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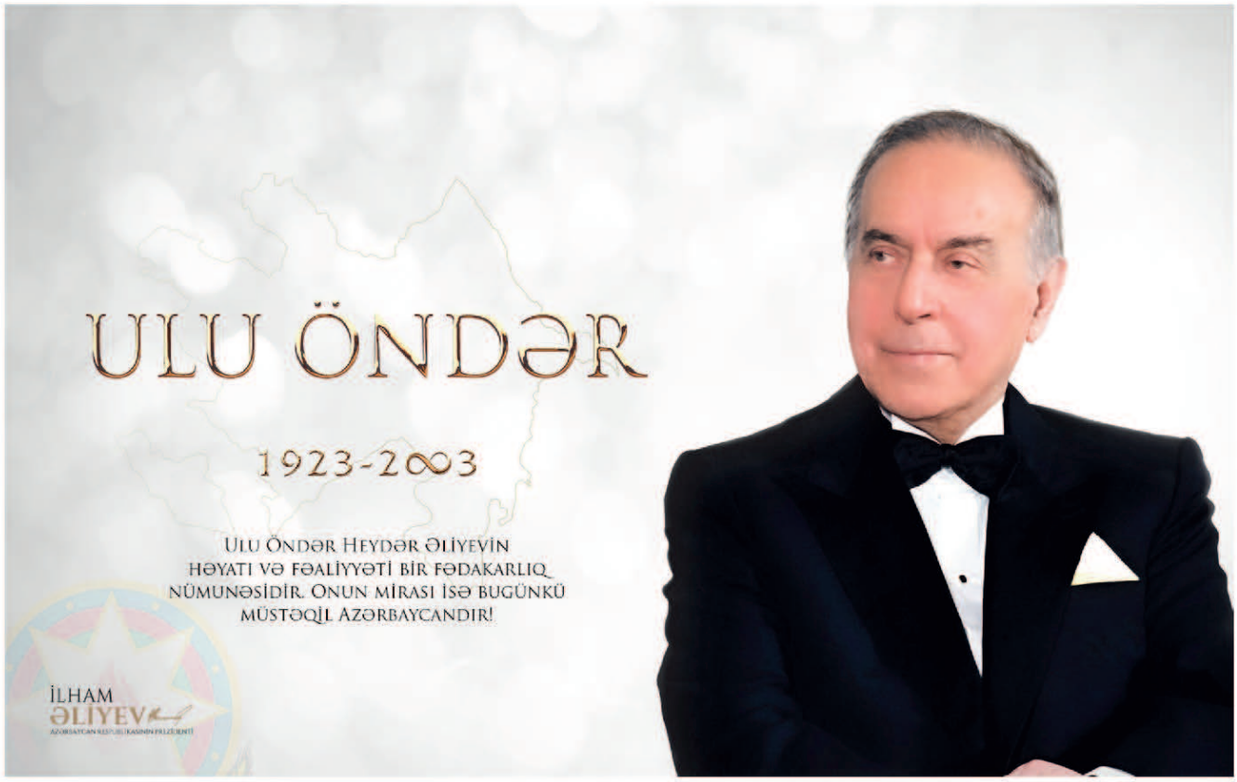
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The fourth issue of the collection of articles titled "Ethnocultural Heritage of Caucasian Albania" is dedicated to the 100th anniversary of HEYDAR ALIYEV, the founder of the independent state of Azerbaijan, the National Leader of the Azerbaijani people, an exceptional politician, and an outstanding statesman. This edition encompasses the proceedings of the 10th International Conference on "Caucasian Albania: Religious and Social Life", organized on April 14, 2023, in Baku.

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DEDICATED TO THE 100th ANNIVERSARY OF
HEYDAR ALIYEV

The founder of the independent state of Azerbaijan,
The National Leader of the Azerbaijani people,
A brilliant politician and an outstanding statesman

PROCEEDINGS OF

THE TENTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON

CAUCASIAN ALBANIA: RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL LIFE

Baku, April 14, 2023

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FOREWORD

In today's complex geopolitical landscape, the Republic of Azerbaijan stands as a reliable bridge between Eastern and Western civilizations, being one of the dynamically developing countries in the world. Azerbaijan's international prestige is increasing thanks to its adept and well-balanced international policies, domestic strategy, and well-thought-of governance programs, the foundations of which were established by Heydar Aliyev, the National Leader of the Azerbaijani people, an exceptional statesman, and a uniquely far-sighted politician. In honor of the 100th anniversary **of Heydar Aliyev's** birth on May 10, 1923, the year 2023 was declared as the "Year of Heydar Aliyev" in Azerbaijan by the Order of Ilham Aliyev, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Heydar Aliyev took the helm of the independent Azerbaijan during a challenging period, emerging as a true leader of his nation and consolidating Azerbaijani society. He implemented a series of reforms that propelled the Republic's socio-economic growth, the enhancement of military-political and scientific-technical capacities, as well as progress in the cultural sphere, encompassing the sciences and the arts. His national policy fostered the advancement of multicultural values, a strong sense of patriotism, mutual respect among diverse ethnic/sub-ethnic groups and religious communities, as well as uniting all Azerbaijanis around the world into a cohesive diaspora. The value of the National Leader's policy was demonstrated to the international community during the Patriotic War of 2020.

Following Heydar Aliyev's precepts, Ilham Aliyev, the President of Azerbaijan and Victorious Supreme Commander-in-Chief, led the triumphant Azerbaijani army in the liberation of Azerbaijan's historic lands from a 30-year Armenian occupation within 44-days (September 27 – November 10) and **during the period from 2020 to 2023, the territorial integrity of Our country was completely restored.**

After the signing of a trilateral statement between Azerbaijan, Russia and Armenia on November 10, 2020, military provocations by Armenians in Karabakh continued. In 2022, units of the Azerbaijani Army executed the anti-terrorist operation named "Revenge": the heights of Girkhgyz, Sarybaba and Mount Bukhduz were liberated; Armenians from Syria and Libya were evicted from the city of Lachin, the villages of Zabukh and Sus.

Cities such as Shusha, Lachin, Aghdam, Jabrayil and Fuzuli, as well as various villages in Karabakh that were destroyed due to the aggressive policies of the Armenians, began to be rebuilt through projects based on modern technologies. President Ilham Aliyev of the Republic of Azerbaijan and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of the Republic of Turkey participated in the opening ceremonies of Fuzuli International Airport on October 26, 2021, and Zangilan International Airport on October 20, 2022. The "Smart Village" project, initiated by President Ilham Aliyev, and covering the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Agali villages of the Zangilan region, has been yielding significant results for the "Great Return" program for Internally Displaced Persons in Karabakh. With the participation of President Ilham Aliyev and First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva, opening ceremonies took place and the first stage of the return of the genuine residents of the region was carried out. Specifically, returns occurred on May 27, 2022, to the village of 1st Agali in the Zangilan region (involving 41 families), and on August 25, 2023, to the village of Zabukh in the Lachin region. The latter was liberated from Armenian occupiers on August 26, 2022, and was rebuilt (involving 20 families of 88 people). A total of 245 families (992 people) have already returned to the Lachin district.

Continuous terrorist provocations by Armenians, the accumulation of illegal arms and ammunition in Karabakh, and illegal elections prompted an anti-terrorist operation conducted by the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Internal Affairs on September 19, 2023, in Karabakh. This operation led to the end of Armenian military separatism, resulting in the complete disarmament of Armenian military gangs and the restoration of full Azerbaijani control over the entire territory of Karabakh.

Eternal memory to all the Martyrs: 156 were martyred and 4 thousand went missing in the First Karabakh War; 2,900 were martyred and 14 went missing in the Patriotic War (Second Karabakh War) of 2020; 71 were martyred during Operation "Revenge" in 2022; and in 2023, 192 military personnel (along with one civilian) were martyred, and 511 military personnel (and one civilian) were wounded. From 2020 to 2023, 141 civilians (of whom 44 died) and 161 military personnel (of whom 13 died) were struck by mines.

The year 2023, designated as "The Year of Heydar Aliyev," is marked by the complete restoration of the territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Central avenues, streets, and numerous facilities across the country are named after Heydar Aliyev. According to official records, there are around 60 museums and centers named in his honor. In Azerbaijan's cultural capital, Shusha, on May 10, 2023, one of the streets was named after Heydar Aliyev, while another was named "November 8", commemorating the Victory.

From May 9 to 11, 2023, the "Kharibulbul" International Folklore Festival was organized by the Heydar Aliyev Foundation and the Ministry of Culture on the Jidir Duzu plain of Shusha. Due to Shusha's designation as the Cultural Capital of the Turkic World for 2023 by the Permanent Council of the International Organization of Turkic Culture (TURKSOY), the festival featured participation from musical and creative groups hailing from Turkic-speaking countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Hungary, the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia of the Republic of Moldova (Gagauz Land), Uzbekistan and the Autonomous Republic of Karakalpakstan of Uzbekistan, the Republics of Altai, Khakassia, Sakha (Yakutia), Tatarstan and Tuva of the Russian Federation, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Turkey, Turkmenistan). All teams demonstrated their performances, creative works, and national cuisines. This festival serves as a vivid illustration of how Azerbaijan embodies the ideas of multiculturalism, showing the positive interplay between various cultures and ethnic traditions.

Azerbaijan plays a crucial role in the systematic study of the history and ethno-cultural heritage of Caucasian Albania, one of the ancient states of the South Caucasus and the first state on the territory of historical Azerbaijan, which held an important historical significance in the region over a millennium (4th century BC – early 8th century AD). As a result of comprehensive exploration into Albanian heritage throughout the latter half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, a scholarly discipline known as Albanian studies emerged and evolved.

The Baku International Multiculturalism Centre successfully implements the state policy of tolerance, supporting the efforts of cultural, educational, and social organizations representing all ethnic groups in Azerbaijan. It organizes diverse conferences, presentations, roundtable discussions, meetings, and dialogues. Moreover, the Centre publishes substantial scholarly works, collections of articles, journals, as well as popular science and fiction.

One of the scholarly directions pursued by the Baku International Multiculturalism Centre is the advancement of Albanian studies. The Centre has organized international conferences to share the outcomes of scholarly investigations into Caucasian Albania and its Albanian ethno-cultural heritage spanning disciplines like archaeology, history, ethnology, linguistics, anthropology, numismatics, architecture, and art. These conferences took place in Italy (Rome, 2015) and Azerbaijan (Nij settlement, 2019), and aimed to reach a broad scientific audience and the general public. A range of valuable publications have also been issued.

The Baku International Multiculturalism Centre, the Institute of History named after Abbasgulu Aga Bakikhanov of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences, the Moral Values Promotion Foundation, and the Albanian–Udi Christian community co-organized the 10th International Conference on the topic of "Caucasian Albania: Religious and Social Life" in Baku, on April 14, 2023. The conference aimed to facilitate meaningful scholarly discussions, involving distinguished scholars from 10 countries around the world, including Turkey (metropolitan Saliba Özmen), Republic of Korea (Kim Jongil), Russian Federation (Murtazali Gadjiev, Gulchohra Seidova, Richard Danakari, Artem Kuranov), Georgia (Roman Lolua), United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (Kamala Imranli-Lowe), Italy (Francesco Mazzola), Germany (Jost Gippert), Norway (Bjern A.Wegge), the United States (Gregory Neal Williams) and Lithuania (Rasa Čepaitienė). During the conference sessions ("Historical Geography: Population and Social Life", "Caucasian Albania Before and During Christianity", "Caucasian Albania: Geographical Parallels, Economic and Cultural Life", "Caucasian Albania: Temples and Monuments"), various topics related to historical geography, pre-Christian beliefs, Christianity, Islamic civilization, and the social life of Caucasian Albania were explored and discussed.

Published by the Baku International Multiculturalism Centre, the collections of articles titled "Ethno-Cultural Heritage of Caucasian Albania" encompasses studies by Azerbaijani and foreign scholars delving into specific issues within the Albanian studies. These collections are designed for the scholarly community, as well as individuals with an interest in Caucasian Albania and historical and contemporary Albanian ethno-cultural heritage.

Academician Kamal Abdullayev

INTRODUCTION

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MAIN ASPECTS IN THE HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF CAUCASIAN ALBANIA

Abstract. This article examines the main aspects of the historical geography of Caucasian Albania, with a primary focus on the question of the country's borders from the 4th century BC to the early 8th century AD. The territory of Caucasian Albania extended from Derbent (Chola) in the north to the Aras River in the south, from the Caspian Sea in the east to the Iberian borders (up to the upper reaches of the Iori and Alazani rivers, the fortress of Hunarakert/Khnarakert), and up to the Dzoraget River (including the Tavush region of present-day Armenia) in the west.

The term "East" referred to Albania and the Caspian Sea as the eastern boundary of the nations and peoples thought to be descended from the biblical Japheth, the son of Noah. In the 1st century AD, during the apostolic era of Christianity, Albania was regarded as being the "East" in relation to Jerusalem, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

The emergence of the Albanian statehood dates back to the 4th century BC, when the country was under the reign of the Arsacid dynasty, who remained in power until the 1st century. Between the 1st and 6th centuries, the country was ruled by ten Arsacid kings, and during the 7th and early 8th centuries by the Great Mihranid Princes. Therefore, Albania has a 1000-year history of statehood as a unified country. From the 9th century to the early 19th century, the Albanian statehood materialized through the establishment of separate fiefdoms across its diverse territories. This historical phase is an integral part of the Azerbaijani statehood.

The Catholicos of Gandzasar Esayi Hasan-Jalalyan in his "Brief History of the **Albanian Country** (1702–1722)" points to the fact that **Karabakh in the 18th century called Albania.**

Keywords: Caucasian Albania, Albanian statehood, the borders, written sources, the term "East"

Main themes in the study of the historical geography of Caucasian Albania are the Albanian statehood and its borders.

1. The names **Albania, Aghvania, Albanian Kingdom**, and **Albanian country** can be found in ancient, Albanian, Georgian, Armenian, Syrian, Persian, Arabic, Byzantine written sources, Russian documents, and European travelers' records from Antiquity to the late 19th century. They refer to one of the ancient South Caucasian states that existed between the 4th century BC and the early 8th century AD.

The Albanian chronicler Movses Kaghankatvatsi (8th century) refers to Albania as "the **East"** and "the **Eastern land"** in two aspects.

First, according to his information based on the biblical text, "The boundaries of Japheth are those which Noah... allotted to him from Media to Gadiron (Cadiz) in the north and down to the river Tigris which

separates Media and Babylon". "From Media to Hesperia which extends to the Ocean and faces the north – Atrpatakan, **Aghvania**, Amazonia... to the British Isles". "Japheth took the western and north countries, where **Aghvania** and the **Caspian Sea** and the ends of the earth in the East are situated" [Каганкатваци, 1861, I, 2, c.1-3]. Consequently, it is evident from the words of the Albanian chronicler that the term "East" referred to Albania and the Caspian Sea as the **eastern boundary** of the nations and peoples thought to be descended from the biblical Japheth, the son of Noah [Игумен Алексий (Никоноров), 2021, c.41].

Second, in the 1st century AD, during the apostolic era of Christianity, Albania was regarded as being the "East" in relation to **Jerusalem, the Patriarchate** of Jerusalem. Kaghankatvatsi noted that "the holy apostle Thaddaeus was appointed for **us easterners**. He came to the Armenian canton of Artaz and there suffered martyrdom at the hands of Sanatruk, king of Armenia. His disciple St.Elishe returned to Jerusalem and informed the other apostles about his martyrdom. There, he was ordained by the hand of St.James, the brother of Our Lord, who was the first patriarch of Jerusalem. He inherited the **East** as his portion, set out from Jerusalem to Persia, avoiding Armenia, and commenced his preaching in Choga" [Каганкатваци, 1861, I, 6, c.6]. St.Elishe's missionary work in Choga/Chola, Lpinia, Albania is thought to have taken place between 51 and 62 AD. In the village of Gis, on a pagan temple, he "offered up bloodless sacrifices and founded a church there earlier than in Armenia", which became a place of worship, "the mother of all **Eastern churches**, i.e. the metropolis", of Christian enlightenment in Albania [Каганкатваци, 1861, I, 6, c.7, II, 48, c.220; Мамедова, 2005, c.254-255, 532; Marcigliano, Messa, Visintainer, Zammatteo, 2014, s.62; Гаджиева, Мамедова, 2018, c.112-113].

It should be noted that the Caspian Sea's variety of names are derived from tribes that inhabited different parts of its coastline throughout the centuries: Albanian, Hyrcanian, Khazar, Jurjan to name just a few [Дорн, 1875, c.XXVIII, XXIX, 65, 156-159, 235, 257, 292, 317, 536, 543, 553, 559, 569; Каспийское море (ЭСБЭ), 1895, c.667-672; Гиркания (НЭСБЕ), 1913, c.593-594; О названиях и географических картах Каспийского моря, 1892, c.3].

Thus, the name **Albanian Sea** (Mare Albanum) was associated with the ethnonym of Albanians and the name of the country – Albania [Дорн, 1875, c.XXVIII, XXIX, 65; О названиях и географических картах Каспийского моря, 1892, c.3; Алиев, 1987, c.4]. Ancient writers also spoke of Albanian Gates ("Pylae albanicae"), also known as the Hunnic Pass or Jora, Choga/Chola, Derbent Gates, which were built in Antiquity at the narrowest point of the pass on the western shore of the sea [Караулов, 1901, c.61; see the works of Murtazali Gadjiev].

The name **Caspian** (Mare Caspium) or **Hyrcanian** Sea was mentioned in ancient writings: The Journey round the Earth by Hecataeus of Miletus (6th–5th centuries BC), The History by Herodotus (5th century BC), The Geography by Strabo (late 1st century BC – early 1st century AD), The Histories by Polybius (c. 205–123 BC), The Description of the World by Pomponius Mela (15–60 AD), The Parallel Lives by Plutarch (c. 46–120 AD), The Ethnica by Stephen of Byzantium (6th century AD), Appendix 6: Excerpta Latina Barbari by Josephus Scaliger, based on the notes of Eusebius Pamphilus, Bishop of Caesarea Palaestinae (died in 340)[1]. The above ancient authors pointed out that the term **Caspian Sea** was derived from the ethnonym of the Caspian tribe that inhabited the sea's southwest coast in Albania: *Hecataeus of Miletus* (fr. 169)[2]; *Herodotus* (I, 201-203; III, 92; IV, 40; VII, 67)[3]; *Strabo* (XI, **1**, 5-6; **2**, 15; **3**, 2; **4**, 1, 8; **6**, 1; **7**, 1; **8**, 8; **14**, 1, 3-4)[4]; *Pomponius Mela* (I, **2**, 9, 13, **19**, 109; III, **6**, 58)[5]; *Plutarch* (Pompey, XXXIV, XXXVI,

[1] Latyshev, 1947, No.1-4; 1948, No.3, pp.220-321; 1949, No.1; No.3, pp.220-291; No.4, pp.230-244; Appendix to the Journal of Ancient History, 1950, No.4.

[2] Hahn, 1884, issue 4, p.8; Latyshev, 1890, Part I, p.2; Aliyev, 1987, pp.13, 107.

[3] Herodotus, 1972, pp.75-76, 168, 196, 333; Gan, 1884, issue 4, pp.13, 15, 21; Aliyev, 1987, pp.13-15, 107.

[4] Strabo, 1964, pp.467, 472, 474-475, 477, 480-481, 485-486, 496-497; Gan, 1884, issue 4, pp.58-59, 63, 67-68, 72, 76-78; Aliyev, 1987, pp.17-19, 23-26, 30, 109.

[5] Hahn, 1884, issue 4, pp.97-98; Aliyev, 1987, pp.86-88, 120.

Alexander, XLIV)[1]; *Eusebius Pamphilus* (p.182, 188, 190)[2]. Strabo wrote: "To the country of the Albanians belongs also the territory called Caspiane, which was named after the Caspian tribe, as was also the sea; but the tribe has now disappeared" (Strabo, XI, **4**, 5)[3]. Pomponius Mela noted that "The Caspian Sea... branches into three gulfs: the Hyrcanian Gulf lies opposite the mouth, the Scythian Gulf branches to the left, and the gulf to the right, which is associated with the name of the entire sea, is called the Caspian Gulf" (Pomponius Mela, III, **5**, 38-39)[4]. Ancient authors noted that "The Caspian Sea is also referred to as **Hyrcanian"** derived from the ethnonym of the Hyrcanian tribe living on the southeastern coast of the sea: *Hecataeus of Miletus* (172)[5]; *Polybius* (V, 55)[6]; *Strabo* (II, **1,14**, **5**, 31; XI, **6**, 1, **7**, 1-3; **8**, 6, 8; **13**, 6)[7]; *Plutarch* (Pompey, XXXVIII, Alexander, XLIV, XLV)[8]; *Stephen of Byzantium* (15-25)[9].

In Arabic sources, this sea was also referred to as **al-Khazar/Khazar Sea and Jurjan** [Дорн, 1875, с.VIII, XII, XXIX, XXIX, 559, 608; Буниятов, Велиханова, 1988, с.114-126].

As is known, Alexander the Great subdued a small region south-east of the Caspian Sea, known as Parthia, one of the Achaemenid state's satrapies, between the 6th and 4th centuries BC, and it later became part of the Seleucid state until 250 BC. Having spread his power in the east to India and pushed the Seleucids across the Euphrates in the west, Arsaces I the Brave (248–216 BC) founded the Parthian Kingdom, creating the Arsacid ruling dynasty in Parthia. This dynasty reigned until 226 AD, when the Parthian empire was conquered by Ardashir I (226–241), who founded the ruling Sasanian dynasty in Persia.

As reported by Movses Khorenatsi (5th century) and Hovhannes Draskhanakerttsi (9th–10th centuries) in their same-name books The History of Armenia, "Arsaces the Great, king of the Parthians, appointed his brother Valarsace as the ruler of Armenia" [Хоренский, 1853, кн.II, гл.1-3, с.77-79; Драсханакертци, 1986, гл.IV, с.54-55; Хасан-Джалалян, 1989, с.13-14; Игумен Алексий (Никоноров), 2021, с.42-43]. This indicates that Parthia incorporated the territory of Armenia into its state, appointing the brother of the Parthian king as its ruler, and implementing various changes there.

