend, the church's name derives from the fact that a monk came bearing a cross with miraculous powers. The residents of the village believed that despite their repeated attempts to move it, it eventually returned to its original position on its own and began to produce white light. However, ethnographic research carried out in the village in the early 20th century proved that there wasn't a cross there. Instead, there was only a drawing of the

legendary cross in the church. People believed that under the cross's influence, they would have long lives, good health, success against their enemies, and that the infertile among them would bear children. They lit candles in the shrine, as they did in other Azerbaijani shrines, presented offerings, sacrificed cocks and sheep in the church's yard, offered money, kissed the temple walls, and said prayers. The shrine was open for visitors every day of the week.

In the early 20th century, several stones adorned with reliefs of magnificent artistic ornaments fell from the eastern wall of the derelict church. Nearby were tombstones with ornaments on them. The White Cross Church had also been damaged in the 9th century, when the Albanians fought for their independence in the Ktish Fortress against the Caliphate army.



*White Cross Church
(14th century), Chinarli village*



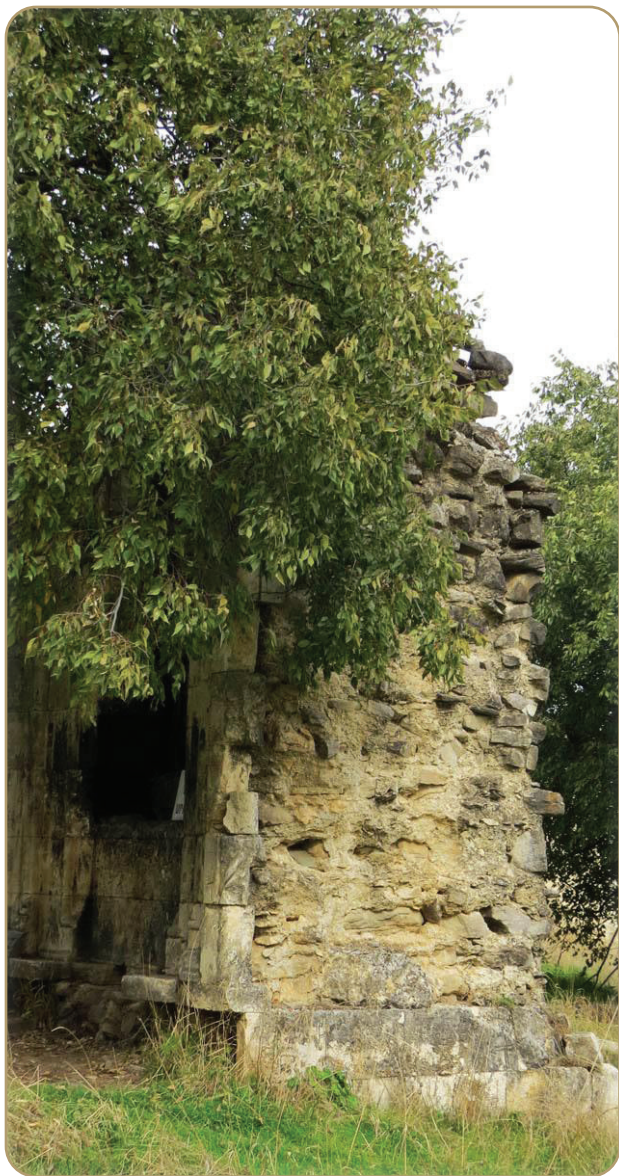
Richly ornamented tombstones near the church with depictions of the tree of life, the sun, and stars



White Cross Church was once the main church of the monastery located in this area.



Tombstones in the yard of White Cross Church



*Ancient structure in the yard
of White Cross Church*

The White Cross Church was the main church of the monastery which was previously located in this area. Following the style used by the majority of Albanian churches, the church was constructed using lime mortar and a variety of local unhewn stones in the shape of a single-nave basilica. The bell tower was erected over the centre of the prayer hall.

The church measured 15.75 m in length and 7.1 m in width when the narthex is included. The bell tower, which had six columns and a pyramid-shaped roof with a unique architectural shape, was constructed in the centre of the prayer hall. To the west of the bell tower was a cross-stone adorned with rich ornaments. The height of the cross-stone was 2.5 metres, and its surface was entirely covered with carved convex patterns.

The church's horseshoe-shaped arches and the nearby tombstones were covered with drawings of horses, the tree of life, the sun, stars, and birds (Ямпольский, 1962, s.105). All the gravestones in the large mediaeval cemetery surrounding the church are heavily ornamented with depictions of typical domestic scenes such as hunting, agriculture, and battle. To the north of the church, in the same area as the cemetery, lie the ruins of a building constructed in 1735, which was used to house visitors in need of rest.

MAVAS MONASTERY (13th century), Gavahin village

Mavas Monastery is located near Gavahin village in the Khojavand district. This historical architectural monument dates back to the 13th century, as determined by an inscription that was found in its yard.

Mavas Monastery is protected by defensive walls and built on an impassable rocky area. As a result, it served for many years as a defensive fortress to ensure the security of the local people. Only the ruins of the fortress walls, which once extended from one rock to the next and encircled the entire complex, have survived to the present day.

From the Mavas Monastery, the three-nave basilica, the ruins of the narthex connected to it, and the remains of several domestic structures have survived. The arched ceiling is supported by two

pylons and semi-pylons that run along the walls. The rectangular prayer hall measures 4.8 by 8.1 metres. The narthex was square-shaped, as may be seen from the ruins. The church's prayer hall is an interesting architectural monument with aesthetically pleasing arches, pylons, apses, and window spots that extend inward. There were two highly artistic cross-stones and embroidered gravestones on the four graves in the church building, below the height of the altar.



Albanian church (14th century), Kharkhar village. During the occupation, unlawful repairs were made to the monument, causing the church to lose its historical appearance

ALBANIAN TEMPLE (14th century), Kharkhar village

An Albanian monument is located in the area of an ancient cemetery in the Kharkhar village of Khojavand. The monument's construction dates back to the 14th century. According to Barkhudaryan, this temple in the village of Kharkhar is St. Gregory Church (Бархударян, 1895, s.99).

Since the Armenian Armed Forces occupied these territories in 1991, illegal repairs have been made to the monument, depriving it of its historical look. Many historical monuments in the village of Kharkhar, including some ancient shrines, were entirely destroyed and others were modified

between 2000 and 2011 by the Armenians who had illegally settled there. The Armenians also committed such acts of vandalism in the temple in the village of Kharkhar, which is a unique example of Albanian architecture. The Armenians demolished the main part of the monument, altered its original look, expanded the monument's area, renovated its walls, and covered the monument's roof with a layer of iron. The artistic stone patterns on the monument were destroyed. The French religious authorities provided the Armenians with financial aid between 2000 and 2011 so they could commit these acts of vandalism.

KAVAKAVANK, Zoghalbulag village

Kavakavank, or St. Mary Church, is located in the Zoghalbulag village of Khojavand district. The name of the village was Trakhtik until December 29, 1992. Kavakavank has been registered as a monument of national importance by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The church is located on the top of a conical hill on the right bank of Guruchay. A beautiful view of the surrounding areas, especially Mount Ziyarat, opens up from the courtyard of the church, which is surrounded by plains.

Barkhudaryan wrote about the inscription that existed in the church. According to the text of the inscription, the ancient church located here was restored in 1742 on the orders of Melik Yegan, Melik of Dizak. The Isra and Miṣraj holidays was

held in the church every year (Бархударян, 1895, s. 109). Barkhudaryan also mentions an ancient sacred place that existed on the site of the church. He claims that the tomb with a white gravestone on top of the mountain there belongs to Saint Jacob. This shrine, popularly known as Kavak Shrine, housed an ancient cross-stone and a tombstone.

The Church of St. Mary is the only surviving building from the ancient monastery complex. The author notes that it was once the centre of a large monastery complex, but it was looted and destroyed by foreigners (Бархударян, 1895, s. 75). The monastery had a strong fortress wall, monks' quarters, and special rooms for pilgrims. The church had already fallen into ruin in the 19th century (Бархударян, 1895, s. 75).



Kavakavank Church, Zoghalbulag village

Only the church building has survived from the complex, and the stones of the other ruined buildings are scattered at the foot of the hill. Around the church, there are the remains of various buildings, architectural details, patterned altar plates, cross-stones, and tombstones.

The church is a three-nave basilica measuring 12.8 by 9.8 metres. According to the information provided by Barkhudaryan, the construction technique of the medium-sized church, built on four columns, is based on rough stone and lime mortar masonry, in accordance with the construction technique of most Albanian churches.

A portal made of finely hewn stones draws attention to the architecture of the church, with the west portal of the church being the only feature that distinguishes it from similar buildings. The portal is

made of white stones and framed by a belt decorated with unusual patterns.

THE CHURCH OF ST. MARY (13th century), Taghaser village

The Church of St. Mary is located in the Taghaser village of the Khojavand district. The ruins of the church are on the hill to the west of Taghaser village. The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan has listed it as a monument of national importance, and it is located on the right bank of Kondalanchay, near Tugh and Bina villages, on the top of Taghaser mountain, inside the forest. This historically significant region was once one of Karabakh's administrative centres. The temple is located near the Ktishvang fortress, which is a rare example of Caucasian Albanian architecture.



*Ruins of the Church of St. Mary,
Taghaser village*



According to the building inscription, it has been determined that the church was restored in 1635. According to Barkhudaryan, this building in the Upper Taghaser area is a religious building dating back to the 13th century, and it is believed that the remains (sacred fragments) of Apostle Thaddeus were buried here (Бархударян, 1895, s. 87). The church had two construction inscriptions, both of which are placed inside the portal tympanum. The inscriptions indicate that the church was built with the participation of the villagers, near the site of an older, smaller church.

The church is 15 by 5.3 metres in size, with a simple rectangular floor layout. There is an altar apse with an arched roof and two small auxiliary rooms in the eastern part of the prayer hall. The building was built entirely of local stones. Only the remains of the defensive walls that surrounded the northern side of the complex have survived to the present day.

The Church of St. Mary is a basilica with four pylons. Only a half-destroyed church building has survived to the present day, from the narthex of the church, which was large and had an arched ceiling and two-sided roof. There are auxiliary rooms on both sides of the eastern apse. Rough-hewn basalt stones and lime mortar were used in the masonry of the wall. Besides ordinary stones, ancient tombstones and cross-stones were also used in the masonry. There are the ruins of two more buildings on the south and west sides of the church. The church, located at the foot of the hill, is surrounded by mulberry and walnut groves.

SAINT GRIGORIS CHURCH (17th century), Zavadig village

St. Grigoris Church is an Albanian monument located in the village of Zavadig in the Khojavand district. The name of the village of Zavadig is written as 'Tsovategh' in an inscription found in the Khudavang temple, dating back to 1182. A source from 1727 states that the village of Zavadig belonged to the Kochaz region of Upper Karabakh.

The inscription found in the church of St. Grigoris in the territory of Zavadig village provides information about the construction date of the monument. According to the inscription, the church was built in 1667-1676 by the order of Petros IV, Catholicos of the Albanian Apostolic Church. Petros IV, the Albanian Catholicos, is listed among the Albanian Catholicoi in the Ganjasar monastery. The inscription on the monument says that the church was used as a summer residence of the Amaras monastery. The building housed several valuable cross-stones, historical manuscripts, and artefacts.

The church is a cross-domed basilica with four pylons and is typical of the architecture of Caucasian Albania in the early Middle Ages. The low drum of the dome is almost invisible in the cross-shaped outer volume. Well-hewn stone blocks were used in the masonry of the church walls. The three-nave prayer hall with an arched roof cover is 19.24 m long, 13.63 m wide, and 8 m high. The church resembles the features of the chapel of St. Grigoris in the monastery of Amaras in terms of relative dimensions, but it is smaller. An arched ceiling and the two-sided roof that covers it, stand on four pylons and the arches connecting them. The best-preserved parts of the interior are the columns, window frames and door frames.



Albanian temple, Kandkhurd village



Basilica, Chiraguz village

The church was used as a warehouse during the Soviet era, and the altar was destroyed during that period.

**ALBANIAN TEMPLE,
Kandkhurd village**

There is an Albanian architectural monument in the Kandkhurd village in Khojavand. The temple, with its entrance door on the western side, has a double-layered roof. This ancient Albanian monument was rendered useless following the occupation of the village of Kandkhurd by the Armenian Armed Forces in 1992. It was then destroyed in 2000, and the original architectural structure was completely changed.

**BASILICA,
Chiraguz village**

This Albanian monument in Chiraguz village, which was built on the foundation of an older building, was restored in 1742. The length of the monument is 12.8 metres, the width is 9.8 metres, and the height is 5 metres. The entrance door is on the west side, and the top is covered with double-pitched stones. Armenian nationalists destroyed the monument following the occupation of the territory in 1992.



Albanian temple, Aghjakand village



Albanian temple, Atagud village

**ALBANIAN TEMPLE,
Aghjakand**

This temple is located in Aghjakand, which belongs to the administrative region of Kohne Taghlar in the Khojavand district. The village of Aghjakand, located at the foot of the Karabakh Range, was occupied by the Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia in 1993. It was liberated by the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan on 20 October 2020.

**ALBANIAN TEMPLE,
Atagud village**

There was a temple from the Caucasian Albanian period near the villages of Atagud and Darakand in the Khojavand district. This ancient Albanian temple was destroyed by the Armenian Armed Forces in 1991.

**Fortresses and castles
THE PALACE OF DIZAK MELIKS
(18th century), Tugh village**

Tugh village was the main village of the Dizak region, which included the Fuzuli and Jabrayil regions and was the residence of the Dizak princes.

The Dizak melikdom is one of the five melikdoms separated from the descendants of Hasan Jalal, the prince of Albanian-Khachen since the 15th





*Palace of the Dizak Meliks
(18th century), Tugh village*



*Residence of the Dizak Melikdom,
portal with the inscription of the reception room*

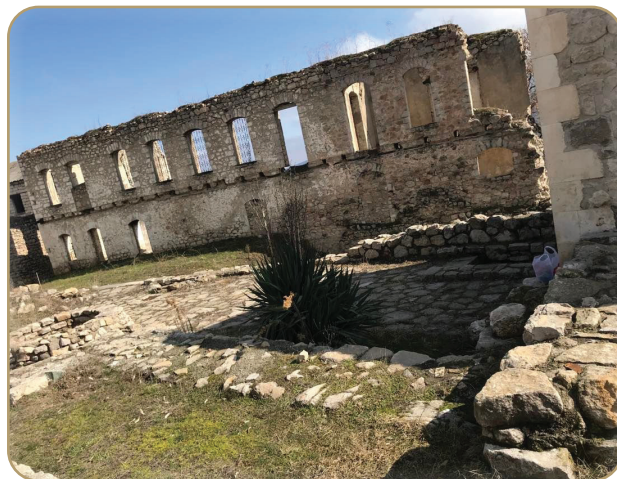
century. In the 15th century, Hasan Jalal's dynasty received the title of "Melik" from Jahan Shah Qara Qoyunlu. Later, the title "Melik" was added to the surnames of representatives of generations of the Albanian meliks (Melik-Yeganov, Melikaslanov, Melikabbasov, etc.). Albanians who received the title of Melik were not only in Karabakh, but also in Iravan, Syunik, and Shaki. Later, Hasan Jalal's dynasty was divided into five Albanian melikdoms: Khachen, Gulustan, Chilaburd, Varanda, and Dizak.

The Dizak melikdom, like other Albanian melikdoms, was part of the Safavid state, Nadir Shah Afshar, and later the Karabakh Khanate. Although the Meliks of Dizak enjoyed special privileges during Nadir Shah's reign, these were revoked by Panahali Khan during the Karabakh Khanate. In 1781, Ibrahim Khalil khan took over the management of the Dizak melikdom from Melik Esayi and gave it to Bahtam.

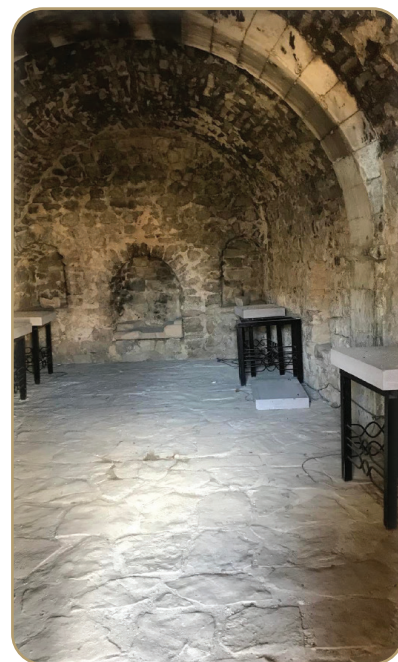
The Albanian meliks of Tugh village ruled the Dizak region from the 18th century on. From then until the beginning of the 19th century, Albanian meliks including Melik Yegan (1737-1744), Aram (1744-1745), Esayi (1745-1781), Avag Melikyeganli (1781-1785), Vakhtang Melikyeganli (1785-1789), Abbas Melikyeganli (1789-1805), and Aslan Bey Melikyeganli (1805-1822) ruled Dizak region. Modern generations of Albanian lineage included the Melikyeganovs descended from the dynasty of Melik Yegan (1737-1744), the Melikaslanovs from the dynasty of Aslan Bey Melikyeganli (1805-1822), and the Melikabbasovs from the dynasty of Abbas Melikyeganli (1789-1805). Representatives of the Albanian Melik lineage, such as Rza bey Melikyeganov and Khudat bey Melikaslanov from the Melik dynasty in Tugh village, were



The first floor of the palace is reminiscent of classic residential buildings.



Remains of the residence of the Dizak Melikdom, Tugh village, Khojavand, 2022



representatives of the Albanian Melik lineage. They were prominent socio-political figures in Azerbaijan and among the founders of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic.

The Palace of the Dizak Meliks was located in the centre of the Tugh village in the 18th century. Even though the Armenians made significant changes to the building's architecture during their 30-year occupation, this historical and architectural monument has managed to maintain its original appearance to this day. The palace is regarded as one of the period's most beautiful examples of civil architecture.

The palace complex of the Dizak meliks is rectangular in shape, with dimensions of 38 by 13.24 metres. There are remains of the fortress walls on both the north and south-east sides of the palace. The artistic-architectural characteristics of the complex's buildings, as well as examples of epigraphy, indicate that its various parts were constructed at different times. The first floor of the main palace building was built in the 18th century, and the second floor in the 19th century. However, the palace complex was most likely built on the site of older buildings.

Melik Yegan's two-story reception room is located in the southern part of the palace, 25 metres away from fortress walls. The room has survived to date, keeping its original appearance. The entrance tympanum of the reception room was built from well-hewn, highly artistic stones. There was an inscription on the portal above the entrance door of the reception room of the complex, indicating that the reception room of the palace was built by Melik Yegan in 1737. The text of the inscription indicates that Melik Yegan received the title of Melik from

the Safavid rulers Soltan Hoseyn and Tahmasp II during the Safavid state. The inscription reads: "... I, Melik Yegan, ... served Shah Soltan Hoseyn and Shah Tahmasp during the turmoil in the country, and he confirmed me as Melik. Then the Ottoman arrived and took the throne from him. I also served him... the mighty Nader Shah arrived with his troops and took the country from the Ottoman. I also served him, and he honoured me by declaring me the beylerbey over six Christian provinces, Talish, Chilaburd, Khachen, Varanda, Kochaz, and Dizak".

The inscription on the gravestone of Melik Yegan, dated 1744, reads: This is the grave of the brave king named Yegan, the son of Vardapet the Pious, the great Melik. Everyone, including Nader Shah, loved him. He ruled in the Artsakh province of the Albanian country (Бархударян, 1895, s. 75).

The reception room's first floor was entirely under the ground, at basement level, and had an underground passage. The rooms on the palace's first floor resemble traditional residential houses with arched ceilings. These rooms are without a doubt the oldest structures in the palace. The windows and doors of the rooms on the first floor have stone frames, and there is a fireplace and deep niches inside the rooms, revealing that the building was domestic in nature.

The rooms on the second story were constructed later, in the 19th century, and based on their layout features, they are reminiscent of traditional houses in Tugh. On the second floor of the reception hall are living rooms with large window frames, and wide, multi-columned balconies surrounding them on three sides.

The guest and living rooms of the palace were arranged in three directions, some of them having direct access to the palace yard. The north-eastern section of the palace has two rooms on the first floor and a wide hall with a balcony on the second floor.

The building on the west side of the rectangular yard had a facade covered with well-hewn stones and a columned balcony. The columned balcony constructed at the yard's highest point has stone stairs that lead down to the yard. This balcony was also used as a tribune during palace events. The stone stairs leading down from the balcony on the second floor also connect the building with the palace yard, despite the fact that the main entrance is on the west side of the building.

The largest hall of the palace building is on the right of the main entrance staircase, and there are three doors. The main door is on the west wall, while the other two doors are on the east. The palace's guest room is positioned high above all other buildings, above the main entrance staircase. Beautiful views of the entire surrounding area can be seen from the balcony in the room.

White and yellowish limestones from a quarry in the Fuzuli district were used to build the palace complex, together with well-hewn grey basalt stones.

From 1885 on, the Tugh school functioned in one of the buildings included in the Palace Complex of the Dizak Meliks. Mirmehdi Khazani, a well-known writer and poet of his time, taught at this school. His grave from 1894 is located in a cemetery on the top of a high mountain, some distance from Tugh village.

The Armenians altered the architecture of the residence of the Dizak Melikdom and demolished

the entrance door during the occupation, carrying out several illegal construction works there.

KTISH FORTRESS (7th century), Tugh village

The Ktish Fortress is located near Tugh village on the top of Tokhasar Mountain, in front of the Gtichavank Church. The precise construction date of this magnificent fortress, which has survived to this day, is unknown. The name of the Ktish Fortress first appeared in sources when the Caliphate occupied the territories of Azerbaijan. Legend has it that the fortress, named Ktish since it was near the Gtichavank Monastery, was the residence of the Albanian king Esayi Abu Muse, who was the ruler of Beylagan. According to Kaghankatvatsi, Abu Muse was a descendant of Caucasian Albanians.

Like other Albanian kings, Abu Muse first allied with Babek in the fight against the Caliphate, later deserting as he weakened. When the Arabs sent troops to defeat Abu Muse, who had maintained his rebellious position, he took a defensive position in the Ktish Fortress, which was 10 parasangs from Beylagan (Ət-Təbəri, III, səh. 1416). Abdullah, Babak's brother, took refuge at the Ktish Fortress following the collapse of Babak Fort.

The Ktish Fortress was the centre of the Dizak Melikdom from the 10th century on. According to Barkhudaryan, Melik Esayi, the Melik of Dizak, fought and defeated Ibrahim Chirkhan in this fortress. The author wrote that the Tugh meliks restored the Ktish Fortress alongside the fortress walls that encircled Tugh village and the Tugh Fortress (Бархударян, 1895, II).



Albanian temple, Malikjanli village

The fortress is located in a highly advantageous strategic position, surrounded by steep rocks on four sides with only a very narrow path leading to it. Arab chronicler Masudi described the Ktish Fortress in his book as follows: “The Ktish Fortress was truly an inaccessible fortress. Its top was in the clouds, and the mountain’s hard and steep slopes were covered with forest. A narrow path that was difficult to pass led to the fortress” (Bünyadov, 2005).

The path mentioned in the source was not actually the only way to the fortress, as there was a secret underground road dug into the rocks to the north of the fortress. The underground road is a distinctive feature of fortresses in Karabakh and can be seen in other contemporary fortresses in the

region, including Lachin Fortress, Lekh Fortress, and Galaboynu Fortress.

KURATAGH FORTRESS, Dudukchu village

The Kuratagh Fortress is a historical-architectural monument located in a mountainous area near the village of Khojavand district.

There is an uninterrupted view of the surrounding areas from the fortress, which is built in a high area that is difficult to access. The fortress is surrounded by steep rocks on three sides and is connected to the surroundings by a single road, and there is an entrance door located between two towers at the fortress’s highest point.

The territory of the Kuratagh Fortress has a smoothed relief and an area of 300 m². In the fortress area was a large stone pool, which was used as a water reservoir. The direction of the remains of earthenware pipes near the fortress made it clear that the water was discharged into the pool from the spring on the south side of the fortress.

The fortress has survived to the present day in a state of severe disrepair. Remains of the fortress walls and semi-circular towers remain in the area, and the fortress has an unsmooth quadrangular shape due to the territorial relief that was considered when building the fortress walls, which once surrounded the main complex.



Albanian temple, Edilli village



Albanian temple, Sur village



Albanberd church, Garakand village



Albanian church, Gunashli village

TARTAR DISTRICT



The Tartar district, located in the Karabakh Plain, is an important administrative territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The district is located on the banks of high-flow rivers such as the Tartar and Khachenchay, both of which are referenced in ancient literature. During the Middle Ages, the district, which included the western section of the Kur-Araz plains, was a critical point on the historic caravan route.

The district was historically known as Chaparkhana (roadside station), and it was located at the intersection of several significant trade routes from the Middle Ages. This reflected the historical position of the district. Specifically, previously, there was a caravanserai and a fortress in Tartar on the ancient caravan route. Located seventeen kilometres from Barda, the former capital of the Albanian state, the modern city of Tartar covers the right and left banks of the Tartar River.

The territory of Tartar was subordinated to the Javanshir Uyezd in 1920-1922, to the Aghdam district in 1923-1929, and to the Karabakh district in 1929-1930. In 1930, a separate Tartar district was established, then re-established in 1934, having been administratively subordinate to the Barda district in 1931.

The district's name was changed to Mirbashir during the Soviet era in 1949, but it was once again given its original name in 1991. The Aghdara district was abolished in 1992 by the resolution of the Milli Majlis of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and the Aghdara settlement and 28

villages of the Aghdara district were included in the Tartar district's administrative structure.

The Armenian Armed Forces occupied the villages of Sugovushan, Talish, and Chayli in the Tartar district between 1993 and 2020. The villages of Sugovushan and Talish, as well as the village of Chayli in the Tartar district, were liberated from occupation as a result of military operations carried out by the Azerbaijani army for the liberation of territories on October 3 and October 9, 2020, respectively. Now, out of the 26 settlements that were transferred from the Aghdara district to the Tartar district, with the exception of the Shikharkh settlement and the villages of Chayli, Hasangaya, Talish, and Sugovushan, the other two settlements (Giziloba and Seysulan) are on the contact line, and eighteen of them are temporarily under the control of Russian peacekeepers.

The settlements of the Tartar district, including historical monuments, were significantly damaged due to the aggression of the Armenian Armed Forces during the occupation. The fate of the historical, cultural, and religious monuments that are currently under the control of peacekeepers is unknown.

The Tartar district, one of the most scenic corners of Karabakh, is a region rich in historical and cultural monuments. Located where the mountain meets the valley, it is regarded as one of Azerbaijan's most ancient settlements. In this territory, Borsunlu kurgans that date back to the early 3rd millennium BC, the Bronze Age, and the first Iron Age, have been found. The historical monuments and cultural heritage of Azerbaijan located in the frontline territories were damaged during Armenia's occupation of Azerbaijani territories. Due to their proximity to the contact line, the Borsunlu kurgans were nearly impossible



Sugovushan village, Tartar

to protect. During the First Karabakh War, the Juma Mosque, an architectural monument of the 20th century, was severely damaged.

Like other Albanian monuments in the Karabakh territory, the Christian monuments of the Tartar district were falsified and vandalised.

Albanian monuments in the Tartar district

- St. Elishe Monastery (12th century), between the villages of Tapakand and Sugovushan

- Urekvank Monastery, Talish village
- Temple, Chardagli village
- Three Infants Monastery, Chilaburd village
- Jaraberd/Chilaburd monastery, Chilaburd village
- Dutakan Albanian Church (12th century)

Palaces and fortresses

- Jaraberd/Chilaburd Fortress, Chilaburd village
- Palace of Gulustan Meliks, Talish village
- Gulustan Fortress

ST. ELISHE MONASTERY (5th century), Sugovushan, Tapakand

St. Elishe Monastery is located on the banks of the Tartar River between the villages of Sugovushan (the village was known as Madagiz until 2020) and Tapakand (the village was called Tonashen by the

Armenians during the occupation). The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan listed this historical-architectural complex as a monument of national importance.



St. Elishe Monastery Complex (5th century), Tapakand

In honour of the Albanian St. Elishe, who significantly contributed to the spread of Christianity in Caucasian Albania, numerous temples were constructed in the Shaki, Gabala, Khojavand, and Tartar districts of Azerbaijan. One of them that has survived to the present day is the St. Elishe Monastery Complex in the Tartar district.

The St. Elishe Monastery Complex was constructed in a mountainous area with a complicated relief in an inaccessible location, 2000 metres above sea level. The monastery is on the top of a high mountain in one of the foothills of the Murov Mountain Range, surrounded by steep rocks and a dense forest. On three sides, the complex is surrounded by resilient fortress walls. Only a few narrow paths on the southern side may be used to climb the high hill for access.

The monastery named after St. Elishe was an ancient place of worship even before the spread of Christianity. According to sources, this ancient building was previously called the land of Ners Mihra. "The History of the Albanians," by Albanian author Movses Kaghankatvatsi, makes it clear that the temple was once included in the Ners Mihra brethren, after whom the church was named. After carrying some of St. Elishe's relics from the Urekvank Monastery in the Talish village of the Tartar district to this location, Vachagan III constructed a monastery in honour of St. Elishe in a high area.

Kaghankatvatsi's information makes it evident that this monastery was one of the early Albanian Christian buildings: "Although the bones and skull of St. Elishe, who founded Christianity and was martyred in the Zargun Valley, were first carried to Urekan (Urekvank – M.P.), afterwards the bones





*Chapels included in the
St. Elishe Monastery Complex*

were brought to the holy Nersmehr (present Jrvstik) Church (the St. Elishe Monastery — M.P.).” After many years, the Albanian King, Vachagan III the Pious, built a column (house of worship — M.P.) in the trench where the bones of the martyr were discovered (Kalankatuklu, 1861, I k., 7 f.). Therefore, the monastery was first known as Ners Mihra, then Jrvstik, and later as the St. Elishe Monastery.