Regarding Albania, it is probable that at this time this nation was also dependent on the Parthian kingdom, and hence, according to Movses Khorenatsi, "The Parthian Valarsace appoints Arran, a renowned man who excels in wisdom and intelligence, as the governor of the **great, glorious**, and populous northern country situated by the large river called Kur [Kura. – *H.U.*] that flows through a vast plain. I must tell you that in the First Book, I forgot to mention this great and eminent tribe, namely the Sisak tribe, who inherited the **Alovan** [Albanian. – *H.U.*] **plain and the mountainous part of the same plain, stretching from the Yeraskh River** [the Aras. – *H.U.*] **to the Khenaraker (Khnarakert) fortress** [История Армении, 1853, кн.II, гл. 8, с.84].

Thus, from these words of Movses Khorenatsi, it can be inferred that Armenia and Albania, which he regards as a **great and glorious country**, were two distinct states under the dominion of Parthia during the mentioned period.

As is known, Kaghankatvatsi described Albania's borders in the 1st, 5th, and 7th–8th centuries. The country's historical geography of the early medieval and medieval periods has been recorded in the works of Persian and Arab authors [Мамедова, 1986, с.87; Мамедова, 2005, с.245].

The ancient author Strabo noted that "the river Kura flows through Albania", implying that the country was located on both shores of the river [Страбон, XI, 4, 2].

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[1] Plutarch, 1987, vol.2, pp.311-312, 406-407; Gan, 1884, issue 4, pp.124-127; Latyshev, 1890, pp.486, 491, 493; Aliyev, 1987, pp.51-52, 61.

[2] Latyshev, 1890, p.667; Aliyev, 1987, p.100.

[3] Strabo, 1964, p.476; Hahn, 1884, issue 4, p.70; On Names and Geographical Maps of the Caspian Sea, 1892, pp.4-7; Chopin, 1866, pp.178, 362; Aliyev, 1987, pp.20-21.

[4] Aliyev, 1987, pp.87, 120.

[5] Latyshev, 1890, part I, p.2; Aliyev, 1987, pp.13, 107.

[6] Latyshev, 1890, part I, p.443; Aliyev, 1987, pp.15-16.

[7] Strabo, 1964, pp.78-79, 129, 480-482, 485, 494; Aliyev, 1987, pp.17-19, 23, 25, 28.

[8] Plutarch, 1987, vol.2, pp.314, 406-407; Aliyev, 1987, pp.51-52, 63.

[9] Latyshev, 1890, part I, p.261; Aliyev, 1987, p.97.

Echoing M.Khorenatsi's information about the founder of Albania's local royal dynasty, the Aranshahs, Kaghankatvatsi reports that "the chief of all of them was a certain Arran of the Sisakan family, a descendant of Japheth, who inherited the plains and mountains of Albania from **the river Yeraskh** [the Aras. – *H.U.*] **to the fortress of Khnarakert"** [Каганкатваци, 1861, I, 2, с.1-3]. This suggests that the southern border of Albania during this period was the Aras river.

Administratively, Albania was divided into regions (gavars) and provinces (nahangs). The left-bank Albania was divided into the following gavars:

Qabala (located to the south of Lpinia and to the north of the historical region of Ejeri, between the provinces of Shaki and Chola. The capital city Qabala was located here);

Shaki (positioned in the northwest of Albania, in the foothills of the Caucasus, and northwest of Qabala, Shaki bordered Kambisena to the west and southwest, Lpinia to the northeast, and Qabala to the southeast);

Kambisena (located in the north-west of Albania, Kambisena extended from the middle reaches of the Alazani and Iori rivers in the northwest to the Kura in the south and to the confluence of the Alazani, Iori, and Kura rivers in the east);

Ejeri (positioned to the south of Qabala, Ejeri was sandwiched between the Qarasu and Girdimanchay rivers, with its southern boundary marked by the Kura river).

The three regions – Qabala, Shaki, and Kambisena – were also bishoprics, with their heads attending all Albanian councils.

We should also mention **Chola** (the stretch of land along the Caspian coast from the Chola Pass (*Chor, Derbent*) southwards to the Besh Barmag Mountain) and Lpinia (located northwest of Chola, between Chola and Shaki), which were not always part of the Albanian state, being peripheral regions that maintained their autonomy at times.

Right-bank Albania was divided into provinces (nahangs):

Uti (*Utik, Otena)* stretched from the Kura in the north to Artsakh in the south, from the Iberian borders in the west to Paytakaran in the east. Here were the capital Partaw (Barda) and the cities of Ayniana, Hani, Anariaka, Khalkhal, Sogarn, etc.); the Gardman (Girdman) region was incorporated in Uti in the northwest. To the north of Uti was the region of Sakasena;

Artsakh (*Orchistene,* the mountainous part of Karabakh and a portion of the Mil steppe): according to M.Barkhudaryants, "The largest mountain range is the Artsakh Mountain Range [the Karabakh Mountain Range. – *H.U.*] located between the **Aras and Dzoraget** [a river in the Lori region of the present-day Armenia. – *H.U.*]. The highest peaks of this range are Mount Harutyun (Koch-Karadagh in Turkic) in the upper part of the Gardman region [in the interfluve of the Shamkirchay and Zayamchay rivers. – *H.U.*]; western and eastern peaks of Mount Mrav [Murovdagh. – *H.U.*] northwest of Haterk [a region in the Kalbajar district. – *H.U.*] and opposite the southern side of Gulistan; Mount Kit (Keti)[1] (11,284 ft.) and Mount Kut (9,000 ft.) located above the Tsar district; Mount Kirs[2] in the upper part of the Dizak district" [Бархударянц, Арцах, 1949, I, с.11-12; 2009, с.24-25];

Paytakaran (*Caspiane, Balasakan* was located in the southeastern part of Albania, lying in the areas of the Mil and Mugan steppes below the Kura river, adjacent to the Caspian Sea in the east; at times, the region covered the southeastern part of Shirvan along the Caspian coast and the northeastern lands of Atropatene in the south);

Syunik (*Syunia, Sisakan, later Zangezur,* was located in the extreme south of Albania, bordered by the Artsakh province to the north and the Aras river to the south, and included Nakhchivan and Goghtan (Ordubad), extending westward to the borders with Armenia) [Бархударянц, Арцах, 1948, с.11-12, 388-391; 2009, с.321-326; Мамедова, 1986, с.89-115; Мамедова, 2005, с.248-273; Safarov, 2022, p.145-151].

[1] Ketidag/Keyti (3,399 m) is located in the west of the Kalbajar district.

[2] This is the highest peak (2725 m) of the Karabakh Range in the southern part of the Shusha Plateau at the junction of the Lachin, Khojavend, and Shusha districts.

The 7th-century borders of Albania are described in Kaghankatvatsi's narration about the Great Prince Javanshir Mihranid (630–684), who "ruled with sovereignty and splendor **from the borders of Iberia to the Gates of the Huns and to the Aras River"** [Каганкатваци, II, 21, с.146; Мамедова, 2005, с.368-372; Гаджиева, 2014, с.38-42].

In the late 19th century, Bishop M. Barkhudaryants wrote several works, including "Aghvania", "Aghvania and its Neighbors" and "Artsakh", in which he pointed out that the borders of Albania stretched from Derbent (Chola) to the Aras River. Referring to Kirakos' account, he noted that "during the times of the Aghvan kings and princes, by their order, a large canal was constructed from the Aras river to irrigate Piank, Mukhank and other districts", i.e. the Jabrayil district and the majority of the Mugan steppe [Бархударянц, Арцах, 1949, I, с.27, 394; 2009, с.39, 43]. This once again proves that the **southern border of Albania was the Aras River**, since the Albanian rulers could extensively use the river to irrigate the lands of the country's provinces.

Regarding Artsakh (Karabakh) and Syunia (Syunik, Sisakan), Barkhudaryants pointed out that "the **borders stretched from the Dzoraget River, including the Murghuz mountain range, to the Aras River**". The bishop writes that the 19th district of the Artsakh province known as Kayen was located east of the Dzoraget river and was part of the Kazakh uezd (district) in the 19th century [Бархударянц, Арцах, 1949, I, с.11-12; 2009, с.24-25], i.e. he is referring to the Tavush region in present-day Armenia, which was part of Albania.

It should be noted that historian Kirakos Gandzaketsi (Kirakos of Ganja) noted that Mkhitar Gosh (1130–1213), who was also from Ganja, "settled in the Getik monastery in the Kayen gavar, on the right bank of the large river called Aghstev" [Aghstafachay. – *H.U.*]. The Getik River and its tributary, the Gosh, run through this area. In the late 12th century, a severe earthquake destroyed the church. In 1188, Mkhitar Gosh, assisted by the Khachen Prince Vakhtang and the nobility, built a new church called Nor Getik/New Getik and taught there. The name of the first Albanian chronicler, Movses Kaghankatvatsi, the author of the "History of the Albanians", and an expanded list of Albanian Catholicoses were named for the first time in "The Albanian Chronicle" of Mkhitar Gosh.

According to the author, the "Albanian Chronicle" was designed as a continuation of the "History of the Albanians", but remained unfinished, covering only the events of 1130–1162 [Гош Мхитар, 1960, с.5-8]. Thus, these chroniclers left behind writings about their homeland, **Albania**.

2. The emergence of the **Albanian statehood** dates back to the 4th century BC, when the country was under the reign of the Arsacid dynasty, who remained in power until the 1st century. Between the 1st and 6th centuries, the country was ruled by ten Arsacid kings, and during the 7th and early 8th centuries by the Great Mihranid Princes. Therefore, Albania has a 1000-year history of statehood as a unified country [Мамедова, 2005, с.330-376; Игумен Алексий (Никоноров), 2021, с.41-50, 58-60, 87, 118, 127, 186-203].

Starting from the 9th century, the descendants of Albanian princely families established a number of fiefdoms and principalities/kingdoms on separate territories in Karabakh and Zangezur: Atrnerseh in Khachen, Ketritch in Gardman, Stepan Klia in Utik, Esayi Abu-Muse in Arran (Mil-Mugan, Baylakan, territory up to the Aras River), Sahl ibn Sumbat in Shaki, Arran, and Syunik [Мамедова, 2005, с.391].

According to the Albanian author, in the 9th century, Khachen ruler Atrnerseh's son, the Pious Grigor-Hamama, the prince of "Little Syunik and Agvank", "the pious **Agvan** sovereign", "having become the Albanian king, revived the fallen **Agvan kingdom"** [Каганкатваци, 1861, III, 21, с.273-273; Мамедова, 1986, с.105].

The Syunik Kingdom was established in the 9th–12th centuries [Мамедова, 2005, с.395-396; Safarov, 2022, p.145-151].

In the 12th–13th centuries, the Khachen principality/kingdom emerged in Karabakh, which in the 13th century was headed by Hasan Jalal known as "the Great Prince of Khachen", "the king of **Albania**", and "the great border protector of **Albania"** [Гандзакеци, 1946, с.117-120, 132-135, 196-198; Гандзакеци, 1976, гл.20-21, 30, 39,44, 55, 57, 63; Тер-Григорян, 1989, с.6; Мамедова, 1986, с.105].

In the town of Avetaranots (now the Chanakhchi village in the Khojaly district of Karabakh, located on a hill on the left bank of the Kondalanchay river gorge), which was the center of the Varanda melikdom, according to Bishop M.Barkhudaryants, a cemetery was located a few steps to the east, below the old cemetery, where members of the Melik-Shahnazaryan clan were buried. "On the cemetery's northern edge, there was a tombstone with a round-shaped upper part, on the right side of which there was an image of a king seated on a horse, riding forward while holding a cross in his hand. The king was pursued by a huge dragon with an open mouth. The other side of the tombstone was adorned with a cross and had a poorly legible inscription carved in the middle that said "In the year 690 **(1241), King of Agvank passed away**..." Near this tombstone, there was another one "with a portrait of a **queen** on horseback, but with no inscription" [Бархударянц, Арцах, 1949, I, с.83; 2009, с.96].

The information provided above proves that the **title of the "King of Agvank"** was still in use in Karabakh **in the 13th century.**

The Armenian anonymous Chronicle, also dating back to the 13th century, reads: "in the year 684 (1235) ... Tatars arrived, led by Chormaqan Noyan, and destroyed many **countries**, including Armenia, Georgia, and **Aghvania"** [Армянские источники о монголах, 1962, с.78], i.e. Aghvania/Albania is referred to as a **distinct country,** along with Armenia and Georgia.

In the period between the 15th and early 19th centuries, five melikdoms were existed in Karabakh (Gulistan, Jraberd, Khachen, Varanda, and Dizak melikdoms) [Раффи, 2009].

The Catholicos of Gandzasar Esayi Hasan-Jalalyan preserved valuable information about the military and political situation in Azerbaijan and neighboring regions in the first quarter of the 18th century in his "Brief History of the **Albanian Country** (1702–1722)".

The title of the work itself, as well as the information presented in the first two chapters, are valuable in that Esayi Hasan-Jalalyan uses the term **"Albanian country"** to refer to both the left and the right banks of the Kura up to the Aras, which testifies to the preservation of Albanian identity and historical memory of Albania and its territory until **the 18th** century.

In Chapter II, referring to the events of the 17th century, the author points out that "during the reign of Abbas Safi the Junior, all the ruined villages and cities were rebuilt, churches, monasteries and convents were established everywhere, in particular St. Etchmiadzin under Patriarch Phillipos [1633–1655] and St.Gandzasar **in Albania** under Agvan Catholicos Petros", i.e. Petros IV Khantsgetsi (1653–1675) [Иеромонах Алексий, 2005, с.182] mentioned in an inscription on the bell tower of the Charek monastery (in the Gadabay district) in 1659 [Хасан-Джалалян, 1989, с.17-18, 43].

Esayi Hasan-Jalalyan's data attests to the equivalence of the status of the Etchmiadzin and Gandzasar catholicosates in the 17th century, as well as the fact that **Karabakh** was known as **Albania**.

Chapter V, titled "Actions committed by the Khon tribe **in the entire Agvank country**", describes the attacks, destruction, and devastation carried out by the Khons/Lezgins during the period from 1711 to 1721 "on both banks of the Kura: in the Shamakhi region up to the city of Shamakhi, in the regions of Gazakh (the city of Aghstafa, the country of Amir-Shamshadil), Zayam [Dzagam, the Shamkir district], the valleys of the four rivers of Ganjabasar [the valleys of the rivers Ganjachay and Shamkirchay], Voskanapat [the Zurnabad village of the Ganja district], Kurekbasan [the valley of the Kurekchay river] and many villages in the Partaw [Barda] district. The survivors from other villages fled and took refuge in the mountains of Artsakh". The narrative continues to describe the Lezgins' attack on Ganja (1721), and Shamakhi (1721–1722). In 1722, they "they advanced through the Iron Gates to Shamakhi, then proceeded through the Mugan plain to Bargushad on the banks of the Aras River. From there, they passed through the Dizak region to the Varanda region and then to the Khachen region, where they plundered and ravaged everything. They then moved to the Jraberd and Partaw regions, before launching an attack on Ganja. The wealthy residents of Ganja sought help from Iberian king Vakhtang [Vakhtang VI (1703–1724)], who arrived with an army of 40,000 soldiers and camped on the southern outskirts of Ganja. In response, the Lezgins withdrew even before his arrival" [Хасан-Джалалян, 1989, с.23, 27, 29-31, 44-45].

At the beginning of the 18th century, the meliks of Karabakh and Zangezur launched a liberation movement against the oppressive rule of Safavid Iran in feudal environment, with the support of the Gandzasar Catholicos Yesai Hassan-Jalalyan who sent a letter for help to Russian Emperor Peter I. The Russian army, led by Peter I, was to join the Georgian and Karabakh troops near Shamakhi. After Vakhtang VI's first campaign and the decline of the Persian power, the Karabakh meliks "united all the brave and courageous young men of the **Agvan country** to build up a large army of more than 12,000 people and fortified themselves in inaccessible places of Artsakh". "Three days later, after gathering up to 10,000 armed men with great fanfare and celebration, and considering the **Agvan state** restored, they came to a halt near Ganja in the Cholak area, because Vakhtang was also camped in this area" [Хасан-Джалалян, 1989, с.33-36, 43-45]. However, this campaign did not have any success, because Peter I returned from Derbent to Russia.

Knyaz G.A.Potyomkin-Tavrichesky's project and letter from the 18th century read as follows: "Taking advantage of the turmoil in Persia, seize Baku and Derbent, and annex Gilan, and call the captured territory **Albania** as it used to be, so it becomes part of the future heritage of Great Prince Konstantin Pavlovich"; "establish the Armenian region and the swath of land that would constitute **Albania**, as well as the kingdom of Heraclius" [Мамедова, 2005, с.597].

As mentioned earlier, at the end of the 19th century, Bishop M.Barkhudaryants provided information about the Albanian statehood in his works titled "Aghvania", "Aghvania and its Neighbors", and "Artsakh".

When it comes to the meliks of Karabakh, M.Barkhudaryants has some interesting information about the rulers of the Dizak melikdom, in particular about Melik Yegan (1737–1744), whom, according to Raffi, Nadir Shah described as "his spiritual father, granted the title of khan, and made the head of all five melikdoms" [Раффи, 2009]. The inscription on Melik Yegan's tombstone read: "Ruler of the Aghvan region, respected by the people of Persia more than Armenian ishkhans", [Бархударянц, Арцах, 1949, I, с.73; Гаджиева, 2021, с.98]. Thus, in the 18th century, **the Dizak melikdom was referred to as the Albanian region, and the ruler of the Aghvan region was contrasted with the Armenian ishkhans.**

Summarizing all the above, it should be stated that the borders of Albania stretched from Derbent (Chola) in the north to the Aras river in the south, from the Caspian Sea in the east to the borders of Iberia, to the upper reaches of the Iori and Alazani rivers (Hunarakert/Khnarakert fortress) and to the Dzoraget river in the west. The Tavush region of present-day Armenia is a district of the Artsakh province of Albania and, consequently, the historical territory of Azerbaijan as the successor of the Albanian ethno-cultural heritage in this region.

The 2023 collected papers "Caucasian Albania: An International Handbook" (Berlin/Boston, 2023, 735 p.), prepared over three years (2020–2023) and edited by Jost Gippert and Jasmine Dum-Tragut, focuses on source studies, historical, ethnic, religious, and social problems of Caucasian Albania since Late Antiquity to the present day, as evidenced by its summary. The editors of this Handbook assure in the preface that it provides up-to-date information about the historical realities of Caucasian Albania based on textual and archaeological sources [Caucasian Albania, 2023, p.vi]. However, from the very first pages, it becomes apparent that this publication is aimed at proving that in Antiquity, Albania existed geographically up to the Kura river and that the Albanian heritage of the right bank of the Kura, including Karabakh and Western Azerbaijan, has been the historical, ethnical, and cultural heritage of the Armenian ethnic group and Armenian state from ancient times to the present day.

In the preface, J.Gippert and J.Dum-Tragut contradict themselves. Initially, they assert that "*In Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, the Southern Caucasus was divided into three countries, Greater Armenia, Iberia (Eastern Georgia, Kartli) and the so-called Caucasian "Albania*" [Caucasian Albania, 2023, p.v].

They put the name of the country, Albania, and the disappearance of its history and culture in quotation marks, insinuating implausibility of their existence, while falsely asserting that this topic remains under-researched.

The editors then acknowledge that *"These three countries formed an ethnic, linguistic and religious conglomeration which bordered both geographically and culturally with South-Eastern Europe and Western Asia"*; *"Armenians, Georgians, and a multitude of Caucasian and other peoples have lived together on the territory of ancient and medieval Caucasian Albania since Antiquity, leaving their traces in the history, culture and language of Caucasian Albania as one of the ancient states of the Southern Caucasus"* [Caucasian Albania, 2023, p.v, vii].

The preface to the Handbook states that *"Since the end of the Second Karabakh War in November 2020, the Azerbaijani government, falling back on the theory of "Albanization"* [put forward by Z.Bunyadov], has quickly started to classify medieval Armenian sites in Karabakh as Albanian, even demonstrably removing Armenian inscriptions. Armenia, in turn, refers to its strong ecclesiastical links with Caucasian Albania which are believed to have brought the country very close to the Armenian culture [Caucasian Albania, 2023, p.vi].

With this statement, the Handbook editors deny all the evidence-based historiography which during the second half of the 20th and early 21st centuries refuted all Armenian concepts regarding the Albanian heritage and territory of Karabakh and Western Azerbaijan being part of the Armenian history.

The article "Main Aspects of the Historical Geography of Caucasian Albania" serves as a well-founded response to several assertions made by some authors in the aforementioned collection of articles titled "Caucasian Albania". It also responds to the book by G.G.Aivazyan, "Udins: A Historical and ethnographic outline" (Er., 2023), in which two maps (attributed to Claudius Ptolemy) are presented. The book also reintroduces the same concept that the southern border of Caucasian Albania was the Kura River, and the entire right bank of the river was part of Armenia.

As previously noted, according to Gandzasar Catholicos Esayi Hasan-Jalalyan and Bishop Makar Barkhudaryants (both natives of Karabakh), Karabakh was still referred to as the Albanian land even in the 18th century.

The history of Albanian statehood, emerging in the 4th century BC and existing within the confines of a unified country until the beginning of the 8th century, and thereafter as part of individual fiefdoms across its various territories until the early 19th century, forms an integral part of the history of Azerbaijani statehood.