Vachagan III the Pious, the ruler of Albania in the 5th century, paid great attention to the construction of churches. During his reign, Caucasian Albania’s largest churches and monasteries were constructed. The St. Elishe Monastery Complex holds a special place among these buildings.

According to Barkhudaryan, who carried out the first research on the monument in the 19th century, the church, which is shaped like an arched hall, “...dates back to a very ancient time, its architecture is simple, and its height is unusually high (Бархударян, 1895, s. 23). The information provided by Barkhudaryan indicates that one of the chapels in the monastery housed the grave of the Albanian ruler, Vachagan the Pious (487-510) (Бархударян, 1895, s.247). Barkhudaryan stated that there was a cross-stone in the territory of the monastery that was rich both in terms of its antiquity and architecture, and according to its inscription, the stone belonged to King Vachagan III (Бархударян, 1895, s.247).

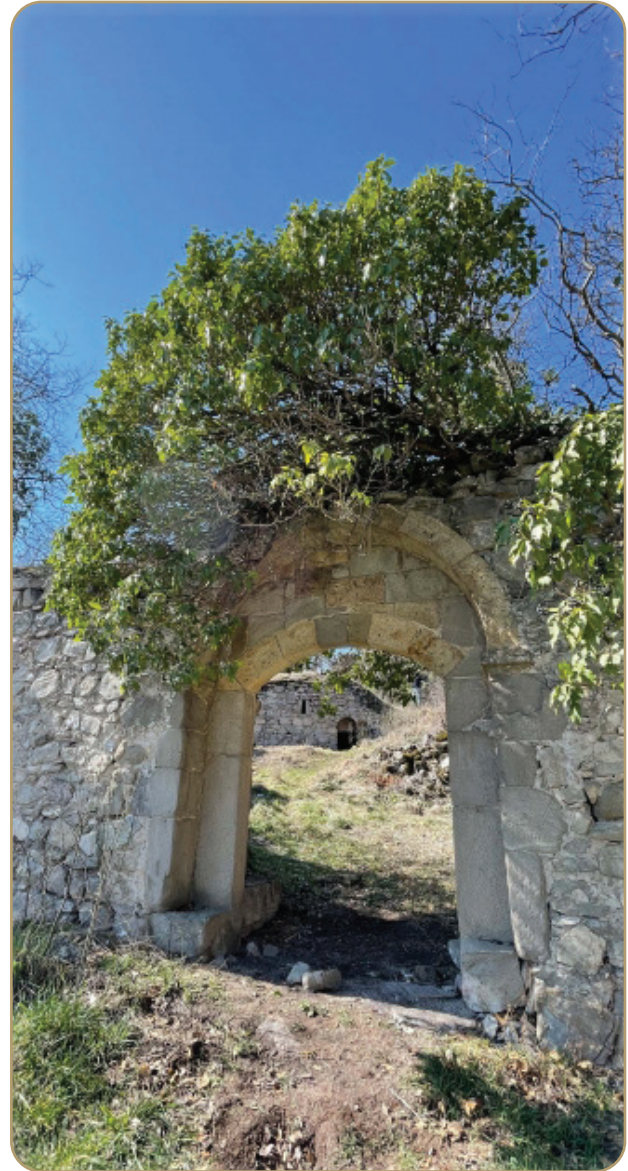
As early as in the Soviet era, in 1970, a group of employees of the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan SSR carried out research to find the grave of the Albanian ruler, Vachagan the Pious, in the St. Elishe Monastery. The expedition planned to conduct archaeological research in

the monastery's area, record the inscriptions on the monuments and, most importantly, find the grave of Vachagan the Pious. According to Rashid Goyushov, the archaeologist who led the expedition, "...this temple was built in honour of Elishe, the first preacher of Christianity in Albania, and also the Albanian King, Vachagan the Pious, was buried here." The findings of the archaeological research revealed that the monastery was constructed in the 11th century, although it is actually an older building, constructed over a temple that was destroyed in the 9th and 10th centuries.

Older buildings existed at the location, according to the inscriptions found in the monastery area. The inscription engraved on the wall of the main church reads: "I, Archdeacon Serob, built the church of the holy apostle on the previous foundation in this holy place."

In order to discover the ancient building on the foundation of the church, archaeological excavations were conducted near the eastern wall of the main church. Numerous ancient building remnants and domestic items were discovered as a result of the excavations, from which it was determined that the St. Elishe Temple is a three-nave basilica with a length of 8.7 metres. The temple's eastern side ends with a horseshoe-shaped altar apse, and there are places for the priest's robes to be kept at the end of the side naves of the basilica.

According to historical information, the monastery was built in the fifth century. The earliest epigraphic inscription in the monastery complex dates back to the 12th century, despite archaeological research confirming that a new monastery complex was constructed in the 11th century on the site



The monastery complex is surrounded by defensive walls.



Interior of St. Elishe Monastery

of the ancient building of the temple, which was destroyed in the 9th and 10th centuries. The building was constructed in 1264, according to the inscription on the tympanum of the church. The main church building of the monastery complex was reconstructed using the stones from the old church (Мамедова, s. 106). According to the inscriptions, large-scale construction work was carried out here during the Principality of Khachen between the 12th and 13th centuries, including the construction of a large main church building, six smaller churches, and several houses and farm buildings.

The monastery complex consists of a cathedral church, seven chapels, residential and farm buildings, strong defensive walls, a cemetery, and several other buildings. Chapels were placed at equal distances on either side of the church: three on the south side and four on the north side. Hall churches with arched ceilings and basilica-style religious buildings were mainly constructed during the 11th and 14th centuries. These buildings were primarily village churches, small temples, chapels, and narthexes included in large monastery complexes. The chapels included in the Elishe Monastery are among this type of building.

One of the most common distinguishing characteristics of Caucasian Albanian architecture is the rectangular altar apses. Such altars may also be found in Gtichavank, Khudavang, Seven Churches, Khatiravang, and other complexes in addition to the St. Elishe Monastery. It should be noted that St. Elishe Monastery is nearly identical in terms of layout to the Elishe Temple in the Kish village of the Shaki district, and the Elishe Temple in the Oghuz district.

The largest altar is located on the church's south side. Pilasters separate the building's internal volume, which has a rectangular shape, into two sections (Мамедова, 2004, s.106). The first section, which has a square floor layout (3.65x3.70 m), is covered with a semi-circular arched ceiling. The second section includes two semi-circular apses with equal-sized arched roofs, and is raised 40 cm above the ground. A small window on the east wall illuminates each of the apses, and there are two niches on the southern and northern walls. The chapel, which is the farthest from the church on the north side, also bears a similar design. There are no niches in the apses of this building, which is smaller in size than the first chapel (2 by 72 by 4.60 m). Generally, all the chapels were built using rough-hewn stones (Мамедова, 2004, s. 106).



Interior of St. Elishe Monastery

The church is shaped like a rectangle with sides measuring 4 by 8 meters (Мамедова, 2004, s. 106). The eastern side of the church, where the altar is located, is raised 60 cm above the ground level, and has a semi-circular internal shape (Мамедова, 2004, s.106). The masonry of its walls, which were made of rough stones in accordance with the construction method of the majority of Albanian churches, may currently be seen to contain older square-shaped stones with archaic architectural details. There are two entrance doors on the south and west sides of the main church building, measuring 10 by 5.8 metres.

St. Elishe Church, the monastery's main church, was designed in a manner reminiscent of early mediaeval Caucasian Albanian basilicas, particularly the Gavurgala and Mingachevir churches, with an altar apse of the same width as the hall, no supporting arches, and two entrance doors (Мамедова, 2004, s.106). Without a doubt, St. Elishe Church was constructed on the foundation of an older church from the early Middle Ages, replicating its architectural elements (Мамедова, 2004, s.106).

A four-columned rotunda made of polished stone rises above the main church's double-sloping roof. The church includes a large prayer hall and a square-shaped room with columns that top out with cylindrical arches. Two pylons hold up the roof of the building, which has a square floor plan.

Numerous renovation and reconstruction works have been carried out on the monastery complex, and the monastery's main church underwent numerous construction and restoration works over the centuries. Large-scale construction work was carried out during the reign of Khachen Principality,

and the main church building and chapels, as well as the residential and farm buildings were constructed.

All of the chapels were constructed with local hewn stones. The two-apsed chapels of the complex are unlike anything found in either the architecture of the Caucasian Albania or the architecture of the nearby countries (Мамедова, 2004, s. 107). The chapels were renovated several times and used as tombs or crypts, and there are dozens of ancient graves inside and around the church. The grave of Vachagan III is in one of the tombs, the Chilaburd Melik, King Atam's is in the second, and Bishop Maliksat's is in another.

In later times, the St. Elishe Monastery had a significant impact on the political and cultural life of both Caucasian Albania and the Karabakh principalities of Albanian origin. There are numerous historical monuments, ancient gravestones including cross-stones from various periods, and graves from the 13th century and later inside and outside the monastery complex. The grave of Melik Adam, an outstanding melik from the Chilaburd district, is also located here.

During the 30-year occupation, the Armenians attempted to use this monument for their political agenda, which was to distort Caucasian Albanian history. The Armenians destroyed the grave of the Albanian King, Vachagan III, that once existed in the monastery, and placed interpretations of Gregorian crosses in various locations inside the temple. However, the state of Azerbaijan, which liberated the Motherland from occupation, also liberated this monastery and numerous other historical and religious buildings.

UREKVANK MONASTERY (13th century), Talish village

In the 18th and 19th centuries, the Talish village of the Tartar district served as the centre of the Gulustan melikdom. The 13th-century Urekvank Monastery, an Albanian Christian monastery complex, is located in the north of Talish village in a forested location in the heart of the mountains. The historical literature refers to this complex as 'Urek,' 'Urekan,' and 'Glokhavank.'

The date of construction of the church building was 1279, according to an inscription on the tympanum of the semi-arched portal on the church's entrance door (Мамедова, 2004 s.41). The narthex building was constructed in 1284, according to another inscription on the tympanum of the narthex portal. Elkhan Abaqa Khan II, the son of Hulagu Khan, is mentioned in the inscription, along with the fact that the narthex was constructed during his reign.



A number of ancient cross-stones were used to build the walls of the Urekvank Monastery.



Liberated Talish village, 2021

The construction of this church dates back to the 13th century according to an inscription found in the monastery complex, but sources suggest that it was built earlier. The church was restored on the foundations of an earlier building from the 5th century, and there are cross-stones from various times on the church's walls. The 7th-century Albanian chronicler, Kaghankatvatsi, mentioned the name of the Urekvank Monastery in his book "The History of the Albanians." The author of historical works on Albania also provided information on the burial of the remains of St. Elishe, who established the first Christian church in Caucasian Albania. According to the book of Kaghankatvatsi, a priest by the name of Stepanos from Urekan took the skull from among St. Elishe's bones and brought it to Urekan (Urekvank). Later, the people took St. Elishe's remains and placed



*Urekvank Monastery
(13th century), Talish village*

them in the village of Urekan, which is where the priest brought his skull (Kalankatuklu, 1861, I k., 7 f.). Barkhudaryan claimed that the skull was taken to the Urekvank Monastery and buried there during the rule of Vachagan III, based on this information. According to the source, it was buried under the altar of the Urekvank Church, and the other remains were buried in the monastery erected by Vachagan III in honour of the apostle (Бархударян, 1895).

The complex, which was encircled by the fortress walls, included a church, a bell tower, a narthex, a large monastic cemetery, and a number of partially ruined buildings. The Urekvank Monastery was occasionally looted, like other temples in the territory, but each time, it was repaired and rebuilt.

The Urekvank Monastery was erected in the style of a single-nave basilica, which is typical of Albanian architectural tradition, although its dimensions decreased over time. It should be noted that the dimensions of arched hall churches were smaller than those of the single-nave basilicas that existed prior to the Arab conquests, which marked a turning point for Caucasian Albania. This was due to the loss of the statehood of Christianity in Caucasian Albania, the sharp decline in the number of worshippers, and the gradual de-ethnicization of the Albanian population. The religious architecture of Caucasian Albania was impacted by all of this. The Christian religious architecture in the territory of the former Caucasian Albania was mostly concentrated in particularly mountainous areas during the reign of the Caliphate in the region. The majority of Albanian monuments were simpler, less attractive, and smaller, and indeed, Urekvank Church and its narthexes are quite simple, architecturally speaking.

The church building is 7.60 metres long, 4.35 metres wide, and the narthex is 7.75 metres long and 7 metres wide (Бархударян, 1861, II к, 241). The monastery's cathedral church is one of the churches with a rectangular apse, and the building itself is gloomy, narrow, small, and clearly a very ancient structure, according to the information provided by Barkhudaryan about the monastery in the 19th century (Бархударян, 1861, II, 241). Churches with rectangular altars, which were discovered among the early mediaeval hall churches of Caucasian Albania, spread later and became a distinguishing characteristic of Albanian church architecture.

The monastery's church building includes a single-nave hall. Using the older church's basement and remaining structural components, a new church was constructed on its foundation in the 13th century. The church was restored on the basis of the apse dating back to the 5th century. When the new church was built, the artistically ornamented stones from the older church were used as construction materials in the wall masonry, and numerous cross-stones were used in the building of the Urekvank Monastery's window frames and walls.

The altar apse maintained its original architectural design despite construction and reconstruction work carried out in the Urekvank Church at various times (Мамедова, 2004, s.41). Because St. Elishe's remains were buried in the altar, this area of the church was preserved. Kaghankatvatsi describes the burial of the relics of St. Elishe, the first illuminator of Caucasian Albania, on the altar.



A structure associated with the St. Elishe Monastery Complex



A structure associated with the St. Elishe Monastery Complex



Talish village, relics of a temple



Around the monastery complex, there are cross-stones from different periods and tombstones from the 13th and subsequent centuries.

A double-sided roof covers the ceiling of the church building, which is held up by arches that are directly attached to the walls. The rectangular prayer hall's shape is archaic and quite unique. The square-shaped apse is positioned above the hall, with a basement underneath. With stairs on both sides, it occupies nearly half of the hall. A long, narrow narthex measuring 7.6 by 4.3 metres was constructed adjacent to the church building, and a dome-shaped roof completes the square-shaped building of the narthex, which measures 7 by 7.5 metres. In the church building, there are the remains of monastic cells. The narthex also served as the crypt for the monastery's bishops, and the gravestones there were embellished with a variety of artistically crafted ornaments and inscriptions. The monastery's bell tower was constructed in the 17th century. This small, basic building is attached to the narthex building on the west side.

In keeping with the construction methods of the majority of Albanian churches, the church was built using rough stone and lime mortar. Only the entrance and window frames were made of well-hewn stone in the buildings that made up the complex; the walls were constructed from huge blocks of limestone that were rough-hewn.

There are cross-stones from various times on the church's walls. Additionally, the northern yard of the monastery is lined with dozens of cross-stones dating from the 13th century and later. According to Barkhudaryan, the monastery's surroundings are embellished with headstones with beautiful ornamentation and cross-stones (244). Drawings of horsemen, religious figures, musicians, various domestic scenes, and geometric and floral patterns were all engraved on these monuments.

A half-destroyed tomb has remained to this day in the monastery's large cemetery, with two large, flat stone slabs inside. The monastic cemetery includes gravestones with rich ornaments, and the gravestones here have a height of two metres or more, and a width of more than one metre. Many bishops and deacons were buried in the cemetery, according to Barkhudaryan, as well as the gravestones of Sarukhan Bey, Melik Beyler, and General Shamil Khan from the 19th century (Бархударян, 1895, s. 245).

ALBANIAN CHURCH (13th century), Umudlu village

The Umudlu village, where the monument is located, is one of the villages included in the Tartar district following the abolition of the Aghdara district in 1992. The 13th-century Albanian temple is located at the foot of Murovdag, north of the Sarsang Reservoir, in a heavily forested location to the north of the Umudlu village. The complex was entirely destroyed during the occupation.

THREE INFANTS MONASTERY (17th century), Tapakand

The Three Infants Monastery is located in the territory of Tapakand village, which was named 'Tonashen' by the Armenians during the occupation of the Tartar district. According to Barkhudaryan's writings from the 19th century, the people of this village were from the Chilaburd district (Бархударян, 1895, s.95). This historical and architectural monument is in a forest area

near Murovdag, seven kilometres from Chilaburd Fortress.

This monument, one of the late Middle Ages monasteries built in Karabakh, was established in 1691 in the Chilaburd district. According to Barkhudaryan, the inscription on the temple's facade states that the church was established in 1664 in honour of Jesus Christ. An inscription at the church's entrance stated that the monastery was established in 1691 during the reign of Sultan Suleiman, by the Albanian Catholic Simeon (Бархударян, II, s. 244-245). According to Barkhudaryan, there are the ruins of an ancient monastery near the church, as well as four ancient graves under the church altar (Бархударян, s.95).

The main church of the Three Infants Monastery was constructed with the support of the Shah of Safavid, also known as Sam Mirza, Shah Safi II, or Suleiman, according to an inscription found in the monastery's area (1666-1694). The church's inscription reveals that construction began in 1691 and was completed in 1694. The church was built with the financial support of Simeon VI, Catholicos of the Albanian Apostle Church, as well as his brother, Archimandrite Ignatius, and visitors, according to the building inscription.

There were cross-stones dated 1571, 1620, and 1745 on the walls of the Three Infants Monastery, one of which was built by Malik Shahnazar's wife, as indicated by the written inscription (Бархударян, 1895, s.95). There were also Albanian cross-stones with artistic descriptions from various eras in the monastery's area.



Three Infants Monastery (17th century), Tapakand, Tartar

The main rectangular church building is a domed basilica with three asymmetrically constructed naves. The dome rests on four beautiful columns and is supported by semi-bearing arches. The portal tympanum's entire surface is adorned with delicate patterns and the prayer hall is large and light, measuring 13.5 by 9.5 metres. There is an altar-apse on the eastern side of the hall, and two-story rectangular auxiliary rooms on both sides of the apse. The second-floor rooms of the Gtichavank Monastery's main church have doors that open onto the apse, from which stairs go to the second-floor rooms, just as is the case with the two-story auxiliary rooms of that building. There are seven niches on the side walls of the semi-circular altar.

There is a place for the baptismal font on the north side of the prayer hall, near the altar. The church's original door, the upper part of the dome shaped like a cap, and the floor covering constructed

of hewn stones have all survived in their original aesthetic. It is known from the inscription on the southern pylon that the pylons of the hall were initially cross-shaped. However, during the next restoration in the 18th century, the two eastern pylons were changed into squares.

The dome of the monastery's main church is typically found on the west side of the prayer hall, rather than in the middle. Not only is there asymmetry in the dome's structure, but in the decorative elements and the windows on the north and south walls. The church's only door is on the south wall.

The dome and the upper parts of the complex's facade were constructed using well-hewn, yellowish-white stones, while the remaining walls were constructed using ordinary greyish-blue stones. Although the monastery's domestic structures,

including the design and architectural elements of the monastic cells, are reminiscent of the Great Arran Monastery near the Kolatak village of Kalbajar, it has a larger area and dimensions. There is a fireplace and windows in all the monastic cells.

The church served as one of the main strongholds for the Albanian Christian Council of Karabakh during the late Middle Ages, as it fought to defend the autocephaly of the Albanian Church from the pressures of the Armenian Gregorian Church.

REMAINS OF THE KALANKAT SETTLEMENT, Chardagli village

An ancient Albanian settlement known as Kalankat or Kalankatuk was located in the Uti province of Caucasian Albania. It is an ancient settlement known as the motherland of Movses Kaghankatvatsi, the author of "The History of the Albanians." In his book "Kitab al-Masalik wa-l-Mamalik," (The Book of Roads and Kingdoms), the Arab historian Al-Istakhri described this village as one of the major stations on the Barda-Dabil Road. The village is located nine parasangs (or roughly sixty-two kilometres) from Barda, according to the author, who called it 'Kalkutus.'

Now, the village's ruins are located near Chardagli village in the Tartar district, where it is supposed there was an early mediaeval church or monastery. It is mentioned that a Kalankat clergyman attended the Aguen Church Assembly in the 5th century (Kalankatli, I, s. 26). Even the name of this monastery is linked to the pseudonym of the Albanian author, Kaghankatvatsi (Мамедова, 2005, s.32).



An anthropomorphic deity and boteh-ornamented cross-stone in the monastery area

DUTAKAN ALBANIAN CHURCH (12th century),

Between the villages of Talish and Sugovushan

The ruins of the Dutakan village are situated in the forest between the villages of Talish and Sugovushan. The summer residence of the rulers of Caucasian Albania was Dutakan, which is referenced in "The History of the Albanians" by Movses Kaghankatvatsi. According to Barkhudaryan, the village of Dutakan was the summer residence of Vachagan III (Бархударян, II, s. 242). The author also mentioned the ruins of the 12th-century church in the village. Here, a partially ruined wide church with a length of 13 m and a width of 7 m is still standing. The building was constructed in 1151 by an Albanian Catholicos, according to the building inscription.



Chilaburd Fortress (18th century)

JARABERD / CHILABURD MONASTERY (18th century), Chilaburd village

The Chilaburd Monastery is a historical and architectural monument located in the territory of Chilaburd village, in the Tartar district. The village was known as Jaraberd until December 29, 1992. The Chilaburd Monastery is located close to the Three Infants Monastery on the right bank of the Tartar River, two kilometres northwest of the Chilaburd Fortress.

The monastery was one of the most ancient and well-known cultural centres in the region. The complex consists of the church, monastic cells, and other domestic structures constructed in the 18th century on the site of older buildings (Мкртчян, 1989, s.59). The stones from older buildings, as well as cross-stones and other inscribed stones, were used in the construction of new buildings in the complex area.



*Gulustan Fortress, located at the foot of Murovdag,
1700 metres above sea level, Tartar*

The main church of the Chilaburd Monastery bears the shape of a single-nave basilica, and the monastery's two-sided roof is supported by double-sided pilasters. The church's entrance door is located

on the western wall. On the south wall there are two windows, while on the east and west walls there is one window section, which is currently in poor condition.

Palaces and fortresses JARABERD / CHILABURD FORTRESS

Built on a steep rock where the Qala, Tartar and Turagay rivers meet, the Chilaburd Fortress/Jaraberd Fortress is a historical and architectural monument in the Chilaburd village of the Tartar district.

Barkhudaryan provided information on the Palace of Chilaburd Meliks in the nineteenth century saying that it was located among the ruins of an ancient settlement between the Chardagli and Ulu Garabey villages (Бархударян, II, ss. 232, 235).

Movses Kaghankatvatsi first made reference to the Chilaburd Fortress, which is also referred to as 'Jaraberd' and 'Charaberd' in mediaeval sources, in the 620s in relation to the Khazars' raids into Caucasian Albania. The Chilaburd Fortress is referred to as the 'Jaraberd Fortress' in Movses Kaghankatvatsi's book. The Albanian Catholicos Viroy, according to the author's information, "called all the honourable persons of the country, all the nobles of the king's lineage, province governors, village landlords, priests, and officials to the Jaraberd Fortress" to stop Khazar raids (Kalankatuklu, 1861, IIk XIX f.)

When discussing the raids on Arran in his book, Mkhitar Gosh referred to him as "the prince of the Jaraberd province and its fortresses" (Mxitar Qoş, 2006 s.396).

The fortress served as the residence of the

Albanian meliks during the 17th and 18th centuries. The rulers of the Chilaburd district, such as Vakhtang, Hasan Jalal, and Atabey, were descendants of the meliks.

There are two more palaces of the Chilaburd meliks in the village of Kichik Garabey. The fortresses of Jaraberd (Chilaburd M.P.), which were located on top of a rock where the Kolatak, Tugrachay, and Tartar rivers meet in the location named 'Meyrakavak' in the village of Mokhratagh (Kichik Garabey), were mentioned by Barkhudaryan in the 19th century (Бархударян, II, s. 234, 251-252).

There are numerous building and gravestone ruins located within the extensive walls of the Chilaburd Fortress, the ruins of which have survived to the present day. The walls of military and farm buildings, as well as a fortress gate, are present here.

Through small paths and mountain roads, the Chilaburd Fortress, which served as the region's main defensive centre for centuries, is connected to monasteries like St. Elishe, Urekvank, Three Infants, and Ganjasar, as well as all the region's mountain villages. The Three Infants Monastery is located near the fortress, and on the path that leads there from the fortress, a tunnel with a 1.5-metre diameter was constructed under the rock.

PALACE OF THE GULUSTAN MELIKS (18th century), Talish village

The Palace of the Gulustan Meliks is located in the Talish village of the Tartar district. The historical and architectural monument, dating to the 18th century, was the residence of the Gulustan meliks, and was constructed by the dynasty of Melik Beyler, who had the title of the Melik of Gulustan.

According to the building inscription, its construction started in the early 18th century: "Melik Beyler fights against and kills Gavur Ibrahim, the owner of the surrounding Albanian villages, and turns the area of the Gulustan Fortress and the surrounding villages into his property."

Currently, all that is left of the palace are its ruins, which are located 100-150 metres away from the Urekvank Monastery. The complex included a number of buildings that were enclosed by towered fortress walls, and the rectangular castle-palace also served as a defensive structure. The castle's garrison was located in a small fortress constructed slightly to the north, and the small fortress, which housed the garrison close to the castle, only has four towers and the ruins of the wall that connected them.

The customs office of the rulers of Gulustan, known as Rahtarkhana, was also located near the village of Talish until the early 19th century. According to Barkhudaryan, this ancient fortress-shaped building was destroyed after the arrival of the Russians in the region (Бархударян, 1895, II. s. 240).

GULUSTAN FORTRESS

The Gulustan Fortress, one of Azerbaijan's first fortresses, served as the first defensive fortress of the Gulustan melikdom. The fortress is located in the

territory of the same-named village at the northern foot of Murovdag, on the left bank of the Injachay, 1700 metres above sea level.

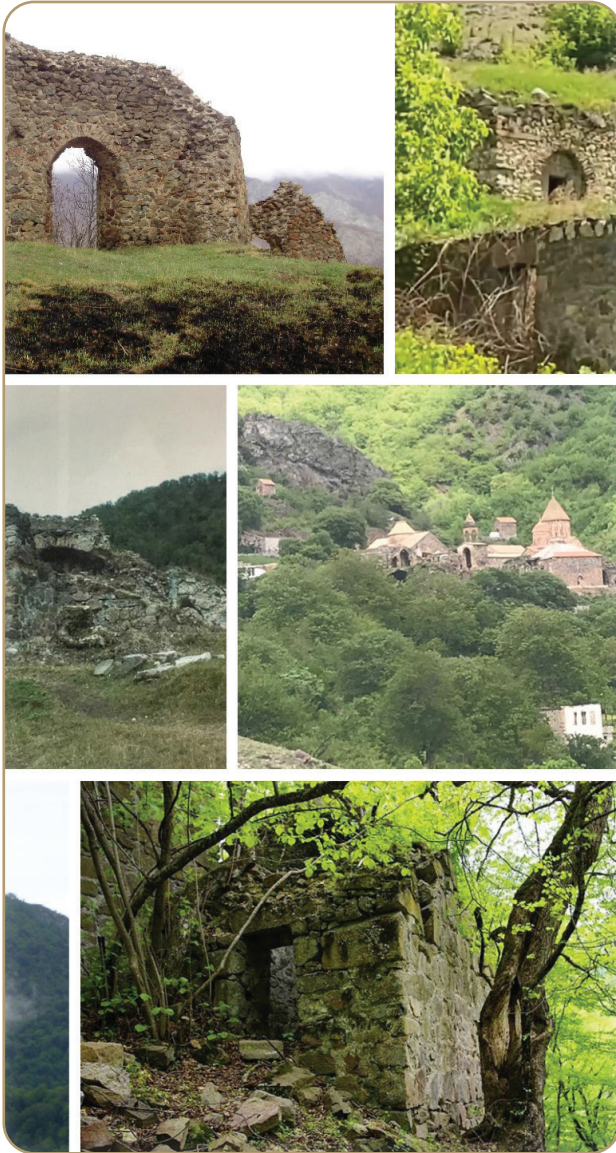
Even though the Gulustan Fortress has not survived in its entirety, some of its towers have been preserved. Researchers believe that the fortress was built during the Caucasian Albanian period with local stones, and boasts a strong defensive system.

The fortress served as the centre of the Gulustan melikdom in the 18th-19th centuries. The Treaty of Gulistan, which divided the territories of Azerbaijan between Russia and Iran, was also signed in this fortress. According to Barkhudaryan, shrines like the four-columned Church of St. Mary and the sanctuary of Murov, where a martyr is allegedly buried under a white cross-stone, are located close to the village of Gulustan (Бархударян, 1895, s. 249).



*Ruins of the palace of the Gulustan meliks
(18th century), Talish village*

KALBAJAR DISTRICT



"Kalbajar is an inalienable part of Azerbaijan. There is no doubt that the day will come when the Kalbajar district will be liberated from the occupation of the Armenian Armed Forces and the citizens, residents of Kalbajar, our compatriots, will return to their places and homelands."

*Heydar Aliyev, the National Leader
1996*

The Kalbajar region is a part of the historical Zangazur district and is located in the East Zangazur region. It is an ancient Azerbaijani territory that historically and geographically encompasses the areas of the Gafan, Gorus, Mehri, Sisiyan, Lachin, Gubadli, and Zangilan districts in Azerbaijan. The toponym 'Zangazur' is linked to the name of the Zangana tribes from the Oghuz tribes. The name of the Zangi tribe is still found in Assyrian inscriptions in the form of "sangi."