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HISTORICAL ORIGINS OF ANCIENT ALBANIANS' RELIGIOUS BELIEFS PRIOR TO CHRISTIANITY

Abstract. In ancient societies, religious beliefs tended to persist for centuries as a product of a conservative mindset, changing little over time. These changes were closely connected with people's way of life, economic practices, burial customs, and other factors. Significant shifts in religious beliefs occurred during successive historical periods, yet certain beliefs managed to persist to some extent. In this regard, the hereditary link between the Late Bronze–Early Iron Age and the subsequent Albanian period in the territory of Azerbaijan holds particular significance. This link is evident not only in material culture but also in religious beliefs. Just as the ethnic composition of the population in Caucasian Albania, an ancient state of Azerbaijan, was not homogeneous, the pre-Christian era witnessed a diversity of religious beliefs in the region. However, it is worth noting that specific religious beliefs did not always align with the region inhabited by a particular ethnic group. There is limited information about the ancient religious beliefs of Albania in the works of authors from Antiquity, which do not fully cover those beliefs. Hence, archaeological monuments and material culture specimens unearthed during excavations, along with tangible evidence of ancient beliefs of the Albanians, also demonstrate their connection to earlier periods. These encompass diverse types of funerary monuments and burial customs, astral beliefs, animal cult, and other religious perspectives.

Keywords: Albanians, astral beliefs, Temple of the Moon, archaeological excavations, oval structures, worship of the Sun, animal cult

Astral beliefs. In ancient Albania, astral beliefs, particularly the worship of the Sun and the Moon, were prevalent religious practices. Strabo, an ancient author, provided relatively detailed information about these beliefs. In his writings, astral beliefs in Albania were associated with similar beliefs in Greco-Roman cultures and were referred to by the same names: deities Helios (the Sun) and Selene (the Moon). According to Strabo, Albanians "worship the gods Helios, Zeus, and Selene, with particular emphasis on Selene, whose sanctuary is located near Iberia. The duty of the priest among them is fulfilled by the most respected individual after the king; he is in charge of a vast and densely populated sacred area" [Страбон, XI, IV, 7]. The precise location of the Temple of Selene, the Moon Goddess, has remained a subject of debate for over a century, and as of yet, this issue remains unresolved.

In scientific literature, the worship of these gods with corresponding names by the Albanians has frequently been interpreted by referencing the works of ancient authors, creating an impression that astral beliefs in Albania emerged under the influence of Greco-Roman cultures [Алиев, 1992, с.151-155]. It has also been observed that Strabo referred to the Albanian gods as Helios, Zeus, and Selene, drawing parallels

to the Greek deities [Babayev, Əhmədov, 1981, s.20]. Authors from Antiquity depicted Albanian beliefs in a manner consistent with the Greco-Roman cultural milieu to which they were connected. Like many ancient civilizations, the Albanians had long worshipped the Sun and the Moon, a practice that endured since ancient times and further flourished during the Albanian state period. Traces of sun and moon worship are reflected in the construction of burial monuments, rock art images, patterns on ceramic artifacts, and the design of jewelry of Azerbaijan of the ancient period.

The scientific literature contains Strabo's information about the location of the temple of Selene, the Moon goddess, in Albania near Iberia, and discussions about the localization of this temple. A.Krymski, alluding to the Sheki zone, wrote: "Apparently, somewhere in these very places or very close to them, according to Strabo, there was an ancient Albanian lunar sanctuary near Iberia (i.e., Georgia, particularly Kakheti), where occasional prophetic human sacrifices took place. According to Strabo, the sanctuary was a significant, densely populated priestly city with significant political authority. Its owner, the chief priest, held the second-highest position in ancient Albania after the king, who, obviously, resided not here but in his Gabala (or Kabalaka)" [Крымский, 1938, с.369-370].

As can be seen, A.Krymski wrote about the Temple of the Moon being situated in the Sheki zone, and based on Strabo's information, described it as a priestly city in his writings. However, as demonstrated earlier, according to Strabo's writings, "the priest is in charge of a densely populated sacred area". In Strabo's accounts, there is no information indicating that the Temple of the Moon was a large city (or was located in a large city), as asserted by A.Krymski.

O.Ismizade supports A.Krymski's perspective regarding the Albanian Temple of the Moon being situated in the present-day Sheki region. Ismizade further suggests that this area densely populated by Albanians, i.e., the Haftaran valley, was one of the main principal central provinces of ancient Albania [Исмизаде, 1956, с.72].

Several authors, namely I.A.Javakhishvili, G.A.Melikishvili, and K.V.Trever, have put forward the idea that the temple could be located in the Kakheti or Kartli regions within the boundaries of Iberia. They base their argument on the presence of a later Christian church in the same area, where Christians would gather to celebrate the "Temple Festival" with origins rooted in ancient pagan practices. According to their viewpoint, the Moon goddess was the primary deity in the ancient Georgian pantheon. However, R.Goyushov, in disagreement with this perspective, argued that there exists a local ancient history of such ceremonies in Albania, along with rituals associated with the worship of the Moon in general. Furthermore, R.Goyushov highlighted that through archaeological excavations, public buildings were unearthed in various sites, including the ancient settlement of Gabala, which were identified as temple structures [Геюшев, 1984, с.18].

J.A.Khalilov conducted a thorough analysis of the viewpoints posited by the authors suggesting that the Temple of the Moon existed beyond the borders of Albania. Khalilov argued that this perspective is erroneous and instead supported the opinion that the Temple of the Moon was originally situated in the Gabala–Sheki–Gakh zone. According to his writings, Moon worship existed not only in ancient Georgia but also in neighboring countries. "The temple of Albania mentioned by Strabo was undoubtedly located in Albania. We find A.Y.Krymski's approach to its localization to be accurate, placing this temple in the Sheki region. However, K.V.Trever considers this localization to be mistaken, referring to the fact that 'the Sheki region in the 1st century BC was quite far from the borders of Iberia.' However, Strabo did not specify the exact distance of the temple from Iberia. Furthermore, it is possible that the temple grounds extended beyond the present-day Sheki district and encompassed a much broader region. The presence of Gabala, one of the major and principal cities of Albania, along with the remains of the renowned Lekit temple and other Albanian monuments within this region, suggests that the Temple of the Moon was situated in this very location" [Халилов, 1985, с.194].

M.Efendi asserts that the temple mentioned by Strabo, dedicated to the Moon goddess, corresponds to the Kurmuk temple located in the Gakh region. He also highlights the connection between the name of the Kurmuk River and this particular belief [Əfəndi, 2005]. A group of researchers has argued that there

exists a notable similarity between the annual sacred rituals conducted in the ancient Greco-Roman temples of the Moon and the rituals observed near the Kurmuk Christian temple in the Gakh region. According to them, such annual rites are practiced not only in Kurmuk but also in other temple complexes within the Gakh district, which are visited by local Christians [Керимов и др., 2007, с.5].

In his article, G.Jabiyev also focuses on the Kurmuk Christian temple, relying heavily on ethnographic materials. According to Jabiyev, the Kurmuk temple holds a unique position as the sole Albanian temple in the region, attracting visitors of all ethnic and religious backgrounds. The author further notes that within this temple, visitors engage in ceremonies that predate both Islam and Christianity, and there are remnants of a structure constructed around the 4th century on a "black stone", which serves as a pilgrimage site. Based on the aforementioned, the author concludes that the temple of Moon-Selene was built by the ancient Albanians on a "black stone". After the official establishment of Christianity in Albania, the Albanian-Christian temple of Kurmuk was built on the site of this temple [Cəbiyev, 2015, s.189-192].

M.Pashayeva also links the former Moon temple to the vicinity of the current Kurmuk temple and supports this claim with ethnographic data. The author explains that according to local inhabitants, the elevated rocky area near the Kurmuk temple held significance as a site of Moon worship in the past, where ceremonial rituals were conducted [Paşayeva, 2015, s.25-27].

Oral ethnographic data, which can be subject to alterations over time, may not be considered a reliable source for pinpointing the location of the pre-Christian Moon-Selene temple, including in the area around the Kurmuk temple. In Antiquity, the veneration of the Moon was prevalent throughout the northern regions of Albania, and it is understandable to encounter remnants of this belief within the ethnographic objects of those areas. However, the localization of the Temple of Selene-Moon mentioned by Strabo, which dates back 2,000 years, cannot be definitively resolved solely based on present-day ethnographic data.

Another significant point related to the topic at hand needs to be stressed. From the early stages of Christianity's spread in the region, there was a blending of the newly introduced faith with the established local pagan practices. Beginning in the 4th century, the construction of the first Christian temples often took place directly above or in close proximity to pre-existing pagan temples and shrines. This, in turn, was one of the approaches Christianity used to contend with paganism. Alongside the practice of Christianity, rituals rooted in pre-Christian beliefs were also performed in Christian churches [Ямпольский, 1962, с.41-42; Геюшев, 1984, с.63-66].

However, there has been no archaeological evidence to definitively establish that Christian temples were constructed on top of earlier religious structures in the northern regions of Azerbaijan. It is likely that the temples of previous religions were comparatively smaller in size than the Christian temples built over them, leading to the fundamental destruction of their remains. Nevertheless, there remains a possibility that future archaeological excavations may uncover structural remains of these earlier religious sites. The excavations led by V.Karimov in the Kurmuk Christian temples of the Kish and Gakh districts in the Sheki region have provided an exception. The excavations in Kish revealed four distinct construction phases within the lower layers, with the oldest dating back to the 2nd–1st centuries BC. The experts who conducted the excavation wrote that the remains from the first phase of this period pertain to a small worship building [Керимов, Стурфиел, 2003, с.43-44]. While we do not object to this proposition, it is important to mention that there is currently no information available regarding the complete design and structure of the building. Additionally, the religious purpose of the remains and the specific religion to which it may have belonged have not been substantiated with the necessary material facts and thorough analysis. Furthermore, there is no chronological connection or stratigraphic sequence linking the small cult building with the subsequent church building constructed above it.

Excavation works were also conducted in the vicinity of the Kurmuk temple, which is frequently associated with the possible location of the Moon temple. These excavations, led by V.Karimov, focused on a restricted area within the Kurmuk church site. According to Karimov, the excavation at this site revealed three distinct construction phases, spanning from Late Antiquity (1st–3rd centuries) to the Middle Ages. The author also noted that the remains of the oldest phase were not preserved. Only the remains of

a foundation were uncovered here, which were attributed to the 1st–3rd centuries. Just a small fragment of this foundation was unearthed, as the main part remains under the subsequent buildings, including the present church [Керимов и др., 2007, с.24-27].

Drawing a definitive conclusion about the purpose of the small foundation remnant discovered in Kurmuk is challenging. It is possible that this foundation does not belong to the period of Antiquity but rather represents a remnant of a church from the Early Middle Ages. While it is possible that the small preserved fragment of the structure, constructed with river rock and lime mortar near the current Kurmuk church, may be remnants of an ancient temple, there is no evidence to support its connection to the Moon temple of Antiquity. Archaeological findings confirming the existence of the Temple of the Moon mentioned by Strabo in the Kurmuk area have not been discovered.

Thus, the location of the Temple of the Moon in Albania still remains a subject of ongoing debate. It is unequivocal that the temple was not situated within the borders of Iberia. Strabo explicitly stated that the Temple of the Moon was located in the territory of Albania, near the borders of Iberia. The idea that the Temple of the Moon is situated in the Sheki and Gakh zone lacks supporting evidence as no remains of buildings that could be identified as the Temple of the Moon have been found in this area. The scarcity of information in written sources poses challenges in determining the precise location of the Temple of the Moon. Consequently, archaeological monuments can be regarded as more reliable sources for investigating this matter.

Archaeological excavations in various regions of Azerbaijan have revealed crescent-shaped structures incorporated into the design of funerary monuments, dating back to the Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Ages (4th–3rd millennia BC). Crescent-shaped structures constructed using stones, soil, and ocher mass have been discovered in various archaeological sites. These include Khachbulag kurgan No. 1 in Dashkasan district, Soyugbulag kurgans No. 3 and 14 in Aghstafa district, kurgans No. 2 and 3 (Fig. 1. 1) and Emili kurgan in Gabala district, and Kudurlu kurgan No. 2 (Fig. 1. 2) in Sheki district [Джафарзаде, 1960; Ахундов, 2001; Museibli, 2014; Müseyibli, 2022]. "Crescents" made of river rocks were discovered in certain graves within the necropolises of Zayamchay (Shamkir district) and Tovuzchay (Tovuz district), which belong to the Late Bronze–Early Iron Age, a time just before the emergence of Albanian culture [Müseyibli, Nəcəfov, 2019, s.23; Müseyibli və b., 2021, s.63]. All these structures in funerary monuments were closely associated with religious beliefs, emphasizing the significant role of burial customs in religious practices. As evident from archaeological excavations, in the Sheki and Gabala zone where the Temple of the Moon is believed to have been located in Antiquity, it has been proven that the belief in the Moon was prevalent during the Early Bronze Age. This belief in the Moon continued to flourish during the period of ancient Albania, with astral beliefs gaining even greater prominence.

The question regarding the location of the Temple of the Moon remains intriguing, especially in light of recent archaeological investigations. As previously mentioned, sources from Antiquity indicate that this temple was situated within the northern regions of Albania, near Iberia. It would not be fitting to search for this temple – the main religious structure in early Antiquity – outside the capital city, which served as the largest settlement in the region. During that era, political administration and religion were closely intertwined, representing the highest echelons of society. It is not surprising, therefore, that sources from Antiquity indicate the prominent status of priests in Albania. These individuals were highly esteemed, second only to rulers, and were in charge of a vast and densely populated temple property province. Hence, the temples were not only the most magnificent structures but also served as political centers. During that period and in earlier stages of history, life thrived around the temple, leading to the expansion of settlements.

The recent archaeological excavations carried out in Gabala, the capital of Albania during Antiquity, hold significance in the quest to determine the location of the Temple of the Moon. Being the capital and a densely populated region of the Albanians, Gabala was also located near the borders of Iberia, as documented in sources from Antiquity. During the archaeological excavations led by correspondent member of ANAS, I.A.Babayev, between 1983–1990 and 2005–2015 in Gabala, significant discoveries were made.

In the third excavation area, the remains of five large, oval-shaped buildings in close proximity to each other were uncovered (Fig. 1. 3, 1. 4). These buildings were constructed using mud bricks on a foundation composed of river rocks. The most prominent among them was oval building No. 1 (Fig. 1. 3), which measured 74 meters in length and 23 meters in width. It had a foundation width of 1.8 meters and walls that were 1.6 meters thick. The roof of the building was supported by 11 pillars, likely crafted from clay bricks with river rocks forming the base. Inside the building, a paved area made of river rocks lined the walls, providing space to accommodate approximately 600-700 people. Based on the stratigraphy of the excavation and the archaeological findings discovered in this site, this oval-shaped structure was dated to the late 1st century BC to the early 1st century AD. Overall, it was determined that the discovered oval-shaped buildings were constructed in different phases spanning from the 4th century BC to the beginning of the 1st century AD. These unique shaped structures have no known counterparts neither among Albanian monuments, nor in other regions. The researchers rightly observed that these oval buildings in Gabala were used for various significant purposes, including religious ceremonies, performances, as well as state and city-wide gatherings. This perspective was further substantiated by the presence of cultic artifacts discovered during the excavations in the vicinity of these closely situated buildings. These artifacts included clay female figurines, zoomorphic figurines, and other objects [Babayev, 2012; Babayev, Nəcəfova, 2017, s.106; Babayev və b., 2017, s.194; Сафарова, 2022, c.74-78]. Furthermore, the idea that these buildings served as temples was supported with more detailed evidence, and while Strabo's mention of the Albanians worshipping Helios, Zeus, and Selene was noted, it was emphasized that the exact attribution of these temples remains undetermined [Сафарова, 2022, c.77]. Thus, the question of the exact location of the temple of the Moon goddess remains unanswered for now.

Based on a comparative analysis of Strabo's information and the findings from archaeological excavations at the ancient city site of Gabala, we believe that the oval-shaped building No. 1, whose remains were discovered here, is probably the temple dedicated to Selene, the goddess of the Moon. Several factors support this viewpoint.

One of the supporting factors is the proximity of Gabala to Iberia, as indicated by Strabo's information. While it is true that Gabala is not as close to Iberia as Sheki or Gakh, Strabo's account does not provide an exact distance between the Temple of the Moon and the Iberian border. In this regard, Strabo's information is significant in identifying the approximate location of the Temple of Selene, the Moon. From our perspective, it appears more plausible that this information refers to the Gabala zone in general.

The second supporting factor is the chronological alignment between the construction date of oval-shaped building No. 1 (late 1st century BC – early 1st century AD) and the lifetime of Strabo (64/63 BC – 23-24 AD). In essence, Strabo's account pertains to an event during his lifetime, making it highly unlikely for him to have made an error. Only information about this remarkably large and splendid oval structure, architecturally distinct from all constructions of that time, could have reached Strabo.

The unique structure of the mentioned building, designed not for habitation but for large gatherings, serves as another supporting factor. Throughout ancient history, religious edifices were distinct in their architectural features, setting them apart from other types of structures. This oval building, along with other similar structures (excluding the fourth oval building), lacks internal divisions and instead forms a complete hall. This architectural characteristic further indicates the collective nature of the events conducted within them. During those times, significant public gatherings were associated with religious ceremonies. The presence of ritual-related artifacts found in this location further substantiates the religious nature of the building. Considering that the primary deity worshipped in Albania during that period was the Moon goddess, it is plausible that the grandest temple was constructed in her honor. It is possible to speculate that the other oval buildings in this area also had a connection to the worship of the Moon goddess. However, it is likely that these buildings were constructed at different times or used for different types of events dedicated to the Moon goddess.

Ancient beliefs associated with the Moon, such as the presence of crescent-shaped structures in graves, are known to have spread in the northern regions of Albania during earlier times. Interestingly, it

is observed that during Antiquity, the worship of the Moon had a greater prevalence in the northern and western regions of Albania. The discovery of numerous ceramic artifacts depicting crescents in the regions of Mingachevir and Gabala, along with the references in ancient sources to the Temple of the Moon in these areas, provides compelling evidence. These findings suggest that Moon worship held a prominent role in the religious beliefs of the northern provinces of Albania and the adjacent regions of Iberia during Antiquity.

A noteworthy aspect is the concentrated arrangement of the oval-shaped buildings unearthed through archaeological excavations at the ancient city site of Gabala. These buildings likely served as the center of a "temple province", a temple property.

The practice of sun worship was also prevalent in ancient Albania. This is evident in the ornamental motifs and artistic designs found in various specimens of material culture such as ceramics and decorative objects. The ceramic artifacts unearthed during the excavations in Mingachevir provide intriguing insights into sun worship. Symbolic representations of the Sun were depicted on earthenware, particularly on flasks, using various techniques such as painting and cutting/pressing [Qazıyev, 1960, XXXI-XXXII tablolar]. Solar symbols featuring circular arrangements of dots were also unearthed in the Yaloylutepe necropolis in Gabala. Furthermore, depictions of the Sun were found inside vessels, where a central circle represented the Sun and lines extended from it towards the edges of the vessel [Исмизаде, 1956, табл. XV, 1-2; табл. XVI, 3]. A plate-type container uncovered in the ancient Girag Kasaman necropolis in Aghstafa showcases the Sun motif, covering the entire outer surface with a glaze application [Müseyibli, Axundova, 2022, şəkil 2. 4]. The Sun symbol was consistently incorporated into the design of ancient Albanian decorations. It appeared on medallions, pendants, buckles, fibulae, and various other ornaments. Additionally, the swastika, a symbol associated with the Sun, was depicted on the gems of rings [Ахундова, 2020, с.183].

In Azerbaijan, images featuring Sun symbols can be found on rock paintings and pottery throughout the different stages of the Bronze Age, reflecting ancient beliefs surrounding the Sun. During the Early Bronze Age, the Sun was often represented by spiral images in rock paintings and ceramics. During the Middle Bronze Age, there was a shift towards more realistic representations of the Sun on narrow-necked earthenware vessels, adapting to the typological form of those vessels. This style became increasingly common in the Late Bronze Age and the Early Iron Age, coinciding with the use of Sun symbols in the ornamentation of open-type vessels. The tradition of using consistent decorative methods on the same type of pottery persisted into the Albanian period. All these factors point to a hereditary continuity in both material production and religious beliefs.

Animal cult. The animal cult also held a prominent place in the religious beliefs of Albanians, as evidenced by the ornaments and artistic designs found on pottery and decorative items, which were produced in large quantities. The objects of the animal cult included horses, dogs, deer, bulls, rams, snakes, and various types of birds. Archaeological findings have revealed that within the Khojaly–Gadabay culture predating the Albanian era, the remains of the mentioned animals were discovered buried either intact or in specific parts within funerary monuments. Depictions of these animals were commonly portrayed in compositions on pottery, representing a cultural and religious legacy that persisted throughout the period of ancient Albania.

Horses were first domesticated in ancient Azerbaijan during the Chalcolithic period, around the second half of the 5th millennium BC. By the Early Bronze Age, horses played a significant role in agriculture, giving rise to beliefs surrounding this animal. In the Middle Bronze Age, horses were utilized for pulling chariots and riding. During this period, the practice of burying horses in kurgans emerged for the first time. In the Late Bronze Age, horses also played a significant role in military activities. The beliefs surrounding horses developed even further during this period and held a prominent place in the belief system of the population. The custom of burying horses, both in pieces and as whole animals, became more common.

In Azerbaijan, since the early 20th century, researchers have studied funerary monuments that contain horse burials, both in fragmented and whole forms (buried separately or alongside people). These burial sites have been found in various locations, including the Goygol district near Ganja, the Hasanli necropolis

near Urmia [Погребова, 1977], the Shahtakhti necropolis in Nakhchivan [Алекперов, 1960, c.47], Karabakh [Cəfərov, 2000], and Mingachevir [Асланов и др., 1959]. All these burials are associated with the worship of horses. These archaeological monuments date from the Late Bronze Age to the Early Iron Age, specifically from the end of the 2nd millennium BC to the beginning of the 1st millennium BC.

The horse cult persisted throughout the Albanian period, as evidenced by various ancient artifacts and decorations. Bronze pendants depicting horses and clay figurines of horses have been discovered in Albanian monuments, indicating their association with the religious beliefs and practices of the period [Ахундова, 2020, c.160].

Beliefs associated with deer were prominently represented in the material culture and burial customs during the period spanning from the end of the Middle Bronze Age, the second quarter of the 2nd millennium BC, to the first half of the 1st millennium BC. Indeed, there are notable examples of deer images depicted on pottery and bronze figurines. The discovery of a pottery vessel and a bronze figure featuring deer imagery in Garajamirli kurgans No. 2 of the 15th–14th centuries BC in Shamkir region, as well as a pottery vessel with a deer image in tomb No. 7 of the Tovuzchay necropolis of the Late Bronze–Early Iron Age in Tovuz region, serves as significant examples [Гусейнова, 2011; Müseyibli və b., 2021]. In the Goygol district, specifically in kurgans Nos. 149 and 150 excavated by Y.I.Hummel, deer burials were discovered alongside human burials (Fig. 2. 3, 2. 4). In kurgan No. 150 (Fig. 2. 4), two deer were buried with a harness attaching them to a sled as draft animals [Гуммель, 1992, c.9-11]. Late Bronze–Early Iron Age bronze belts found in various monuments across Azerbaijan display depictions of deer in addition to other animals [Xəlilov, 1062]. Indeed, all of this evidence clearly indicates the presence of specific religious beliefs regarding deer during the Bronze–Early Iron Age.

The cult of the deer in spiritual culture persisted into the period of Antiquity. The evidence found in numerous specimens of material culture from Albanian monuments reinforces this observation. Among the various depictions of deer associated with religious beliefs in the material culture of ancient Albania, notable examples include the earthenware rhytons featuring deer images and zoomorphic designs discovered in the jar burials of Mingachevir. Of particular interest is the rhyton found in jar burial No. 30 (Fig. 3. 1). This is an oblong drinking vessel, with its handle intricately crafted in the shape of a deer's head. Other zoomorphic rhytons (Fig. 1. 2, 1. 3) were entirely made in a deer shape [Qazıyev, 1960, s.11, 13, XXV, XXX tablolar]. These rhytons were crafted with the purpose of being used in religious ceremonies, where they would be filled with a specific liquid during the course of the rituals. The fact that these vessels are adorned with deer imagery is undoubtedly connected to the cultic beliefs associated with this animal.

During archaeological excavations, a multitude of ornaments adorned with deer images have been unearthed. Notably, a pendant ornament featuring a deer figure (Fig. 3. 4) was discovered in Mingachevir, while a medallion adorned with a deer image (Fig. 3. 5) was uncovered in a clay sarcophagus (tub burial) No. 3 near the village of Mollaisagli in Ismayilli district. The medallion portrays a deer's head turned backward with great precision and realism [Qazıyev, 1960, XL tablo; Османов, 2006, c.132].

In the territory of Azerbaijan, religious views associated with dogs emerged as early as the Neolithic period, coinciding with the rise of early agricultural cultures. Dogs were among the first animals to be domesticated by the settled, farming, and livestock-raising communities. Evidence of this can be seen in the burial of dogs alongside humans in two Neolithic graves at the Kultepe I site in Nakhchivan. In grave No. 12, where an adult person was buried in a crouched position on their left side, a dog's skull was discovered near the knee bones of the deceased. Similarly, in grave No. 41, where an adult person was buried in a crouched position on their right side, a dog skeleton was found around the legs of the deceased. A clay figurine of dog was unearthed from the Early Bronze Age layer of the same monument. The researcher of the monument, O.H.Habibullayev, attributed the burial of dogs in the Neolithic graves of Kultepe I and the discovery of the clay dog figurine from the Early Bronze Age layer to the existence of a dog cult during those times. According to him, these findings suggest that in the beliefs of the ancient inhabitants of Kultepe, the image of a dog reflected ideas of protection and preservation of dwellings, possessions, crops, herds, and even the people

themselves. Cultic beliefs of ancient people were associated with the dog [Абибуллаев, 1982, с.46, 49, 142-143].

During the Late Bronze–Early Iron Age, there was significant progress in material production and economy in the territory of Azerbaijan. This era witnessed a notable advancement in animal husbandry, with a particular emphasis on the expansion of transhumance to unprecedented levels. Undoubtedly, during this time, dogs served as invaluable helpers to herders in guarding the herd and property. Their growing significance in farming led to specific beliefs surrounding these animals. The archaeological research has revealed numerous facts, shedding light on the existence of these beliefs within the material culture and burial customs of the time.

The Tovuzchay necropolis belonging to the Khojaly–Gadabay culture provides a clear example of the burial of dogs alongside humans. In graves No. 10, 53, and 54, dogs were interred together with people. The burial arrangement in grave No. 53 is particularly intriguing (Fig. 4). In the layered, double-pavement grave, a woman was laid to rest on the upper pavement, positioned on her left side. Situated in front of her and on the lower pavement, two dogs were buried in a seated position. The inclusion of the dogs in this burial suggests their role as guardians of the woman interred [Müseyibli, 2008, s.11].

The dog cult held a significant position within the religious beliefs of the ancient people of Caucasian Albania, as evidenced by notable discoveries in Shamakhi. Among these findings, a rhyton made of soft limestone was excavated from a household pit dating back to the 3rd–2nd centuries BC (Fig. 5 and 6). The rhyton measures 17 cm in height and 9 cm in diameter. The upper part of the rhyton is adorned with relief depictions of two human heads and one dog head. The author of the excavation noted that the depiction of a dog's head is associated with ritual beliefs. Additionally, dog burials alongside humans were discovered in several ancient tombs in Shamakhi. According to the writings of Valerius Flaccus, an author from the Antiquity period, the Caspian tribes of Albania held deceased dogs in equal regard to humans and buried them alongside ancestors and heroes in their graves. Another ancient author, Julius Solinus, described how Albanians used dogs in hunting, and these dogs were known for their ability to overpower wild animals such as bulls and lions. He wrote that the Albanian king gifted two dogs of such prowess to Alexander the Great. These dogs killed a lion and even wore out an elephant through their impressive leaping abilities [Xəlilov, 1973, s.253-256]. Also, there are deer depicted on this rhyton through incised lines (Fig. 6), suggesting a connection to the deer cult.

The relationships with dogs and beliefs surrounding the dog cult, which originated and persisted in ancient Albania during earlier times, further expanded and evolved in later stages. These views are evident in funerary monuments, ceremonial objects, decorative items, and other archaeological materials [Ахундова, 2020, с.170-174].

Conclusion. The studies reveal that nearly all aspects of ancient pre-Christian religious beliefs in Albania of Antiquity, encompassing burial customs in earthen graves, astral beliefs tied to the veneration of the Moon and the Sun, and the attribution of sacredness to diverse animals, notably the cults of horse, deer, and dog, exhibit strong connections to the cultures of earlier periods in terms of their core attributes. These links in religious beliefs are a part of the complex heritage connecting the Albanian culture as a whole to previous periods, particularly the Late Bronze–Early Iron Age. Certain components of these religious beliefs continued in Albania during the later period, within the context of Christianity.

The belief in the Moon was prevalent in pre-Christian Albania, particularly in the northern region. It is possible that in this area, structures associated with this belief, which may not have survived to the present day, were constructed. However, we speculate that the large oval building found in the ancient city site of Gabala is the remains of the Selene (Moon) temple mentioned by Strabo. Traces of the ancient belief in the worship and sacredness of the Moon, dating back millennia before the modern era, can still be found today. The crescent Moon remains a sacred symbol in the Islamic world. These enduring connections serve as evidence of the hereditary linkages between the stages of our people's ancient history in these lands.

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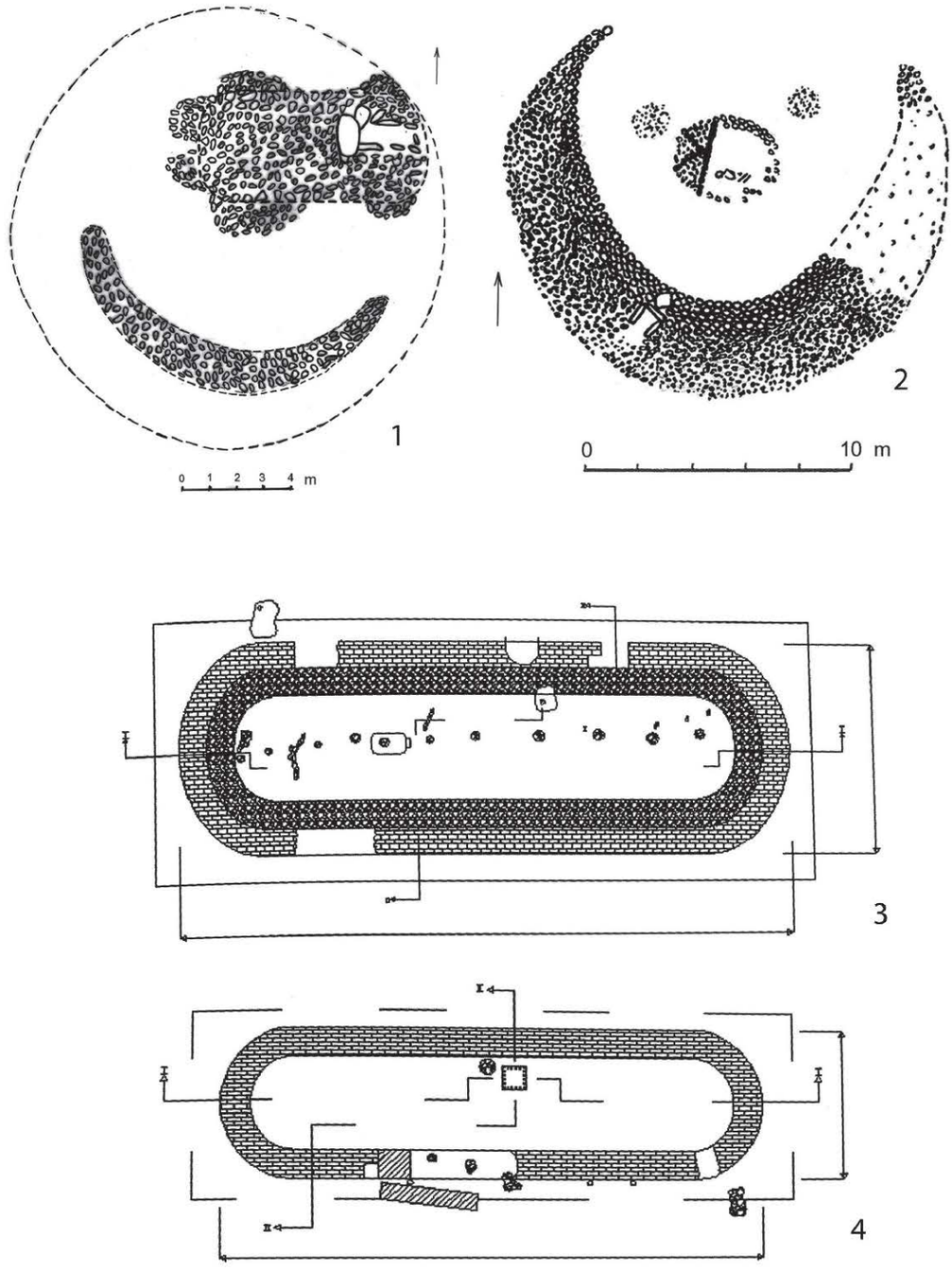


Fig. 1. 1 – Amili mound No. 3, Gabala; 2– Kudurlu mound No. 2, Sheki; 3-4 – Remains of oval-plan buildings No. 1 and 2 in the ancient Gabala



Fig. 2. 1, 2 – Pottery and bronze figure of a deer from Mound No. 2;
3 – Grave No. 149, Goygol; 4 – Grave No. 150, Goygol;
5 – Earthenware vessel from Burial No. 7 of the Tovuzchay necropolis



Fig. 3. 1-3 – Earthenware rhytons, Mingachevir;
4 – Bronze pendant, Mingachevir; 5 – Medallion, Mollaisagli

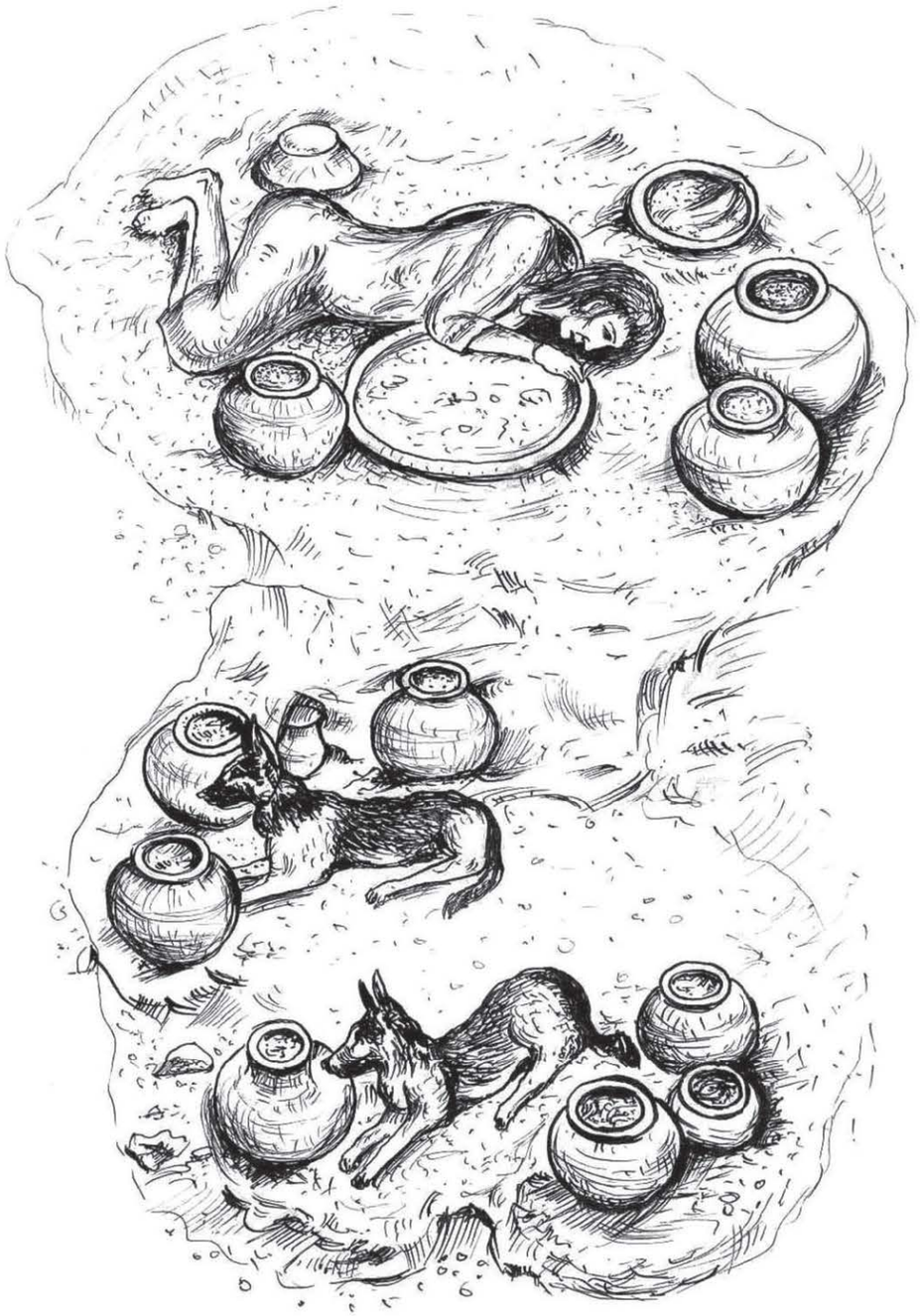


Fig. 4. A graphic reconstruction of Burial No. 53, Tovuzchay necropolis (artist F.Farmanov)



Fig. 5. A stone rhyton with anthromorphic and zoomorphic features, Khinisli, Shamakhi

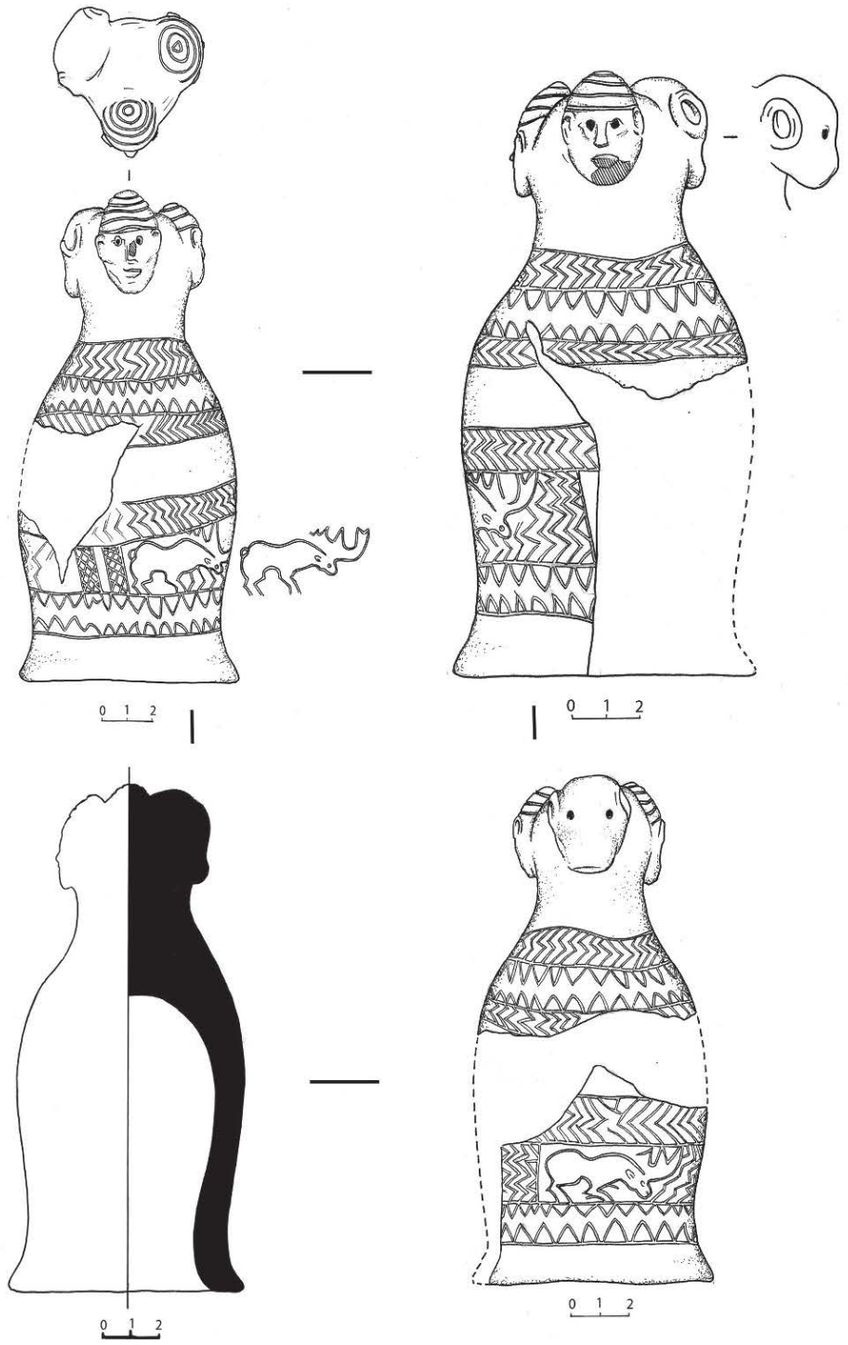


Fig. 6. A stone rhyton with anthromorphic and zoomorphic features, Khinisli, Shamakhi (artist S.Farmanli)

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ABSOLUTE CHRONOLOGY OF THE SALBIR SITE OF GABALA CITY – THE CAPITAL OF CAUCASIAN ALBANIA

Abstract. Since 2009, the Azerbaijani–Korean joint expedition team has excavated the Salbir site (one of the territories of Gabala city – which is the capital of Caucasian Albania), with full support of SEBA (Seoul–Baku) Azerbaijan–Korean Cultural Exchange Association. Azerbaijani archaeologists from Azerbaijan National Academy of Science and Korean archaeologists from various universities and archaeological units participated in the archaeological excavations. A total of ten seasons of field work have been undertaken up to 2019; any excavations for 2020, 2021 and 2022 have not been carried out because of COVID-19, and excavations have resumed in 2023.

The chronology of the Salbir site with its time span of occupation has been revealed by relative and absolute dating which support the existing hypothesis that the Salbir site could be one of the territories of Gabala city from the moment that the city became the capital city of the Caucasian Albania since 4th Century BCE and onward.

Keywords: Gabala, Selbir territory, absolute chronology, burial types, artefacts

Since 2009, the Azerbaijani–Korean joint expedition team has excavated the Salbir site (one of the territories of Gabala city – which is the capital of Caucasian Albania), with full support of SEBA (Seoul– Baku) Azerbaijan–Korean Cultural Exchange Association.

The Azerbaijani–Korean joint expedition team, which consists of Azerbaijani archaeologists from Azerbaijan National Academy of Science and Korean archaeologists from various universities and archaeological units, has aimed at the following primary goals:

1) to obtain basic information on the process of early state formation, namely, Caucasian Albania, in the Caucasus region;
2) to achieve a systematic understanding of the exchange between eastern and western civilizations;
3) for the archaeologists of the two countries to share knowledge and experiences of a common excavation, which may act to facilitate scientific and cultural exchange, in addition to promoting good will between the two countries.

A total of ten seasons of field work have been undertaken up to 2019. Excavations were not carried out for three years (2020, 2021, and 2022) due to COVID-19. However, we will resume the excavation from 2023.

Many results have come out from the investigations carried out thus far.

For example, on the Salbir site:

- the investigation of the north city wall has been completed, making it possible to reveal in detail the process of wall construction which spanned from the Second half of the First Millennium BCE to the Medieval period;
- in this process, nine graves by the northern wall (dating to the ancient and medieval periods) were also identified, which yielded various personal ornaments, human skeletal remains, etc.;
- in addition, investigations carried out in the area next to the west city wall (the western area) [The History of Gabala, 2017, p.43], revealed the presence of a sort of "necropolis" with mainly catacombs from the Ancient to the Medieval period;
- and, also remains of various buildings and ovens, water supply and drainage facilities, pottery kilns, wells, and Qanat, etc. were found on the Salbir site.