The history of the concepts of West and East Zangazur is linked to the establishment of the Soviet Bolshevik government in Azerbaijan. The Russian Empire established the Zangazur Uyezd in Azerbaijan's Elizavetpol (Ganja) Governorate in 1867. Following the establishment of the Soviet government in Azerbaijan in April 1920, a decision was made in November of the same year, at a joint meeting of the Political and Organisational Bureaus of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party, to transfer West Zangazur to Armenia without the consent of Azerbaijan's Bolshevik leadership. In the late 1920s, when the Soviet Bolshevik government transferred the ancient territories of Azerbaijani people to Armenia, the concepts of East and West Zangazur first emerged.

The area of West Zangazur, consisting of 3,637 square versts of the total 6,742 square-verst area of the Zangazur district, was given to Armenia. The remaining 3,105 square versts of the East Zangazur territories remained part of the territory of the Azerbaijan SSR. Zangazur was thus divided into two parts. The districts of Gafan, Gorus, Mehri, and Sisiyan were transferred to Armenia while the districts of Lachin, Gubadli, and Zangilan remained in the Azerbaijan SSR. As a consequence, a corridor named Zangazur was created, separating the Nakhchivan territory from the Azerbaijani lands. The state of Azerbaijan was divided into two parts by a corridor. Since 1933, the name Zangazur was completely wiped off the map. The districts of Gafan, Gorus, Garakilsa (Sisiyan) and Mehri were established in the West Zangazur territories that were handed to Armenia. First, the Kurdistan Uyezd was established in the Azerbaijani portion of East

Zangazur, followed by the creation of the districts of Kalbajar, Zangilan, Gubadli, and Lachin. The territories of East Zangazur and Karabakh were both occupied by the Armenians in 1992–1993.

One of the major outcomes of Azerbaijan's historic victory in the 44-day Second Karabakh War, which started on September 27, 2020, and ended with the restoration of its territorial integrity, was the opening of the Zangazur Corridor that runs through the ancient district of Zangazur. This will serve to reunite the Turkic world, which was geographically divided into two parts.

The East Zangazur economic zone, which includes the districts of Zangilan, Gubadli, Jabrayil, Lachin, and Kalbajar, was established by the decree signed by President Aliyev in order to restore the Karabakh and East Zangazur territories that were liberated from occupation in 2020. The districts of





Great Arran / St. Jacob Monastery, Kolatak village

Garakilsa, Gafan, Gorus, and Mehri, which were historical lands of Azerbaijan, are included in what can now be called West Zangazur, which is currently considered Armenian territory. As President Aliyev repeatedly highlighted in his speeches, the Iravan Khanate and Zangazur district are the historical and ancient lands of Azerbaijan.^[4]

Due to its rich nature and extremely valuable groundwater resources, non-ferrous metal deposits, and number of historical, architectural, and cultural monuments, the territory of Kalbajar, one of the Zangazur district's jewels, is a particularly valuable region of Azerbaijan. With hundreds of historical architectural monuments from the ancient and mediaeval periods engraved on the rocks, along the banks of the lakes "Garagol," "Zalkha," and the

^[4] <https://president.az/az/articles/view/52742>



Khudavang Monastery Complex (6th-7th centuries)

mountains "Ayichingil" and "Parichingil," Kalbajar effectively became an open-air museum.

The territory of the Kalbajar district of Azerbaijan was one of the first human settlements. During the Soviet era, valuable materials connected to the rich and ancient history of the Kalbajar district were discovered as a result of archaeological research carried out in numerous villages in the district, including Zar, Dovshanli, and Sirkhavand villages. The Late Bronze-Early Iron Age necropolis in the Dovshanli village, the Balligaya necropolis in the Sirkhavand village, ancient jar burials (3rd millennium B.C.), and rock art found in the Zar village are all noteworthy examples of the region's ancient history.

However, due to the Armenian occupation that began in the late 20th century, the Kalbajar district's abundant resources, including its historical and architectural sites, were vandalised. All the religious monuments from the Islamic era in the Kalbajar district, along with hundreds of holy places, crypts, cemeteries, historical and architectural monuments, including a 19th-century mosque in the centre of the district, the ancient mosque from the 18th-19th centuries in the Bashlibel village, the 19th-century mosque in the Otagli village, and numerous cemeteries from the Middle Ages in the district, were destroyed by the Armenian Armed Forces during the occupation. Among the historical monuments were horse and ram-shaped tombstones with Arabic inscriptions from the 18th-19th centuries in the cemeteries in Zar and Zaylik villages at the foot of the Gochdash Mountain, the Sanctuary of Goch

Dashlar (ram-shaped stones) in the Asri village, the Shrine of Seyid Asadullah and the Holy Place of Seyid Ahmad Agha in the Soyudlu village, and the Holy Place of Seyid Baghir Agha and the Shrine of Seyid Aliabbas in Bashlibel village.

The Museum of History and Local Lore in Kalbajar, established in 1982, had more than 30,000 exhibits, including 14 horse and ram-shaped tombstones on display in the yard of the museum, which operated in the Kalbajar district until 1993. The museum building was a unique historical-architectural construction, with its exterior walls made of stones in 2037 different colour shades. Various stone patterns, agricultural tools, and many other items were carved into the museum's walls. The museum, which was open until April 1993, was also destroyed by the Armenian army. Most of its exhibits could not be saved.



Lok Fortress, Ganlikand

Albanian monuments of the Kalbajar district

Kalbajar is one of the regions of the Zangazur district that is richest in ancient Albanian fortresses and temples. There were 35 state-registered Albanian temples in the Kalbajar district, though it should be noted that this is not an exhaustive list of the Albanian monuments in the region. To register and thoroughly study all of the region's monuments would require joint scientific expeditions involving historians, archaeologists, ethnographers, and architects. The architectural style of the Albanian monuments, which is completely different from that of the Armenian churches, the shape of the cross, and many other characteristics, as well as the symbols and components related to them, were subjected to Armenian falsification and destruction by the Armenian Gregorian Church with the support of the Armenian state, and presented as Armenian monuments during the occupation.

The Khudavang Monastery Complex located in the Vank village of the Kalbajar district, the famous Ganjasar Monastery Complex in the Vangli village, which was the residence of Albanian Catholicoi, the Church of Hasan Jalal in the Charektar village, the Great Arran Monastery in the Kolatak village, Khatiravang, the Red Monastery, several religious, historical and architectural monuments of the Albanian era, as well as defensive buildings and fortresses from the Albanian era, such as Lok Fortress, Ulukhan Fortress, Galaboynu Fortress, Jomard Fortress, and Keshikchi Fortress, were all presented to the world as examples of Armenian culture during the occupation.

The Armenian Armed Forces completely destroyed all the historical and architectural monuments in the territory of the Kalbajar district,

including cultural centres, during the nearly 30-year occupation of the district, and the region was illegally resettled by Armenians.

According to the statement on November 10, 2020, the Kalbajar district, which was occupied by the Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia in 1993, was returned to Azerbaijan on November 25.

List of Albanian monuments in the district

- Khudavang (Dadivank) Monastery Complex, Vank village
- Albanian temple (500), Hasanriz village
- Albanian temple (672), Yayiji village
- Albanian temple (12th-13th centuries), Yayiji village
- Albanian temple (718), Gasapet village
- Great Arran Monastery (9th century), Kolatak village
- Albanian temple (12th century), Kolatak village
- Albanian temple (10th century), Chormanli (Garnakar) village
- Albanian church (11th century), Chormanli (Garnakar) village
- Ganjasar Monastery (12th century), Vangli village
- Havaptugh Temple (12th century), Vangli village
- Khatiravang Monastery (1204), Qozlu village
- Red Monastery (13th century), Qozlu village
- Meyrakavak Monastery (13th century), Qozlu village
- Albanian church (13th century), Charektar village
- Harva Church (13th century), Dovshanli village
- Mamakan Khatun / Vachar Church (13th

century), Bazarkand

- St. Stepanos Church (13th century), Bazarkand
- Albanian temple (13th century), Zar village
- Red Stone Monastery (12th century), Chapar village
- Albanian temple (12th century), Childiran village
- Red Temple (13th century), Childiran village
- Albanian temple (1283), Hasanriz village
- Kilisakend Temple, Gasimlar village
- The Cave Temple, Armudlu village
- Church (1668), Dovshanli village
- Church (17th century), Devedashi village
- Albanian temple, Makhratag village
- Albanian temple, Shaplar village

Fortresses and castles

- Khanabert/ Tarkan Fortress, Vangli village
- Palace of the Khachen, Vangli village
- Khachen / Gakhach Fortress, Kolatak village
- Lok Fortress (7th-8th centuries), Ganlikend village
- Galaboynu Fortress (8th-9th centuries), Galaboynu village
- Akan Fortress, Hasanriz village
- Ulukhan Fortress (7th-9th centuries), Garajanli village
- Jomard Fortress (8th-9th centuries), Jomard village

KHUDAVANG (DADIVANK) MONASTERY (6th-7th centuries), Vank village

The largest monastery complex in the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Khudavang Monastery, is located in the Vank village of Kalbajar district, on the left bank of the Tartarchay. One of the most magnificent material and cultural pieces created by the Azerbaijani people's ancestors, the Khudavang Monastery Complex is one of the first Christian temples in the South Caucasus, and the monastery itself is one of the largest monuments of Christian architecture in Azerbaijan.

The Khudavang Temple Complex was included in the list of "immovable historical and cultural monuments of international importance" approved by Resolution No. 132 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan, dated August 2, 2001.

The Khudavang Monastery, one of the most important monuments of the Tartarchay Valley, is an ancient temple complex with traces of pre-Christian

beliefs. This Albanian temple, known as the "Temple of God" among the people, is a place of worship that was constructed on the site of an ancient cult before the adoption of Christianity.

Khudavang is one of the earliest Albanian Christian religious monuments, dating back to the Apostolic Age. According to records, it was established by Dadi, a disciple of Thaddeus, one of Jesus Christ's apostles (Бархударян, 1895, ч. II, s. 215). According to Barkhudaryan, it is impossible to identify the age of this building because it has undergone numerous restorations, but its restored state survived after the original historical building was completely destroyed (Бархударян, 1895, ч. II, s. 215).

The monastery on the site of this ancient temple was first built in the 6th-7th centuries, according to the findings of archaeological research carried out

during the Soviet era. The ruins of an early Middle Ages temple with an archaic pyramidal pitched roof, typical of Azerbaijan, were found in the monastery complex (Ямпольский, 1962, s. 226).

Detailed information about the texts of numerous stone and epigraphic inscriptions in the Khudavang Monastery Complex and other Albanian temples was provided by Bishop Barkhudaryan, who collected important information about the Albanian churches of Karabakh and published it in 1895. According to Barkhudaryan, the monastery was called 'Khudavang' because it was constructed on top of a cliff. Even now, the term 'Khudavang,' which means "temple of God," is still used by the people. According to Barkhudaryan, the name 'Dadivank' is connected to the village of Vank, where the monastery is located (Бархударян, 1895, II ч. s.220).

The Khudavang Monastery was known as

the Sanctuary of Vank after the name of the Vank village. According to Yampolsky, Muslims arrived here in the early 20th century, together with the local Albanian Christians. The Shrine of Vank was in the Khudavang Monastery. Crosses carved with beautiful ornamentation adorned the sanctuary's centre (Ямпольский, 1962, s. 225). Muslims also used to visit this Christian temple (Ямпольский, 1962, s. 226).

The hackberry tree near the Khudavang Monastery was the place of worship for the people, as was the case with all Azerbaijani sanctuaries. The temple continued to be a place of worship for both the Muslim and Christian populations, even after Christianity was adopted.

The monastery complex was located in the historic region of Rostok in the Artsakh Province of Caucasian Albania. The monastery was controlled by the Albanian princely dynasty of Khachen,



Built on a high hill in the area of Vank village, the Khudavang Monastery is known among the population by the name 'Khuda-vang' (khuda- "god").

which revived with the weakening of the Caliphate beginning in the ninth century, a century after the decline of the Albanian statehood. The area and fortress of Hasanriz (Aterk) were also controlled by the princely dynasty of Khachen, in addition to the Khudavang Monastery. The monastery served as the religious centre of the Principality of Khachen, which flourished from the 11th-12th centuries.

It should be noted that the princely dynasty of Khachen belonged to the Albanians who participated in the ethnogenesis of the Azerbaijani people. Arzu, Khatun, Tursun, Seyti, Hasan, Avag, Altun, Agbukh, Garagoz, and Mamakhatun are obviously Turkic names that were recorded in the inscriptions of the Khudavang Temple Complex, and these names are also apparent signs of the Turkic ethnicity of the people who built the monument.

There were numerous inscriptions related to the rulers of the Principality of Khachen in the area of the monastery. According to an inscription on the south wall, the Albanian monasteries Khudavang, Khatiravang, and Getamaj (Zar) served as the Khachen princes' inheritance and ancestral thrones. Tursun Seyti, Hasan and their brothers and sons from the princely dynasty of Khachen agreed that the monasteries of Dadivank, Khatir and Getamaj (Zar) from their grandfathers represent the family cemetery of the dynasty. Additionally, princes descended from the Khachen dynasty were mentioned in the inscription, including Peki, Altun, Aytin, Bahram, and Jahanshah (Бархударян, 1895, II ч. s.220).

There were a number of inscriptions from the reign of Hasan, the son of Sakar Vakhtang and ruler of the Principality of Khachen from 1142, in the Khudavang Monastery. According to the inscriptions, Hasan, who married Mamakhatun, the daughter of the king of Kura, chose to live a monastic

life with his wife in 1182, after forty years of ruling. In 1182, Prince Vakhtang's son Hasan, after ruling the territories of Khanabad, Khachen, and Aterkin (Hasanriz) for forty years, divided his fortresses and properties among his six sons and came to the Khudavang Monastery to visit his brother, bringing an Aghuan (Albanian) cross-stone with him (Бархударян, ч .II, p.215).

The second inscription belongs to Hasan's wife, Mamakhatun. The inscription reads: "I, Mama Khatun, the daughter of the King of Kurak, the wife of Hasan, left our property to our sons and came to the monastery and became a monk. 1182" (Бархударян, s.216).

There were inscriptions in the area of the monastery describing the burials of members of the Albanian princely dynasty and their support for the monastery. The monastery complex was renovated and expanded by Hasan and his wife, Mama Khatun, from the Mihranid dynasty, in the late 13th century. They spent their later years in the monastery complex and lived a monastic life, giving power to their sons and receiving religious ranks. According to the inscriptions on the monastery's walls, Hasan the Great, king of Khachen and a member of the Mihranid dynasty, and his wife Mama Khatun settled in the Khudavang Monastery in 1182 after dividing their property among their six children. The inscription reads that the king of Khachen carried an Albanian crossstone here in 1182 (Бархударян, ч.II, с.215). Hasan, the prince of Khachen, and Mama Khatun spent the remainder of their lives in this monastery as monks.

According to an inscription dating to 1182, in the area of the monastery, Gregory, the brother of Hasan, was an Albanian bishop who served in this

monastery during this time. The prince of Khachen, Hasan, and Mama Khatun came to him and started to live a monastic life (Бархударян, ч.II, s.215).

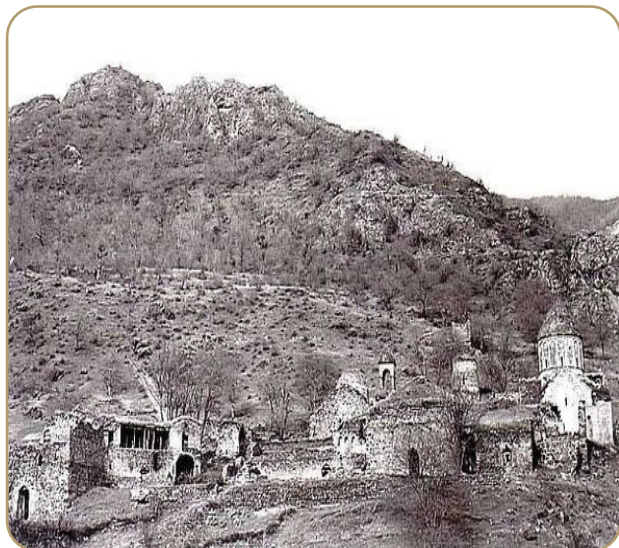
In 1214, when the Principality of Khachen was flourishing, the monastery was reconstructed, and Hasan the Great built a new temple in the monastery (Crypt-Darpa of Hasan). Vakhtang, the son of Hasan Jalal and grandson of Hasan the Great, carried out major construction works in the area of the complex, and in 1214, his wife, Arzu Khatun, built a church in the complex in memory of her husband Vakhtang and two sons.

According to an inscription from 1214, the monastery's area was turned into the Khachen dynasty's family mausoleum by the order of Arzu Khatun, Prince Vakhtang's wife, and the monastery's historic fence was restored. The crypt of Arzu Khatun, a magnificent building, was constructed

in the monastery on four hewn stone columns. The inscription on the wall of that building reads: "I, Arzu Khatun, the daughter of the Great Prince Kurd, the wife of Vakhtang, the owner of Aterkin and the entire Khachen, built this holy church on the site of the graves of my husband and my sons, Hasan and Gregory, who died prematurely." The construction was finished in 1214 (Бархударян, 1895, II к. s.216).

Images of Prince Vakhtang and two of Arzu Khatun's sons were carved into the stone of the eastern and southern facades of the Church of Arzu Khatun, respectively. The facade is covered with hewn stone and decorated with convex and carved patterns.

As a result of the lands given to the monastery by the sons of Khachen, Prince Hasan Jalal and Mama Khatun, the monastery's territory and lands gradually increased significantly. The inscription on



Khudavang temple, Kalbajar, 1980

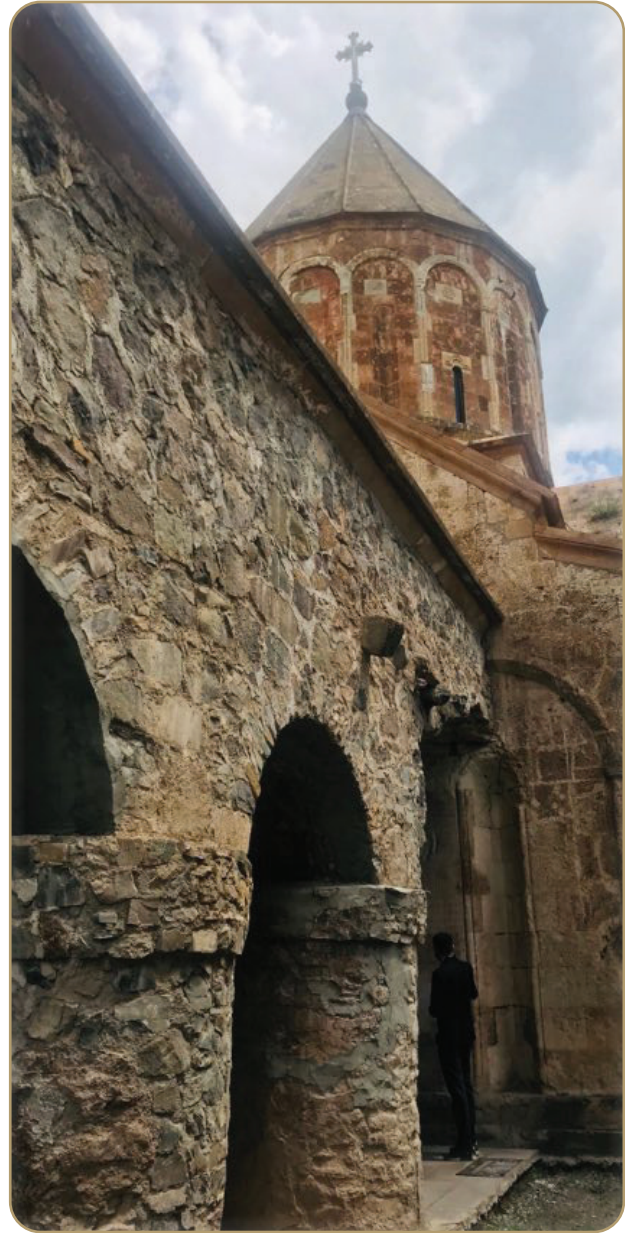


Khudavang monastery was also known as "Vank shrine" among the local population.

the facade of the main portion of the temple, which dates back to 1271, mentions the lands given to this temple. In the text of one of the inscriptions, it states that “I, Mama Khatun, Hasan’s wife, and our son Gregory gave our lands to this holy shrine. 1312” (Бархударян, ч.II, s.217).

According to the inscriptions in the church, the Albanian rulers of Khachen and their sons and daughters-in-law engaged in charity work on behalf of the monastery, including the repair of the monastery’s magnificent church bell. Indeed, the bells of the Khudavang Monastery and other Albanian churches were repaired by Hasan’s nephews, Bahram and Sargis. These church bells were also built at the Getamech Church in the villages of Khatiravang and Zar, according to information provided by Barkhudaryan (Бархударян, Arsax, II к., s.218).

A family mausoleum for the Khachen dynasty was erected by the order of Arzu Khatun, the wife of the Khachen prince Vakhtang and the daughter of Kurd, the prince of princes, according to one of many inscriptions in the monastery’s area that dates back to 1298. In the family mausoleum, there are the graves of several Catholicoi and bishops, including the ruler of Khachen, Vakhtang, his wife, Arzu Khatun, his sons, Hasan and Grigoris, his mother, Khorisha Khatun, Arzu Khatun’s sister and the wife of Hasan II and mother of Grigoris, Mama Khatun, as well as other Albanians who lived in different periods, such as Zakhari, Atanas, Ovanes, Grigoris, and Sargis (the last Albanian bishop) (Бархударян, Arsax, II к., s.218).



One of the rarest temples is the Khudavang Monastery Complex, which includes a range of examples of mediaeval architecture, including residential homes, a hotel, a library, and a refectory. The monastery complex has numerous buildings and ruins, including a basilica-style main temple, several auxiliary temples, a chapel, a farm, and residential buildings. The main religious portion of the complex includes seven adjacent parts that differ in floor layout and composition. The monastery complex consists of nine buildings in addition to the ancient main church, including the single-nave basilica of St. Mary, the Church of Hasan Jalal, the Church of St. Gregory, the bell tower of the church, the school building, and the gallery. Five of the buildings are part of the main complex, while the others are auxiliary.

The main temple, a single-nave basilica from



Khudavang temple, the fresco reflecting the images of Prince Vakhtang, Arzu Khatun, and her son

the early Middle Ages, is the oldest building in the complex, but numerous other buildings were added to this temple over a period of many years, including a number of rectangular temples and chapels near the main temple. Consequently, a large religious complex was established.

During the military conflict, the complexes of worship surrounded by magnificent walls acted as shelter not only for priests, but also for the residents of the surrounding villages. The Khudavang temple served as both the residence of the Albanian bishop and a significant centre for culture and education.

Arzu Khatun temple, which was constructed in 1214 and holds the main position in the temple complex, is one of the most important examples of Albanian architecture. A rotunda with a four-columned bell was built on the roof, and the temple has two bas-reliefs. A prince and a holy man are depicted in a half-length drawing above the window on the facade of the eastern wall, and two princes are carrying a model of the temple on the southern wall. Arzu Khatun's husband is probably depicted in the first bas-relief, and their sons are depicted in the second.

Decorative ornaments carved with high craftsmanship were used on the stone during the construction of the Arzu Khatun Temple. Stones patterned with refined artistic technique were used to construct the portal at the entrance to the Arzu Khatun Temple, each of which is regarded as an individual artistic architectural monument.

Both the structural and decorative parts of the temple were built using two- and three-pillared drop arches. The 16-pointed circle fixed on the arches in the temple is complete with a triangular, umbrella-shaped roof.

The main building of the Khudavang Monastery Complex is the Church of Hasan the Great. The temple of Hasan the Great, complete with a domed hall, was constructed in 1182, according to an inscription on its walls.

The building compositions, the structure of facades, and the dome and roof shapes all distinguish the domed halls of the Arzu Khatun Temple and the Hasan Temple from one another. The large building that was added to the single-nave basilica in 1224 is also of exceptional interest, as it is a mausoleum in which family members of the noble lineage were buried.

The complex also included the residence of the Albanian bishop, a religious education centre, and a school. Domestic structures, as well as the palace, residential and farm buildings, are located on the slope to the south of the religious buildings. There

are two chapels near the bell tower, both of which have a cross-stone with gorgeous ornamentation.

The Khudavang Temple Complex includes economic and residential buildings, as well as domestic structures. The activities of farming, vine-growing, and gardening, which were significant to the economic life of Caucasian Albania, also held a specific position in the lives of Albanian temples. In the Khudavang Temple Complex, a stone trough that measured 3.6 metres long and 20 centimetres deep and was intended for winemaking, and stone wells that were connected to it by specific ditches were discovered during the archaeological research carried out in the Soviet era.

The complex's buildings are examples of the centuries-old construction culture, and the various types of mediaeval Christian architecture in Azerbaijan. The older, irregularly built Hasan



The bas-relief on the south wall of the temple, on which two princes are holding a model of the temple in their hands



View of Arzu Khatun Church



Khudavang, Church of Hasan the Great

Temple has walls made of unhewn stones, and the monastery complex was constructed using black basalt stone, baked brick, and lime. Their roofs are covered with tiles and stones, the domes were constructed from wood, and the window reveals are horseshoe shaped.

All of the typical features of Azerbaijan's Christian architecture are comprehensively represented in this complex, and the direct connection with the Muslim architecture of Azerbaijan can clearly be seen in many of the carved stone decorations of the monument. Finely carved stone patterns were used to embellish the church, particularly the western and northern ends. One of the characteristics that makes the Khudavang Monastery Complex unique is the use of carved stone ornamentation that is typical of Azerbaijani Muslim architecture.

Various methods were used for the expansion and addition of side rooms to the churches starting in the 10th century, during the renovation period of early mediaeval churches. The side rooms in the Khudavang Monastery's ancient and main single-nave basilica were built into the depth of the wall by carving the walls around the altar (Мамедова Ф., 2004, səh. 86). This resulted in the creation of a distinctive architectural composition that is typical of the architecture of Caucasian Albania.

It is enough simply to look at the names of the rulers and the ruling dynasty displayed on the inscriptions to see that the Khudavang Temple has nothing to do with modern Armenians, like other Albanian temples of Karabakh. Hasan, Arzu Khatun, Mina Khatun, Kochubey and other Turkic names inscribed on the Khudavang Temple show that the

founders of the Principality of Khachen, where these churches were built, were Christians of Turkic origin.

Until the 19th century, the Khudavang Monastery was religiously and legally under the control of the independent Albanian Catholicosate (Aghuan), which was part of the bishopric of Rostok province. After the Albanian temples of Karabakh, including the Khudavang Monastery, were subordinated to the Armenian Etchmiadzin Church as the Karabakh diocese as a result of the confessional policy of Russian tsarism, this monastery, like other Albanian temples, fell into a terrible state. Witnesses said that the monastery, which had been prospering and in good condition before 1828, began to fall into ruin after that year, according to Barkhudaryan, who wrote that every district of Karabakh has had its own monastery, priest, and monks for centuries (Бархударян, ч. II, s. 5). Barkhudaryan describes how the Armenians who were moved from the Qajar and Ottoman Empires to Karabakh by Tsarist Russia as a result of the Turkmenchay (1828) and Adrianople (1829) Treaties, plundered the Albanian monasteries: "Unfortunately, these magnificent monasteries are destroyed and looted, and large plots of land given to the monasteries are occupied." This information obviously demonstrates the extent to which the Armenians plundered the Albanian Christian ethno-cultural heritage without any historical, confessional or legal rights during the years 1828-1895.

Armenian vandals entirely destroyed the crosses and inscriptions that belonged to the Albanian church in an attempt to falsify history and remove all traces of Azerbaijan's ancient culture. One of the most beautiful examples of Albanian cross-stones can be seen in two circular



Richly ornamented cross-stones with the images of khoncha and the tree of life, which once existed in the monastery complex, were taken to Etchmiadzin.

khonchas positioned next to one another, and two cross-stones with a cross structure in the shape of the tree of life in the bell tower of the Khudavang Monastery Complex. Similar cross-stones clearly showing the symbols of Ahura-Mithra—two gods—combined with Christian symbolics only seen in the Albanian stele, were also discovered in the Khojaly, Tartar, Gadabay, Shusha, and other districts. One of the most interesting examples thereof is the cross-shaped Karabakh stone that dates back to 1633. Unfortunately, these cross-stones were taken to Etchmiadzin during the Soviet era.

Particularly between 1992 and 2020, while Kalbajar was under occupation, the Khudavang Temple was vandalised by the Armenians, and the Khudavang Monastery was presented to the world as an Armenian monastery complex, similar to other Albanian monasteries in Karabakh. Like all Albanian temples in Karabakh, the Khudavang Monastery also underwent illegal restoration works during the Armenian occupation. This falsification, under the guise of restoration work, continued throughout the years 1997-2011 under the control of the Armenian Apostolic Church. During the occupation, a large amount of the monastery's artwork, including frescoes depicting Prince Vakhtang and two of Arzu Khatun's sons, as well as religious images and inscriptions, were destroyed or looted.

The Armenian invaders were forced to leave Kalbajar in 2020 as a result of the 44-day victory march of the Azerbaijani Army and the liberation of the territories of the motherland. But because of the Azerbaijani government's humanitarianism, the Armenians were given time to evacuate, and

they took advantage of this not only by mining the entirety of Kalbajar, but also by looting this magnificent monastery. When the Armenian priests who attempted to take over the monastery during the occupation were forced to leave the territories of Azerbaijan, they did not hesitate to take as much as they could from Khudavang and other Albanian monasteries and churches, including the unique frescoes and church bells of Khudavang Temple.