In addition to the research of the Salbir site in 2015 and 2016, kurgan of the Bronze Age in Dizakhli (in a small village located 10 km away from the Salbir site) has been excavated [The History of Gabala, 2017, p.22; Yi Seonbok, Kwon Ohyoung and ets., 2017, pp.118-149]. Although it turned out that this kurgan has been heavily looted. Excavations have revealed an intriguing inner structure and construction method adopted in this region.

More importantly, it can be emphasized that the chronology of the Salbir site with its time span of occupation has been revealed by relative and absolute dating which support the existing hypothesis that the Salbir site could be one of the territories of Gabala city from the moment that the city became the capital city of the Caucasian Albania since 4th Century BCE and onward.

First and foremost, in the process of investigating the north wall, relative dating was attempted by comparing the pottery, ornaments, and burial styles observed with the existing relative chronology. For example, burial No. 6 near the northern wall (Fig. 1 and 2) has features of wooden coffin which was placed within a burial pit which cut into the layer that represents the ground surface of the time and a yellow clay soil layer (a natural layer) as underneath the 1st wall. This indicates that burial No. 6 may have been made prior to the construction of the northern wall and was partly destroyed during the process of building the northern wall.

Various personal ornaments (at least two bronze hair pins, various beads including numerous glass and bone beads, a pair of bronze bracelets, two rings, and a brass belt ornament with triangular openwork decorations), nine ceramic vessels including a jar with handles (six placed near the deceased's head, and three at the foot), a small iron knife (presumed), and a small iron arrowhead (presumed) were found to have been used as grave goods [The Salbir site, 2017, pp.57-59]. In particular, the potteries found in this burial No. 6 could be dated to the Ancient period.

Secondly, in order to more securely date the start of the wall's construction, charcoal samples at the base of the wall, charcoal and human bone samples from relevant points near the wall were analyzed at the AMS (Accelerator Mass Spectrometry) Laboratory at Seoul National University, in order to receive accurate information on radiocarbon dates and therefore have a scientific rationale for when Salbir site of Gabala city would function as a capital city for the first time.

For this, the charcoal sample was collected from the lowest layer of the wall and it yielded absolute dates of 2180±50 BP, which produces a central date of **265 BCE** when calibrated (Fig. 2). In addition, AMS analysis was also carried out on the charcoal and human bone sample from Burial No. 6 (Fig. 3), and thus considered to be of the earliest date in this northern wall area (Fig. 1 and 2). These two samples yielded

absolute dates of 2070±40 BP and 1950±50 BP respectively. When calibrated, these dates are **105 BCE and 95 CE** (Fig. 4 and 5).

Therefore, while there does exist a discrepancy between the assumed earliest date of the north wall's construction and the date of the samples, it is possible to securely establish that Burial No. 6, which is the earliest of burials at the northern wall, was carried out approximately at the beginning of the first century BCE, in the Ancient period, and thus to tentatively attribute the beginning date of the wall's first construction to sometime around between the first century BCE and the first century CE.

In addition to the relative and absolute chronology of the Northern wall as such, evidence has been found in the western part of the site, which could prove that the Salbir site itself was occupied from the Ancient period. These evidences include building floor, wooden cist burials and catacomb burials.

A square mud brick floor of a mud brick building was unearthed in the western part of the Salbir site. Although it is difficult at present to confirm the overall size and form of this structure, several layers of mud bricks were identified and the mud brick is square-shaped, with each size measuring approximately about 15*15*5 cm, and made of fine clay. They did not contain plant-based inclusions. Such mud bricks have been identified throughout the site and are believed to be associated with the buildings constructed in the Ancient period. Structures built using unfired mud bricks (which were located below medieval structures made of fired bricks) were also identified.

In the western part of the Salbir site approximately 20 catacomb burials have been also discovered and some of them hitherto investigated, which can be dated to the Ancient and the early Medieval period [Kim Jongil, Jabiyev G. and ets., 2019, p.88-89; The History of Gabala, 2017, p.39; The Salbir site, 2017, pp.59-67]. For example, wooden coffin burial located at the base of the west wall, was assumed to be established prior to the construction of the west wall dated to the Ancient period, which means that this burial appears to be an ancient burial dating to the period prior to the construction of the Salbir city wall as in the case of Burial No. 6 at the northern wall.

Among approximately, catacombs No. 1, No. 8 and No. 13 are most conspicuous examples even in the Salbir site as a whole.

Catacomb No. 1 consists of main chamber, shaft and corridor in which the burial chamber is located to the south of the corridor and the floor levels of the corridor and burial chamber are identical (Fig. 6). The floor of the burial chamber is round in plan and relatively even and the ceiling of the burial chamber is a shaped like semi-globular dome. The length of the burial chamber is approximately 195 cm, width 155 cm, height 127 cm.

The artifacts from this catacomb consist of the following: 11 ceramic vessels (including a mounted cup), one buckle, and one bronze ring from the western section of the burial chamber; one buckle, two bronze bracelets, and two fibula, and more than 673 beads from the central section of the burial chamber, and one ceramic jar from the eastern section of the burial chamber (Fig. 6) [Yi Seonbok, Kim Jongil and ets., 2016, p.87; The Salbir site, 2017, pp.59-60]. These artefacts can be clearly dated to the Ancient period (Fig. 7).

As for catacomb 8, it has been observed that this burial was repeatedly used and it would be not easy to reconstruct the exact sequential process of each phase. Yet, it is believed that the burial chamber, which is located to the west of the corridor, is 297 cm long, 221 cm wide, and 295 cm high. The floor of the burial chamber is even and the ceiling is dome-shaped. The artifacts from this catacomb consist of the following: one jar with handles, one bottle with handles, one coin (from Parthia), two bronze objects, seven iron objects from the southern section of the burial chamber; approximately 50 iron arrowheads from the western corner of the burial chamber (closely related to Sarmatia); various artifacts including one large ceramic jar with a stone lid, one bottle with handles, five jars with handles, two Roman glass vessels, and an iron spear with two prongs from the northern section of the burial chamber [Yi Seonbok, Kim Jongil and ets., 2016, p.88; The Salbir site, 2017, pp.62-63]. The large ceramic jar was found to contain a tooth that had been deliberately pulled out and one ornament, and the jar with handles contained a small amount of

animal bones (Fig. 8, 9 and 10). It is of note that burial goods from this catacomb would indicate cultural exchange between the Caucasian Albania and neighboring countries.

The burial chamber of catacomb No. 13 is round in floor plan, with a height of 180 cm and a diameter of 210 cm. Its ceiling is a semi-globular dome structure (Fig. 11). A human skeleton was found on this burial chamber floor. The deceased had been laid to rest in a crouched position with the head and body facing eastwards and arms upon the chest. A bracelet consisting of jet, bone, carnelian, and glass beads was found near the spine of the skeleton. One jar with two lugs and four jars with handles of the Ancient period, were found in this burial [Yi Seonbok, Kim Jongil and ets., 2016, p.88; The Salbir site, 2017, pp.64-65].

Excavations undertaken over the past ten years have produced many more results than was originally anticipated. Investigations on the inner area of the Salbir site were able to reveal that:

1) this site was occupied and played an important role as one of the territories of Gabala city – the capital of Caucasian Albania from the Ancient period (at least from the first century BCE) based upon absolute and relative chronology;
2) the urban structure of the city was highly developed;
3) It was also possible to identify the various developed construction methods that were used to build the city walls and buildings;
4) the grave types and associated grave goods act to shed light on the nature of exchange relationship between Caucasian Albania and neighboring contemporary political groups, such as the Sarmatians or the Parthians;
5) the glass vessels, including those made of Roman glass, excavated from graves provide insights into the nature of cultural exchanges between the East and the West, which extended from Rome to the Korean peninsular and the Japanese archipelago.

Therefore, it is expected that this excavation report will act to illuminate the historical role and significance of Gabala region in the Caucasus region since the Bronze Age and through to the Ancient period and finally to the Medieval period.

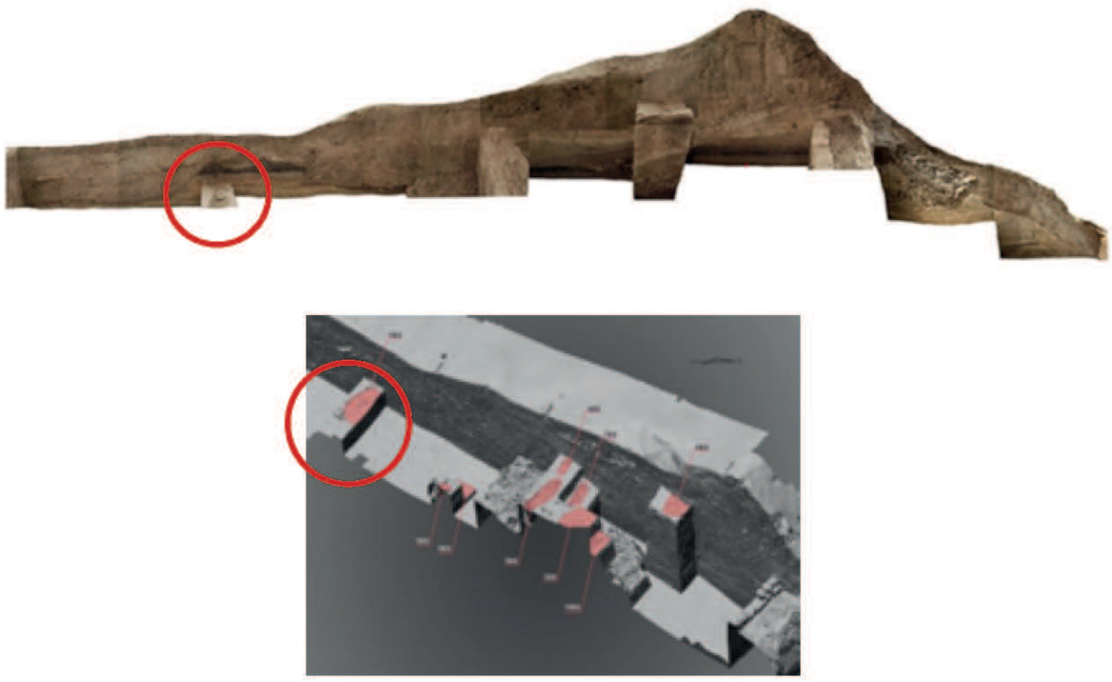
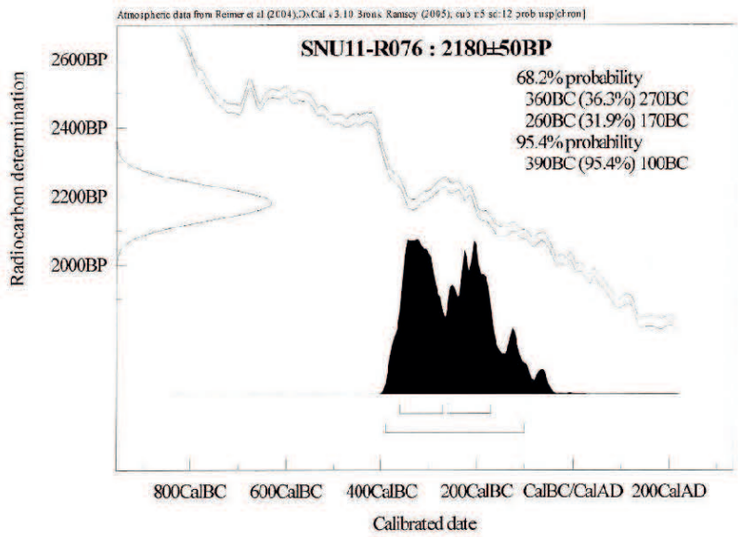


Fig. 1. Northern wall and burial No. 6 around the northern wall

■ Calibrated Ages

Sample ID	Radiocarbon Ages (BP)	Calibrated Ages
Selbir 2011-1	2180±50	265 BC



Note. Calibration results were obtained using IntCal04 calibration curve and OxCal v3.10. They are based on Bronk Ramsey C., Radiocarbon 37(2) (1995) 425-430 and Bronk Ramsey C., Radiocarbon 43(2A) (2001) 355-363.

Fig. 2. The results of the AMS dating analysis on the charcoal from the lowest layer of the north wall

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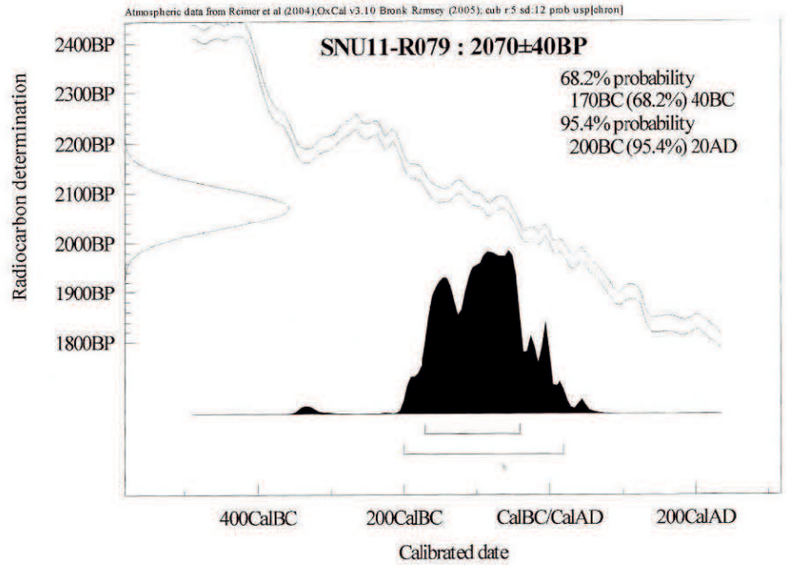
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Fig. 3. Burial No. 6 around the northern wall and its burial goods

■ Calibrated Ages

Sample ID	Radiocarbon Ages(BP)	Calibrated Ages
Selbir 2011-4	2070±40	105 BC

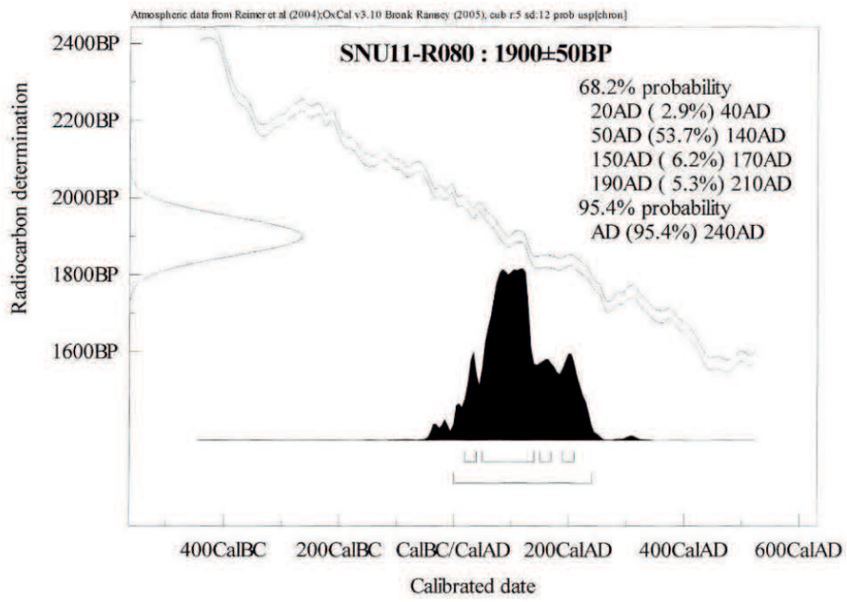


Note. Calibration results were obtained using IntCal04 calibration curve and OxCal v3.10. They are based on Bronk Ramsey C., Radiocarbon 37(2) (1995) 435-430 and Bronk Ramsey C., Radiocarbon 43(2A) (2001) 355-363.

Fig. 4. The results of the AMS dating analysis on the charcoal from burial No. 6

■ Calibrated Ages

Sample ID	Radiocarbon Ages (BP)	Calibrated Ages
Selbir 2011-5	1900±50	AD 95



Note. Calibration results were obtained using IntCal04 calibration curve and OxCal v3.10. They are based on Bronk Ramsey C., Radiocarbon 37(2) (1995) 435-430 and Bronk Ramsey C., Radiocarbon 43(2A) (2001) 355-363.

Fig. 5. The results of the AMS dating analysis on the bones from burial No. 6

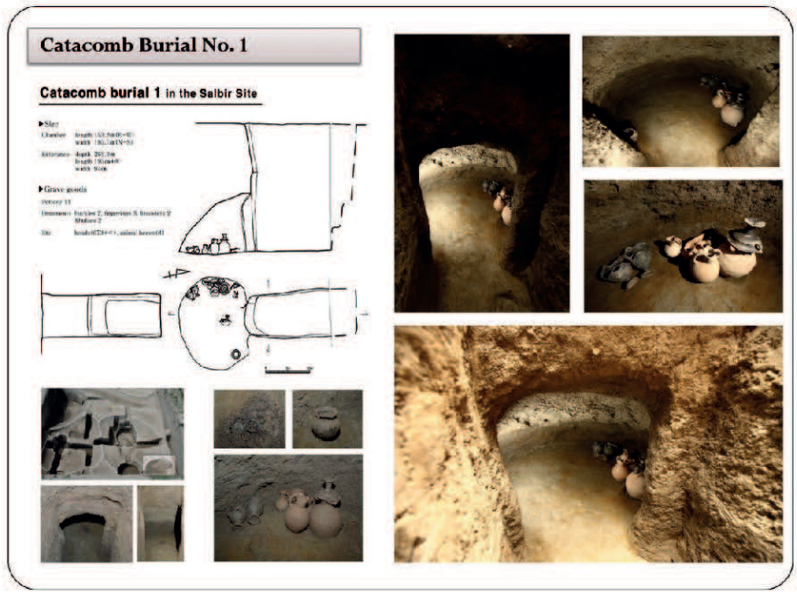


Fig. 6. Catacomb No. 1 main chamber



Fig.7. Burial goods from catacomb No. 1



Fig. 8. Ancient pottery from catacomb No. 8



Fig. 9. Roman Glass, Parthian coin and other findings from catacomb No. 8



Fig. 10. Iron armory of Sarmatian type from catacomb No. 8

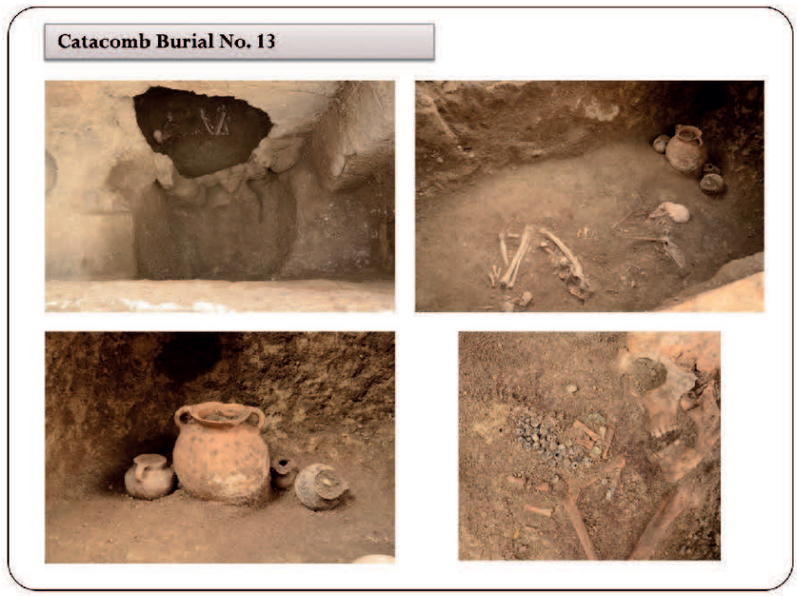


Fig. 11. Main chamber and burial goods from catacomb No. 13

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ALBANIAN GRAVES OF THE ANTIQUE PERIOD IN KIPCHAKTEPE

Abstract. The territory, conventionally called Gipchagtapa, began to be inhabited in the 6th–5th centuries BC, and during the Early Middle Ages and the Classical Middle Ages the northern and eastern parts its were inhabited. During Antiquity, in the II century BC – II century AD a prevalent practice in the area involved interring individuals in earth graves and jar burials.

The site showcases notable examples of material culture akin to other ancient and early medieval Albanian period sites found in the Ganikh-Ayrichay river basin, such as Torpaggala (Almali), Torpaggala (Lalali), Aghyazi, Garabulag, and Galashahar. The site, which we tentatively refer to as Gipchagtapa, was recorded by our team in 2018 and introduced to the scientific literature for the first time. From 2018 to 2020, our research primarily focused on exploring the residential section of the site. In 2021–2022, an ancient necropolis situated in the western part of Gipchagtapa was discovered and registered, becoming the subject of archaeological investigation. During the excavation process, we extensively studied the earth graves and jar burials from the ancient period. One of the intriguing discoveries at the site includes small ceramic female idols, which have piqued our interest. The material culture artifacts gathered from the earth graves and jar burials suggest that these burials date back to the 2nd century BC to the 2nd century AD. The individuals were interred in these ancient burial sites at Gipchagtapa following the customs associated with the pagan Albanians.

Keywords: Gakh, Albania, idolatry, grave, ancient

In the southern part of Gipchag village of Gakh district, the site tentatively referred to as Gipchagtapa was first registered in 2018 and began to be investigated [Əliyev, 2018, s.25]. Through a series of archaeological excavations, both the settlement and necropolis sections of the site were identified. In the course of research conducted in the necropolis in 2021–2022, ancient earth graves and jar burials were discovered, funeral customs associated with the pagan religious beliefs were identified, samples of material culture and small idols were found.

It is positioned on the right bank of Ayrichay and encompasses an estimated area of 5 hectares. Over the past few years, archaeological excavations have been conducted in three specific areas within this site [Əliyev, 2020, s.26; Əliyev, 2021, s.28; Əliyev, 2022, s.22]. More recently, archaeological excavations conducted last year at Excavation Area III uncovered an earth grave in which six people were interred [Əliyev, 2022, s.23]. The scientific significance of this burial is associated with interesting burial rites and samples of material culture, which reflect the ancient religious worldview in Caucasian Albania and show the social life of pagan Albanians.

During the research, grave goods and human skeletons were discovered in the ancient earth grave located in the western excavation area of the site. The skeletons were found partially flexed and lying on their right side. The Gipchagtapa territory began to be inhabited as early as the 6th–5th centuries BC, and during Antiquity, in the II century BC – II century AD a prevalent practice in the area involved interring individuals in earth graves and jar burials. During the Early Middle Ages and the Classical Middle Ages, the northern and eastern parts of the site (Excavation Area I) were inhabited.

At Excavation Area II intriguing and unique small anthropomorphic idols discovered during the archaeological excavations (Picture 1). These ceramic household idols are of relatively small size, one of them is partially intact. The color of the clay of the female idol is yellow-reddish. Another idol is mostly complete in its upper part [Əliyev, 2021, s.33], while we found only the head of a separate idol.

In the southwestern area of the site, a jar burial was uncovered, containing four pottery vessels. Two earth graves were also found, with partially intact bone fragments. Adjacent to the deceased, pottery vessels from the ancient period were discovered. Additionally, a rusted fragment of an iron spearhead and a dagger were found in one of the earth graves [Əliyev, 2021, s.29-30].

Excavation Area II measures 10x5 meters, covering an area of 50 square meters (Fig. 1). During the archaeological excavations, two large household jars were unearthed in the northwestern section of Excavation Area II [Əliyev, 2021, s.30] (Fig. 2). The jar burial discovered was tentatively recorded as jar burial No. 1. The burial jar itself is fragmented and likely belonged to a young individual; the bones have completely decayed. Two small pottery pieces placed alongside the buried individual were nearly entirely broken, while two were found in fragmented condition. The burial jar's mouth (head part) was oriented towards the northwest, while the base (foot part) faced the southeast. Adjacent to it, a single-handled bowl-type container was found, while inside it, there was a small ceramic vessel. Additionally, we uncovered a portion of a medium-sized jug-type vessel [Əliyev, 2021, s.32] (Picture 1).

In the southwestern section of Trial Excavation Area No. 1, located southwest of Excavation Area II, a jar burial was discovered. The burial jar, identified as jar burial No. 2, is fragmented (Fig. 3). The bones within the jar have completely decayed. Additionally, four pottery vessels were found next to the buried individual: the vessels are complete, but exhibit cracks [Əliyev, 2021, s.36] (Picture 1).

In the western part of the Gipchagtapa site, a subsequent trial excavation area, referred to as Trial Excavation Area No. 2, was established. This area measures 3x1.5 meters in size. Within this excavation area, two earth graves were identified. Through the archaeological excavations conducted, it was determined that a portion of the skeletal remains within these graves remained intact. Adjacent to the deceased individuals, pottery vessels from antiquity were discovered. These pottery pieces varied in their state of preservation, with some found intact, others broken, and some in fragments. Notably, four pottery vessels were found in a complete state (Picture 1). A small rusted section of an iron spearhead and a dagger were also uncovered within the earth grave [Əliyev, 2021, s.37].

In the western part of Gipchagtapa, where the earth graves are located, Excavation Area II was established, measuring 5x10 meters (Fig. 4). At a later stage of the archaeological excavation, due to necessity, the area was extended by 4x1 meters towards the west, resulting in a final size of 5x11 meters. However, a 1x1 meter section containing a bush plant in the southwest corner of the area was left untouched to preserve the natural environment. The excavation process was conducted in stages, beginning with the removal of the top 10-cm humus layer, including grass and meadow plant roots. Subsequently, the excavation proceeded in stages by digging to the same depth. Over the following days, fragments of pottery were uncovered. Notably, at a depth of 30 cm towards the central part of the excavation area, a small clay female idol was discovered. Adjacent to the idol, partial exposure of skull bone fragments was observed (skeleton No. 1) [Əliyev, 2022, s.24].

Following the identification of earth grave traces (skeleton No. 4) in the western section of the excavation area, further archaeological investigations were conducted in the area. Notably, in the southern part, four pottery samples were initially discovered. These included one leg of a three-legged vase and fragments a pot, a crock, and a pitcher, which were removed and cleaned. Adjacent to the pottery fragments, two pieces of charcoal remains were also detected. Towards the north of this area, a section of soft soil was carefully excavated. In Excavation Area III, situated in the southern part, traces of another earth grave were uncovered at a depth of 40 cm. As the first anthropological remains in the area where the traces of earth grave No. 4 were detected (skeleton No. 6), the pelvic part of a skeleton was found and cleaned.

During the excavation, a spouted vessel and fragments made of iron and copper were unearthed. The spouted vessel was located near the southern wall of the excavation area. Furthermore, fragments of

pottery vessels with distinct functions were discovered. In the southern section of the the excavation earth grave No. 4 was partially cleared [Əliyev, 2022, s.25-26].

Traces of skeleton No. 6 were found 60 cm from the corner in the southwestern part of the excavation area. Initially, a piece of pottery was discovered at that location. The soil around the vessel, found at a depth of 37 cm, was cleared, and the vessel was photographed *in-situ*. In the western section of Excavation Area III, the excavation of earth grave No. 4 continued. As a result, it was found: three pottery vessels located next to each other; charcoal remains, metal pieces (consist of iron, bronze and copper material), and beads made of paste, and bronze and copper jewelry from the burial chamber. The cranial bone (skeleton No. 2), very fragile bones (Fig. 5) and other parts of the human skeleton also were cleaned [Əliyev, 2022, s.27-28].

Upon opening the earth grave in the western part of the excavation area, partially flexed skeletal remains were revealed (skeleton No. 1). In close proximity to the foot of this skeleton, traces of another skeletal remains were found (skeleton No. 6). Next to him were found copper bracelets, earrings, rings, paste beads, part of an iron knife fragment. Further westward, a medium-sized jar was found, with a stone resting on its mouth.

As the archaeological excavation progressed, a total of five skeletal remains (skeletons No. 1, No. 2, No. 3, No. 4, and No. 6) were identified and exposed in the area: the bones (arms, legs, parts of the pelvis, jaws, teeth) were very fragile; parts of the skull are crushed, the ribs are rotten. Analysis of the bones reveals that the deceased individuals were buried on their right side, partially flexed, and facing north. During the excavation, a significant number of artifacts were unearthed, including bronze and copper bracelets, three copper rings, and a pair of copper earrings, paste beads, and copper ornaments worn on the upper arm. Adjacent to the medium-sized jar, a three-legged vase was discovered, accompanied by pottery vessels to the west and another vessel on the opposite side.

Skeleton No. 5 was discovered during the archaeological excavations in the earth grave located in the western part of Excavation Area III. Based on the skeletal remains discovered in the central part of the grave, it was determined that the deceased individual was buried in a similar manner to the others, but with the face partially oriented towards the northeast. Cleaning of the right arm revealed an iron bracelet and paste beads.

Upon examining the overall structure of the opened earth grave, it becomes evident that four adults (skeletons No. 1, No. 2, No. 5, and No. 6) and two infants (skeletons No. 3 and No. 4) were interred using a standard burial ritual. Prior to the burial, the soil was excavated, mud was prepared, poured into the excavated area, and smoothed. A chamber was then carefully formed, and the deceased individuals were placed inside before being buried. The deceased individuals, following the burial customs of ancient pagan Albanians, were interred in the earth grave on their right side and in a partially flexed position.

Within the grave, two adults (skeletons No. 1 and No. 2) and two infants (skeletons No. 3 and No. 4) were buried in the eastern part, another adult was buried in the western section, with an additional adult (skeleton No. 5) interred between them in the central part. One of the infants (skeleton No. 3) was buried in the arms of its parent (skeleton No. 2), while the other (skeleton No. 4) was placed near the back of its parent (skeleton No. 1) (Fig. 6) [Əliyev, 2022, s.30-33]. We posit that maybe these adults are women based on the unearthed ornaments (Fig. 7), (Picture 3).

During the ongoing archaeological excavation in Excavation Area III, copper earrings belonging to the individual buried in the central part (skeleton No. 5) were found. Positioned behind the leg of the skeleton, opposite to a single-handled pottery vessel, was a two-handled pottery vessel with horned upper handles. The infant (skeleton No. 3) buried in the arms of its parent (skeleton No. 2) was found with a small paste bead pendant and a small copper ring. In the western part, near the leg of the deceased individual (skeleton No. 6), the remains of a pottery vessel and iron fragments were uncovered. The archaeological excavation revealed that the earth grave extended beyond the western part of Excavation Area III. Within the extended area, a significant discovery was made a three-legged vase opposite to the leg of skeleton No. 6, along with a pot and other pottery fragments. At the bottom of the leg of skeleton No. 6, a sizable flat stone and the body of a large jar were unearthed. In the northern part of the excavated area, another pottery vessel

was found alongside the previously uncovered vessels. As the area was further excavated and deepened, a large jar was discovered, buried upright beneath the feet of the individual interred in the western part (Fig. 6). The jar's mouth was covered with a flat stone, and a small pottery vessel was also uncovered in its western section. Upon cleaning the interior of the medium-sized jar, which was positioned on its side with a stone in its mouth, it became evident that it had been used for storing food. Remnants of wheat and fragments of charcoal were discovered inside. The excavation process was carried out to fully open the grave chamber, reaching a depth of 1 meter (Fig. 6). Additionally, the plan of the archaeological excavation site was developed by our team (Fig. 6) [Əliyev, 2022, s.34-37].

Pottery, copper, and bronze bracelets, rings, and earrings were unearthed in the grave (Picture 2-3), iron cutting tool fragments, fragments of a copper buckle, a button, and a decorative object worn on the upper part of the arm were among the discoveries (Picture 3). The pottery items comprise a three-legged vase, jar, crock, pot, and other vessels (Picture 2). An intriguing discovery includes a small ceramic female idol (Picture 1). Based on the analyzed material culture artifacts, it is plausible to suggest that the earth grave dates back to the 1st century BC – 1st century AD. Those interred in the ancient earth grave were laid to rest following pagan Albanian traditions. One intriguing aspect is that those buried in the graves could have met two possible fates: either they were victims of murder or succumbed to an illness. Otherwise, the simultaneous burial of infants and adults in the same grave would defy logic. This grave, with its remarkable features, holds great significance in studying the ancient Albanian worldview, beliefs in the afterlife, burial customs, and rites that were prevalent in Albania.

Extensive research has been conducted on the ancient graves of Caucasian Albania across different locations, leading to the establishment of their chronological framework. The material culture artifacts discovered within the tombs at Gipchagtapa point to their classification as Yaloylutepe-type materials. Such a ground burial is similar to grave goods No. 4 in Yaloylutepe [İsmizadə, 1956, p.33].Furthermore, comparable graves have also been studied in the districts of Oguz, Agdash, and Zagatala [İsmizadə, 1956, s.12-13; Osmanov, 1982, s.25]. The characteristics of the Yaloylutepe culture are also evident in the earth graves examined within the Shirvan district [Osmanov, 1982, s.46-47]. G.O.Goshgarli describes the typology of earthen graves that were prevalent in ancient Albania based on the positioning of their skeletons as follows: 1) Earth graves containing slightly flexed skeletons: 7th–4th centuries BC; 2) Earth graves featuring tightly flexed skeletons: 4th century BC – 3rd century AD; 3) Earth graves wherein the deceased are laid on their backs: 1st–3rd centuries AD [Qoşqarlı, 2012, s.128]. The earth graves at Gipchagtapa fall within the second category of graves. These Gipchagtapa burials, characterized by the practice of interring the deceased in a tightly flexed posture on their right side, signify a testament to the ancient pagan Albanians' belief in the afterlife. M.J.Khalilov's research affirms the continuity of pagan earth burials into the Early Middle Ages in the Shirvan district and the northeastern area of Azerbaijan [Xəlilov, 2009, s.24].

As is known, among the various burial practices prevalent in ancient Albania, jar burials hold a distinctive significance. The jar burials at Gipchagtapa also align with the typological traits of the 1st–3rd centuries. Similar graves have been identified near the villages of Zayam and Malakh in the Gakh district [Əsədov, 2018, s.18]. In our viewpoint, the traces of the Yaloylutepe culture are similarly noticeable within the jar burials, highlighting a unified Albanian culture. Despite the diverse tribes inhabiting Caucasian Albania adhering to distinct funeral customs, it is evident that the shared Albanian cultural heritage is prominently manifested in these burial sites.

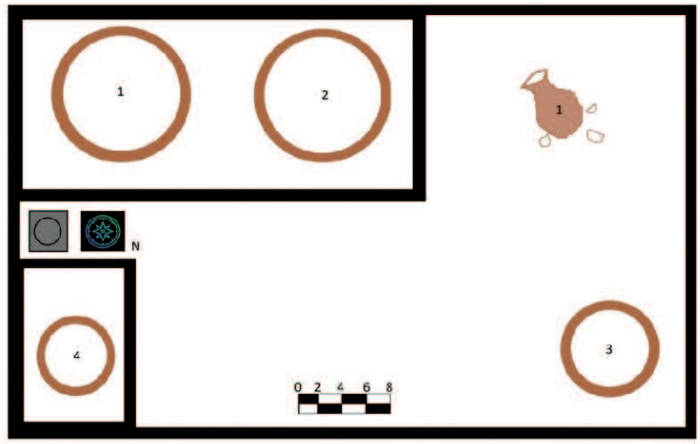
Among the unearthed artifacts, pottery stands out prominently. Clay vessels exhibit a range of colors, from gray and yellow-grayish to reddish and black-grayish tones. These vessels vary in craftsmanship, with some displaying a rough finish while others exhibit meticulous refinement. The ornamental elements encompass a variety of paste beads. Metal artifacts include copper rings, earrings, bracelets, and buttons. Additionally, small clay figurines are a distinctive feature of ancient Albanian graves. F.L.Osmanov conducted an analysis of clay female figurines, identifying six distinct types among them [Osmanov, 1998, s.168-170]. The clay figurines from Gipchagtapa exhibit similarities to the fourth form of type I and types III–IV.

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Fig. 1. View of Excavation Area II Fig.



2. Plan of Excavation Area II (Taleh Aliyev)



Fig. 3. Jar burial No. 2



Fig. 4. View of Excavation Area III from the west



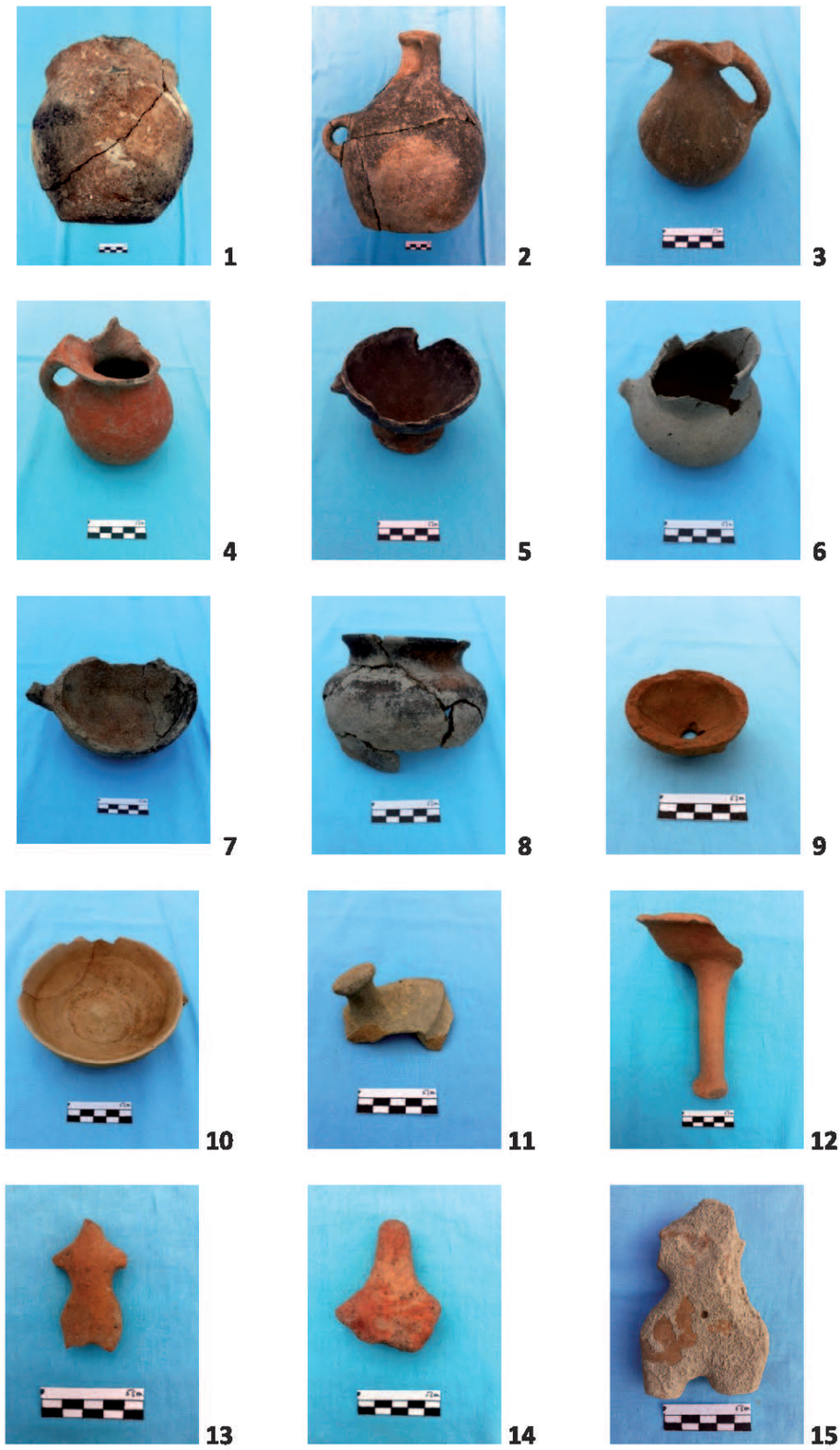
Fig. 5. View of the earth grave in Excavation Area III from the west



Fig. 6. Earth grave in Excavation Area III



Fig. 7. Plan of the earth grave in Excavation Area III (Taleh Aliyev)



Picture 1. Pottery items and ceramic anthropomorphic idols


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Picture 2. Pottery items



Picture 3. Paste beads, and iron, copper and bronze products found in the ancient earth grave in Excavation Area III

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SONASAR TOMB FROM THE LATE HELLENISTIC PERIOD IN EAST ZANGAZUR

Abstract. This article discusses the findings from East Zangazur, which were looted and relocated to Armenia during the Armenian occupation. The findings were discovered in a damaged tomb near the village of Sonasar, in the Lachin district of Azerbaijan. The 112 pieces unearthed, composed of gold, silver, and bronze, consist of both decorative and domestic items. The wide diversity, aesthetic value, and advanced fabrication techniques of these items suggest that the Sonasar tomb belonged to a high-ranking female member of society.

Two gold necklaces with medallions are among the artifacts found. One of the gold rings features a relief depiction of Athena on a carnelian stone. Gold sequins make up the majority of the findings (80 pieces). Other tomb items include silver bracelets, a bowl, a mirror, and a coin minted in honor of Athena. The discovery also yielded seventeen rare bronze seat bases.

The artifacts from Sonasar bear significant similarities to the Albanian monuments of antiquity. Based on comparative studies, the tomb is dated to the late Hellenistic period.

Keywords: East Zangazur, Lachin, Sonasar village, tomb, treasure, Antiquity

Introduction. A significant portion of the cultural artifacts created by the Azerbaijani people over centuries is located in East Zangazur and Karabakh. Unfortunately, during nearly 30 years of Armenian occupation, these monuments suffered from extensive vandalism, looting, and destruction.

During the 44-day war in the fall of 2020, thousands of monuments, alongside hundreds of cities, villages, and settlements that were under enemy occupation, were liberated. However, assessing and researching the looted cultural heritage will undoubtedly require substantial time and effort. The present article represents one of the initial steps taken in this direction.

An ancient tomb was discovered in 2010 in East Zangazur, near the village of Sonasar in the Lachin district (Fig. 2). The tomb's walls were constructed from unhewn round stones and were covered with large, solid stone pieces. The grave measured approximately 2 metres in length, 1.5 metres in width, and 1.5 metres in depth. The deceased was interred in a stone sarcophagus within a well-appointed tomb, including numerous metal objects. Nearly all of these items are various types of ornaments. The artifacts' wide range, artistic and aesthetic values, and advanced processing techniques suggest that the Sonasar tomb belonged to a high-ranking woman in society.

The area of the Sonasar village served as the settlement of the Hojaz village in the nineteenth century and later became the permanent residence for the villagers who relocated [Azərbaycan toponimlərinin ensiklopedik lüğəti, 2007, s.195]. The oeconym is believed to have originated from the combination of the words «Sona» and «sar», which means «bird of prey with a green head». The village of Sonasar, located 1350 meters above sea level, is surrounded by the villages of Soyugbulag, Mayis, Pirjahan, Seyidlar, and Hojaz (Fig. 1).

History of the treasure discovery. In 2010, an Armenian shepherd named A.Kurakyan accidentally discovered valuable artifacts within an ancient tomb while grazing his cattle near the village of Sonasar in

the Lachin district. This treasure comprised a total of 112 ornamental and domestic items (such as earrings, rings, bracelets, and kitchen utensils) exquisitely crafted from gold (200 g), silver (700 g), and bronze (approximately 5 kg). The shepherd took the artifacts to Yerevan, hoping to profit by turning them over to the National History Museum of Armenia. The museum valued the treasure at 8 million drams ($21,336) and offered to pay the shepherd up to 50% of this amount. A.Kurakyan turned down the offer, stating that the sum was «insignificant for such a finding.» This triggered prolonged disputes over the Sonasar artifacts, which belonged to Azerbaijan, between Armenia and the puppet «government of Nagorno-Karabakh». The conflicts were characterized as «a miserable situation» by P.Avetisyan, director of the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of the Armenian National Academy of Sciences. Journalist G.Abramyan, reporting on the Sonasar treasure situation to «russian.eurasianet.org» on April 24, 2011, noted that «there is a risk that Azerbaijan, which regards Karabakh as its territory, will claim this treasure» [Абрамян, 2011].