ALBANIAN TEMPLE (500), Hasanriz village

Hasanriz Temple is located in the same-named village in the Hasanriz Trench, on the left bank of the Tartar River, in the Kalbajar district. The village of Hasanriz was formerly a part of the Aghdara district, but it was included in the boundaries of the Kalbajar district in 1992. The village's former name was Aterk which, according to the researchers, is a phonetic variation of the Turkic word "atrak," which means the place where the river water flows into the river's mouth. The village was named Hasanriz after Hasan Jalal, the prince of Khachen, during the Albanian renaissance in the 13th century. The name of Hasanriz village first appeared in Ottoman sources in 1727 as a part of the Chilaburd nahiyah. According to Barkhudaryan, Hasanriz (Aterk) was the residence of the Vakhtang dynasty in the 12th century. According to the information provided by the 19th-century author, there were a number of ancient church ruins from the Albanian period near the village of Hasanriz (Aterk); specifically, ancient buildings on the left bank of Tartar River, on the eastern side of Hasanriz (Aterk) village (Бархударян, 1895, s. 213).

The Garakhunch Church is also mentioned by the author as being located in the village, alongside the Hasanriz Temple. According to Barkhudaryan, this ancient church is located in the village of Hasanriz (Aterk), on the top of a hill on the right bank of the Tartar River. The ancient church's arch on the top of the hill was crooked (Ямпольский, 1962, s. 119). The hill itself was called Ulduzlu Tepe ('Star Hill') by the local population.

The Ulduzlu Tepe ('Star Hill') shrine was mentioned in relation to 5th century events by Kaghankatvatsi, the Albanian author. An unknown grave site became a significant shrine for people, according to the author. The grave of a martyr named Taguhi from a princely dynasty

in the Albanian province of Uti is said to be here, according to legend, after he was tortured and killed by a Hun commander (Бархударян, 1895, II k s. 400). According to Kaghankatvatsi, an Albanian noblewoman named Taguhi was tortured and killed by a Hun general. "Everyone clearly observed a strong light to shine from the scene of St. Taguhi's martyrdom. The tattered remains of her clothes scattered everywhere shone like stars. The starry light shone above the holy martyrs. When they saw this, the people called the place Astei Blur ('Star Hill'), as it is known to this day." (Kalankatuklu, I k., f.18). This ancient grave site, which is called Ulduzlu Tepe ('Star Hill') and is located on the bank of the Tartar River, was well-known as a great shrine even in the 19th century (Ямпольский, 1962, s. 119).



Hasanriz village, Kalbajar

**GREAT ARRAN / ST. JACOB
MONASTERY (9th-13th centuries),
Kolatak village**

After the Aghdara district was abolished in 1992, the village of Kolatak, which is located on the slope of the Karabakh Range, was included in the Kalbajar district. It was occupied from 1993 until 2020 by the Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia. According to the agreement dated November 10, 2020, Russian peacekeepers took temporary control of the region.

The Great Arran Monastery is located on the right bank of the Khachenchay in a forested area to the north of the Kolatak village. According to the name of the province it is located in, the monument is referred to as the Great Arran Monastery in historical literature. This territory was also referred to as Ashaghi (Lower) Khachen in mediaeval sources.

It is unknown when the monastery's earliest buildings were constructed, but the earliest inscription dates back to 853, and was found on the base of the cross-stone, which was later reused to build the wall. This shows that the church dates back to an earlier time.

According to Barkhudaryan's information about the Great Arran Monastery, one of the churches included in the complex was constructed in 1223, and the other in 1225. The inscription on the ancient tombstones here is written by an Albanian archbishop. The Great Arran Church was repaired by Khorasha Khatun (Hurishah), the husband of Vakhtang and the owner of property of Khachen, according to an inscription on the monastery's door (Бархударян, 1895, I, s.152).

It should be noted that the Turkic names of the Khachen rulers and their family members, including



Great Arran Monastery

personal names like Khachen Prince Hasan Jalal (1214-1261), Hasan Jalal's mother Khorisha Khatun (Hurishah Khatun), his wife Mamgan, his son Ivane-Atabey, his daughters Ruzukhan, Mama Khatun, and Mina Khatun, all of which are preserved in the inscriptions of Albanian churches in Karabakh, are also reflected in inscriptions in all Albanian temples in Karabakh. Several more inscriptions made by the Khachen dynasty can be found in the area of the Arran Monastery, according to Barkhudaryan. According to these epigraphic inscriptions, almost all members of the Khachen dynasty have Turkic names. One of the inscriptions, for instance, is said to have been written by Arkan, the grandson of Khachen ruler Hasan and his wife, Mamakhatun (Бархударян, 1895, I, s.150). Another 13th-century inscription belonging to Kutlu Bey in the principality of Hasan Jalal was found in front of the temple (Бархударян, 1895, I, s.151-152).



The Great Arran monastery complex consists of two churches surrounded by fortress walls, two narthexes and auxiliary buildings

The monastery was reconstructed once more in the 17th century after being restored in the early 13th century. The stone masonry in the restored areas differs from that in the non-restored areas. So, in addition to using the stones from the original building, the surrounding cross-stones and gravestones were also used during the restoration. The ceiling was covered with cross-stones, while the inscribed and hewn stones were used as the corner stones. According to the inscriptions, the monastery underwent restoration in 1691, then again in 1725. The complex's various parts underwent several restorations from the 9th to the 18th centuries, and the main buildings were constructed between the 12th and 13th centuries.

The Great Arran Monastery served as the residence of the Catholicoi of the Albanian Apostolic Church during the prosperity of the Principality



The first church of the monastery located in the west is known as the church of St. Jacob



The altar of the Great Arran Monastery's first church, known as the Church of St. Jacob

of Khachen, particularly beginning in the 13th century. The names of the Catholicos and bishops who are buried in monastery area are inscribed on gravestones, along with this information.

According to the 19th-century author Barkhudaryan, the Great Arran Monastery was the bishopric of the Khachen melikdom (Бархударян, 1895, I. s.5). The monastery was also known as the educational centre and library of Khachen. According to Barkhudaryan, the Kolatak village is rich in ancient cemeteries and temples, as well as epitaphs. There are also three other temple-shaped churches close to Kolatak, according to the author.

The Great Arran Monastery Complex includes two churches surrounded by fortress walls, two narthexes, and several auxiliary buildings, such as residential buildings. All of the buildings are adjacent to one another, and most of them have interconnecting passages. There is a scriptorium where parchment manuscripts were kept, stone rooms with fireplaces, cells with balconies, a trapezoid kitchen building, a building for making sesame oil, and numerous storage buildings, water storage, and guard stations inside the walls of the stone fortress. Cross-stones, gravestones, cornices, arches, altar risers, door and window frames, and fireplace mantels used during the construction of the buildings in the complex show the craftsmanship of the mediaeval craftsmen. However, in the present day, all these buildings are partially ruined.

The church was restored in 1222 by Khorisha (Hurishah) Khatun, the wife of Khachen prince Vakhtang and the mother of Hasan Jalal, according to an inscription on the monument's door. The church was constructed in accordance with Caucasian

Albania's mediaeval architectural traditions. Large single-nave basilicas started to be replaced by more complicated three-nave basilicas in the architecture of temples as the power and influence of the church grew along with the strengthening of the position of Christianity. Single-nave basilicas did continue to exist in Caucasian Albanian architecture until the 19th century, but their dimensions got smaller over time. The Arran Monastery's basilicas with their arched ceilings were also included in this type of temple.

The Church of St. Jacob is the first church, measuring 8 by 3.4 metres and located to the west of the monastery. The Church of St. Jacob was one of the holy shrines of Caucasian Albania, according to historical sources. The church with a horseshoe-shaped apse is a narrow, long, rectangular-shaped (7.80 m by 3.2 m) single-nave basilica. The church is illuminated by two windows and has entrances on the south and west sides. The first window is on the eastern wall, while the second cross-shaped window is on the western wall.

The church's altar is positioned above the main common floor. The altar is high because it is situated beneath the entrance of one of the cells that leads to the altar at the back. In all, there are four small cells, each measuring 1.30 m by 1.30 m, attached to the altar and located on the church's eastern wall. Three of the cells' entrances are located in the prayer hall, while one entrance is below the altar. There is a staircase on the south side that leads up to the altar. The fact that the cells date from an older time and were used as a secret place suggests that this portion of the church was originally an older building that was restored in the 12th century. This supposition is also supported by the inscription on the portal's



Cross-stone in the second church of the Great Arran monastery complex

tympanum, according to which the Great Arran Church was reconstructed by Khorisha Khatun, the wife of the Khachen prince.

The second church, which is adjacent to the south-east wall of the Church of St. Jacob, has the same simple layout as the first one. There is an apse on the east wall of this church, which has the shape of a simple rectangular hall (8.0 m by 3.4 m). The narthex of the second church is particularly noteworthy among the different buildings in the monastery complex. In order to accommodate people during worship and to ensure that everyone could fit there, a 2.5-metre-wide corridor was constructed between the narthex and the church building due to the small size of the church itself. There is a large, heavily ornamented cross-stone on both sides of the corridor. The cross-stone on the northern wall was built in 1223, while the one on the southern wall was built in 1224, according to the inscriptions. Four cross-stones, distinguished by their rich decoration, were used as side blocks for the corridor's west window, but the inscriptions on these cross-stones have been erased.

There are two entrances to the church: one on the south side of the three-arched narthex and one on the west side of the adjacent chapel-narthex. So, the three-arched narthex organically complements the external forms of both churches, serves as the entrance to both churches, enhances the attractiveness of the complex's overall appearance, and plays the role of the centre, much like in the monasteries of Khudavang (Kalbajar district) and Charekvank (Gadabay).

Cross-stones, gravestones up to two metres long, and stones with inscriptions were used in the

construction of the narthex wall. The blue stone masonry of the church wall is coloured with orange cross-stones, grey gravestones, and white stones with inscriptions.

The narthex was used not only as a burial place for nobles, but also as a place for discussing religious and social issues. Here, the floor is covered with many gravestones. According to the inscription on the gravestones on the floor, Catholicoi and bishops of the Albanian Apostolic Church were buried here.

Until 1764, information on Albanian bishops was recorded on the cross-stones and stone inscriptions of monasteries and churches (Бархударян, с.6). According to Barkhudaryan, there are graves of several Catholicoi in the second church of the Great Arran Monastery.

Barkhudaryan's information demonstrates that the church was an Albanian church that operated until the 19th century. The Great Arran Monastery in Karabakh, like the Dizapayt, Kavak, Gtichavank, White Cross, Amaras, Kochiz temples, and the Khudavang and Elishe monasteries, was prosperous until the mass resettlement of Armenians to the Caucasus in 1828. The Albanian Apostolic Church was destroyed as a result of the mass resettlement of Armenians in the Caucasus following the signing of the Treaty of Turkmenchay in 1828, and the Armenian Gregorian Church's desire to take control of the Albanian churches. Shortly after, in 1836, the Russian Empire's Synod decided to abolish the Albanian Church and hand it over to the Armenian Church on the insistence of the Gregorian Church. All of these churches were destroyed and Armenianized after the Albanian Church ceased its activities.

ALBANIAN TEMPLE (12th-13th centuries), Kolatak village

In the territory of Kolatak village, there is another Albanian historical architectural monument dating from the 12th and 13th centuries, in addition to the Great Arran Monastery (9th century). The monastery was constructed eight kilometres from Kolatak village, at the foot of a large hill. Unlike the Great Arran Monastery in Kolatak, this monastery has a simple design and layout.

In the complex area, there are many cross-stones that have significant artistic, ethnographic, and historical importance. A total of twenty-five inscriptions from the 12th and 13th centuries were discovered in the monastery area, dating back to 1179, 1181, 1186, 1191, and 1194 (Бархударян, s.24-28). The inscription on the church's altar dates back to 1265.

The complex includes three church buildings surrounded by fortress walls, and there were signs of a water pool and a water transmission system inside the fence. The monastery yard is divided into two parts, and there are three churches and a three-arched narthex-chapel building in the northern part of the yard. A semi-destroyed rectangular building adjacent to the complex's northern wall is believed to be an old refectory. There are the ruins of monastic cells and other service buildings on the north-west side. There were many cross-stones with relief images of horsemen among them, which have survived to the present day. There is a large mediaeval cemetery to the east of the complex.

The walls of the large church are in good condition despite the fact that the arched roof of the



*Albanian temple (12th-13th centuries),
Kolatak village*

building's southernmost portion has collapsed. The construction method of the church is similar to that of most Albanian churches. The walls were built using rough-hewn cobble stones; only the church altar was constructed with polished stones.

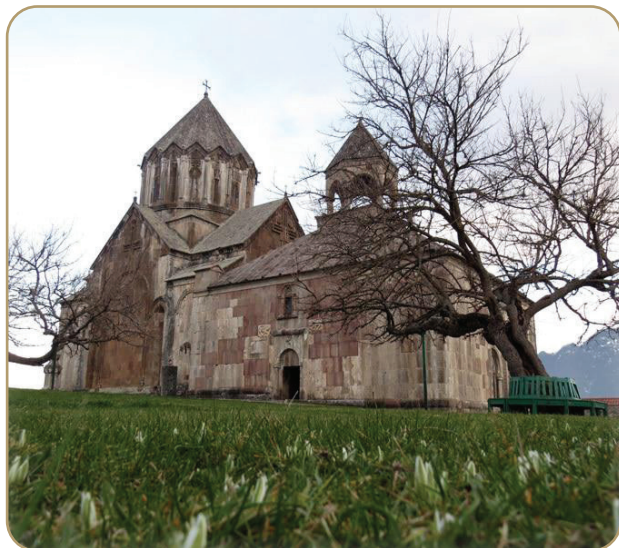
GANJASAR MONASTERY (13th century), Vangli village

One of the most notable examples of Christian architecture in Caucasian Albania is the Ganjasar Monastery Complex, which was constructed on the left bank of the Khachen River in the Vangli village of the Kalbajar district.

After the Aghdara district was abolished in 1992, the village of Vangli, where the monastery is located, was included in the territory of the Kalbajar

district. The Ganjasar Monastery, constructed in the village of Vangli, which had for a while served as the centre of the Albanian Principality of Khachen, was the religious and cultural centre for Christian Albanians in Azerbaijan between the 13th and the 19th centuries.

For those studying the history of the Albanian Apostolic Church—which is part of Azerbaijan’s material and moral heritage—after the 13th century, the Ganjasar Monastery Complex is a significant resource, and was the symbol of the 13th-century Renaissance in Albanian Christian culture during the existence of the Principality of Khachen. The monument contains a lot of Dyophysite elements, showing that Albanian Catholicosate was independent of other churches in the 13th century. Dyophysite elements in the architectural composition of the temple complex demonstrate



*Ganjasar Monastery Complex
(13th century)*

that it belongs to the architecture of Caucasian Albania, displaying centuries-old traditions. The local population called it the Albanian church even in the late 17th century. The following inscription was inscribed by the Albanian priest who repaired the monastery’s roof in the 17th century: “... They used the money we donated with the best of intentions to build the roofs and the destroyed walls of churches in the holy throne of Aghuan Ganjasar” (Məmmədov, 2015, s.41). The ancient temple site, which the residents of Vangli called the Greek Church, remained the main shrine in the area of the monastery (Ямпольский, 1962, s. 40-47). The reason that the local people called the Ganjasar Temple “the Greek church” is connected to the Albanians’ Greek-orientation as a Dyophysite church. The fact that the monastery’s archaic building is known as such, shows that it is an ancient Albanian church from the early Middle Ages. There was an ancient burial site near this building.

Local people called the Ganjasar Temple “the Sanctuary of Vank” in the 20th century. In the southern region of the Ganjasar Monastery, this archaic temple served as a place of pilgrimage for both the Muslim and Albanian Christian people of Vank village and the nearby villages. The local people used to visit this temple together and perform ancient rites in the monastery yard, just like in the Albanian temples of Kurmuk (Gakh), Parigala (Zagatala), Elishe (Oghuz), Aghoghlan (Lachin), and Khudavang (Kalbajar) in Azerbaijan. The monastery was an ancient place of worship that both Muslims and Christians visited, as was the case with many other Albanian monasteries in Azerbaijan. Some of the Albanian people were Christians during that time, and afterwards, many converted to Islam.

Until the 20th century, local people lit candles in the archaic building known as the Greek church in the monastery's yard, slaughtered sheep, cocks, and chickens as a votive offering, and distributed the food made from these animals to seven neighbours, according to the tradition (Ямпольский, 1962, s.40-47). The legs of the animals slaughtered were kept in the sanctuary in accordance with an ancient Albanian tradition. This tradition is still practiced in ancient places of worship, such as the Sanctuary of Chicken near the village of Nij, where Christian Udis live compactly, and on the Komrad Mountain (Dizakhli village), where the ruins of an ancient Albanian temple are located in the Gabala region of Azerbaijan. In order to protect their livestock from various diseases, the Azerbaijanis who engaged in cattle breeding also used to visit the Ganjasar Temple.

The territory of the Principality of Khachen significantly expanded during Hasan Jalal's reign, and construction and improvement works also grew on a large scale. Hasan the Great, his son Prince Vakhtang, grandson Jalal Dola, and their wives, Arzu Khatun, Khorisha Khatun, and Mamakhatun, well-known Albanian princes of Khachen and descendants of the Mihranid dynasty, constructed a number of magnificent defensive fortresses, monasteries, churches, and temples in the principality's territory. The clerics from this dynasty served as Albanian Catholicoi in the Principality of Khachen, which prospered in the 12th century. The Ganjasar Monastery, Vachar Church, Akan Fortress, and Khanabert Fortress belonged to the Khachen dynasty, alongside the Ganjasar Monastery (Бархударян, II к s 400).



Ganjasar Monastery Complex (13th century)



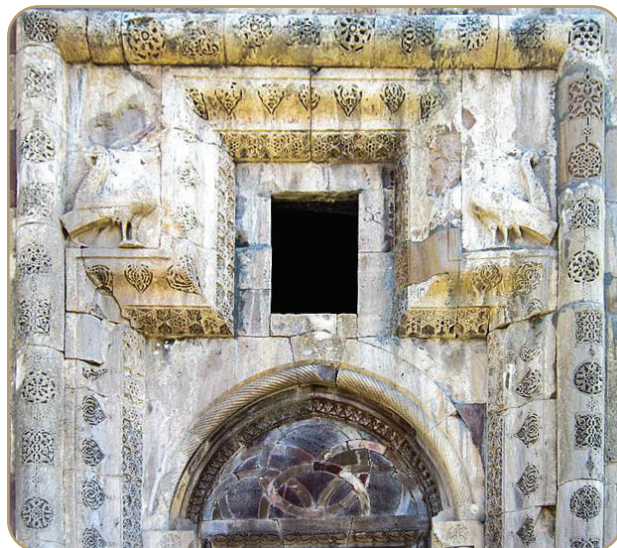
The dome of the Ganjasar Monastery

The Ganjasar Monastery was constructed opposite the Khanabert Fortress, which was the residence of Hasan Jalal. According to the inscription in the monastery, the temple was constructed during the reign of Jalal Dola Hasan, son of Vakhtang. The epigraphy inside the monastery makes it clear that Vakhtang, the son of Hasan the Great, bequeathed the construction of a church in Ganjasar, where the graves of his ancestors are, to his son Jalal Dola and Jalal Dola's mother, Khorisha Khatun. According to the epigraphic inscription on the monastery's wall, Hasan Jalal Dola, the grandson of Hasan the Great and the son of Vakhtang, and his mother, Khorisha Khatun, built this monument.

Jalal Dola established the church near the south door of the complex in 1216, at his father's behest. During the construction of the church, his mother Khorisha Khatun, who had accepted a nunship,



Image of Hasan Jalal on the dome's façade, holding a model of the temple over his head



Peacock reliefs typical of Albanian culture on the entrance portal to Ganjasar Monastery

went to Jerusalem and died there. The construction was completed in 1238, and the church was blessed in 1240, during the patriarchate of the Albanian Catholicos Nerses. According to the text, Jalal Dola constructed a beautifully decorated church called Ganjasar, which has a dome that resembles the sky, near the family cemetery in front of the Khanabert Fortress (Бархударян, 1895, s. 153-159). Jalal Dola organised a solemn feast here to celebrate the completion of the building's construction in 1240. During this celebration, which was attended by Nerses, the Albanian Catholicos and many bishops, the church was consecrated (sprinkled with holy water). The following is stated in an inscription on the monastery wall: "This church was consecrated in 1240 during the patriarchate of Ter-Nerses, the Albanian Catholicos."

The monastery was constructed on the site of the family mausoleum of the Khachen rulers, who were Hasan Jalal's ancestors. Hasan Jalal, who was killed by the Mongols in 1261, and his heirs were also buried in the monastery mausoleum, which was the Khachen dynasty's family cemetery. By order of the Mongol governor, Argun, Jalal Dola was tortured to death in 1261 in Qazvin, and his body was handed to his son, Atabey. According to Barkhudaryan, Atabey buried him in the Ganjasar Monastery, but the death date on his tombstone was marked as 1431. It appears that this tombstone was either replaced or erected 170 years after the death of Jalal Dola (Бархударян, II к. s.400).

Many Albanian religious clerics descended from Hasan Jalal were also buried in the area of this monastery complex, which served as the residence of Albanian Catholicoi. Other members of the ruling dynasty of Khachen were also buried here, including



A cross-stone erected in memory of Hasan the Great I, Khachen prince, in Ganjasar Monastery (13th century)

Mamkan Khatun, the wife of Jalal Dola, and her son Atabey. According to the inscriptions on the monuments above it, the members of the dynasty and clerics were buried here until the early 18th and 19th centuries; tombstones with the names of the Albanian Catholicos Gregory, who died in 1653, Yeremi, a descendent of Jalal Dola, who died in 1700, and Esayi, an Albanian Catholicos, who died in 1728. In the inscription dating back to 1727, Tarkhan's memory was also mentioned. The grave of the last Albanian Catholicos, Sargis (1828), a descendant of Esayi-Jalal Dola, was also located here.

Inscriptions engraved on the walls on the temple's four sides provide information about the rulers and Catholicoi of Khachen. It was mentioned in one of the inscriptions that Jalal Dola, his wife Mamaka Khatun, and their son Atabey also contributed to the building of the church in 1266. The inscription, dating back to 1271, is from the period of Atabey, the Prince of Khachen. Information on Atabey's son, Aygun, is provided in an inscription from 1495.

Since 1511, the Ganjasar Monastery Complex, in particular, served as the residence of Albanian Catholicoi. From this time on, the monastery known as the Ganjasar Catholicate became the main residence for Albanian Christians from 1511 to 1836. This Albanian temple was the residence of the last Albanian Catholicoi as the religious centre of the independent Albanian principality for six centuries, from 1511 to 1836. According to inscriptions found in the monastery complex, Catholicos Esayi Hasan was elected Albanian patriarch in 1702 and held the position until his death in 1728. The Ganjasar Monastery, like all other Albanian churches, stopped functioning following the Russian Synod's decision to abolish the Albanian Church as an institution in 1836.



Ruined gravestone of Hasan Jalal Dola, Albanian Prince of Khachen

The Ganjasar Monastery Complex had large amounts of land during the Middle Ages. It is known from the inscriptions in the monastery that members of the Khachen dynasty occasionally gave land to the monastery and did charity work. Aygun, the son of Atabey, was one such contributor of land, according to an inscription from 1495. Smbat, the son of Pir Hamza, and Rastam, the son of Jalal the Great, also gave land to Ganjasar in 1471, and Catholicos Sargis, the grandson of Seytu, the son of Atir Melik, and Dursun, the grandson of Jalal the Great, followed suit in 1493. The inscriptions also mentioned the donations made by Captain Melik Abov and his wife Heriknaz, his son Melik Beyler in 1790, and Seytu's sons, Valijan and his brothers, to the church in 1480. The land used by the villagers living in the nearby villages was also owned by the monastery. According to the archive documents of 1825, the lands used by the Balligaya village, consisting of four families, and the Vangli village, consisting of 55 families, were "the property of Ganjasar." The document states that the population of Balligaya is pure Turks (Azerbaijanis) (N.Məmmədov, 2015, s. 42). However, according to Barkhudaryan, in the 19th century, the lands donated to the monastery were looted, and the church was destroyed, both spiritually and materially.

The Armenians, who were relocated to the Karabakh and Iravan Khanates of Azerbaijan by the Russian Empire, destroyed the Albanian temples and holy places in these lands starting in the 19th century and started to falsify and Armenianize them, including the Ganjasar Monastery as well. Armenians, who have no deep historical roots in the Caucasus, chose to appropriate centuries-old Albanian monuments and used the guise of



The words "during the patriarchate of the Albanian Catholicos Nerses" at the bottom of the inscription from during the reign of Albanian ruler Hasan Jalal Dola in the 13th century prove the Albanian heritage of the temple.

Christianity to strengthen their position there. The Armenian Gregorian Church continued to destroy pieces of Albanian Christian culture and archives during the 19th and 20th centuries.

However, historical realities can not be hidden. For the first time since the 19th century, the orientalist scholar Joseph Orbeli revealed that the majority of the original appearances of the Karabakh monasteries and churches were falsified, when he examined more than a thousand inscriptions on the temple during his archaeological expedition to the Ganjasar Monastery of Karabakh in the early 20th century. Orbeli found important facts in the Ganjasar inscriptions which demonstrate that these lands were owned by the Albanian people, who controlled the Albanian church and the Albanian principality. The author discovered the facts of Armenianization of the Albanian monuments of Karabakh, as being among the acts of the Armenian church that distorted the Ganjasar inscriptions. However, the researcher was forced to not publish his work during the Soviet era due to intense pressure. Research by Orbeli demonstrates how the Albanian history in the region of Karabakh was destroyed and Armenianized. Fortunately, the Armenians were unable to entirely destroy this invaluable work. Currently, a copy of this important research and related documents is kept in the Institute of the Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences. As a consequence of the efforts of Azerbaijani researchers, the copy of this scientific work, which shows the true face of Armenian falsification, was transported to Baku from St. Petersburg in 2011 (Axundov, 2018).

The Armenian Church has deliberately collected Albanian inscriptions from all Albanian monasteries since the 19th century and made an effort to eliminate those that did not fit their purpose.

The entire collection of historical records of mediaeval Albanian history, particularly the extensive library of the Albanian patriarchs in Ganjasar, was destroyed when the Armenianization of the Albanian churches began in the 19th century, and manuscripts and all valuable documents were transported to Etchmiadzin. According to the records of the last Albanian patriarch, Sargis of the Hasan Jalal dynasty, the priceless archive, which the Albanian Church had kept at the Ganjasar Monastery for centuries, mysteriously disappeared while being transported. As a result, the extensive archive of the Albanian patriarchs in the Ganjasar Monastery was irretrievably destroyed. Despite the fact that the last Albanian patriarch, Sargis, restored some of the documents and recompiled them, a substantial portion of them were not reproduced. This demonstrates that all the historical records that are now available are falsified copies that have new Armenian texts added, instead of the originals.

The accurate interpretation of the Ganjasar Monastery inscription confirmed that the Albanian Apostolic Church was independent, i.e., autocephalous, in the early 13th century. The words “during the patriarchate of the Albanian Catholicos Nerses” at the bottom of the inscription prove the Albanian heritage of the temple. However, the Armenians photographed this inscription from an angle that makes the words in the bottom line difficult to read in all the photos. The phrase “Albanian Catholicos under the patriarchate of Nerses” in the temple’s main inscription obviously expresses the high rank of the spiritual Albanian leader. The patriarch is the highest spiritual rank and is the head of the independent (autocephalous) church of the country in accordance with Christian church tradition. That is why when translating this phrase from the Ganjasar inscriptions, Armenian scientists purposefully omitted the word “patriarchate.”

According to Orbeli's research, the words "Armenia" or "Armenian" were not present in any of the monastery inscriptions; instead, it was revealed that the translated inscriptions contained texts indicating that the Ganjasar monastery's area and the monastery itself belonged to an independent Albanian principality. In particular, words like "Holy throne of Ganjasar of the country of Albania," "This is the grave of Sargis, the Catholicos of the Albanian people," "Catholicos Sargis from Albania for the people of Hasan Jalal" in the inscription show that the monastery is the spiritual centre of the Christian Albanians of Azerbaijan, and that this territory was inhabited by Albanian people who were ruled by Albanian princes and clerics.

Numerous Turkisms are present in this Albanian monument, according to the research on the Ganjasar inscriptions. As Turkic peoples have lived in the Caucasus since ancient times, the Turkish ethnic component has always played a significant role in Caucasian Albania and the Albanian Autocephalous Church. Albanian cross images and artistic compositions reflect elements of Turkic beliefs and worldviews, such as solar and lunar cults, and the tree of life. The Ganjasar inscriptions show that the Albanian Christian population of Karabakh were native speakers of the Turkic language, and although they adhered to Christian traditions in church life, they preserved Turkic traditions and folklore in their domestic life. A significant centre for the formation and growth of Turkic Christians in the South Caucasus throughout the Middle Ages was the Principality of Khachen in Karabakh, which formed kinship ties with both the Kipchaks and the Mongols during the rule of Hasan Jalal Dola, one of the brightest representatives of the Albanian-Khachen Principality, which flourished in the 12th and 13th centuries. Khorisha Khatun (Hurishah Khatun), the

mother of Hasan Jalal, came from a Kipchak Turkic family. This is further supported by the description of two Mongolian horsemen with braids, wearing typical robes and hats, and holding spears on the lower right side of one of the cross-stones in the monastery area. There is no doubt that the portrait of a Mongol military leader is shown on this Albanian cross-stone, which was erected in 1274 in honour of the renovation of the Ganjasar Monastery. The composition of a horseman and a man standing next to him in a semi-circular border in the lower part of the stone shows the fact that Khachen Prince Hasan Jalal was a vassal of the Mongol Khaganate.

It should be noted that there are many words and personal names of Turkic origin in the inscriptions on the walls of the Ganjasar Monastery Complex. The names of the ruling family of Khachen, as well as the Albanian bishops and Catholicos from



An image of one of the Mongol military chiefs on the Albanian cross-stone created in honour of the repair of the Ganjasar monastery in 1274.