In 2011, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (now the Ministry of Culture) of the Republic of Azerbaijan declared that it was exerting its utmost efforts to retrieve the looted treasure and that the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of ANAS had been commissioned to estimate the approximate value of the ancient items. According to the late academician T.Bunyadov, «With their actions, Armenians resemble robbers and bandits who cannot share the loot. The international community must recognize the actions of these bandits» [Газета «Эхо», 2011, c.4].

Hence, the news about the Sonasar treasure peaked in the media in April 2011. The issue only came to the forefront a few times in subsequent years. For instance, an extensive article by J.Khachatryan, an Armenian archaeologist, was published in 2013 [Хачатрян, 2013]. A brief description of the treasure was featured among archaeological updates in 2015 on one of the social media platforms [Античное захоронение Сонасара, 2015].

About J.Khachatryan's article. The author of the article notably omitted the fact that the treasure was discovered on Azerbaijani soil, employing various unrelated location names in an apparent attempt to misrepresent the truth. The article's title, «Antique vault in the Sod Province of Armenia,» clearly reveals the researcher's stance that the occupied Azerbaijani territories are Armenian, citing the Sonasar findings as examples of Armenian material culture. Such an approach is common among most Armenian scholars. For instance, they proudly quote the ancient Greek geographer Strabo, stating, «in the past, Armenia was a small country, but due to the efforts of Artaxias and Zareh, it annexed lands of neighboring nations and expanded its borders». They openly discuss their aggressive campaigns against the Caspian nation, who resisted the invaders from the east, and Georgia to the north in the second century BC, without any evident hesitation [История армянского народа, 1980, c.36-37].

The village of Sotk, currently situated in Western Azerbaijan's historic Goycha district, was officially named Zod until 1995. Until the mid-20th century, the majority of the villagers were Azerbaijani Turks. Established in 1930, the Armenian SSR's Basarkechar district, bordering the Goycha Lake and the Kalbajar and Gadabay districts of Azerbaijan, was renamed Vardenis in 1969 [Историческая география Западного Азербайджана, 1998, c.90].

In Antiquity and the Middle Ages, the area of Zangazur was known as Syunik or Sisakan. However, Syunik was not Armenia but rather the western province of Albania, the ancient Azerbaijani state. According to J.Khachatryan, who cited the 7th-century Armenian geographer Anania Shirakatsi, Sotk was the sixth province of Syunik [Хачатрян, 2013, s.61]. At this point, it would be apt for him to consider the writings of another 7th-century Armenian author, Bishop Sebeos. Sebeos described the events of the 6th century as follows: «The ruler of Syunik rebelled and separated from the Armenians. He requested the Sassanid king Khosrow to relocate the archives of the Syunik land from the city of Dvin to Paytakaran, include their cities within the borders of Atropatene, and remove the Armenian name from them. The order was executed» [История епископа Себеоса, 1939, c.28-29]. Given that its ruler «rebelled and separated from the Armenians,» asked the Sassanid king to «remove the Armenian name from them,» and that it faced periodic Armenian invasions, it is clear that such a province could not be part of Armenia.

In spite of his erroneous and misleading assertions, J.Khachatryan presented a classification of the items discovered in the Sonasar tomb, conducted a comparative analysis with other similar materials, and endeavored to interpret the mythological meaning of the images on some examples in his article. By highlighting the similarities between the majority of the items illicitly taken from Azerbaijani territory and the items from the rulers' tombs discovered near the Garakilsa settlement (Syunik) in Zangazur, he ultimately suggested that the Sonasar tomb dates back to the second half of the first century BC [Хачатрян, 2013, c.61, 68-69].

The Sonasar treasure. The findings from this treasure are largely categorized into two groups: ornaments and domestic items. The ornaments, being more abundant and colorful, include:

1. Gold necklace with a medallion (Fig. 3, b). It measures 18 cm in diameter. A delicate golden foil was wrapped around a bronze wire, forming a groove, and woven with gold thread. It had cylindrical tubes at both ends. These tubes were attached to a green glass-made medallion placed in an oval-shaped hollow. Six different spots on the medallion were damaged, and some of the gold threads had broken off and fallen out.

2. Gold necklace with a medallion (Fig. 4). The necklace was composed of bird figures, each separated by small round pieces. Seventeen of them were intact, while two were fragmented. The medallion was made of dark brown agate and decorated with a carved relief image of a griffin (a mythical creature with the body of a lion and the head of an eagle) with its right leg raised, set in an oval frame. The level of detail in the image is remarkable, showcasing long, clawed talons, wide-open, powerful wings, sharp beaks, an upward-curled tail, and stretched, muscular hind legs.

3. Gold cowrie (Fig. 3, a). This elongated (15x9 mm) gold item was crafted in the shape of a seashell, specifically a cowrie shell, and had a groove in the center. The sides were adorned with etched patterns. It had holes at both ends. Such cowries, signifying seashells, were often used as decorative elements in jewelry, such as earrings, necklaces, bracelets, and so forth. Cowrie shells are commonly found in Azerbaijani monuments from antiquity (for instance, in the jar graves of Mingachevir) [Qazıyev, 1960, XLI tablo, II şəkil; Ахундова, 2020, c. 51]. In ancient and medieval times, cowries were used as currency in several countries, including Azerbaijan.

4. Two gold rings (Fig. 5, a, b). These were created by soldering together two thin, ribbon-shaped layers of gold. Gold rings constructed in this manner were popular at the turn of the eras. One of the rings features a stone that is round and dark green in color, with no image engraved on it. The dark red carnelian (a type of agate) stone of the second ring is convex and oval. It features a relief depiction of Athena, the goddess of wisdom, holding an owl in her right hand, a table under her left elbow, and wearing a semi-circular helmet.

5. Two gold hoop earrings (Fig. 5, c, d). These have diameters of approximately 25 mm. Some of their frames were embellished with figures of adolescents. The lower part of the figures depicts a lion's head, one of the symbols of Cybele, the mother goddess in ancient Anatolian mythology. Here, one can discern the representation of the legend concerning Cybele and her consort, Attis.

6. Gold sequins (Fig. 6). These are the most numerous items among the Sonasar findings. The sequins («flat buttons»), created from a thin layer of gold using the casting method and with two holes on the sides, can be classified into three groups based on size: The most numerous group (48 pieces) consists of sequins with a 13 mm diameter, convex on one side, eight-petal-shaped, and with double frames. The second group (10 pieces, 12 mm in diameter) features sequins with convex patterns and a single frame. The third group of sequins (22 pieces) has a smaller diameter (11 mm), a central projection, and no frame.

According to ethnographic studies, sequins were made in Azerbaijan in various shapes, including buta, pakhlava, triangles, circles, and more. Craftsmen known as jewelers created these sequins, or «zaranduz,» from metal plates using the forging and pressing (molding) methods. These sequins were then sewn onto sturdy fabrics such as velvet, moire, and baize as decorative elements. For instance, 19th-century national costumes made of velvet and ornamented with gold sequins were discovered in Karabakh [Azərbaycan Xalça Muzeyi 50].

In the past, shoes adorned with gold and silver sequins were fashionable. In the jewelry art of Karabakh, gold and silver buttons, made using forging and networking methods, held a particular place among clothing ornaments. According to ethnographic materials, even though gold buttons were not widely used, the elite class of the population was able to incorporate such valuable buttons into their attire as far back as antiquity [Vəliyev, Abdulova, 2016, s.89].

7. Silver bracelets (Fig. 7, a-d). The Sonasar findings include four silver bracelets. The first bracelet is unpatterned and divided into three sections. It is open-ended and straight cut, with a diameter of 11.8 cm. The second bracelet, also small (11.10 cm in diameter), is intact and round, with slightly thicker ends and belt-shaped engraving patterns. The third bracelet has a larger diameter of 15.11 cm and resembles the second bracelet in terms of its shape, pattern, and craftsmanship. However, its ends are more open. The fourth bracelet, measuring 12.10 cm in diameter and divided into two sections, differs from the others in that it is made of a thicker silver rod. It has slightly thickened, straight-cut ends, and is distinctive because of its pattern, which includes belt-shaped cutting lines and oval circles. Metal bracelets similar to the Sonasar examples have been found in Mingachevir's jar burials [Ахундова, 2020, с.70-71; Халилов, 1985, с.139-140]. Bracelets became more common in Antiquity, and there have been instances where 56 bracelets for hands and feet have been found in a single jar burial in Mingachevir [Qazıyev, 1960, s.25]. While most bracelets in Albania were made of bronze and iron, silver and gold bracelets were also found. According to J.Khalilov, bracelets sometimes served as a sign of a person's financial wellness [Халилов, 1985, с.139].

8. Silver mirror (Fig. 7, e). The mirror is disc-shaped with a smooth surface and jagged edges. It was likely placed on the face of the deceased, reflecting ancient beliefs that mirrors served as a means of communication with the underworld.

9. Silver coin – tetradrachm (Fig. 8, a). This coin was found inside a pottery vessel. Minted in 104 BC in honor of Athena, it weighs 16.02 grams and has a diameter of 30.0 mm. On the obverse, Athena is depicted with a helmet on her head, facing right. The reverse of the coin shows an owl and a wheat spike enclosed by a laurel wreath. Around the owl, there are several inscriptions (on the above ΑΘΕ, on the left ΑΜΦ[Ι] ΚΡΑ/ΤΗΣ/ΑΡΙ/[Σ]Τ, on the right ΕΠ[Ι]/ΣΤΡΑ/ΤΟΣ).

10. Silver bowl (Fig. 8, b). The bowl is hemisphere-shaped, with three concentric circles drawn by scratching clearly visible at its base. Vertical, close lines running from the bowl's shoulder to its base embellish the body of the bowl. This fluted pattern is thought to be associated with the Solar cult. Similar bowls were used during ceremonies conducted at shrines built in honor of the gods.

11. Bronze bases (Fig. 9). Seventeen seat bases (armchair, throne, chair, etc.) of various sizes were also found in the Sonasar tomb. Despite their similarities in shape, they differ slightly in size. Such findings are rarely discovered in archeological excavations. Only a few seats in the images on ancient Greek vases, wall paintings, and relief images of tombs appear to have special bases.

12. Pottery vessel (Fig. 8, c). The vessel is a jug type and has a three-spout mouth, a feature characteristic of the Antiquity period, especially the Hellenistic period. The mouth and the shoulder of the vessel are connected with an asymmetrical rod-shaped handle. The vessel was likely used as a water container.

Conclusion. Clearly, the artifacts discovered in the Lachin district and looted by Armenia constitute a significant part of the rich cultural heritage created by the Azerbaijani people. The closest analogs to these examples can be found among the materials of the Albanian monuments from Antiquity. The burial items in the Sonasar tomb confirm the long-running customs in burial practices. For instance, the burial items of an early Albanian woman found in 1992 near the Guyu Dara Khashtab (Hashtab) village of Zangilan included a bronze bowl, a mirror, silver bracelets, and various beads [Rəsuloğlu, 1992, s.92-94]. Despite the over 400-year gap between the ancient burials of Sonasar and Guyu Dara Khashtab, only some examples are different in terms of the materials from which they were made. Further complex archeological research in East Zangazur could potentially provide more evidence to support this thesis.

It is hoped that our looted examples of material and cultural heritage, including the Sonasar findings, will soon be returned to Azerbaijan in accordance with international law norms.

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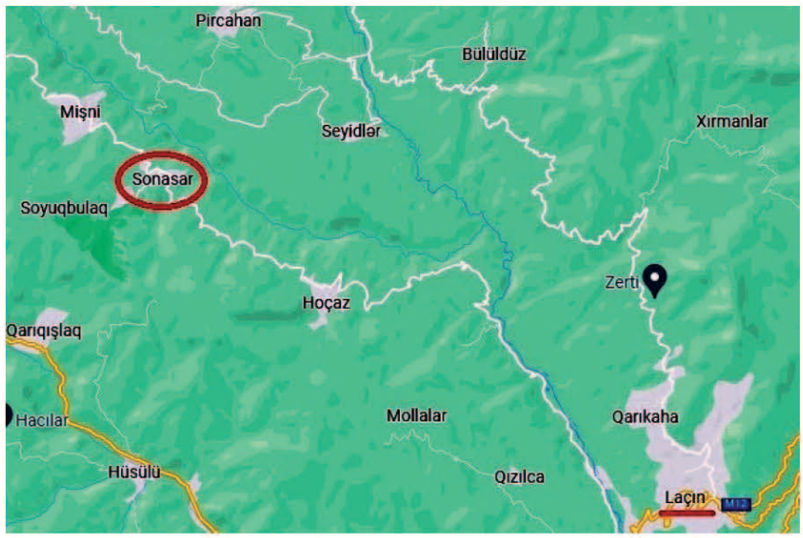


Fig. 1. Sonasar village of the Lachin district. Satellite view





Fig. 2. Remnant of the Sonasar tomb and stone sarcophagus



Fig. 3. Gold cowrie and necklace



Fig. 4. Necklace with a medallion

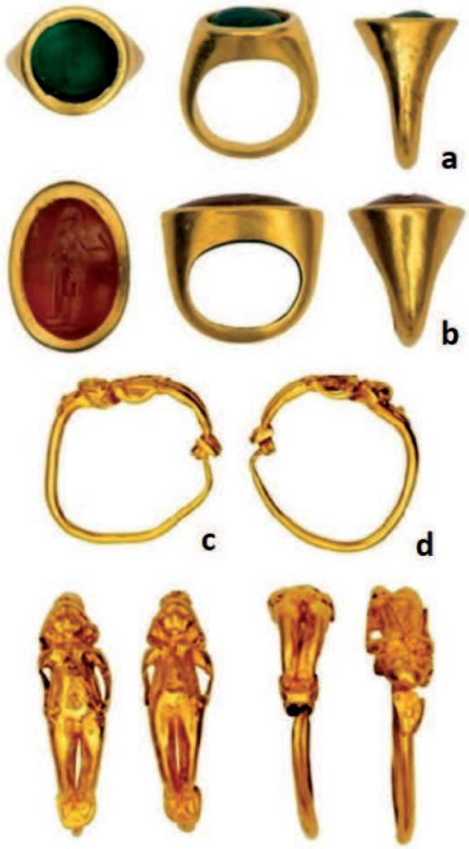


Fig. 5. Ring and earrings



Fig. 6. Gold sequins

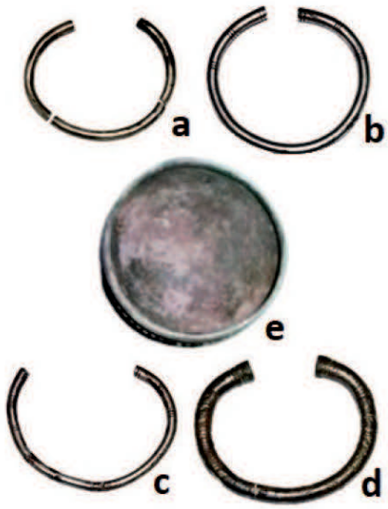


Fig. 7. Silver bracelets and mirror



Fig. 8. Silver coin, bowl and pottery vessel



Fig. 9. Bronze seat bases

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ANCIENT CERAMICS OF NARGIZTEPE

Abstract. Nargiztepe stands as an important archaeological monument from the Middle Bronze Age, officially registered with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan under inventory number 1116. Archaeological research at Nargiztepe began in 2013 and is still ongoing. The settlement's surface materials feature a vast collection of ceramic fragments. The pottery discovered at Nargiztepe exhibits notable characteristics, primarily crafted from clay blended with coarse sand, resulting in well-fired vessels with sturdy walls. However, it is important to highlight that medieval pottery diverges from this pattern, typically fashioned from fine clay. Among the unglazed pottery, an abundance of pitcher and jug-type containers are prevalent. Excavations conducted to examine the stratification of the northern section of the settlement revealed that Nargiztepe is comprised of three distinct cultural phases: Middle Bronze Age, Ancient Era, and Medieval Period.

Keywords: Nargiztepe, Karabakh, Mil-Karabakh, Albania, ceramics

Nargiztepe is situated in the Khojavend district, occupying a prominent position where the foothills of the Karabakh mountain range intersect with the Mil-Karabakh plain. The site is located at a distance of about 7-8 km from Mount Garachug, with the river Hunashen flowing just 0.7 km southeast. The monument stands at a height of 8 meters, encompassing an area of approximately 1.3 hectares, which is quite significant in its own right.

Archaeological research at Nargiztepe was initiated in 2013 and has since remained an ongoing endeavor. Throughout the extensive exploration, German experts played a vital role in facilitating various practical tasks. Geodesist A.Kvast utilized advanced technical equipment to meticulously produce a topographic plan of the monument. Geophysicists J.Fassbinder and F.Becker contributed by drafting a magnetometer map of the surrounding area. Technician J.Krumnow undertook primary efforts in creating a 3D image of the Nargiztepe site.

The settlement boasts a plentiful array of ceramic fragments strewn across its surface. These pottery pieces exhibit several shared traits. Specifically, they are predominantly crafted from clay blended with coarse sand, resulting in a well-baked composition. Notably, their sturdy and robust walls stand out as a distinct feature that carries significant importance.

The medieval pottery stands out as an exceptional case within this context. These pottery pieces are typically crafted from fine clay. The interior of the plate-type vessels are adorned with geometric patterns, and are coated with glazes in shades of green, brown, and cream.

In the unglazed pottery collection, pitcher and jug-shaped containers predominate. The large pitchers have mouth diameters of up to 50 cm. Some containers feature an ornamental rope design on the rim, reminiscent of ancient and medieval cooking pots. Jug-shaped pots often bear distinctive black stains. Many pots exhibit convex and concave patterns, engravings, and cuts on their shoulders. However, examples of sherds from the Middle Bronze and Early Iron Ages are relatively uncommon.

A fragment originating from the mouth and shoulder of a large-bellied grey vessel, characterized by its thick walls and associated with the Middle Bronze Age, grabs attention. Both the interior and exterior

surfaces of the vessel exhibit meticulous polishing. The rim slightly curves outward. Adorning the shoulder of the pot is a pattern composed of perforated circles and intricately carved geometric lines with sharp edges, all converging towards the mouth. Black polished ceramic samples discovered in the vicinity of Nargiztepe bear resemblance to pottery from the Early Iron Age in the region. Fragments dating back to Antiquity originate from pottery made of fine clay, displaying exquisite smoothing and thin walls, often exhibiting traces of red paint.

The exploratory soundings conducted to examine the stratification of Nargiztepe, specifically in the northern part of the settlement, revealed the presence of three distinct cultural phases: the Middle Bronze Age, Antiquity, and the Medieval Period. Encountering rare fragments of Early Iron Age pottery, including rims, bodies, and handles of black glossy containers, within the monument signifies the existence of a cultural layer from this particular period. Of special interest is a stone wall constructed using large oval stones, discovered at a depth of 2.5 meters, which appears to be associated with a mud-brick pavement. This 2.7-meter-wide wall is believed to have encircled the entire mound.

One of the most intriguing artifacts discovered during the cleaning process near the walls is a clay human figure. Standing at 4.2 cm tall, this delicate sculpture is made of fine clay, although its head, right arm, and legs are missing.

The discovery of a protective wall, coupled with the scarcity of Middle Bronze Age pottery in this layer, suggests that Nargiztepe, like Uzerliktepe in the Aghdam district, served as a fortified town site.

In an elevated area southwest of Nargiztepe, situated at an altitude of 218 meters above sea level, pits, stone fragments, and scattered pottery were discovered. Among these findings, observable are obsidian flakes exhibiting finely retouched edges. Additionally, various stone tools, predominantly consisting of mill and grinding stone fragments, were identified. Notably, the grinding stones exhibit distinct characteristics—the utilized side is flat, while the opposite side is convex, resembling a boat-like shape. One remaining part of such a grinder, crafted from solid river stone, measures 22 cm in length and approximately 13.5 cm in width. Interestingly, a grinding stone made of gray river stone bears a striking resemblance to the sole of a child's foot, measuring 8.5 cm in length and 3.5 cm in width at its center.

The surface ceramics at Nargiztepe exhibit a range of colors, including black, grey, and pink. The large household pitchers were crafted from clay mixed with coarse sand. The household utensils, particularly jars, jugs, and bowl-type vessels, were skillfully made from well-fired clay. The pottery handles can be categorized into two groups: band-like and stick-like. For instance, a pot-type vessel featured a big stick-like handle adorned with parallel slanting strips drawn in red paint. The rim of the jar was framed with the same colored paint.

The spout of another pot is crafted from very fine clay, with a meticulously smoothed surface adorned with red paint decorations. This type of patterned vessel is commonly discovered at ancient monuments in the Mil-Karabakh region, including sites like Galatepe, Garakober, and others.

Pots with incised handles were also present. One particular stick-like handle stands out with three deep incisions. During our exploration, we came across a rain-formed pit on a slope, where scattered artifacts piqued our interest. A sounding was conducted in a 2 x 2 m area surrounding the pit, leading to the discovery of a large burial jar. This jar, oriented with its mouth facing south and the base north, measured 1.35 m in height and 0.8 m in body width, with a mouth diameter of 37 cm and base diameter of 22 cm. The edges of the mouth were adorned with rope-like patterns. The deceased was buried in a flexed position, lying on the left side, with the head positioned towards the mouth of the pot and facing west. Unfortunately, the bones were extensively damaged.

Based on the grave goods discovered, it can be inferred that the deceased was likely a female because adjacent to the head, an intact grey pot was found, along with a fragmented jug and a finely crafted, black polished bowl (albeit broken). Within the burial jar, a collection of artifacts included four bracelets made of bronze wire, a pair of earrings, a ring, and approximately 90 colorful beads composed of various materials.

These items bear similarities to artifacts found in ancient jar burials unearthed across Caucasian Albania. Preliminary excavations at the current site of the Nargiztepe complex confirmed the presence of a necropolis consisting of jar burials. These burials, securely positioned beneath the firm rocky soil at a considerable depth on a gently slanting slope, have remained remarkably preserved. Future archaeological excavations at this ancient necropolis hold significant potential for shedding light on the political, socio-economic, and cultural aspects of life in Caucasian Albania.