Khachen, are of Turkic origin, and this is one of the important factors that show the significant role of Turkic culture in mediaeval Albanian heritage, and the Turkic origin of the founders of the ancient monasteries and churches in Karabakh.

There are even Turkic texts in the Ganjasar inscriptions, according to recent research. On the walls of the Ganjasar temple, specialists have managed to discover the inscription “Malikdən torunları için hatıra” (A memorial from Melik to his grandchildren), as well as ancient Turkic words like *ezgi*, *şamar*, and *sakin*. The discovery of the memorial text ‘from Melik to his grandchildren,’ as well as numerous Turkic personal names, including Khorishah (Hurishah) Khatun, Hasan Jalal, Melik Ata, Atabey, and Gochubey, as well as ancient Turkic titles like Hakan, Hatun, and Atabey, mentioned in the Ganjasar inscriptions, indicate that the rulers of Khachen are of Turkic origin. These findings demonstrate the significant role of Turkic culture and Turkic ethnicities in the mediaeval Albanian heritage of the Karabakh region.

It should be noted that these Turkic names and titles were found in the inscriptions of all the Albanian temples in Karabakh, not just the Ganjasar Monastery. In many of the Albanian church inscriptions in Karabakh, personal names of Turkic origin belonging to the Albanian Khachen dynasty, including Mama Khatun, Atabey, Arzu Khatun, Gochubey, Tursun, Seyti, Avag, Shams, Altun, Agbukh, Garagoz, Ruzukhan, Mina Khatun, Nazli Khanim, Aygun, and Aykut were repeatedly mentioned. Inscriptions, almost all of which have names of Turkic origin and belong to the Khachen dynasty, can also be found in the area of the Great Arran Monastery, according to Bishop



The composition of a horseman and a man standing next to it, reflecting the fact that Khachen Prince Hasan Jalal was a vassal of the Mongolian Khaganate (inscription of 1274).

Barkhudaryan, who provided information about the Christian monuments of Karabakh in the 19th century.

The inscriptions in the monastery mentioned Erkan, the grandson of the Khachen ruler Hasan and his wife Mamakhatun, and another inscription mentioned Kutlu Bey in Hasan Jalal’s principality. The Turkic origins of the Principality of Khachen are indicated by the names of the Albanian princes of the Khachen Melikdom, including Hasan Jalal, Arzu Khatun, Mama Khatun, Atabey, Erkan Gochubey, and Kutlu Bey. The presence of Turkic names in the building inscriptions of Albanian temples, such as Khatun, Bey, Melik Ata, Atabey of Khachen, and Ulubey, is an accurate indicator of the ethnicity of those who built these monuments.

The document archive of the mediaeval history of the Albanian churches and its extensive library were located in the Ganjasar Monastery Complex, which served as the Albanian patriarchate for centuries. Therefore, the Ganjasar Monastery, the last residence of the Albanian Patriarchate located in Karabakh, became a major target after the Russian Synod's well-known decision to abolish the Albanian Church in 1836. This monastery, which possessed a large amount of economic property and land and prospered until 1828, was on the verge of being destroyed like other Albanian churches and monasteries at the end of the 1830s. Since this time, all the manuscripts and priceless records in the Albanian patriarchs' library have been transported from Ganjasar Monastery to Etchmiadzin. The archive of the Ganjasar Monastery mysteriously disappeared, according to Sargis, the last Albanian patriarch and Albanian Khachen ruler from the dynasty of Hasan Jalal. The theft of priceless texts from the Ganjasar Monastery is also mentioned by Barkhudaryan, who travelled throughout Azerbaijan and categorised all Albanian churches in the late 19th century. The author was a living witness to the rapid deterioration of Albanian churches in Karabakh, especially the Ganjasar Monastery, into ruins.

The Armenian Gregorian Church's policy of destroying the Albanian Christian heritage, which began in the 19th century, persisted in the 20th century with the distortion of the epigraphy in Albanian churches, and the erasing and alteration of ornaments and symbols used in the artistic style of the Albanian period. During the Soviet empire, this policy of distorting the heritage of Caucasian Albania was maintained.

It should be mentioned that the inscriptions on the walls of the Ganjasar Monastery at that time were very different from the inscriptions present now, according to the epigraphic research carried out in the monastery in 1919. The photos of the Ganjasar Monastery from the last century make it obvious that the inscriptions on the monastery's walls are different. The fake, new inscriptions on the monastery walls in modern times are very different from the photos taken in the previous century.

The Albanian inscription, which was written in the Ganjasar Monastery in the 13th century under the rule of Hasan Jalal Dola, remained until the end of the 20th century. The Georgian linguist-scientist Zaza Aleksidze read this Albanian epigraphy, which was written in 1240 during the reign of Hasan Jalal Dola, the Albanian ruler. The book preserved



A depiction of a Mongolian horseman on a cross-stone in the area of the Ganjasar monastery complex.

priceless information, including the fact that the Albanian Catholicoi had the highest title of patriarch in the Christian world, that Hasan Jalal built the church especially for the Albanian people, and that the Albanian church was autocephalous (meaning that it was blessed by the apostles of Jesus) until the 20th century.

The falsifications that persisted in the Ganjasar Monastery during the 19th and 20th centuries became even more clear during the time that Karabakh was occupied by Armenia from 1993 to 2020. Since the Soviet era, Armenian Catholicoi have tried to get approval to repair the Ganjasar Monastery with the goal of falsifying and destroying the epigraphy in this Albanian temple. The Azerbaijani researchers protested and tried to prevent any falsification at that time, but the Armenians got an opportunity during the occupation of Karabakh territories in the late 20th century, and managed to erase the vast majority of the inscriptions confirming the Albanian origin of these monuments.

Most of the ancient stone inscriptions of the Ganjasar Monastery were replaced by stone slabs with fake inscriptions during the nearly 30-year occupation of Karabakh and East Zangazur by the Armenian Armed Forces. It is obvious that these changes were made with the intention of destroying the inscriptions that show the autocephaly of the Albanian Church, and Armenianizing the temple's Albanian origin. The inscriptions, which are extremely important for the study of the history of Caucasian Albania, were removed from the walls of the Ganjasar Monastery and replaced with new, fake inscriptions. When compared with photos of the Ganjasar Monastery taken in the late 20th century, it can be seen clearly that there are obvious and significant changes between the inscriptions'

previous and current looks. The majority of the stone slabs with engravings of Albanian texts were updated and now, a large portion of the Ganjasar inscriptions have been replaced by fake slabs with new Armenian texts. According to experts, these slabs are distinct from the stones used in mediaeval Albanian architecture and were brought to the church area from another location.

In the monastery complex, falsification activities were carried out more actively between 2000 and 2011. The architectural structure of the monastery complex was seriously damaged, and the inscriptions and artistic samples on the interior and facades of the monument were erased and replaced with various animal figures and Armenian inscriptions. In the monastery's yard and cemetery, dozens of new gravestones and cross-stones were



The monastery was built on the site of the family crypt of the rulers of Khachen, which belonged to Hasan Jalal's ancestors.



Many Albanian clerics descended from Hasan Jalal were also buried in the Ganjasar monastery complex, which afterward became the residence of Albanian Catholicoi.

installed, while cross-stones in the monastery's area were destroyed and replaced with Armenian crosses. Both the monument's exterior and interior appearance were severely damaged by this. The tombstone on the tomb of Khachen Prince Hasan Jalal Dola in the complex was destroyed in 2011 along with many of its artistic ornaments. Elements that didn't fit the monument's original architectural

features were added during the repair work to the monastery's roof and interior during these years. There was also interference with the architecture of the monastery's facade. The Ganjasar Monastery, the main and largest Albanian temple in the Karabakh region, was presented to the world as an Armenian monastery complex during the years of occupation.

HAVAPTUGH TEMPLE (12th century), Vangli village

Another 13th-century Albanian temple is located in the Vangli village of the Kalbajar district, in the rocky area at the foot of the hill on the right bank of the Tartar River. The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan listed it as a historical-

architectural monument of national importance. The temple is located three kilometres west of the Khudavang Monastery Complex and five kilometres south of the Ganjasar Monastery Complex, in Vangli village.

This Albanian temple was a large mediaeval monastery complex, with more than twenty buildings and rooms. The date the church was built and the name of the person who ordered it to be built are mentioned on the inscription above the church's entrance door. The entrance doors are located in the southern part of the church. According to the inscription above the door, the church was constructed in 1163 and restored in 1223. The inscription reads: "...I, Ter Johann, nephew of Ter Gregory, and my nephew Georg built this church with the help of other brothers in memory of our parents for the salvation of our souls in the summer of 1163, during the reign of Vakhtang's son Hasan and his spouse Mamkan." In another inscription, the restoration of the church by Hasan Jalal in 1223 was mentioned.

The complex includes a church, a narthex and

a small chapel. Around them are the ruins of other structures that did not survive to the present day in their entirety. The main church is a three-nave basilica that has, however, survived.

One of the buildings in the monastery, the main church, has a rectangular hall with an arched ceiling, and rough limestone blocks were used to construct its walls. A small square-shaped building without an apse connects to the church building from the west. The doors of the church and that building are on the south side and open into a narthex that is shared by both. The narthex building was constructed using rough cobble stones, and the roof was covered with lumber.

There was a large mediaeval cemetery with tombstones and geometric sculptures bearing various artistic ornaments to the east of the church, on the slope of the hill.



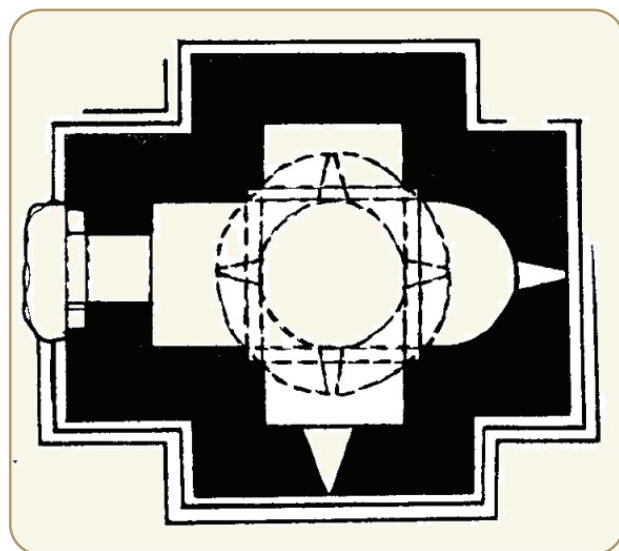
Havaptugh temple, 12th century

CHURCH OF THE SAVIOUR (11th-13th century), Yayiji village

The village of Yayiji, where the Albanian church existed since the 12th and 13th centuries, was known as Kochoghot until December 29, 1992. The village was occupied by the Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia and was included in the territory of the Kalbajar district in 1992 after the abolition of the Aghdara district, of which it had previously been a part.

There were two churches in the village, one of which was on the right bank of the Tartar River. The building's western side is encircled by steep rocks, and its northern side is surrounded by a thick forest with fruit trees.

Barkhudaryan provided information about the building inscription on the tympanum of the entrance portal of the Church of St. Mary here. According to the inscription, the church was constructed "... during the reign of Vakhtang, son of Hasan...". Although the monument's construction date is not specified in the inscription, we can estimate it from the mention of Vakhtang, the prince of Khachen who died in 1214. According to the ancient inscriptions on the territory of the church, it was constructed on the site of a building from an earlier period. The Church of the Saviour was constructed in the late 11th century, and reconstruction works were carried out in the 13th century. The name of Sargis, the son of Hasan, the ruler of Khachen, is mentioned on one of the cross-stones on the wall of the church (Бархударян, 1895, s.168). The inscription on one of the cross-stones built into the church's door makes it



Plan of the Church of the Saviour in Yayiji village

clear that the church was restored in 1249 by Sargis, the son of Aslan (Бархударян, 1895, *ibid.*).

According to its architectural structure, the church has a cross-shaped floor plan, with sides of 5.2 by 4.2 metres. Except for the eastern apse, the wings of the cross have a well-emphasised rectangular configuration on the inside and are connected by four arches raised on pilasters at the intersection corners. Moreover, a dome drum with four window openings is supported by the pilasters. The east, south, and north wings of the cross all have windows on their side walls. The northern and southern wings each have four niches, two of which are oval-shaped and two of which are square-shaped. The walls are plastered with lime mortar from the inside. The church's floor was constructed of hewn and smoothed rock.

ALBANIAN TEMPLE (672), Yayiji village

According to Barkhudaryan, the ruins of another Albanian temple in the village of Yayiji were to the east of the village, on the right bank of the Tartar River. The ruined monastery had a circular dome and once had a monastic cell and an altar. There was an ancient cemetery full of large and beautiful cross-stones around the monastery (Бархударян, 1895, s.168).

KHATIRAVANG MONASTERY (13th century), Qozlu village

The Qozlu village, located on the slope of the Karabakh Range, was a significant settlement in the Yukhari Khachen territory, situated at the crossroads of several important trade routes on the mediaeval Dvin-Barda Trade Route. The village also connected the Khachen-Chilaburd-Goycha basin. Qozlu village was replete with Albanian architectural monuments, including the Khatiravang Monastery, the Red Monastery, and the Vaguas Monastery.

The Khatiravang Monastery Complex in the village of Qozlu is located on the right bank of the Tartar River, 2 kilometres southeast of the Khudavang Monastery. The Khatiravang Monastery was built in the thirteenth century during the prosperous years of the Principality of Khachen, which kept alive Albanian statehood traditions in Karabakh.

According to the building inscription, main church of the Khatiravang Monastery was built in 1204. The inscription indicates that the monastery's area was significantly increased as a result of the donated plots of land. According to the inscription

in the Khatiravang Monastery dated 1215, the construction of the church was financed by the children of Minakhatun and the daughter of Prince Hasan Jalal (Бархударян, II kitab, s.206). The names of the Khachen dynasty's deceased representatives are listed in an inscription on a cross-stone near the monastery that dates back to 1311 (Бархударян, II, s. 207). There are several more cross-stones here dating back to 1201, on which the names of the noblemen and women from the Khachen dynasty were inscribed (Бархударян, 1895, II, s. 208).

The Khatiravang Monastery Complex consists of an old and a new church, a chapel, a bell tower, domestic buildings intended for monks, and half-ruined fortress walls. The tower remains on the fortress walls were covered with well-hewn and polished madder-coloured stone slabs.

The main church of the monastery is architecturally similar to the narthexes of the mediaeval churches in the territory of the Khachen Principality. However, it is a one-of-a-kind landmark in the Christian architecture of the South Caucasus (Мамедова, 2004, s.133). Two one-nave chapels with rectangular altars and arched ceilings were added to the four-column, domed church with an asymmetrical plan. This is a unique architectural composition that is characteristic only of the architecture of Caucasian Albania.

Khatiravang Monastery was one of the ruined early mediaeval churches that was restored and Armenianized during the prosperous years of the Albanian Khachen reign. During this time, the main churches, large hall churches, and small churches of Albanian temples, including the Monastery of St. Elishe, Kichan Monastery, and Gtichavank Monastery, were constructed in the Principality of Khachen.



Qozlu village, Kalbajar



Khatiravang Monastery, Qozlu village

The rectangular altar apses added to the capacity of the church in the Khatiravang Monastery are one of the common characteristic features of Caucasian Albanian architecture (Мамедова Г., 2004. səh. 107). Such altars can also be found at the St. Elishe Monastery, Gtichavank Monastery, Seven Churches Monastery, and Khudavang Monastery. According to Professor Gulchohra Mammadova, Doctor of Architecture, rectangular altars are not used in any Armenian monastery complexes. Rectangular altar apses were used almost parallel to semi-circular apses in Caucasian Albanian architecture during the high Middle Ages, and they had canonical status in religious architecture (Г.Мамедова, 2004. səh.107).

The proportions of the church's naves differ from those of other basilicas. While the width of the middle nave in ordinary basilicas is 2-2.5 times wider than that of the side naves, this proportion of

dimensions is 0.8:1:0.7 in the Khatiravang Church. The aisles and notches of the central nave were covered with arched ceilings constructed on arrow-shaped arches (Г.Мамедова, 2004).

The church's dome also has a distinctive shape. Specifically, it is located in the middle section of the central nave, on the western side of the temple, not in front of the altar apse. The four columns that support the arches under the dome are of various shapes (rectangular, octagonal, and cross-shaped), well-polished, and decorated with carved patterns. The main feature of the dome is that it lacks a drum and rests directly on the octagonal base. According to G. Mammadova, this is related to the influence of Azerbaijani-Islamic architecture on mediaeval Albanian architecture.

The architectural structure of the Khatiravang Church demonstrates that the buildings in the complex are not all from the same period. It is assumed that the one-nave chapels, which were later added to the church, belong to the period before the construction of the church building, and they were included in the main volume of the church in order to preserve these ancient structures. When the Caliphate began to fall apart in the ninth century, it appears that the Khatiravang Temple, along with the Khudavang Monastery, Hayravank Monastery, Vaguas Monastery, Red Monastery, and other early mediaeval Albanian churches, were restored and expanded. The addition of side rooms in different shapes to the main church is a distinctive architectural composition that is characteristic only of Caucasian Albania's architecture.

The main church of the Khatiravang Church did not have special facade decorations like most



monastery churches of its time. The edges of the window places were highlighted, the cornices were finely worked, and cross-stones and stones adorned with epigraphy were used in the wall masonry. To the north-west of the bell tower is a refectory building with a rectangular plan and an arched ceiling. This building, which extends from east to west and is still in good condition today, plays an important role in the complex's architectural composition. The walls and arches of the refectory building were built with rough-hewn stones and lime mortar, which are typical of Albanian construction methods. The refectory building consists of two halls - the great hall has a fireplace as well as niches and window spaces on its walls, while there are only two niches on the walls of the second hall. There is a building consisting of two halls in the north-eastern part of the complex. In keeping with the architectural features that are typical of the residential buildings of the region, the first hall has an arched ceiling.

The Khatiravang Temple, like other Albanian monuments in Karabakh and East Zangazur, was vandalised by Armenians who illegally occupied these lands during 1992-2020.

THE RED MONASTERY (13th century), Qozlu village

Another Albanian temple, the Red Monastery, one of the precious relics of its time, is located in the Qozlu village, which is rich in historical and architectural monuments. This historical-architectural monument was built on steep rocks in the forest, 3 kilometres away from the village of Qozlu in the Kalbajar district. The Red Monastery, an Albanian architectural monument of the 13th

century, was registered as a monument of local importance by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan. There were about twenty inscriptions in the territory of the monastery, which itself was rich in epigraphic writings. Barkhudaryan reported on the contents of the inscriptions found on stone slabs, portal tympana, and cross-stones embedded in the wall in various parts of the walls of the monastery. The inscriptions provide information about the monument's construction date and the rulers of Yukhari (Upper) Khachen, with those on the church's walls and narthex indicating that the temple was built in 1224 and restored in 1259. According to Barkhudaryan, the main church of the Red Monastery was restored in the 13th century.

The inscription on the north wall of the main church building indicates that "the church was constructed in 1224 by Vakhtang's son, Hasan's brother. The church was given to Grigor, Hasan's nephew." The second building inscription constructed on the south wall of the church indicates that the church was constructed at a different time and in a different order. According to this inscription, the church was restored by Grigor, the bishop of Amaras in 1259. The name of Grigoris, the son of Sakar, was mentioned on both inscriptions. Grigoris, who was assigned to the service of the church in 1224, is also mentioned as a church monk in 1259.

Inscriptions also reveal the relationship between the dynasty of Hasan Jalal, the ruler of Khachen, and the Zar church. Sargis, the prince of princes, Mamkan, and Horisha, the mother of Grigoris, from the Khachen dynasty, were all mentioned in the inscription in the Zar Church (Бархударян, I, s.218). According to Barkhudaryan, the Albanian Prince Hasan loved the village of Zar very much, and it is

known that members of the Zar dynasty constructed the church. The person referred to as 'Sakar' or 'Sakr' in the records was the leader of the princely dynasty of the Zar village. It is mentioned in the inscription carved on one of the cross-stones in the monastery area that this church is the Monastery of St. Gregory. Sakar's contributions to the monastery are also mentioned in the cross-stone's inscription.

The monastery complex includes the main large church building, an adjacent narthex, a chapel, cells, and the remains of other household buildings. The main church building consists of a small hall with an arched ceiling, surrounded by a narthex to the west and a chapel to the southeast. The church's south and north walls are very thick, but it is possible to access the storage rooms inside the wall through niches carved out inside the narthex's walls.

The Red Monastery was one of the ruined early

mediaeval churches, which started to be restored and expanded after the weakening of the Caliphate in the 9th century. To conduct this expansion, rectangular side rooms were built onto the main structure of such churches. Only Caucasian Albanian architectural monuments exhibit this type of architectural solution, which is typical of many early Christian Albanian temples like Khudavang, Khatiravang, and Vaguas. These rooms were added to the small hall church of the monastery on the west side and along the width of the building in order to increase its volume. In the Vaguas Church, which is close to the Red Church (three kilometres away), such an example of this type of composition can also be seen.

According to the construction method used by the majority of Albanian churches, the church is made of white and orange limestone, and large rocks were also used in the construction. All of the



The Red Monastery, 13th century, Qozlu village

buildings in the complex were constructed using a method common to Albanian churches; namely, rough-hewn local stones. Only the niches, door and window frames were made of neatly polished stones. The walls of the church were also built using stones with epigraphic inscriptions.

In the monastery area, cross-stones were made using the pink stones typical of the valley of the Tartar River. There were cross-stones with high craftsmanship and rich artistic ornamentation all around the Red Monastery. The Red Church was in good condition until the 19th century, based on Barkhudaryan's information about the Karabakh monasteries (Бархударян, 1895, II, s.167-168).

The monument is currently on the verge of collapse.

MEYRAKAVAK MONASTERY (13th century), Qozlu village

One of the Albanian monuments dating back to the 13th century and located in the territory of the Qozlu village, is the remains of Meyrakavak Monastery. The former name of the Qozlu village was Vaguas. The ruins of this ancient village, with a centuries-old history of being on mediaeval trade routes, are located two or three kilometres from the modern village of Qozlu. According to Barkhudaryan, the monastery in the Vaguas village is located on a hill on the right bank of the Tartar River. He wrote that the local population called the monastery 'Meyragala' (Meyrakavak) (Бархударян, 1895, s.170). According to the inscription on the monastery's main church building, which is located among the ruins of the Vaguas village, it was constructed in 1215. The inscription made it clear that the church



was built by the granddaughter of Hasan, the wife of Prince Tarkhan (Бархударян, s.193.). The inscription reads: "I, Hasan, the daughter of Gregory the Great, the wife of Prince Tarkhan, built this church in the summer of 1215." It should be noted that Gregory the Great was the prince of Khachen who was in power in the 10th century.

The complex includes the main church building, which was constructed in the 13th century, as well as a small chapel that is believed to have been constructed at earlier times, a narthex, and domestic buildings. According to Barkhudaryan, a three-metre-high, finely patterned cross-stone from 1218 once stood in the centre of the village (Бархударян, 1895, s.112-114).

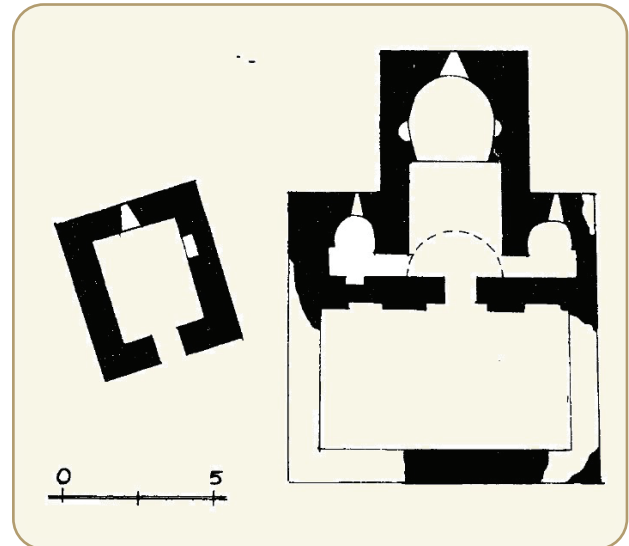
From the ninth century on, when the Caliphate began to fall apart, restoration and expansion work was carried out in the Meyrakavak Monastery. In line with the composition that is typical of Albanian architecture, side rooms were added to the monastery to expand it; specifically, rectangular side rooms were added to small hall churches on the west side and along the width of the building in order to increase their volume. The Vaguas/Meyrakavak Monastery is regarded as one of the best-preserved examples of this composition. However, all of the complex's buildings have either sustained significant damage or are in poor condition.

The main church building, which has a rectangular floor plan, is similar to an Albanian temple from the ninth and tenth centuries that is located in the Eyrvank village of the Gadabay district, in that it includes a horseshoe-shaped apse with small rooms on either side (Мамедова, s.84). The church and the side rooms were built at different dates, as evidenced by the cracks between them. There is a semi-circular altar as the continuation of the church building on the west side. Several wall

arches are assumed to have formerly supported the eastern wall. The small rooms that were located on either side of the apse had a cylindrical arched roof and a small doorway that led to the main prayer hall. The narthex adjoining the church's western wall was significantly damaged. According to the positioning of the arches on the wall, it is clear that the arched roof of the narthex rested on the arches of the wall.

The rectangular chapel building is on the north side of the complex. There is a niche on its south wall, and a window spot on the east wall. The building has a cylindrical arched roof and a double-pitched roof.

According to the construction method followed by the majority of Albanian churches, well-hewn stones were also used in the construction of the complex's buildings in addition to rough cobble stones. The sides of the windows and doors, as well as the corner sections of the houses, were all constructed using only well-hewn stones.



Plan of the Meyrakavak Monastery

THE CHAREKTAR MONASTERY (13th century), Charektar village

One of the most well-known monasteries in the Principality of Khachen is the Charektar Monastery, which is located in the highlands close to Yukhari Khachen of Karabakh, in the Charektar village on the left side of the Tartar River. Charektar is one of the villages that was included in the territory of the Kalbajar district following the abolition of the Aghdara district in 1992. The Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia occupied Charektar in 1993, then, according to the agreement of November 10, 2020, the village was temporarily placed under the control of Russian peacekeepers in 2020 after Azerbaijan's Army liberated the Karabakh territories from occupation.

The Charektar Monastery is also known as the Church of Hasan Jalal. According to the building inscription, the monument dates back to the 11th-

12th centuries, and the monastery's main church was constructed in 1260. There were cross-stones, headstones, and pieces of epigraphic inscriptions in the area of the monastery complex, which is now completely ruined. Numerous tombstones and cross-stones in the monastery are rich in patterns with floral and geometric ornamentation. Makar Barkhudaryan read a total of eleven inscription texts from the 12th to the 14th centuries in the monastery area in the nineteenth century. The oldest inscriptions date back to 1152, 1206, 1347, and 1360. The texts of the inscriptions include details on the church's construction period and the restoration work carried out there at various times.

The church includes a small rectangular basilica and a rectangular altar in the eastern part. According to inscriptions, they were constructed in the 11th-12th centuries. The only remaining portion of the entrance on the church's western part is its ruins.



The Charektar monastery (13th century), Charektar village

The narthex was a part of the defensive wall, as evidenced by the remains of a semi-circular tower in the southern part of the church. The church's northern wall, together with the eastern and western wall foundations, have all been maintained. Cross-stones and gravestones were rich in finely carved floral and geometrical ornamentation, and the Zar prince's tombstone in particular was heavily ornamented.

The main church has somewhat survived, despite the fact that the monastery complex is currently a ruin. Only the main church building, a narthex, a refectory, and a portion of the bell tower have survived intact among the monastery's buildings. The peculiarities of the architectural remains of the monastery buildings that have survived to the present day and the examination of epigraphic pieces demonstrate that the buildings surrounding the church date from various times. The hewn stones and cross-stones with rich ornamentation that were used in their construction, were taken to the surrounding areas and used in the construction of residential buildings.

The monastery's main church is a small rectangular basilica. The religious architecture of Caucasian Albania was changed, and their dimensions compared with the one-nave basilicas of the period before the Arab conquest were reduced during the conquest as a result of the loss of the statehood of Christianity in Caucasian Albania, the deprivation of its official ideology, the sharp decline in the number of worshippers, and the following gradual de-ethnicization of the Albanian population. In this regard, the church in Charektar Monastery was also a small rectangular basilica (7 by 3 metres). There is a rectangular altar, which is characteristic only of Caucasian Albanian architecture, on the

eastern side of the main church of the monastery, which is covered with a two-pitched roof. Side rooms started to be added to small hall churches in order to increase their volume from the 10th century onward, when the process of restoration and enlargement of early mediaeval churches began to be expanded as the Caliphate was weakened. It appears that a narthex and other buildings were added to the Charektar Church's west side for this purpose. However, only a small part of the narthex has survived to the present. The narthex was included in the defence system, as evidenced by the semi-circular towers at the corner of its southern section. From the south side, the refectory is adjacent to the church. The northern wall of the refectory was fully preserved, while the eastern and western walls were partially preserved.

However, the monastery complex was entirely destroyed and the monastery itself, an example of Albanian Christian architecture, remains in ruins today. The remains were scattered throughout the hill on which it was located, and the cross-stones and old tombstones were also destroyed. The Charektar Monastery's recent condition is unknown because, in accordance with the agreement of November 10, 2020, the village of Charektar has temporarily been placed under the control of Russian peacekeepers.

HARVA CHURCH (13th century), Dovshanli village

Another Albanian church is located under a large rock in the village of Dovshanli, on the banks of the Khachen River. According to Barkhudaryan, who reported that there were two churches in the village, there is also an older church above the Church of St. Mary in the east of the village. The

author referred to this church as 'Anapat Church' (Бархударян, 1885, I. s.164, s.166). It should be noted that the Soviet authors referred to this church in the village of Dovshanli as 'Harva Church.'

Although the church's inscription claims that it was built in the 13th century, the building's structure suggests that it was actually constructed earlier. This Albanian temple is constructed inside an ancient cave, which contained the tomb of an unknown ascetic. The building is located under a high rock to the right of a waterfall and consists of two small churches that are nearly adjacent to one another. The monument is a two-hall church that was hewn and finished with masonry, then connected to a large rock. They appear to be two independent towers from the other side due to the successful construction work. From the inside, the majority of these towers are adjacent to the limestone-plastered cave, creating the appearance that there is one whole church (Бархударян, I. s.167). The entrance to the cave is blocked by a door and a window, resulting in the church appearing to be an adjacent half-rock hall. The church itself has two altars.

There is an inscription dated 1249 on a large stone at the door to Harva Church (Бархударян, 1895, s.167). The names of the kings of Khachen and Aran (Albanian) Jalal Dola and his son Atabey are mentioned in the inscription on the unhewn stone in this location (Бархударян, I, s.167). According to the inscription on the church's wall, it was built in the 13th century. Atabey, the son of Jalal Dola is mentioned as the prince of Khachen and Aran in the inscription (Бархударян, I.s.166).

CHURCH (1668), Dovshanli village

The territory of Dovshanli village at the foot of the Karabakh Range, rich in Albanian churches, cross-stones, and grave monuments, is an ancient settlement with kurgans dating back to the 11th-9th centuries BC. Following the Treaty of Turkmenchay, Armenians who were relocated to the Caucasus, particularly Karabakh, resettled there in the 19th century with the support of the Russian Empire and changed the village's name from Dovshanli to Arajadzor. However, on December 29, 1992, after the Republic of Azerbaijan regained its independence, the village's original name was restored.

Barkhudaryan provided information about the Albanian churches and cross-stones, as well as the ancient grave sites in this village. According to the author, there are two large cross-stones, dating back to 1237, at the exit of the village (Бархударян, 1885, I. s.166). His notes made it clear that there were two churches in the village, one of which is the Church of the St. Mary, dating back to the 17th century. According to the information provided by the 19th-century author, the construction date of the building is mentioned as 1668 on the inscription of the church (Бархударян, 1885, I. s.164). The author also made reference to the Aran territories that border the area of the village that belonged to Ulu Bey, the grandson of Jalal the Great, in the Bible given to this church (Бархударян, 1885, I. s.165). The names of Hasan Jalal, his mother Khorisha Khatun (Hurishah Khatun), his wife Mamakhatun, his son Ivane-Atabey, his daughters Ruzukhan, Mama Khatun, and Mina Khatun, the grandchildren of Hasan Jalal, the king of Khachen, Erkan, and Ulu Bey are mentioned in the church's inscription. The



Dovshanli village, Kalbajar

names of the Khachen kings, and all other members of their family mentioned in the church's inscription, appear to be of Turkic origin. The Albanian-Turkic history of Karabakh has deep roots, as evidenced by the Turkic names of the Khachen dynasty.

MAMAKAN / VACHAR CHURCH (13th century), Bazarkand

The remains of Mamakan (Mama Khatun) Church are in Bazarkand, a village in the Dovshanli administrative territorial division of the Kalbajar district. The Russian Empire relocated the Armenians from Iran in the nineteenth century, and they settled in the village on the banks of the Khachen River, at the foot of the Karabakh Range. Although the village's original name was later changed, it was restored in 1992 as the Republic of Azerbaijan regained its independence.

The remains of the Mamakan (Mama Khatun) Church are at the entrance to the Bazarkand village, on the banks of the same-named river, in the so-called Vachar ruins. This ancient Albanian church, located near the Ganjasar Church, is named after Mama Khatun, the wife of Hasan Jalal, the ruler of Khachen and one of the outstanding representatives of the Albanian renaissance in the 12th-13th centuries. Due to its location in the ruins of the ancient Albanian settlement of Vachar, the church is known as Vachar Church.

Two inscriptions were discovered in the church in the territory of Vachar, one of which is on the tympanum, and the other on the church's western facade. One of the inscriptions containing the construction date of the Vachar Church states: I, Hasan, the son of Vakhtang and Khorisha, the king of Khachen, built this holy church in 1229.

There is also a small chapel adjacent to the southern wall of the rectangular-shaped church. It was constructed of hewn basalt stones. In the basilica-shaped church, both the prayer hall and the altar are at the same height, and the church may only be entered from the west side.

There are numerous historical and architectural monuments, dating back to various times, in the area where the church is located. The monastery is surrounded by richly ornamented cross-stones dating back to the 13th century. There were church remains from the time of Hasan Jalal and a mediaeval cemetery in the area where the church is located.

ST. STEPANOS CHURCH (12th-13th centuries), Bazarkand

Another Albanian historical and architectural monument is located in the territory of Bazarkand. The monument, dating back to the 12th-13th centuries, is a single-nave basilica. The Church of St. Stepanos is one of the numerous monuments in the territory of Vachar, where there are ruins of an ancient settlement from the Caucasian Albanian period.

The 12th and 13th centuries, particularly during Hasan Jalal's rule, were a time of prosperity for this ancient settlement, while the precise date of the settlement foundation's construction is unknown. The following is written on the inscription from the dynasty of Hasan Jalal that was found here: "I, Hasan, the son of Vakhtang and Khorisha, the king of Khachen, built this holy church in 1229." There were fine, richly ornamented cross-stones from Hasan Jalal's ruling period in this area. Along with the St. Stepanos Church, the Mamkan khatun Monastery is another Albanian historical and architectural building in this old Albanian settlement.



St. Stepanos Church (12th-13th centuries), Bazarkand



*Holy Mother of God temple
(13th century), Zar village*

St. Stepanos Church's entrance door is on the south side because of the uneven surrounding relief. The church's arched ceiling was reinforced with a vaulted arch, and the altar is placed above the floor level, at a semi-circular depth. On either side of the altar, square niches were made, and the two-story church building is covered with well-hewn stones.

MONASTERY COMPLEX (13th century), Zar village

The Zar village in the Kalbajar district was one of the sites notable for its rich culture and historic monuments. The research carried out by Azerbaijani archaeologists in the Zar open camp in Kalbajar during the Soviet era, demonstrated that humans settled there as early as the Palaeolithic era.

There is an Albanian monument, the Monastery Complex of the Holy Mother of God, in the village of Zar. The monastery is located three kilometres west of the Khudavang Monastery, on the left bank of the Tartar River. The Complex, which is located at the foot of the Karabakh Plateau, was preserved in its entirety until 1993.

According to the church's tympanum, its construction date is 1174, and the person who ordered it to be built was Mamkan Khatun, the daughter of Kuriken (Gurgan). The names of Mamkan Khatun, the wife of Hasan Jalal, and Horisha (Hurishah), the mother of Grigoris, are both mentioned in the inscriptions in the Zar Church (Бархударян, 1895, I k. s.218).

Eight inscriptions from the years 1174, 1178, and 1261 were discovered in the monastery's area. According to Barkhudaryan, there is information

about Dafna Khatun, the daughter of Sargis, the prince of princes and the wife of Hasan I, and her sons in the inscriptions in the monastery's area. Hasan, the son of Dafna Khatun, the ruler of Khanabert, loved the Zar village very much, according to Barkhudaryan (Бархударян, 1895, I, s.218).

Dafna Khatun took over as ruler of Yukhari Khachen, which included the territory of Zar, following the death of Khachen Prince Hasan I. She was the wife of Gara Grigory, the son of Hasan, and the daughter of Sargis, the prince of princes. From their marriage, Hasan the Brave was born. Hasan the Brave had a son, Grigor, and a grandson, Prince Bahram, from his marriage with Mamakhatun (Mamkan), the daughter of Kurik (Gurgan). This dynasty owned the Yukhari Khachen, including the monasteries of Zar and Khatra.

The Yukhari Khachen lands were ruled by the Dafna dynasty, a branch of the Khachen dynasty, from the 12th to the 16th centuries. The Dafna dynasty was divided into Melik dynasties such as Ulubeyogullari, Aytinogullari, and Doganogullari from the middle of the 15th century, and later, the Melik-Shahnazarov dynasty, which ruled the Principality of Varanda, descended from the Ulubeyogullari dynasty.

Generally, recent research shows that the Albanian-Khachen princes were of Turkic origin, and they were mostly married to women from the Kipchak dynasties. Hasan Jalal's father was married to Hurishah (Khorisha) Khatun, who was of Turkic origin. Hurishah Khatun's grandfather was Vagram (Zakhare), the bey of the Uzungolullar dynasty of Kipchak origin, her father was Akbugha, and her brothers were Vagram, Zakhare, and Ivane (Əlizadə-Nəciyev, 2020, s.2586).

As can clearly be seen, the Albanian history of Karabakh has ancient Turkic roots. The marriage of Albanian-Khachen princes to women from well-known Kipchak dynasties, who were related to them in terms of ancestry, during the Principality of Khachen's reign in the twelfth century, when the Albanian Renaissance flourished, further enhanced this Turkic layer. It's interesting that the Christian Kipchak khatuns continued to use the title of Khatun, which symbolizes their Turkic origins, even after settling in Karabakh.

There are more than twenty buildings in the monastery complex in the village of Zar, all of which are under varying levels of protection. The monastery's main church is located in the centre of the complex. The three-nave, basilica-shaped church consists of a square-shaped narthex and two doors, one opening to the yard and the other to the chapel.

The oldest building included in the complex is the Church of the Holy Mother of God, which is located in the northern part of the complex. It is a rectangular-shaped building covered by an arched ceiling. On the west side, a rectangular narthex was constructed adjacent to the church building. Its south-west door opens to the yard, while its west entrance leads to the middle room. The second building that was constructed adjacent to the church's western side is an ancient chapel, whose northern wall is also the western wall of the Church of the Holy Mother of God.

On the western side of the monastery, there are still buildings that were used for domestic purposes, and their ruins. Among them is a rectangular building with an arched ceiling, as well as a number of residential and household buildings on the south

side of the monastery. All of the buildings included in the Monastery of the Holy Mother of God were constructed using the same method as most Albanian churches, which involved using unhewn, rough cobble stones.

The Monastery Complex of the Holy Mother of God, which dates back to the 13th century, was preserved in its entirety until 1993, when Kalbajar was occupied by the Armenian Armed Forces.

THE RED STONE MONASTERY (12-13th centuries), Chapar village

The Red Stone Monastery is an Albanian historical and architectural monument located in Chapar village, Kalbajar district. Barkhudaryan referred to this village as 'Chaparshen.' According to the author, the inscriptions at the Khudavang Monastery include references to the name of this village, which is close to the Hasanriz village (Бархударян, 1895, I, s.214). According to Barkhudaryan's information, the remains of the ancient church complex in the village extended from Chaparshen to the Khudavang Monastery, and to the village of Yanshag (Бархударян, 1895, I, s.214).

The Red Stone Monastery Complex is located eight kilometres from the Chapar village. The epigraphic inscriptions discovered in the monastery complex, and the cross-stones found in the area, mainly date back to the 12th and 13th centuries.

The complex includes a large and a small church, as well as a narthex and a chapel. The large church is located in the centre of the complex, while the small church and chapel are located to the north of the large church building. In the area between the large

church and the chapel, there are still some remnants of another small building. The church and the chapel are shaped like a simple, rectangular, single-nave basilica. The narthex, which connects to the main church from the west, is square with a cross-shaped ceiling.

The church and the chapel were both constructed using the same architectural method, only differing in the size of the prayer hall and the placement of the doors. The small church and the chapel share the same yard. There are two entrances to the narthex: one to the west and one to the north. The narthex also served as a graveyard where the monks of the monastery were buried.

In line with the construction method followed by the majority of Albanian churches, unhewn

cobble stones were used in the construction of the monastery's buildings. For the frames of windows and doors, corners, and holding portions, only hewn stones were used.

THE KILISAKEND TEMPLE, Gasimlar village

Due to its proximity to the ancient Albanian church, the village of Gasimlar, located in the foothills, was formerly known as Kilisakend ("Kilisa" means church, and "Kend" means village). The settlement was established by Gasim Maharramoghlu, who came from the village of Alkhasli in the present-day Lachin district, in the 19th century, and the village was afterwards known as Gasimlar, according to information provided by the local people.



*Red Stone Monastery
(12th-13th centuries), Chapar village*

The ancient Albanian church in the village served as a place of worship for Udis, the final generation of Albanian Christians, who visited there from Gabala once a year until the 1980s. This ancient Albanian temple in the village was a place of pilgrimage for the Udis living in the Nij village of Gabala, according to information provided by Gara Vagifoghlu, a resident of Gasimlar. According to Vagifoghlu, the Udis used to visit the Albanian temple in the village once a year, where they would stay for a few days and pray.

This ancient Albanian temple in the village is in the shape of a small chapel. The temple's semi-circular entrance was shaped like a rectangular door with three cross-stones, two of which were placed vertically, while the third one was placed horizontally. Albanian canon laws were depicted on all three cross-stones, which shared characteristics

with other cross-stones discovered in the Kalbajar district's territory, as well as with one another. The cross-stone placed on the left side of the main arch draws attention, and a cross in the shape of a tree of life rises from the symmetrically located side arches. The four cross-shaped trunks ending in flowers emphasise the botanical rendering of the cross (a symbol of productivity). A meandering line passes over the cross, followed by a second line, completing the image of the stele. Three holy crosses surrounded by fruiting branches were placed in the middle of this line.

However, this Albanian temple in the village of Gasimlar was also vandalised during the occupation of Karabakh by the Armenian Armed Forces from 1992 to 2020, and the Albanian cross-stones in the church were stolen and replaced with new, fake ones.



*Albanian Kilisakend temple,
Gasimlar village*



*Entrance to the Albanian
Kilisakend temple*

THE CAVE TEMPLE, Armudlu village

Armudlu village is located on the left bank of the Tartar River, in the Keshdak administrative territorial division of the Kalbajar district. There was a cave temple near the glade in the forest area of the village. This ancient shrine, located near the Jutju village of the Khojavand district, is named after the Albanian Christian, St. Elishe.

As the founder of the first Albanian church in Albanian territories, St. Elishe is one of the most revered saints in the country. Numerous churches and monasteries were constructed in his honour in Shaki, Gabala, Oghuz, as well as Khojavand and the Tartar district of the Karabakh region. In this regard, Elishe is not only accepted as a disciple of Thaddeus,



Ancient Albanian monument - Galaduzu

but also as a saint in Christian literature, particularly in Albanian Christian tradition (Мамедова, 1986).

It should be noted that the sanctification of Elishe has not been observed in any other Christian community. Elishe is remembered in the Christian world only in relation to Caucasian Albania, and is sanctified in that country. According to the Albanian author Kaghankatvatsi, who highlighted Elishe's specific reputation among Albanians, the local people regarded Elishe as their apostle and patron at all times (Каганкатвацци 1861, I, 6, 11, 17, 32; II, 7). Therefore, there are different myths and legends regarding St. Elishe, one of the most revered saints in Caucasian Albania, which are preserved in Azerbaijan to this day particularly among the Udis, who have maintained their Christian traditions in modern times. The vast majority of Albanian Christian temples in the Azerbaijani territories, including the cave-temple in the Armudlu village, are linked to the name of Elishe.

Ancient Albanian fortresses of the Kalbajar district

Defensive fortresses and fortifications are also among the interesting examples of Albanian architecture that have survived to our time. Azerbaijan's territory is rich in fortresses and defensive buildings, including the Derbent Fortress, Javanshir Fortress, and Chiraggala, from the Albanian cultural heritage, which are preserved to this day. In particular, such historical defensive fortifications in the Karabakh region were distinguished for their magnificence.

Fortresses and defensive fortifications from the Albanian era, including Lekh/Lok Fortress, Ulukhan

Fortress, Galaboynu, Jomard Fortress, Keshikchi Fortress, Khanabert/Tarkan Fortress, Gakhach Fortress/Khachen Fortress, and Khachen Palace, have survived to the present day in the Kalbajar district of the Karabakh region.

KHANABERT / TARKAN FORTRESS, Vangli village

The Khanabert Fortress is a historical-architectural monument located in the Vangli village of the Kalbajar district. The fortress, which was built on the top of a high mountain, is located opposite the southern wall of the Ganjasar Church, on the right bank of the Khachen River.

The local people also refer to the fortress as the Tarkhan Fortress. According to Barkhudaryan, this fortress was called ‘Khanabert’ or ‘Tarkan Fortress.’ This impregnable fortress is located in a wooded area, and is isolated on four sides, according to the author. The fortress walls cover a large area on the top of the mountain. The semi-destroyed building with the well-preserved staircase stands out among the ruins of the fortress. The Khanabert Fortress also includes fortresses like Gakhach and Chilaburd in its surrounding areas.

The fortress was the ruling residence of the Khachen princes. In the 13th century, Hasan Jalal constructed fortress walls to enclose the top of the hill and create a strong defence system. According to Barkhudaryan, the Jalal dynasty also owned the Khanabert Fortress, like Ulubaba. In an inscription from the 13th century, Hasan Jalal named himself “the ruler of the Khanabert Fortress.” According to legend, this fortress was also the summer residence of Ruzakan Khatun, the daughter of Hasan Jalal.

In addition to Khanabert, Hasan Jalal also had control over the nearby fortresses of Gakhach and Chilaburd. In the event of a threat to the monastery and the surrounding territories, these fortresses constructed around the Ganjasar Monastery would create a strong defence shield. According to the 13th-century Albanian author Kirakos Gandzaketsi, Khanabert was an impregnable fortress, and Hasan Jalal and the entire Khachen people retreated to it during the first Mongol raid. When the Mongols besieged the fortress and realized they couldn’t take it, they offered a truce.

However, only the semi-destroyed defensive walls and the ruins of various buildings remain from the magnificent fortification that once held the Mongol army at bay.

KHACHEN PALACE (12th-13th centuries), Vangli village

The Khachen Palace, which served as the headquarters of the Principality of Khachen and prospered from the 12th to the 13th centuries, is located in the Vangli village of the Kalbajar district. This historical and architectural monument dates back to the 13th century. The Khachen Palace is located to the north of the Khanabert Fortress, near the Ganjasar Monastery. The monument is registered by the Republic of Azerbaijan as a monument of national importance.

The Khachen Palace Complex is clearly an example of Albanian architecture due to its style. The castle-style palace complex has survived until modern times in a mostly ruined state. The parts that have survived include the entrance door, four semi-circular towers of approximately the same size, the remnants of the fortress walls, the walls of two

halls, and the main walls of the palace rooms. The monument was constructed in accordance with the construction method of major Albanian churches, using lime-gypsum mortar and rough, unhewn stone.

Within the palace fences, there are two small, basilica-shaped churches. The remains of other buildings were found on the southern side of the defensive walls. On the north side of the complex, the inner yard has a large area which takes up nearly half the space between the complex's defensive walls.

The Khachen Palace was preserved until the 19th century. It was in a slightly better state when Barkhudaryan saw it, and he describes it as "...a simple building that consists of many rooms, and is surrounded by fortress walls constructed with



Khanabert fortress, Vangli village, Kalbajar



*Khachen palace
(12th-13th centuries), Vangli village*

lime mortar. The reception room, the most attractive part of Hasan Jalal's palace, is a building that has retained the architectural features of its time. The rooms are covered with arched ceilings with robust and high walls. The supporting arches, made of well-hewn stones, rest on elegantly and delicately crafted capitals. There are few narrow windows in the rooms. The palace is completely surrounded by dense trees and raspberry bushes, making it impossible to identify the number of rooms. Without removing the plants, the research cannot be continued."

The corner towers of the palace, which only partially survived, were built of unhewn quartz stones, and the palace's walls are 1.6-1.8 metres thick. The fortress's towers were constructed at an earlier time. The arched ceiling was divided into four sections by four supporting arches, with the western arch resting on a two-layered thick wall,

while the other three arches divided the hall and a small room in the niche into equal sections. Supporting arches are constructed from two-to-three rows of equal-sized monolithic stones and sit on a cylinder-shaped foundation that splits the arch. The principle of the two-centred arch holding the dome of the Ganjasar Monastery was used when constructing the supporting arches of the main hall. The large hall is connected to a small square room with an arched ceiling, through a narrow corridor. This room's arrangement, which includes niches on the walls for a collection of household items and a specially constructed fireplace, suggests that it was mainly used for domestic purposes.

The architecture of other princely and melik palaces constructed in the surrounding territories throughout later times was greatly influenced by the Khachen Palace.

KHACHEN / GAKHACH FORTRESS (7th century), Kolatak village

The Khachen Palace is located between the Kolatak village of the Kalbajar district and the Almali village of the Khojaly district. Local people also refer to this historical-architectural monument, which was built on the top of the Gakhach Mountain, by the name of the mountain: 'Gakhach' Fortress. The fortress is referred to as the Khachen Fortress in historical records (Kalankatuklu, III k.23f). Kaghankatvatsi, the 7th-century Albanian author, provided information about this fortress, claiming that Sparam, the wife of the Albanian king Varaz Tiridates, hid there to escape from the Arabs, when discussing the destiny of the Mihranids, the final Albanian reigning dynasty of Caucasian Albania

(Kalankatuklu, III kitab, XXIII fəsil).

The Gakhach or Khachen Fortress was constructed in a location with a highly advantageous natural feature. The Gakhach Mountain, where the fortress is located, is surrounded by steep rocks on all sides, and the slope is covered with dense forests. This natural landscape ensures that the fortress is invisible from far away and inaccessible from nearby. The west, north, and east sides of the mountain's peak, which is slightly inclined to the south, are surrounded by rough, steep rocks that reach a height of 50-60 metres. The fortress's entrance is to the south because the southern side



Khachen/Gakhach fortress

of the mountain is more accessible from this point. Barkhudaryan discussed the fortification of the south side, which is naturally weaker, with fortress walls, stating: "The non-high cliffs of the south side are fortified with fortress walls constructed of stone and lime mortar. The masonry was done along the entire slope." According to Barkhudaryan, the Khachen Fortress has two entrances, the first of which is in a place called Garaglukh on the Chikakar rock, with the second between the Khachen and Kolatak rivers, near the Great Arran Monastery (Бархударян, 1895, s. 209).

The Gakhach Fortress is located near the Great Arran Monastery, and the oldest buildings in the fortress date back to its construction period. The local people further fortified the Gakhach Mountain, where the fortress is located, with fortress walls during the Arab raids to improve its defensive capacity.

The whole nearby area, the lands of the Principality of Khachen, and the surrounding villages, including the Great Arran Monastery, are clearly visible from the fortress. According to Barkhudaryan, the view from the south of the fortress opens to the Kirs Mountains, Shusha, Bugrakhan, and Khachen village, from the north to Murov and Jaraberd, and from the west to Khanabert. Arran remains under the fortress (Бархударян, 1895, s.209).

Although the mountain peak appears to be small from a distance, the fortress actually occupies an area large enough to house the people of nearby territories. Here, there were remains of many buildings from various times, secret doors and underground passages, rock-hewn tunnels, and loopholes.

There was once an area for a water supply tank in the event of the population requiring long-term



Local people also refer to the Khachen Fortress, which was built on the top of the Gakhach Mountain, by the name of the mountain: 'Gakhach' Fortress.

shelter. It was located on the top of the mountain and provided by two large pools in the centre. These pools, carved into the fortress, were filled with rainwater, and stored as a reserve, while a spring at the foot of the mountain was used to provide drinking water. The fortress walls were constructed of stone and lime mortar in accordance with the construction method of most Albanian buildings.

The Gakhach Fortress served as a strategically important defensive fortress of the Principality of Khachen until the end of the Middle Ages.

LOK / LEKH FORTRESS, Ganlikand village

The Lok Fortress, a historical and architectural monument, was constructed 600 metres from the

right bank of the Lev River in Ganlikand village, on a high mountain ridge in a forested area. The name of the Lok Fortress fits with how the fortress is shaped, as its back resembles the neck of a camel.

Although the Lok Fortress was originally a defensive fortress and a shelter, it is also thought to have served as a centre for caravan route control. These fortresses were constructed on such roadways throughout the Middle Ages to control caravan routes. Thus, there were guard towers on the mountains

around the fortress. Due to the function of the guard tower located at the top of one of the mountains in the area, it has preserved the name Garavul Mountain. The Jomard Fortress is visible from Garavul Mountain.



The sole entrance door at the northeast end of the fortress is only accessible by a narrow path on the northwest side.



The name of the Lok Fortress, built in a forested area on a high mountain, fits with how the fortress is shaped.

The structure of the fortress makes it obvious that it was built to serve as a defensive fortification. It has an elongated, complex structure that complements the mountainous relief, with steep rocks and cliffs enclosing it on three sides. The sole entrance door at the northeast end of the fortress is only accessible by a narrow path on the northwest side. The interior of the fortress measures around 90 metres in length and 3.5 to 4 metres in width. The citadel of the Lok Fortress is located in the high southwest end of the fortress area.

There were wells 3-5 metres deep carved out of the rock at the top of the fortress, which were apparently used to store food or water. Two more caves were discovered near the fortress in the direction of the Lev River. Any item of food could be kept for a month without spoiling in the cave, as

it was cold in the summer and warm in the winter. These caves appear to have acted as the reserve storage facilities of the fortress.

GALABOYNU FORTRESS, Galaboynu village

The Galaboynu Fortress is located in the village in Kalbajar that bears the same name. Due to its location at the “neck” (passage) of the fortresses of Shishgala and Dayirman, the village of Galaboynu was given its name.

During the time of Caucasian Albania, the Galaboynu Fortress served as one of the refuges for Albanian princes during the Arab raids on Azerbaijan. The fortress, which covered a large area, was a strategic settlement with secret underground passages inside, typical of fortresses in Karabakh.



Such secret passages can also be found in the Ktish Fortress in the Khojavand district. The fortress was surrounded by steep cliffs on all four sides and could only be reached via a narrow path. However, the path was not, in fact, the only way to the fortress, as an underground road had also been carved out of the rocks on the northern side of the fortress.

The fortress, which covered a large area, was also a strategic settlement, and there are the remains of more than 200 buildings inside.

AKAN FORTRESS, Hasanriz village

The Akan Fortress is located in the Hasanriz village of the Kalbajar district. This historical and architectural monument is located northeast of the village, at the foot of a large mountain on the bank



Lok Fortress, Ganlikand

of the Akan River, in a location that is inaccessible and bordered by steep hills on both sides.

The remains of buildings constructed of rough-hewn stones, including one building with an arched ceiling, and tombstones were discovered within the fortress walls of the Akan Fortress. The well-preserved wall remnants demonstrate that the Akan Fortress, which covered a large area, played an important role in the defensive system of the area. A secret underground passage in the north-eastern part of the fortress leads to a four-hall brick building located by the river.

ULUKHAN FORTRESS, Garachanli village

A defensive building from the Albanian era, the Ulukhan Fortress is located in the territory of the Karachanli village in the Kalbajar district. In his book "Artsakh," Barkhudaryan described the fortress as the 'Ulubaba Fortress' and claimed that it dates back to the reign of Prince Jalal (Бархударян, s. 208) in 1284.

JOMARD FORTRESS

The Jomard Fortress, located on a rock above the Jomard village in the Kalbajar district, is a defensive building from the Albanian era. On the road leading to the Tutguchay valley in the district, the fortress was constructed on the top of a large rock high above the village of Jomard. It is unknown when exactly the fortress was built, but it was constructed using local stones.



*The only entrance door at the north-east end
of the Lok Fortress*

JABRAYIL DISTRICT

The Jabrayil district was established as an administrative territorial division of the Republic of Azerbaijan in 1930. The area of the district, which was part of Caucasian Albania, the ancient Azerbaijani state, was located in the Dizak district.

Military operations carried out by the Azerbaijani Army starting on September 27, 2020, resulted in the liberation of the Jabrayil district from Armenian occupation, to which it had been subject since August 23, 1993.

Monuments of the Jabrayil district

The Jabrayil district is one of Azerbaijan's regions with a wealth of historical, religious, and cultural monuments. The region's territory was rich in headstones of various artistic shapes and rock art. The Khodaafarin Bridge, a symbol of united Azerbaijan, is located in the Jabrayil district.

There were numerous ancient shrines, historical and religious monuments, and mosques, such as the Tomb of Mazannene (Khalafli village), the Mausoleum of Marmarnene, the Round Mausoleum, the Mausoleum of Shikhbaba, and the Octagonal Mausoleum in the Jabrayil territory.

However, the Armenian Armed Forces destroyed the historical and religious buildings as well as the settlements in the Jabrayil district, which was occupied from 1999 until 2020. Only the Chalabilar Mosque remains in a semi-ruined state out of the five mosques that once existed in the

city of Jabrayil; the others were entirely destroyed. Examples of historical and religious buildings that were destroyed in the Jabrayil district during the occupation include the mausoleum from the 13th-16th centuries in the village of Daghtumas, the Mausoleum of Shikhbaba in the village of Shikhtar (14th century), the Stone Mausoleum, the Octagonal Mausoleum from the 16th century in the village of Khubyarli, and the mosque complex in the village of Chalabilar (16th century), as well as ancient mosques in the villages of Papli, Dashkasan, Marza, and Suleymanli. Hundreds of historical, architectural, and religious monuments were also demolished, including the Sultan Majid Hammam of the district, the Round Mausoleum and the Octagonal



Maiden Tower on Diridagh Mountain, Jabrayil

Mausoleum in the Khudyarli village (19th century), the Round Mausoleum in the Shikhlar village (14th century), the Khodaafarin Bridge (early Middle Ages), the Maiden Tower on the Diri Mountain, the Bashikesik Dome in the Daghtumas village, and the temples of "Haji Garaman," "Jabrayil," "Ata," and "Dul-dul."

The people of Jabrayil believe that the woman buried in the Mausoleum of Marmarnene near the Hasanli village is the mother of Mazannene. The Mausoleum of "Jabrayil Ata," located on the Alpasha Mountain to the north of Jabrayil city, was erected on the grave of Jabrayil Ata, who is believed to be the founder of the Jabrayil village. The mausoleum, which dates back to the eighth or ninth century, is 4-5 m long, 2.4 m wide, and 1.8 m high, and has no epigraphic inscriptions. It was destroyed during

the occupation, even though it had still been in the condition it was in at the time of construction.

The Maiden Tower, which dates from the 12th and 13th centuries and is located on the left bank of the Araz River on the Diridagh Mountain, and the Shirik Fortress, which dates back to the 4th-6th centuries and covers an area of 500 square metres, were both completely destroyed by Armenian vandals. The monument known as the "Bashikesik (headless) Dome" because of the open top of its dome, dates back to the 13th-14th centuries and was located in the mountainous area of the Jabrayil district. It, too, was destroyed by the invaders. The "Round Mausoleum" of the 15th century, which has a special place in the mediaeval history due to its architectural style, and which was located on the north of the city of Jabrayil, the Octagonal



Khodaafarin bridge, Jabrayil, 2022

Mausoleum from the 16th century, and the historical cave known as the “Palace of the Giants,” located two kilometres east of the Daghtumas village of the district at an altitude of 870 metres above sea level, was demolished by the occupiers. It was 30 metres long and designated a protected building by the state. A great mosque-madrassa constructed in 1678 by Muhammad ibn Haji Garaman Ahmadli was located in the Chalabilar territory of the district. Great scientists and religious figures, as well as the 18th century poet of Azerbaijan, Molla Vali Vidadi, taught in this madrassa. The mosque was a unique complex consisting of special cells and classrooms, but it was destroyed and left in a state of disrepair during the years of occupation. In total, 35 sanctuaries, holy places, and shrines, 22 tombs, 8 mosques, and 34 mausoleums were destroyed in the Jabrayil district.

DIRIDAGH MONUMENT

The ruins of the village and fortress of Diri still remain in Diridagh, in the Jabrayil district. Researchers claim that the name of the province of Tri and the fortification or monastery of the same name, which existed in Caucasian Albania in the early Middle Ages, are reflected in this toponym. According to Barkhudaryan, there were ruins of a destroyed and partly destroyed Albanian church in Tumas, under the Diridagh Mountain on the left bank of the Araz River (Бархударян, 1895, s. 384-385). There is also a fortress named Tiri in the Zangilan district. That village was also recorded as Diri in the 19th century. It is believed that the word “tiri” originates from the Syriac word “deyra” (church, monastery). It is well known that Syrian Christian missionaries preached Christianity in Caucasian Albania.



The ruins of the Diri village and Diridagh Mountain in the area of the Jabrayil district

GUBADLI DISTRICT

The Gubadli district, located in the basin of the Bergushad and Hakari rivers in the southeast of the Karabakh Range, was historically known as the Bergushad district. In the Middle Ages, the Bergushad district covered the area between the Hakari River and Bergushadchay River flowing into Araz. During the rule of Karabakh's Panahali Khan, the territory of the Gubadli district, which was included in the territory of the Zangazur district, was part of the Karabakh Khanate as an integral component of Zangazur until the middle of the 18th century. Gubadli was included in the territory of Zangazur Uyezd during the Russian Empire.

The Kapan, Goris, Karakilisa, and Mehri districts of the Zangazur region, which is the ancient land

of Azerbaijan, were given to the newly established Soviet Republic of Armenia by the Soviet Empire in 1921. With some difficulty, the Gubadli, Lachin, and Zangilan districts in the territory of East Zangazur, remained within the administrative territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

In 1933, the Gubadli district was established. Despite the fact that its territory was included in the Zangilan district in 1963, it reverted to being a separate district in 1964. The Gubadli district was a region rich in both natural monuments and historical-cultural monuments. Numerous architectural monuments such as fortresses, mausoleums, mosques, and bridges were recorded in the region. Also recorded were caves dating to the ancient Stone Age located on the banks of the



Bergushad River, the “Maltepe” settlement of the Bronze Age in the village of Muradkhanli, cyclopean fortresses, kurgans, Galacha, Maiden Tower, the Koroghlu Fortress, cave sanctuaries such as “Agh Kaha” and “Gara Kaha,” and cave temples in the villages of Balahasanli and Aliguluushagi, all in the Gavur Valley.

Before the occupation, the Gubadli Museum of History and Local Lore, where more than 5,000 exhibits were preserved, had operated until 1993. The Armenian Armed Forces then occupied the district and destroyed all the material and cultural samples in the museum. Like other historical and cultural monuments in Karabakh, many of Gubadli’s ancient buildings were used as military bases or destroyed by the Armenian occupiers during the occupation.

Armenian vandals completely destroyed and burned almost all the historical and cultural monuments of the region. The rare exhibits preserved in the Gubadli Museum of History and Local Lore were looted, dozens of historical monuments were destroyed and burned, and religious monuments were used as pigsties. Numerous ram and horse sculptures in the territory of Gubadli district, including the Goy Fortress from the 5th century near the village of Aliguluushagi in the Yazı Plain, as well as ancient fortresses such as the Galali Fortification Complex in the Muradkhanli village, the Salahli Sanctuary, and the Armudlu Sanctuary, were destroyed.

Armenian vandals attempted to destroy all traces of the Azerbaijani people in the Gubadli district during its occupation.



Albanian temple, Mazra village

Albanian monuments of the Gubadli district

During the years 1993–2020, the Armenians not only destroyed Muslim religious monuments in the territory of the Gubadli district, but also Albanian churches dating back to the Christian era of the region. Albanian temples in the Yukhari Jibikli and Mazra villages of the Gubadli district, as well as temples including one temple-cave dating back to the 4th century in Gavur Valley, an Albanian temple in the village of Basharat, the Galali Temple from the 5th century in the village of Muradkhanli, the Goy Fortress, and a cave-temple in the village of Aliguluushagi, were preserved until 1993.

However, these Albanian monuments suffered

major damage and were victims of Armenian vandalism or completely destroyed during the occupation, along with all the historical and cultural monuments of Gubadli. The ancient Anapat Church in the Seytas village of the district was one of the Albanian churches demolished by the Armenians.

Albanian monuments in the district

- Cave-temple (4th century), Gavurdere Temple
- Cave-temple, Aliguluushagi village
- Ancient Anapat Church, Seytas village
- Albanian churches and monuments, Yukhari Jibikli village
- Temple, Marza village
- Albanian temple, Basharat village



Albanian temple, Mazra village

**CAVE-TEMPLE (4th century),
Gavurdere Temple**

There was a cave-temple dating back to the 4th century in an area named “Gavur Valley” of Gubadli. The temple is a cave constructed (carved) in the rock.

The ancient building consisted of a hall with a 10-metre-high ceiling, where the people gathered for worship, an altar with a height of about 1 metre in front of the hall, two vertical outcrops carved out of stone on two sides of the altar, and two windows also carved out of stone with openings at the same height as the ceiling, as well as a door opened for the

entrance. It is thought to have been be a cave-temple from the earliest age of Christianity in Caucasian Albania, although there is no specific information regarding the year of its construction.

**ALBANIAN TEMPLE,
Basharat village**

According to Barkhudaryan, who provided information about Albanian monuments in the 19th century, there is a half-destroyed Albanian temple in Bayat (Basharat village) on the left bank of the Araz River (Бархударян, 1895, s. 384-385).

LACHIN DISTRICT

The Lachin district of Azerbaijan is part of the historical Zangazur district. The territory of Lachin, which is located in the eastern part of the Zangazur Plateau, was formerly part of the Karabakh Khanate in the 18th century and became part of the Elizavetpol (Ganja) Governorate,

which is Zangazur Uyezd, in the 19th century after the annexation of the northern part of Azerbaijan by Tsarist Russia. During the period of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, the district was part of the Karabakh General-Governorate. In 1920, during the Soviet era, the Zangazur District of Azerbaijan was divided, and the territories of West Zangazur were given to Armenia. Meanwhile, the territories of East Zangazur, including Lachin, remained part of the Azerbaijan SSR. Since 1930, the name Zangazur has been erased from the map. The districts of Zangilan, Gubadli, and Lachin were established in the part of East Zangazur included in Azerbaijan.

There were hundreds of historical, cultural, and architectural monuments, dozens of kurgans, several castle-type archaeological monuments, numerous grave monuments, stele, horse and ram figures, and stones with plots in the Lachin district, which is rich in natural resources, nature, and historical monuments.

In the Lachin district, which was occupied by Armenian Armed Forces, hundreds of historical, cultural, and religious monuments that were rare pearls of global architecture were destroyed between 1992 and 2020. It was discovered that the Armenians vandalised 54 historical monuments of international importance and more than 200 historical monuments of national importance in the district. Only 70% of the historical monuments recorded in the district are represented by these figures. The statue and monument complexes in the Lachin district, tombstone statues dating back to the 13th century in the villages of Jijimli, Gulabird, Zevva, Malibey,



Monuments of Lachin



Bulovluk, Arafli, Algulu, Malkhalaf, Soltanlar, Husulu, Kosalar, Seyidlar, Pirjahan, Minkend, and Kurdhaji, and gravestones with rich artistic ornamentation from different periods, including dozens of ram and horse figures engraved with drawings of household scenes, were destroyed during the occupation by the Armenian Armed Forces.

Numerous material, moral and cultural monuments, including the Melik Ajdar Mausoleum which dates back to the 12th-13th centuries in the Jijimli village of the district, the Govur Fortress from the 11th century in the Pirjahan village, Kafir Fortress dating back to the 17th century, the Sultanbaba and Sheikh Ahmad mausoleums in the Zeyva village, ancient mosques in the villages of Garagishlag and Garagol, Hamza Sultan Palace (1761) in the Husulu village, mausoleums of Zangazur sultans in the Khan graveyard, Ushag Fortress from the

15th century in the Gushchu village, the shrine of Sari Ashig in the Chilaburd village, a mausoleum from the 15th century, a fort in the Sadinlar village, the Sheikh Ahmad, Soltanbaba and Jabrayil Bey mausoleums in the Zeyva village, and the Khalifa Mausoleum dating back to the 17th century in the Malkhalaf village, all suffered Armenian vandalism. The Hamza Sultan Palace, a historical monument which was located in the Husulu village and dates back to the 17th century, was used as a guest house during the occupation. The Sumuklu graveyard in the Zabukh village of the district, the Khallanli graveyard of the 16th century, the ancient graveyard of the 14th century in the Husulu village, the “Vank” graveyard in the territory of Khachen Yali, and the ancient graveyards in the villages of Malibey, Kosalar, Hajilar, and Bozlu were destroyed.

About ten thousand exhibits of the Lachin Museum of History and Local Lore, which was

rich in highly artistic historical exhibits, as well as carvings with various plots, horse and ram statues displayed in the yard of the museum, were destroyed when the Lachin district was occupied in May 1992. Armenian vandals entirely destroyed the museum complex, which was regarded as a historical and cultural monument.



Hamza Sultan Palace

Albanian monuments in the Lachin district

The Lachin district is rich in monuments from the time of Caucasian Albania. The relics of Caucasian Albania have been preserved for many centuries in the tolerant environment provided by Azerbaijan, in a number of villages in the district including Kosali, Jijimli, Pichanis, Mirik, Abakheyir, Soyugbulag, Korjabulag, Gorchu, Ashaghi Farajan, Sadinlar, Ahmadli, and Arikli.

However, Albanian temples, like all historical and cultural monuments in the territory of the Lachin district, suffered from the vandalism of Armenian nationalists during the nearly 30-year occupation. Dozens of Albanian monuments, including the cave-temple in the Hochaz village of the district (5th century), the 15th-century church in Minkend, the 17th-century church in the centre of the Sadinlar village, the 17th-century temple in the Ahmadli village, the 10th-century temple in the Ashagi Farajan village, and the chapels of Garasaggal, Arakhish, and Shalva, were destroyed or falsified, then presented to the world as Armenian monuments.

Wall inscriptions and artistic ornamentation of Albanian monuments in the territory of the Lachin district were damaged and replaced with new decorative motifs during the occupation by the Armenian Armed Forces between 1992 and 2020. Numerous monuments of Albanian heritage, including Aghoghlan, Varazgun, and the Damirovlu Pir Temple, which are great material and cultural examples of Albanian architecture in the district, were falsified and damaged. By falsifying the

distinctive features and architectural styles typical of Albanian architecture, an attempt was made to adapt the monuments to the Gregorian church. All of this is an obvious example of the policy of cultural genocide against Azerbaijani culture and history in the occupied territories.

As a result of the wars that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union, UNESCO has started to apply criminal responsibility from the late 20th century, particularly for damage to monuments during wars. The Paris Declaration of October 17, 2003, states that a state that intentionally destroys or intentionally fails to take appropriate measures to prohibit, prevent, stop, and punish any intentional destruction of cultural heritage of great importance for humanity, whether or not it is inscribed on a list maintained by UNESCO or another international organisation, bears the responsibility for such destruction, to the extent provided for by international law (39, VI).

According to the declaration, the destruction of the monuments is a crime against humanity and those who committed such acts should be criminally liable. The destruction of monuments in Karabakh and Zangazur, as well as in the Lachin district is an act of violence aimed at destroying the culture and historical memory of the people of Azerbaijan. Those who committed such acts of vandalism shall be responsible under the laws of the Republic of Azerbaijan as well as subject to international legal acts and conventions.

List of Albanian monuments in the Lachin district

- Aghoghlan Temple (5th-6th centuries), Kosalar village
- Varazgun Temple (4th-5th centuries), Bozlu village
- Cave-temple (5th century), Hochaz village
- Albanian church (10th century), Ashaghi Farajan village
- Temple (10th century), Sadinlar village
- Damirovlu Pir Temple, Garagishlag village
- Albanian church (12th century), Hochaz village
- Albanian church (12th century), Gorchu village
- Garasaggal Chapel (13th century), Arakhish village
- Arikli Chapel (16th century), Arikli village
- Temple remains, Alkhasli village
- Chapel (15th century), Shalva village
- Albanian church (15th century), Minkend
- Temple (16th century), Ahmadli village
- Arakhish Chapel (16th century), Kurdhajili / Arikli
- Albanian church (17th century), Mirik village
- Albanian church (17th century), Minkend
- Albanian church (17th century), Pichanis village
- Albanian temple (16th-17th centuries), Mighidere village
- Garagishlag Temple, Bozlu village
- Garakechdi Chapel, Garakechdi/Chiragli village
- Temple, Pichanis village
- Temple, Sovurbulag village
- Church, Sonasar village

AGHOGLHAN TEMPLE (5th-6th centuries), Kosalar village

The Aghoghlan temple, which is one of the greatest examples of the monuments of Caucasian Albania, is located on the Karabakh Plateau on the right bank of the Aghoghlan River in the village of Kosalar, one of the most ancient settlements in the Lachin district. The village of Kosalar, which is located 1250–1300 metres above sea level, has many historical and cultural monuments, including several ancient monuments and stones with plots dating back to the ancient history of Azerbaijan in the territory of the village.

The Aghoghlan Temple is an Albanian monastery from the 5th-6th centuries. The complex, which is located at the foot of the mountain on the bank of the Aghoghlan River, has a total internal area

of roughly two hectares. Among the monuments of Albanian Christian architecture, this majestic monastery holds a special place.

The Aghoghlan Monastery is an ancient Albanian temple constructed near an old sanctuary. It is believed that the name of Aghoghlan is related to the astral religious beliefs of the local people and their worship of the Sun (Ямпольский, 1962, 4047). The Aghoghlan Temple was constructed in the first century AD, and the monument complex even dates to the pre-Christianity period, as confirmed by a wealth of archaeological and ethnographic evidence (Ямпольский, 1962, R. Göyüşov).

Once Christianity was established as the official religion in Caucasian Albania in the fourth century, churches started to be built in the ancient holy places of the people. The Aghoghlan Church was built on



Surrounded by a stone fence on a high hill, the Aghoghlan Monastery holds a special position among Albanian Christian architectural monuments

the site of such an ancient temple and later became a monastery complex. Therefore, the complex contained elements of pagan temples and was rich in ancient cult symbols, just like all the Albanian churches of the early Christian period in Caucasian Albania.

Before the occupation, a pre-Christian stele with images of women drawn in a rectangular frame existed in the yard of the Aghoghlan temple, which was likely a symbol of the God of the Moon. This stele was stolen during the occupation by the Armenians.

As the Aghoghlan Church was constructed on the site of an ancient temple, this temple was always visited by the local people as a sanctuary. Both Christian and Muslim people from nearby villages visited during the 19th and 20th centuries. According to legend, Aghoghlan was a well-known cavalier who protected the local people, and he was buried in this temple after dying heroically during a battle. According to local legend, Aghoghlan was seen in this sanctuary three times a day, and went back to the forest and lived a lonely life the rest of the time. Aghoghlan disappeared after Gregory the Illuminator, who preached Christianity in Albania in the fourth century, settled here. This information demonstrates the pre-Christian origins of the word Aghoghlan, which is still used as a place of worship for the people. It also demonstrates that there has been a church in this location since the fourth century.

The only tree in the sanctuary of Aghoghlan, which was located on a high hill and encircled by a stone fence, was also a place of worship. As with all sanctuaries in Azerbaijan, those who visited this shrine tied various cloths to the tree, lit candles, and offered sacrifices.



The interior of Aghoghlan Monastery



The monument's central nave is surrounded by columns that run north to south and west to east, giving the building a striking level of majesty and considerable wondrous beauty.

The spring water that seeped from the foot of the hill where the sanctuary was located was believed to be healing, and was taken home as holy soil. People travelled 100 kilometres to visit the temple from nearby villages. There, they kissed the ground and sometimes made a vow to crawl on their bellies in front of the temple in the hope that their actions would help them recover from illness (Ямпольский, s.230).

The sanctuary of Aghoghlan was located inside the monastery and was visited as a sanctuary even after the monastery ceased operating in 1836. When the local people visited the temple, they performed ancient rituals here, and infertile women visited and tied cloths to a single tree in the temple yard. People traditionally visited the temple on Sundays and Fridays.

According to legend, some of the relics of Gregory, the first mythical Catholicos of Caucasian Albania, were given to the Aghoghlan Monastery. They were believed to have been found in Amaras, and were distributed among the Albanian bishoprics.

After Christianity was established as the official religion of Caucasian Albania in the fourth century, the Aghoghlan Monastery was one of the earliest Albanian temples constructed on a polytheistic temple. The monument was restored at different times, and later, in the 5th and 6th centuries, a monastery was constructed here. The monument's original foundation was left as it was during the repair process, and new walls between 1.5- and 2-metres high were constructed on the old, intact side walls.



For the purpose of illuminating the temple's interior, the walls have long, narrow windows.



The horseshoe-shaped window on the internal wall of Aghoghlan Monastery

The temple has fairly large dimensions, with a length of 25.6 metres and a width of 12.5 metres. The monastery building, which was constructed of basalt, the local stone, consists of a rectangular basilica with three naves. All the naves in the prayer hall are covered with cylindrical arches, which also finish off the high stone columns supporting the open stone roof. For the purpose of illuminating the temple's interior, the walls have long, narrow windows.

The only entrance to the hall is on the side of the building's facade. Narrow window recesses, located far from each other in the upper part, divide the smooth surfaces of the facade, allowing light to enter the hall's interior. The monument's central nave is surrounded by columns that run north to south and west to east, further embellishing the beauty of the place.

In the monastery's area, there were inscriptions dating from the 17th and 18th centuries. However, one of these inscriptions was stolen from the monastery's area in 1967, during the Soviet era, while the other was stolen between 1989 and 1992, at the start of the Karabakh conflict. The information regarding the fortification of the monastery's surrounding fortress walls in 1613 and the construction of the arched main entrance door was reflected in the text of the inscription that was stolen from the monastery between 1989 and 1992. Another church inscription, dating back to 1779, described the repair of the main church building and the bell tower.

Under the guise of repairing the Aghoghlan Monastery after occupying the Lachin territories in 1992, the Armenians made significant interior



The interior of Aghoghlan Monastery

changes to the monument, completely destroyed several stone inscriptions on its walls including a number of Albanian ornaments and symbols and altered the structure of many other features. The original interior structure of this ancient monument was entirely changed.

The Armenians did not hesitate to place fake inscriptions on the monastery's walls, in an attempt to reflect ownership of this ancient Albanian monument during the occupation. Thanks to the donations received from clerics of other countries, in 2006, the Armenians placed a large number of stone slabs on the walls of this monument, supposedly showing the Gregorian sect of Christianity. The inscription in which the date of construction was mentioned on the walls of the monument was erased.

The ancient Albanian stele in the yard of the Aghoghlan Temple was destroyed during the occupation by the Armenian falsifiers, who then replaced it with two fake cross-stones brought from Yerevan. They buried three gravestones in a line close to the entrance door to the complex yard, demolished the building's facade, and replaced it with an iron covering. They then looted the monastery again, despite the fact that the November 10, 2020, agreement had been reached for them to leave.

This old Albanian temple was illegally given the status of an Armenian Gregorian church in 2007 as a result of a decision made internally, by the Gregorian bishops in Armenia.

On December 1, 2020, when the Lachin district was liberated from occupation, the monuments of Lachin, including the Aghoghlan Temple, were also liberated from the enemy's occupation. Along



Members of the Albanian-Udi Community in the ancient Albanian temple in liberated Lachin, February 2021



Members of the Albanian-Udi Community in Aghoghlan temple



Members of the Albanian-Udi Community lit candles and prayed for the souls of Khojaly victims in the church

with several territories, the Azerbaijani Army also liberated religious temples from captivity. A memorial ceremony for the Khojaly victims was held in February 2021 in the ancient Albanian temple in the liberated Lachin. In the Aghoghlan temple, members of the Albanian Udi community lit candles and performed prayers for the victims of the Khojaly.

VARAZGUN TEMPLE (4th-5th centuries), Bozlu village

Varazgun is an ancient Albanian temple located in a high mountainous area on the Lachin-Minkend road in the Lachin district. It is believed that the temple's first name was Varazkhan. The building is located close to the villages of Bozlu and Gushchu among the remains of the village of Varazkhan. There are remnants of ancient cylindrical towers, caves, and stone figures that are typical of Albanian architecture among the ruins of the ancient village of Varazkhan, which is rich in historical monuments.

The Varazgun Temple dates back to the early Christian period. The temple endured hard times for centuries, yet managed to retain its magnificence to the present day. The building from the fourth and fifth century has survived to the present day, albeit in ruins. At the site of the temple, which was constructed in a high mountainous area, there were the remains of an old Albanian cemetery from the seventh century. This temple was referred to by Barkhudaryan as 'Varazbun' in his book, "Artsakh," in 1895. According to the author, this building was used as the summer residence of the Albanian kings Varaz Grigor or Varaz Tiridates. Additionally, he defined the name Varazbun as "the home, the land of Varaz" (Бархударян, I, s.116).

It is important to note that the definitions of this term include "basis," "base," "basement," and "foundation" in the "Old Turkic Dictionary" (Древнетюркский словарь, 1969, s.118, 124). According to Barkhudaryan, this temple is the present Church of St. Mary.

The quadrangular temple was built in a high mountainous area, but the temple's dome and south wall have been destroyed. Two altars and the apse dome form an intersection in this temple, a unique architectural monument. It should be noted that fragments with two-layer altars can only be discovered in the Varazbun Temple. This unique temple was constructed using local stones and lime. The top of the temple, with two rooms, is covered with a dome. Most likely, the monument was restored several times between the 10th and 12th centuries and the 16th and 17th centuries. The



Varazgun Temple (4th-5th centuries), Bozlu village

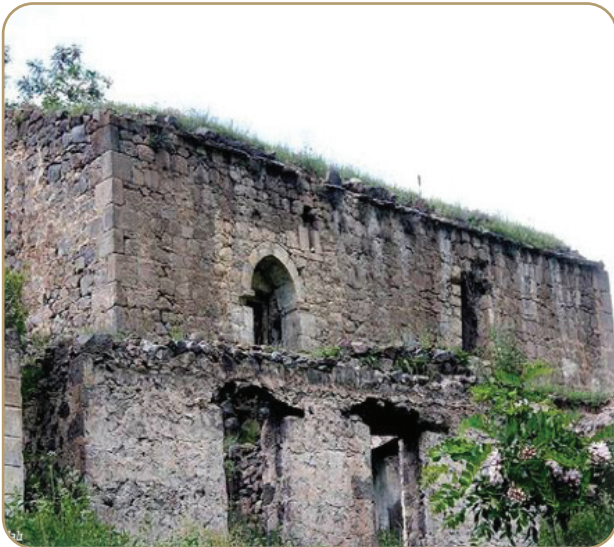


Internal view of Varazgun Temple

monument had an interesting architectural structure and construction, and was shaped like a cylinder. The two-layer plasters joined to the dome during construction extend to the east and west all the way to the end, enhancing the building's natural beauty. The temple has external dimensions of 10.55×10.00 metres, a height of 9.60 metres, and a wall thickness of 0.95 metres.

This ancient Albanian temple is one of the monuments that were Armenianized during the 30-year occupation. Between 1995 and 2000 in particular, the Armenians brought many newly carved Armenian cross-stones to surround this monument, and in 2006, it was illegally given the status of an Armenian church by the Armenian government (See: İsmayılov, 2012).

SADINLAR TEMPLE, Sadinlar village



Albanian temple, Sadinlar village

There were previously inscriptions from the Albanian era inside the Sadinlar Albanian temple, which is located in the middle of the village of Sadinlar, but these inscriptions have since disappeared. The temple's stones were inscribed with drawings of Albanian crosses, and there are ancient stones with the Sun and human drawings on them in the eastern part of the temple.

The monument measures 8.40 by 6.10 metres and was constructed using a building method in accordance with most Albanian churches, which is based on local stones and lime mortar masonry.

This monument was illegally given the status of an Armenian church by the Armenian government in 2006, in accordance with the Armenian government's resolution.

DAMIROVLU PIR TEMPLE
(11th century), Garagishlag village

This architectural monument, dating back to the Caucasian Albanian era, is called “Damirovlu Pir”, and is located one kilometre from Garagishlag village in the Lachin district, to the northeast. This old Albanian building is a rectangular-shaped chapel that is located in the forest and surrounded by great rocks.

The monument measures 5.80 by 2.50 m, and its height is 4.4 m. The Damirovlu Pir Temple is a chapel with two windows that widen from inside to out, and an entrance door. The building has two small rooms, one of which is 4.30 by 3.15 metres in size, and the second is 5.25 by 5.15 metres. The monument was constructed using hewn orange basalt stones



*Albanian temple
(10th century), Ashaghi Farajan village*



Damirovlu Pir Temple, Garagishlag village



and lime, and its ceiling is covered with specially shaped solid pieces of rock that complement each other. The temple's entrance door was inscribed with a large Albanian cross (İsmayılov, 2012, s.127).

The temple dates back to the 11th century. However, this location was a sanctuary, as the name implied. The Damirovlu Pir Temple, like many other Albanian temples, was constructed on the site of a pre-Christian place of worship and remained such during the spread of both Christianity and Islam. However, after Armenia occupied the Lachin district in 1992, attempts were made to Armenianize this monument, and the Armenian government illegally gave it the status of an Armenian church in 2006.

ALBANIAN CHURCH (10th century), Ashaghi Farajan village

There were many Caucasian Albanian monuments in the villages of Farajan and Ashaghi Farajan, which are historically significant parts of the Lachin district. However, several of these monuments were demolished and destroyed during the occupation, and only remnants of the others remain today.

ALBANIAN TEMPLE (12th century), Hochaz village

There is a cave-temple from the fifth century and a basilica from the 12th-13th centuries, both monuments of the Albanian era, in the territory of the Hochaz village, which is one of the most ancient



Albanian temple (12th century), Hochaz village



Monuments in Hochaz village, Lachin



Cave-temple (5th century), Hochaz village

settlements in the Lachin district. There were many stone carvings with plots, horse and ram figures here, as well as other examples of artistic stone art and many examples of stone inscriptions, all dating back to the Caucasian Albanian period.

The building history of the Albanian temple located in the centre of Hochaz village dates back to the 12th-13th centuries. The monument is a two-nave basilica measuring 13.40 metres long, 8.15 metres wide, and whose walls are 105-110 cm thick (Ismayılov, 2012, s.135).

The Armenians attempted to Armenianize a great many Albanian historical monuments by placing fake inscriptions inside temples. This also occurred following the occupation of Hochaz village in 1995, when they destroyed the engraved stone on the southern facade of the temple. They brought stones with fake inscriptions made in Armenia to Hochaz village and fixed them to the Albanian basilicas and chapels. This Albanian monument was illegally given the status of an Armenian church by the Armenian government in 2007.

TEMPLE REMAINS, Alkhasli village

There are numerous architectural and archaeological monuments in Alkhasli village, including many artistic stone samples, horse and ram figures, and tombs. There were the remains of two monuments, dating back to the 12th and 13th centuries, during the prosperity of the Principality of Khachen, in the village, but during the Soviet era, the Armenians stole the stone inscriptions on the remains of these monuments and transported them to Armenia.

GARASAGGAL CHAPEL (13th century), Yukhari Garasaggal village

There is a chapel, dating to the 13th century, in the centre of Yukhari Garasaggal village, which is included in the Kurdhaji village administrative division of the Lachin district. This old Albanian temple was built on the remains of a building that was constructed long before Christianity, belonging to the group of chapel-type Albanian temples. The main walls of the temple were built in earlier times, while the upper walls were constructed later.

The stone inscription, which is five rows above the ground and located below the window in the eastern apse of the building, contains information on this. The inscription on the temple's wall dates back to 1246. It was impossible to read the other



*Garasaggal Chapel (13th century),
Yukhari Garasaggal village*

inscriptions as a portion of the inscription was still buried deep into the wall. Gravestones from the 15th or 16th century were used to build the upper walls of the chapel.

The Garasaggal Chapel is an Albanian temple with a unique composition. This temple is a domed, single-nave, central-type basilica whose ceiling is finished with drop arches. It was constructed in accordance with the requirements of the chapel era. It should be noted that although Albanian architects continued to use the single-nave basilica style until the 19th century, it lost its significance during the construction of large religious buildings (Мамедова, 2004, s.46). The Garasaggal Chapel is a rectangular-shaped building with an altar apse on both sides. The chapel has two entrance doors from the north and south, one of which is closed off by a stone wall. The entrance door of the chapel's room leads to the room where the robes and chapel equipment are stored. The building also has a niche and a fireplace. The chapel's roof and ceiling were constructed in a semi-circular arch design, and the church was built using a building method in accordance with the majority of Albanian churches, which was based on local basalt stones and lime mortar masonry. The chapel was used as a collective farm storage unit during the Soviet era.

It should be noted, unfortunately, that in the territories kept under the control of the Russian peacekeepers in Karabakh, the workshops making false Albanian cross-stones have resumed their operations.

SHALVA CHAPEL (15th century), Shalva village

The Shalva Chapel is located in the Shalva village of the Lachin district. There are artistic stone samples rich in carvings with plots from the time of Caucasian Albania in the village, as there are in many other villages of the Lachin district.

Although the Shalva Chapel, a monument from the Caucasian Albanian period, dates back to the 15th century, it is likely that the chapel's original construction took place much earlier. It was constructed on an ancient pre-Christian foundation, the same as other Albanian temples. The use of local stones and gravestones from an old cemetery around the chapel in the construction of the temple, serves as evidence that the original building was constructed at a much earlier time.

The Shalva Chapel is a building that is 13.5 metres long, 8.5 metres wide, and has walls that are roughly 1.4 metres thick. The monument is one of the chapel-type Albanian temples, and the building's construction structure is reminiscent of other chapels with single-nave basilicas in the surrounding territories. The chapel has four windows that enlarge from inside to outside, and an entrance door. One of the chapel's four windows is on the western wall, while three are on the eastern wall. The chapel's entrance is located on the building's west side. There were special areas for storing the robes and church equipment of clergymen in this old temple, on either side of the altar.

The Shalva Chapel was constructed using local unhewn basalt stones and lime mortar, in accordance with the construction method of the majority of

Albanian churches. Ancient tombstones were also used in the construction.

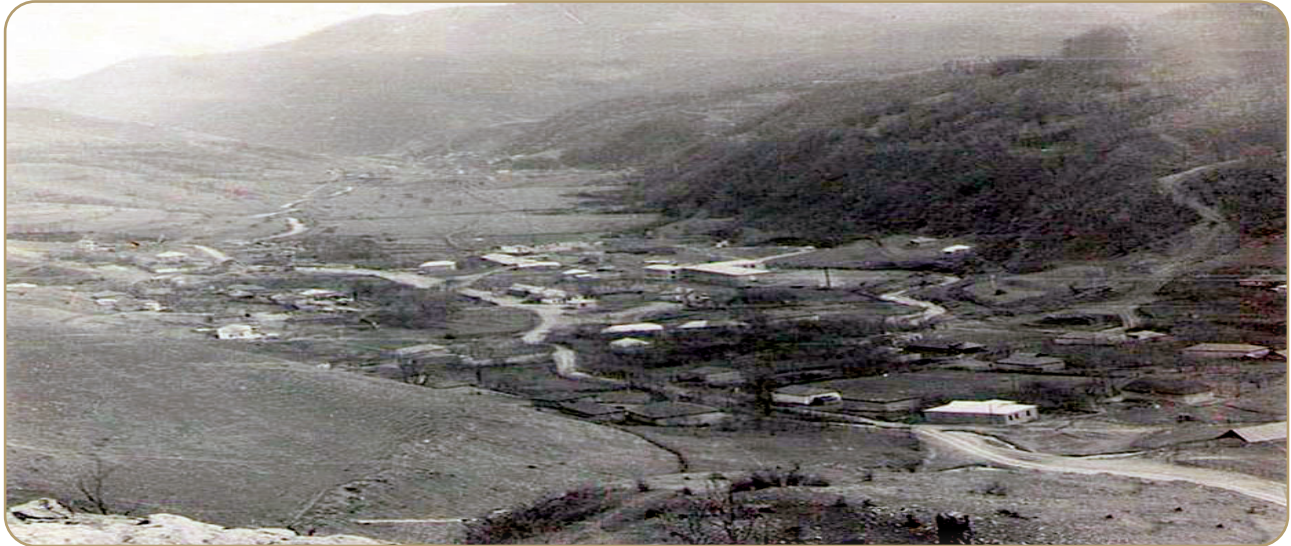
It is impossible to read the inscriptions on the tympanum above the chapel's entrance door, or those on the tombstone at the bottom of the middle window on the chapel's eastern wall.

The chapel served as a warehouse during the Soviet era. The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan listed the Shalva Chapel in 2001, and it was included in the list of immovable historical and cultural monuments of global importance.

The Armenians who had illegally resettled in the territory of the Shalva village following its occupation by the Armenian forces, attempted to falsify this monument. This historic Albanian monument was given the status of an Armenian



Shalva Chapel (15th century), Shalva village



Shalva village, Lachin

church by the Armenian government in violation of international law in 2007. By falsifying the architectural monuments of Albanian heritage, which are material and moral relics of the Azerbaijani people, the Armenians committed purposeful cultural genocide against the Azerbaijani people.

GARAGISHLAG TEMPLE, Bozlu village

The Garagishlag Temple is located in the village of Bozlu, 1220–1290 metres above sea level, in the valley of the Minkend River. The temple, which dates back to the Caucasian Albanian period, was constructed inside the forest, one kilometre to the northeast of the Garagishlag village, and was encircled by high, great rocks.

The Garagishlag Temple is a single-nave chapel with two windows, and an entrance door that enlarges from inside to out. The temple measures 5.80 by 2.50 metres and its height is 4.4 metres. There are several ancient cave-temples in the rocks surrounding the monument. According to Barkhudaryan, who provided information about the monuments of Karabakh in the 19th century, there were five destroyed churches and the remnants of a semi-destroyed Albanian church along the territory extending from the Araz River to the village of Garagishlag, on the left bank of the Araz River under the Dirı Mountain, in Tumas, Bayat (Basharat village) (Бархударян, 1895, s.384-385).

ALBANIAN CHURCH (16th century), Ahmadli village

The Albanian church located in the Ahmadli village of the Lachin district dates back to the 16th century. The construction year of the church is 1517, as per the inscription on the monument's wall.

The church is a double-nave chapel whose outer walls are 16.3 by 9.7 metres in size, and 1.3 metres thick. The masonry of the building was constructed using local stones and yellow lime (İsmayılov Laçın, 2012, s.124).

From 1995 on, the Armenians illegally conducted repairs to this monument and erected fake cross-stones all around the temple during the occupation. This Albanian monument was given the status of an Armenian church by order of the Armenian government in 2007.



*Albanian church
(16th century), Ahmadli village*

ALBANIAN CHURCH (17th century), Minkend

The church is located in the centre of Minkend village and has a three-nave monastery-style basilica from the period of Caucasian Albania. The year 1675 is inscribed on the entrance wall of the temple, depicting the construction date.

The temple building was built with a combination of local basalt stones and lime in accordance with the construction technique of most Albanian churches. The length of the monument is 22.58 metres, and the width is 12.60 metres (İsmayilov Laçın, 2012.s 123).

This ancient Albanian temple was also a victim of Armenian falsification. In 2000, the Armenians placed forged inscriptions on the walls both on the facade and inside the monument.



*Albanian temple
(17th century), Minkend village*

In 2009, with the support of the Armenian government, the original appearance of this Albanian monument was modified, and some of the inscriptions and carvings on its walls were completely removed or altered. The bell tower on top of the monument was removed and replaced with an iron cover, and decorations of Armenian-Gregorian crosses were placed inside the building.

This ancient Albanian monument was illegally restored under the name “Saint Minas Church” with the financial support of the Tufenkian Foundation in 2009. This church was officially inaugurated by order of the Armenian government and the ancient Albanian monument was illegally given the status of an Armenian Gregorian church in 2009.

ALBANIAN CHURCH (17th century), Mirik village

The church was built on a solid piece of rock in the west of Mirik village of the Lachin district. On the temple’s wall stone, the date of construction was indicated as 1655. This three-nave basilica temple is a rare example of Albanian architecture. The length of the basilica is 20.60 metres, its width is 12 metres, the thickness of its wall is 1.55 metres.

Local stones and lime were used in the construction of the monument, as is common of the construction technique of the most Albanian churches.

The surroundings of the only exit door and the southern facade of the building are decorated with rich ornaments and carvings, and a sundial-shaped ornament was carved on the stone in the interior of the monument. The inside of the basilica is illuminated by means of six outward-expanding

windows. The internal columns of the building are placed in a circular design with equal spacing. The protrusions of the arch stones extend to the corner stones of the building.

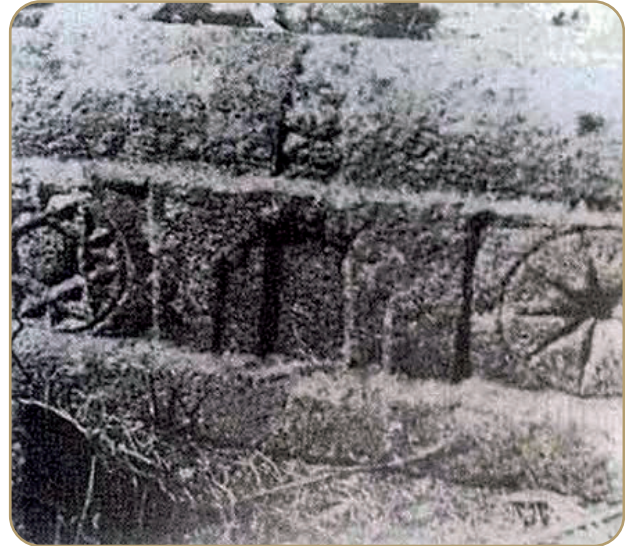
The monument served as a village warehouse during the Soviet period, and afterwards as a rural cultural house. These territories were under occupation of the Armenian Armed Forces from 1992 to 2020. In 2006, the Armenian government illegally granted the status of an Armenian church to this monument.

ARAKHISH CHAPEL
(12th-13th centuries), Arakhish village

Arakhish village is located on the southwestern slope of the Karabakh Plateau, between Kurdhajili village and Arikli village. There were ancient



Albanian temple (17th century), Mirik village



Tombstones with artistic ornamentation in the area of the Albanian church near Mirik village

cemeteries, as well as the Albanian monument, Arakhish chapel, which was in poor condition on the territory of the village. The chapel is located at an altitude of 1510-1540 metres above sea level and its ceiling is in the form of a central basilica with a dome and a single nave finished with joined arches.

Although the chapel was registered during the Soviet period, no archaeological excavation was conducted in its territory. The monument has an unusual architectural structure, which can be dated back to the 12th to 13th centuries based on its composition and architectural characteristics. There is a horseshoe-shaped altar with an apse in the layout of the building. Rough-hewn, unpolished stone, and a mixture of lime and sand were used during construction, as is typical of Albanian architecture. The dimensions of the building are 12.30 by 5.20 metres, and the thickness of the walls is up to 90 centimetres. There is an ancient pre-Christian and Christian cemetery around the building and in the vicinity. There were numerous tombstones that differed from one another in the territory of the cemetery, all richly adorned with the pre-Christian motifs of fire, the sun, and the moon. The chapel was destroyed by the Armenian army during the occupation.

ARIKLI CHAPEL (16th century), Arikli village

The territory of the village of Arikli, located in the administrative territory of the Kurdhajili village near Arakhish village, was also home to numerous valuable architectural examples from the period of Caucasian Albania. In addition to the Albanian chapels, ancient fortresses, mausoleums and other examples of artistic stonework were also found here. The monument from the period of Caucasian



Arikli chapel (16th century), Arikli village

Albania in the territory of Arikli village is listed among the chapel-style Albanian temples.

The chapel, located in the centre of the village, dates back to the 16th century. The construction technique of the temple is based on local basalt stone and lime mortar masonry, in accordance with the technique of most Albanian churches. The external dimensions of the chapel were 10.70 by 5.20 metres, and the thickness of the wall was equal to 1.0 metre. The monument had two entrances, one from the south and another from the north. Following the 1992 occupation, Armenians attempted to declare this historical Albanian monument to be an Armenian church. In 2000, several fake tombstones and cross-stones were created in the Gorus district of the Republic of Armenia and placed around the monuments. In 2007, the Armenian government then illegally granted the status of an Armenian church to the Albanian monument in the village of Arikli.



Tombstones with artistic ornamentation near Arakhish chapel, adorned with images of fire, the sun, the moon, domestic scenes, hunting, and cavalry

ALBANIAN TEMPLE, Mighidere village

Mighidere village, located on the banks of the Hakari River at an altitude of 1180-1280 metres above sea level, was home to a large number of historical and cultural monuments of the Middle Ages. Indeed, the village is one of Albania's most monument-rich regions. Some of these monuments have survived to the present day, despite their half-ruined state. The remains of the complex from the time of the Albanians begin in the village of Mighidere and extend in three directions to the areas of Arpagedik, Gonagormez, and Chemenli.

In the south-west of the village, there is a one-nave chapel of Albanian architecture. Various artistic images were carved on the southern facade of this chapel. However, during the occupation period of village between 1992 and 2020, Mighidere monuments, like all monuments from the Albanian period in these territories, were falsified.

There was another Albanian temple dating back to the 16th-17th centuries surrounded by high mountains in the east of Mighidere village. In 1998, so-called Armenian scientists removed the inscription on the temple's wall that indicates the construction year and brought it to Yerevan, where it is kept in the Matenadaran-Institute of Ancient Manuscripts of Armenia.

Armenians have placed a large number of carved fake tombstones with the image of a cross on them around this monument, as they did with all other Albanian monuments in these areas. These false replacements were in fact made in the Gorus region of Armenia.

ALBANIAN TEMPLE (17th century), Pichanis village

The village of Pichanis, located at an altitude of 1400-1500 metres above sea level on the banks of the Hakari River, is rich in architectural monuments and artistic stone pieces from the period of Caucasian Albania. The remains of the ancient building complex from the Albanian period in the village stretch 2 km to the southeast of Aghjayazi village.

There was an Albanian church from the 17th century in the village of Pichanis, which has been added to the list of the Albanian architectural monuments. The exterior dimensions of the chapel-shaped building are 11.80 by 8.20 metres, and the wall's thickness is 110 cm.

Although this ancient Albanian building has been preserved until modern times, it was subjected to falsification and Armenianization as with the other Albanian temples of Karabakh. In 2003, the Armenians removed the historical stone inscription from the Albanian period on the facade of this monument and replaced it with a fake stone plate



Albanian church (17th century), Pichanis village

bearing an inscription in Armenian and a picture of a cross on it. The Armenian government has designated all architectural monuments in this area as Armenian since 2007.

GARAKECHDI CHAPEL (10th century), Garakechdi village

There were two temples from the period of Caucasian Albania in the village of Katos, which is part of the administrative territory of the village of Garakechdi.

The former name of Katos village was Garakeshish. The village, which was named also Leninkend during the Soviet period, was renamed as Garakechdi in 1999. Garakechdi village is surrounded by Alkhasli, Minkend, Kamalli, Bozlu villages. One of the temples, the Garakechdi chapel,



Garakechdi chapel (10th century), Garakechdi village

dates back to the 10th century. There is a window on the south wall of the monument, which is in a partially destroyed state.

In 2003, Armenians removed an inscribed stone and two cross-stones from this monument and took them to Armenia. Since 2007, the Armenian government has illegally claimed that the building has the status of an Armenian church.

There was another ancient temple, a relic of Albanian culture, in the territory of the village. The temple is 45 metres long and 10 metres wide, and there was an ancient stone inscription in the part of the temple that protrudes from the surface of the ground. The side of the inscription was decorated with ram statues.

ALBANIAN TEMPLE, Sonasar village

Sonasar, one of Azerbaijan's ancient settlements, is located at an altitude of 1300-1350 metres above sea level. It was one of the Lachin region's villages that was rich in ancient artistic stone samples and inscriptions, figures of horses and rams from the period of Caucasian Albania. There is an ancient cemetery, tombstones, and several architectural monuments from the Albanian period in the village.

The Albanian monument in Sonasar village is also one of the victims of Armenian vandalism. After the occupation, Armenians brought stones with curved cross pictures from the Gorus district and buried them in the area in 1998.

Since 2007, the Armenian government has falsely designated this Albanian monument an Armenian church (İsmayilov, 2012, s.135).

ZANGILAN DISTRICT

Zangilan district is located in the southwest of the Republic of Azerbaijan. It borders Gubadli to the north, Jabrayil district to the east, the Islamic Republic of Iran along the Araz River to the south, and the Mehri and Gafan districts of Armenia to the west. The name of the current Zangilan settlement near the Khodaafarin bridge was written in the form of Zangiyan, in a source dating back to the 7th century. There is also a village with the same name in South Azerbaijan.

The territory of the Zangilan district was included in various administrative territorial divisions at different times. Until 1828, the region's western part of Basitchay River belonged to the Nakhchivan Khanate, and the eastern part of Basitchay River belonged to the Karabakh Khanate.

Following Russia's occupation of the South Caucasus at the beginning of the 19th century, Shusha, Elizavetpol, and Zangazur Uyezds were established within the Elizavetpol governorate,





Albanian temple, Babali village



Albanian temple - Shatariz village

which was founded in 1868. According to the new division, the territory of Zangilan district was included in Zangazur Uyezd. Zangilan was listed as part of Jabrayil Uyezd in the 1925 documents. A separate Zangilan district was established in 1930. Until 1957, Zangilan was known as Pirchivan. Zangilan was granted city status in 1967.

In 1929, with the decision of Soviet Government, Nuvadi, Togud, Ernezir villages of Zangilan district, and in 1946, four thousand hectares of forest area, were taken from the Republic of Azerbaijan and handed to the Republic of Armenia.

Armenian troops occupied Zangilan in October 1993. Before the occupation, the territory of Zangilan district was rich in historical, archaeological, ethnographic, and architectural monuments. During the occupation, all historical and architectural monuments in the district that reflected the history, way of life, and culture of the Azerbaijani people from the ancient period to the present were destroyed. Numerous historical, cultural and religious monuments, such as the circular tower in Hajalli village, the octagonal mausoleum (1304-1305) in Memmedbeyli village, the 14th-century mausoleum in Yenikend, the 13th-14th-century "Khanazur" monument in Bartaz village, the 18th-century mosque, the Tagli fortress, the Pirjivan camel pir (sacred place), the Asgulum fortress, the ninth-century Razdara Mosque, the 12th-century Top bridge, Maiden Tower, as well as the Zangilan Museum of Local Lore with hundreds of exhibits were devastated, and the district was completely left in ruins.

Zangilan monuments

The Zangilan region of Azerbaijan was located on historical trade routes that stretched from east to west along the Araz River, as well as from south to north along the Hakari, Bergushad and Okhchu rivers. In this regard, the region was rich in castles, observatories, monuments and artefacts of material culture. The jug graves of the 2nd century BC and coins of the 4th-2nd centuries BC, mostly minted in the name of Alexander the Great, indicate that this area has played an important role in international trade since ancient times.

Zangilan had several invaluable architectural monuments reflecting different pages of history. However, the occupation of the Zangilan territories by the Armenian Armed Forces in 1992-1993 resulted in the destruction of almost all the historical, religious, and cultural monuments of the region, including the Museum of Local Lore, which was rich in valuable exhibits reflecting the ancient history of Zangilan. Hundreds of our historical, cultural, and religious monuments, such as the "Fortress" masonry walls on the Asgulum mountain 8 kilometres from the city of Zangilan, the round tower in the village of Hajalli in Zangilan territory, which was preserved for centuries, the octagonal mausoleum in Memmedbeyli (1304-1305), the Shukratav fortress and Khanazur shrine of the 6th-8th centuries in the villages of Bartav and Kechikli, the Daghdaghan and Gayali shrines in the Malatkesh village, a mosque in Zangilan city, an ancient mosque in the Razdara village, the Taghli fortress, the camel shrine in Pirchivan, the Gunesh shrine associated with Sari Ashig in the Gilatagh area, and the Yol shrine (16th-18th centuries) were victims of Armenian vandalism.

The ancient settlement of the early Middle Ages, which was discovered during the Soviet period in Zangilan near the village of Sherifan, on the right bank of the Hakari river, was completely destroyed during the occupation. The surface remains of the monument demonstrate that there was a tower-shaped fortress building here, which was mentioned during the period of Babak's fight against the Arabs. According to the sources, Sahl Sumbat mentioned the fortress in a location known as 'Shehri Sherifan,' close to the village of Khuraman on the Araz riverside. It is said that there were numerous fortresses and underground roads there, and three or four wooden roads leading to Babak Fort. Archaeologist Rashid Goyushov's research in Zangilan in the 1970s confirmed theories that Babak's movement played a role in Zangilan's history, and that there was indeed a passage under the Hakari River from Shehri Sherifan.

Albanian monuments in the Zangilan district

The fact that the Hakari River was also known as the Arran (Albanian) River during the era of Caucasian Albania suggests that there are numerous monuments of Albanian culture here. Albanian temples were registered in the villages of Bartav, Garababa, Yemazli, Razdara, Khanazur, Shatariz in the Zangilan district.

- Albanian temple, Babali village
- Albanian church, Bartav village
- Albanian Church, Garababa village,
- Albanian church, Yemazli village
- Albanian Mausoleum Complex, Razdara village
- Albanian church, Khanazur village
- Albanian temple, Shatariz village

The Albanian monuments were completely destroyed during the occupation, along with the entire territory of the Zangilan district.

**ALBANIAN CHURCH,
Bartaz village**

There were the ruins of an ancient Albanian temple in the deep forest close to the settlement of Bartaz, which is located on the left bank of the Araz River. The walls of the partly destroyed Albanian church were 1.5 metres thick. The Khanazir shrine, an ancient sanctuary, was located 100–150 metres away from the ancient church, which had a structure that was identical to that of the Albanian monument in the Garababa village of Zangilan.



ALBANIAN MONUMENTS OF KARABAKH AND EAST ZANGAZUR LIST

AGHDAM DISTRICT

- Albanian temple (6th century), Kangarli village
- Gavurgala (6th century), Sofulu village
- Beshikdagh / Vankasar Monastery (5th century), Shahbulag village
- Kichan Monastery (12th century), Balligaya village
- Albanian temple (15th century), Magsudlu village
- Albanian temple (16th century), Salahli-Kangarli village

KHOJALY DISTRICT

- Albanian temple (905), Shushakand village
- Albanian temple (1065), Chanakhchi village
- Albanian temple (1100), Chanakhchi village
- Albanian temple (1122), Khansikh village
- Albanian monastery (12th century), Khachmaz village
- Albanian temple (17th century), Khachmaz village
- Ochkavank Monastery (12th century), Badara village
- Albanian temple complex (12th century), Badara village
- Monastery of the Saviour (13th century), Badara village
- Baghirkhan Temple Complex/Bovurkhanavank (12th century), Daghdaghan village
- Monastery Complex of St. George (13th century), Khanabad village
- Albanian temple (13th century), Daghyurd village
- Albanian temple (1202), Armudlu village
- Round temple (1356-1357), Khojaly city

- Remains of the Albanian church, Karkijahan settlement
- Seven Churches, Meshali village
- Durpasu church, Meshali village
- Church in the Small Water, Meshali village
- Church on Borgun Rock, Meshali village
- Church in the Land of Avaz, Meshali village
- Temple, Ballija village

KHOJAVAND DISTRICT

- Amaras Monastery (4th century), Jutju village
- Khutudara Monastery (5th-6th centuries), Bina village,
- Katarovank temple (4th-6th centuries), Chaylaggala village
- Bri Monastery Complex (5th-7th centuries), Chorakli village
- Seven Doors Monastery (7th century), Susanlig village
- Red Church (10th century), Tugh village
- Monastery of St. John (10th century), Boyuk Taghlar
- Albanian temple (1170), Hadrut settlement
- Church of the Holy Mother of God (12th century), Hunarli village
- St. Elishe Monastery (12th century), Chartar village
- St. Stephen's Church (12th century), Tugh village
- St. John's Church (13th century), Tugh village
- St. Mary's Church, Tugh village
- Church of the Holy Mother of God (12th century), Chorakli village

- Gtichavank Monastery (13th century), Taghlar village
- White Cross Church (11th century), Chinarli village
- Mavas Monastery (13th century), Gavahin village
- Albanian temple (14th century), Kharkhar village
- Kavakavank, Zoghalbulag village
- Church of the St. Mary (17th century), Taghaser village
- St. Grigoris Church (17th century), Zavadig village
- Albanian temple, Kandkhurd village
- Basilica, Chiraguz village
- Albanian temple, Aghjakand
- Albanian temple, Atagud village
- Albanian temple, Banazir village
- Albanian temple, Khirmanjig village
- Albanian temple, Anaku village
- Albanian temple, Zamzur village
- Albanian temple, Malikjanli village
- Albanian temple, Bulutan village
- Albanian temple, Edilli village
- Albanian temple, Aghbulag village
- Albanian temple, Tak village
- Albanian temple, Azikh village
- Albanian temple, Dolanlar village
- Albanberd church, Garakand village
- Albanian temple, Sur village
- Albanian temple, Uchoglan village
- Albanian temple, Gizilgaya village

Fortresses and castles

- Palace of Dizak Meliks (18th century), Tugh village
- Ktish Fortress (10th century), Tugh village
- Kuratagh Fortress, Dudukchu village

TARTAR DISTRICT

- St. Elishe Monastery, between the villages of Tapakand and Sugovushan

- Urevkank Monastery (13th century), Talish village
- Albanian church (13th century), Umudlu village
- Remains of the Kalankat settlement, Chardagli village
- Three Infants Monastery (17th century), Chilaburd village
- Jaraberd/Chilaburd Monastery (18th century), Chilaburd village
- Dutakan Albanian Church (12th century)

Palaces and fortresses

- Chilaburd Fortress, Chilaburd village
- Palace of Gulustan Meliks, Talish village
- Gulustan Fortress

KALBAJAR DISTRICT

- Khudavang (Dadivank) Monastery Complex (6th-7th centuries), Vank village
- Albanian temple (500), Hasanriz village
- Albanian temple (672), Yayiji village
- Albanian temple (12th-13th centuries), Yayiji village
- Albanian temple (718), Gasapet village
- Great Arran Monastery (9th century), Kolatak village
- Albanian temple (12th century), Kolatak village
- Albanian temple (10th century), Chormanli (Garnakar) village
- Albanian church (11th century), Chormanli (Garnakar) village
- Ganjasar Monastery (13th century), Vangli village
- Havaptugh temple (12th century), Vangli village
- Khatiravang Monastery (1204), Qozlu village
- Red Monastery (13th century), Qozlu village
- Meyrakavak Monastery (13th century), Qozlu village
- Albanian church (13th century), Charektar village
- Harva Church (13th century), Dovshanli village

- Mamakan/Vachar Church (13th century), Bazarkand
- St. Stepanos Church (13th century), Bazarkand
- Albanian temple (13th century), Zar village
- Red Stone Monastery (12th century), Chapar village
- Albanian temple (12th century), Childiran village
- Red temple (13th century), Childiran village
- Albanian temple (1283), Hasanriz village
- Kilisakend temple, Gasimlar village
- Cave temple, Armudlu village
- Church (1668), Dovshanli village
- Church (17th century), Devedashi village
- Albanian temple, Makhratag village
- Albanian temple, Shaplar village

Fortresses and castles

- Khanabert/ Tarkan Fortress, Vangli village
- Palace of Khachen, Vangli village
- Khachen / Gakhach Fortress, Kolatak village
- Lok Fortress, Ganlikand village
- Galaboynu Fortress, Galaboynu village
- Akan Fortress, Hasanriz village
- Ulukhan Fortress, Karachanli village
- Jomard Fortress, Jomard village

GUBADLI DISTRICT

- Cave-temple (4th century), Gavurdere Temple
- Cave-temple, Aliguluushagi village
- Albanian church, Seytas village
- Albanian churches and monuments, Yukhari Jibikli village
- Temple, Marza village
- Albanian temple, Basharat village

LACHIN DISTRICT

- Aghoghlan temple (5th-6th centuries), Kosalar

- village
- Varazgun temple (4th-5th centuries), Bozlu village
- Cave-temple (5th century), Hochaz village
- Albanian church (10th century), Ashaghi Farajan village
- Temple (10th century), Sadinlar village
- 'Damirovlu Pir' temple (11th century), Garagishlag village
- Albanian church (12th century), Hochaz village
- Albanian church (12th century), Gorchu village
- Garasaggal chapel (13th century), Kurdhaji village, Yukhari Garasaggal
- Arikli chapel (16th century), Arikli village
- Temple remains, Alkhasli village
- Chapel (15th century), Shalva village
- Albanian church (15th century), Minkend
- Temple (16th century), Ahmadli village
- Arakhish chapel (16th century), Kurdhajili / Arikli
- Albanian church (17th century), Mirik village
- Albanian church (17th century), Minkend
- Albanian church (17th century), Pichanis village
- Albanian temple (16th-17th centuries), Mighidere village
- Garagishlag temple, Bozlu village
- Garakechdi chapel (10th century), the territory of Garakechdi/Chiragli village
- Temple, Pichanis village
- Temple, Sovurbulag village
- Church, Sonasar village

ZANGILAN DISTRICT

- Albanian temple, Babali village
- Albanian church, Bartaz village
- Albanian church, Garababa village,
- Albanian church, Yemazli village
- Albanian mausoleum complex, Razdara village
- Albanian church, Khanazor village
- Albanian temple, Shatariz village

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