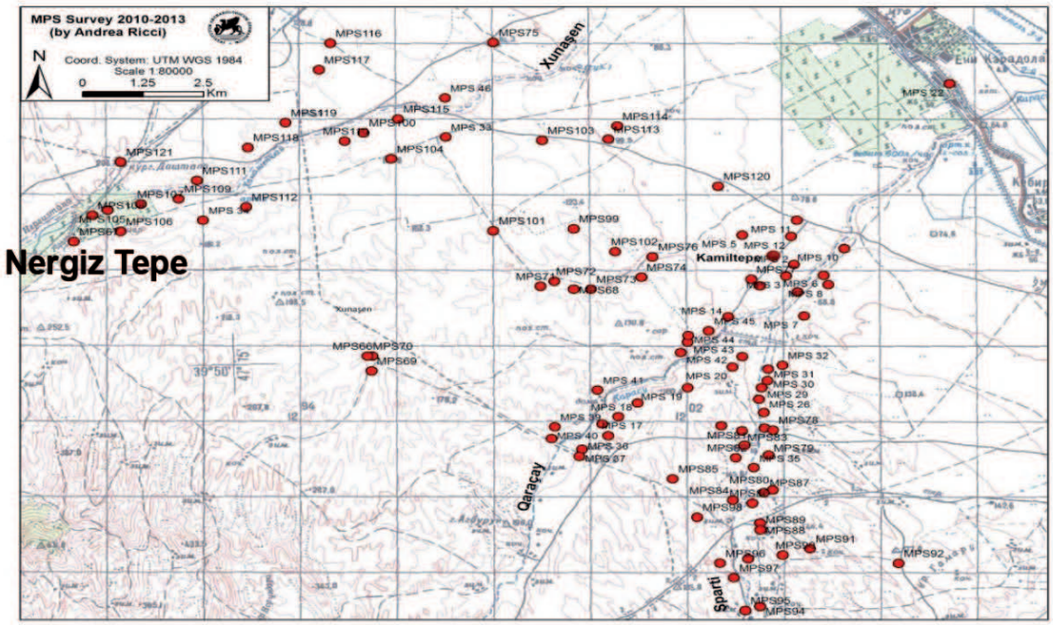
In recent times, the Nargiztepe necropolis has garnered significant attention due to the discovery of a jar burial. The jar's neck was positioned towards the south, while the base faced north. The funerary jar measured 135 cm tall, with a neck diameter of 37 cm, a body diameter of 80 cm, and a base diameter of 22 cm. In the jar, a skeleton was found lying on its left side in a crouched posture, with the head facing west towards the jar's mouth. The skeletal remains exhibited severe deformities. Among the grave goods, notable items included four bracelets crafted from bronze wires, earrings, a ring, and over 90 diverse beads. Based on the inventory discovered, it can be inferred that a woman was laid to rest in this grave. Further investigations and continued efforts at this necropolis will provide valuable insights into the political, socio-economic, and cultural aspects of life in Caucasian Albania.

Conclusion. The unearthed findings provide evidence that the stone-covered earthen graves at this site are associated with pagan religious rituals and burial traditions dating back to either Antiquity or the Early Middle Ages. Among the various ceramic artifacts uncovered, special attention is drawn to fragments of an earthenware vessel adorned with red-painted designs. This large capacity pot is crafted using crimson clay, and its surface is adorned with intricate designs that span across the shoulder, body, and handle. These patterns consist of geometric elements such as straight, perpendicular, and intersecting lines, as well as arches. Additionally, they incorporate depictions of natural elements like the sun, mountains, and trees, along with zoomorphic shapes like deer. These decorative motifs, excluding the zoomorphic designs, are commonly observed on the ceramic artifacts discovered in other historic sites throughout Karabakh. Notable locations include Galatepe, Uzerliktepe, Garakopaktepe, Garakobar, among others. Moreover, some fragments bear a resemblance to specimens found in the nearby Nargiztepe settlement.

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Topographic plan by Anna Kvast





Ceramic artifacts from Antiquity



Ceramics of Nargiztepe

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ARAN AND ADURBADAGAN IN THE 6TH CENTURY*

Abstract. The article examines the issue of administrative and political connections between two neighboring historical regions, Caucasian Albania (Aran) and Adurbadagan, which formed part of the Sassanid Iran during the reign of Shahanshah Khosrow I Anushirvan as a result of military and administrative reforms of the Adurbadagan region (*kust*) headed by the commander (*spahbed*). The Adurbadagan kust included both the Adurbadagan province (*shahr*) itself and Albania/Aran, along with other provinces of the South Caucasus. The information from the Syriac "Life of Gregory" and the seals of the spahbeds of Adurbadagan indicate a successive, possibly hereditary, military-administrative governance by representatives of the House of Mihran over the Adurbadagan kust and the Caucasian provinces. This may explain the rise of the Mihranids to power in Aran after the failed rebellion of Bahram Chobin (590–591), who was also a representative of the Mihran family. The House of Mihran maintained their positions in Adurbadagan and in the Caucasus throughout the 6th century, during the reigns of shahanshahs Kavad I, Khosrow I, and Hormizd IV. It can be assumed that this was due to the support of the House of Mihran by the Sassanids, particularly by Kavad I, during their struggle against the House of Karen during challenging times for the state. The inclusion of Albania/Aran in the Adurbadagan kust is clearly confirmed by twenty Middle Persian inscriptions from Derbent, composed on behalf of Darius, the chief fiscal officer (*amargar*) of Adurbadagan.

Keywords: Caucasian Albania, Aran, Sassanid Iran, Adurbadagan, Middle Persian inscriptions, Derbent, amargar

Caucasian Albania (Ancient Greek: Ἀλβανία, Latin: Albania, Parthian: Ārdān, Middle Persian: Ārān) and Atropatene (Ancient Greek: Ἀτροπατήνη, Ἀδραβιγνων, Parthian: Āturpātakān, Middle Persian: Ādurbādagān), being neighboring countries, evidently maintained close trade, economic, and political ties during the ancient period, continuing until the conquest and incorporation of the latter into the Sassanid state shortly after the rise of the Sassanids, possibly as a *shahr* (Middle Persian: *šahr*, "country, region; city"). During the Sassanid period, as noted by C.Schippmann, Atropatene, or more precisely, Adurbadagan, "became a tightly integrated part of the empire instead of a loosely attached vassal state as it was during the Parthian era" [Schippmann, 1987, p.224]. To a large extent, this was due to the religious significance of the region, as it was home to one of the three main Zoroastrian fire temples ("Great Fires") called Adur Gushnasp (modern-day Takht-e Soleiman), as well as its military-strategic role on the northern border of the Sassanid state, particularly during Iran's expansion into the Caucasus and its struggles against nomadic tribes. Unfortunately, we have very limited information about Adurbadagan and, even more so, its connections with Caucasian Albania in the early Sassanid period. The role and significance of Adurbadagan significantly increased in the late Sassanid period, particularly during the reign of Shahanshah Khosrow I Anushirvan (531–579), due to the escalation of the military and political situation on the northern border of the Iranian state (Middle Persian: *Ērānšahr*). During that time, it is known that the region held the administrative status of a *shahr*, as evidenced by various inscriptions on late Sassanid intaglios [Gyselen, 2002, p.127].

* This article incorporates materials from a previously published article [Гаджиев, Дунцов, 2023, с.173-187].

The region was headed by a shahanshah-appointed governor called a *shahrab* (Middle Persian: *šahrab*, "defender of the shahr/province") [Gyselen, 2019, p.31, 427]), whose residence was the city known as *Shahrestan-i Adurbadagan*, which refers to Ganzak or Ardabil [Ghodrat-Dizaji, 2010, p.76]. The sources also provide information that the governor of the region held the title of *marzban* (Middle Persian: *marzbān*), which means "guardian of the border". In the Syriac "Life of Pethion", a Persian martyr executed around 447 AD, there is a mention of the marzban of Adurbadagan (Syriac: Ādʰorbāīgʰān) named Tohm-Hormazd, who resided in Ganzak [Hoffmann, 1880, s.64]. Additionally, al-Baladhuri mentions a marzban of Adurbadagan, whose residence was located in Ardabil (quoted in: [Хуршудян, 2015, с.91; Khurshudian, 1998, s.69]).

By this time, possibly as a result of the Iran-Savir war of 503–508 AD, around 510 AD, the royal authority in Caucasian Albania was abolished following the death (?) of the last Arsacid-Sassanid king of Albania, Vachagan III (c.485 – c.510 AD) (for the period of his reign, see: [Гаджиев, 2015, с.68-75; Gadjiev, 2020, p.29-35]). Given the established system of governance in the Caucasian provinces at that time, their military-strategic and border position, as well as the tradition of Sassanid military-administrative command, it can be assumed that Albania obtained the status of a province/*shahr* with its center in Partav, led by a military-administrative governor/*marzban*.

V.I.Goiladze drew attention to the fact that in the early to mid-6th century (517–518, 554–555), there was a combined governorship of Albania and Iberia, led by a military commander who held the titles of *marzban* and *kanarang* (Middle Persian: *kanārang*, "guardian/protector of the border") [Гоиладзе, 1979, с.8, 14-16]. These positions were occupied by representatives of the highest military aristocracy of Iran (known as *asvārān*, "cavalrymen"), who held a status in the military-administrative hierarchy that was similar to that of a *spahbed* (Middle Persian: *spāhbed*, "army commander"; for the position/title of *spahbed*, see: [Gyselen, 2001; 2004]; see also: [Khurshudian, 1998, s.147-154; Хуршудян, 2015, с.195-205]) and were directly subordinate to the shahanshah [Christensen, 1944, p.521-522]. It is possible that the formation of this unified governorship was influenced by the complex military-political situation in the Caucasus, where Iran and Byzantium were engaged in a struggle for control. The formation of a unified governorship obviously aimed at establishing a unified fiscal and financial administration, and in support of this view, I can mention the intaglio of the *amargar* of Aran and Virozan (*Ārdān ud Werōzān āmārgar*) [Gyselen, 2002, p.38, 439; 2019, p.129, 254, 439], i.e. Albania and Georgia (Iberia/Kartli), which is likely from the same period.

It is known that as a result of the military and administrative-territorial reforms of Shahanshah Khosrow I Anushirvan (531–579) (see: [Rubin, 1995, p.225-297]), Iranshahr was divided into four major administrative-territorial districts (Middle Persian: kust, kustag, "region, side"), each corresponding to one of the cardinal directions. These included: the Eastern kust (Middle Persian: *kust ī Xwarāsān*), the Western kust (Middle Persian: *kust ī Xwarārān*), the Southern kust (Middle Persian: *kust ī Nēmrōz*) and the Adurbadagan kust (Middle Persian: *kust ī Ādurbādagān*), which was understood to be the northern district. According to R.Gyselen, the designation of this kust was not based on the cardinal direction but rather on the name of the region, because the term "north" (Middle Persian: *abāxtar*) had a negative connotation, referring to a territory of demons [Gyselen, 2004]. It is difficult to determine the exact timing of the reform, but it can be assumed that it was completed by 541 AD, at the beginning of the new war with Byzantium (known as the Lazic War). The Adurbadagan kust included not only Adurbadagan proper, a historical province in northwestern Iran between the Sefid Rud and Aras rivers and Lake Urmia, but also all the Sassanid possessions in Transcaucasia, including Albania, Persarmenia, and Iberia, along with various sub-regions such as Sisagan/Sigan, Mughan, Balasagan, and others.

Along with the abolition of the position of supreme commander (Middle Persian: Ērān-spāhbed, *spāhbedān spāhbed*) the offices of four *spahbeds* were established to oversee the military and administrative administration of the respective districts, directly reporting to the shahanshah.

The division of Iranshahr into four districts is confirmed by both written sources (*Shahrestaniha i Eranshahr*, *Ashkharhatsuyts*, at-Tabari, ad-Dinawari, al-Khwarizmi, etc.) and the discovery of unique bullae with seal impressions of the military commanders, the spahbeds, from all four regions. Of particular interest

to our topic are the seals of the spahbeds of Adurbadagan mentioned by name (Middle Persian: *Ērān kust ī Ādurbādagān spāhbed*), specifically Gorgon (*Gōrgōn*), Sed-hosh (*Sed-hoš*), and ...-Khosrow (*...-Husraw*), which can be dated to the reign of Khosrow I Anushirvan, as well as one seal from the reign of Hormizd IV (571–590) [Gyselen, 2001, p.35-46; Gyselen, 2007, p.272-277; Gyselen, 2019, p.452; Daryaee, Safdari, 2010, p.1-15]; see also: [Daryaee, 2002; Maksymiuk, 2015] (Fig. 1). As convincingly suggested by P.Pourshariati [Pourshariati, 2008, p.103], spahbed Gorgon can be identified with Golon Mihran (*Gołon Mihrān*), also known as Mihran Mihrewandak (*Mihrān Mihrewandak*), who is mentioned by Sebeos in relation to military events in the Caucasus in the 570s (Sebeos, 1999, p.7, 10, 163).



Fig. 1. Seal impressions of the spahbeds of Adurbadagan [Gyselen, 2019, p.270]

When discussing the representatives of the House of Mihran who headed the Adurbadagan region, it is worth noting an account from one of the Syriac hagiographies of Persian martyrs ("The Life of Gregory"). It tells the story of Piran Gushnasp, who embraced Christianity and received the name Grigor upon baptism, possibly in honor of Gregory (Armenian: Grigor) the Illuminator. According to the text of the hagiography, he belonged to the Mihranid family, served as the governor of Adurbadagan under the shahanshahs Kavad I (488–498/499, 501–531) and Khosrow I Anushirvan (531–579), and was martyred for apostasy in 542. The hagiography narrates as follows:

"During that time, there lived a man from Rai, originally from the House of Mihran (Mihrān), a great king who was initially known as Piran Gushnasp (Pirāngušnasp), and upon baptism, received the name Grigor (Grig^{h}*ōr*). He was appointed by the king [Kavad I. – *M.G.*] *to rule over many nobles as the governor of the Northern (awāhtar) region and borders, and the king commanded him to guard the lands of Gurzan (Gurzān) and Arran (Arrān), and he had thousands of cavalry under his command"* [Hoffmann, 1880, s.78-86].

I would like to note that in the retelling of this hagiography by E.A.Mishin, Armenia is incorrectly mentioned instead of Arran [Мишин, 2014, с.457], and E.S.Khurshudian, in my opinion, mistakenly refers to him as the marzban of Georgia and Arran [Хуршудян, 2015, с.94; Khurshudian, 1998, s.71], though it is possible that during the reign of Kavad I, prior to the implementation of the military-administrative reforms and the establishment of the position of spahbed of the North (Adurbadagan), he served as the marzban of Georgia and Arran, which aligns with the aforementioned information about the existence of a combined governorship of Georgia and Albania. Indeed, the mention in the text that Piran Gushnasp was appointed as the "governor of the Northern region and borders" refers to the Northern kust or the kust of Adurbadagan. This suggests that he was the spahbed of Adurbadagan, at least during the reign of Khosrow I until his martyrdom in 542. This is further emphasized by the remark in the hagiography that "the king commanded him to guard the lands of Gurzan and Arran, and he had many thousands of cavalry under his command". This highlights his extensive territorial authority, which was not limited to Adurbadagan alone, but included strategically important border regions of Albania and Georgia, during the military and political situation in the 520s.

The information from "The Life of Gregory" and the seals of the spahbeds of Adurbadagan apparently indicate a successive, traditional, and possibly hereditary military-administrative governance of the Adurbadagan kust and the Caucasian provinces by representatives of the House of Mihran. This could potentially explain the rise of the Mihranids to power in Albania following the unsuccessful rebellion of Bahram Chobin (590–591), who was also a representative of the Mihranid family. Researchers have repeatedly pointed out that the military-administrative reforms of Khosrow I were aimed, among other things, at curbing the growing influence of powerful Iranian houses, particularly the Parthian ones. The examples provided above seemingly demonstrate the House of Mihran's ability to maintain their position in Adurbadagan and the Caucasus throughout the 6th century, during the reigns of shahanshahs Kavad I, Khosrow I, and Hormizd IV. It can be assumed that this was due to the support of the House of Mihran by the Sassanid rulers, particularly Kavad I, in their confrontation with the House of Karen during challenging times for the state.

The inclusion of Albania within the Adurbadagan kust is clearly reflected in the Middle Persian inscriptions of Derbent, composed on behalf of Darius, the *amargar* of Adurbadagan (*Dariuš ī Ādurbādagān āmārgar*) [Гаджиев, Касумова, 2006; Гаджиев, Дунцов, 2023, с.173-187], the main financial and tax inspector of this region, who, on behalf of Shahanshah Khosrow I and the spahbed of Adurbadagan, played a crucial role in financing and overseeing the construction of the colossal defensive complex of Derbent, at least during the initial and most significant stages of the project, which involved the construction of the northern city defensive wall and the citadel (for information about the timing of their construction, see: [Гаджиев, 2006, с.77-94; Gadjiev, 2008, p.1-15]). Let me remind you that the correct reading of the name of the amargar Darius became possible thanks to the discovery of Inscription No. 29 [Гаджиев, 2000, с.119-122, рис.4; Гаджиев, Касумова, 2006, с.78-81, рис.36], and I would also like to note that the position of amargar of Adurbadagan is attested on the impression of the intaglio/seal [Gyselen, 2007, p.42, 132; Gyselen, 2019, p.31, 253, 439] (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. Seal impression of āmārgar of Ādurbādagān [Gyselen, 2019, p.31]

Until recently there were 32 known Middle Persian inscriptions carved on the walls of the Derbent defensive complex in the late 560s, documenting its construction [Гаджиев, Касумова, 2006]. Currently, the corpus of Middle Persian inscriptions of Derbent has been expanded with three additional inscriptions, Nos. 33-35, which have been discovered in recent years [Гаджиев, Дунцов, 2023, с.173-187] (Fig. 3). These newly discovered inscriptions belong to subgroup B of group 1 of the Middle Persian inscriptions of Derbent, and they represent the inscriptions of amargar Darius. Their texts are identical: *Dariuš ī Ādurbādagān āmārgar* or "Darius, the amargar of Adurbadagan".

As of day, a total of 20 (out of 35) inscriptions are known that are composed in the name of Darius and document his activities in Derbent. All of these inscriptions are carved on the northern defensive wall of the city, where a total of 25 Middle Persian inscriptions are located (Fig. 4).

I would like to remind you that the inscriptions of amargar Darius are classified into four groups based on their content [Gadjiev, 2016]:

1 – Name (inscriptions Nos. 11, 26, 31: *Dariuš*);

2 – Name and title (inscriptions Nos. 7, 10, 24, 27-29, 33-35: *Dariuš ī Ādurbādagān āmārgar*);

3 – Construction data, name, and position (inscriptions Nos. 1, 2, 4-6, 9, 25; for example: *az ēn ābarbar Dariuš ī Ādurbādagān āmārgar; ēn ud az ēn ābarbar Dariuš ī Ādurbādagān āmārgar; pahnāy čahar ī Dariuš ī Ādurbādagān āmārgar*);

4 – Construction data, date, name, and title (inscription No. 3: *ēn ud az ēn ābar sāl 37 Dariuš ī Ādurbādagān āmargar kard*).

Based on the results of excavations conducted in the area where the inscriptions are located (Pit 26 near Tower No. 3, Excavation XXII near Tower No. 12, and Excavation XXIX near Tower No. 19 – [Гаджиев, 2010, с.25, 37, рис. 7; Гаджиев и др., 2015, рис. 4; Гаджиев и др., 2019, с.11-13]), the original ground level during the construction of the northern city wall in these sections is estimated to be 1.4-1.5 meters (Excavation XXIX) and 2.5-2.6 meters (Pit 26, Excavation XXII) below the modern level. There is a gradual increase in the thickness of the overlying layers in the northeast direction (towards the sea). The blocks with inscriptions Nos. 3, 5, and 11 were installed at a height of about 1.7-2.7 meters above the original ground level of the wall construction. The blocks with inscriptions Nos. 1, 2, and 33 were installed at a height of about 3.1-4.4 meters.

The inscriptions of amargar Darius are located on the northern city wall along its entire length. They start from the beginning of the wall, with inscriptions Nos. 30 and 31 located at distances of 6.3 meters and 5.5 meters, respectively, from the junction of the wall with the northeastern corner tower of the citadel. The inscriptions continue until the coastal section, with inscription No. 10 located near Tower No. 2. Furthermore, they are installed at a fixed height ranging from 0.3-0.6 meters to 3.3-3.4 meters above the modern ground surface. They document the control exercised by Darius, the amargar of Adurbadagan, over the construction of the northern city defensive wall of Derbent (and presumably the citadel as well, considering the structural connection between the northern defensive wall and the citadel, indicating their simultaneous construction – [Кудрявцев, 1982, с.103; Кудрявцев и др., 1978, с.126]) from the beginning of its construction to its completion.

On the other hand, significant stretches of the northern defensive wall of Derbent lack Middle Persian inscriptions, including those composed in the name of Darius. These sections are located between Towers Nos. 2-8, 11-15, 22-33, and 36-40. Given that the northern wall is significantly covered by thick cultural layers (up to 3-5 meters thick) from the medieval and modern periods, there is hope for the discovery of new Middle Persian inscriptions through excavations along the defensive wall and uncovering of the lower parts of the wall that are currently buried underground.

In conclusion, according to the information from the "Ashkharhatsuyts" reflecting the situation in the late Sassanid period, it is evident that from the late 6th to early 7th century, during the reign of Shahanshah Khosrow II Parviz (591–628), and until the rise of the Mihranid dynasty to power in Albania, the Adurbadagan kust was also referred to as the *kust Kapkoh* (Middle Persian: *kust ī Kāpkūh*, "kust of Caucasus"). It consisted of 10 or 14 shahrs, mentioned by name, and the South Caucasian regions were listed either as part of the Adurbadagan shahr or directly as part of the Kapkoh kust [Армянская География..., 1877, с.57-63; Патканов, 1883, с.21-32]. This obviously can be attributed to the political circumstances and related changes in administrative-territorial division that occurred during the unstable period in the Sassanid state.

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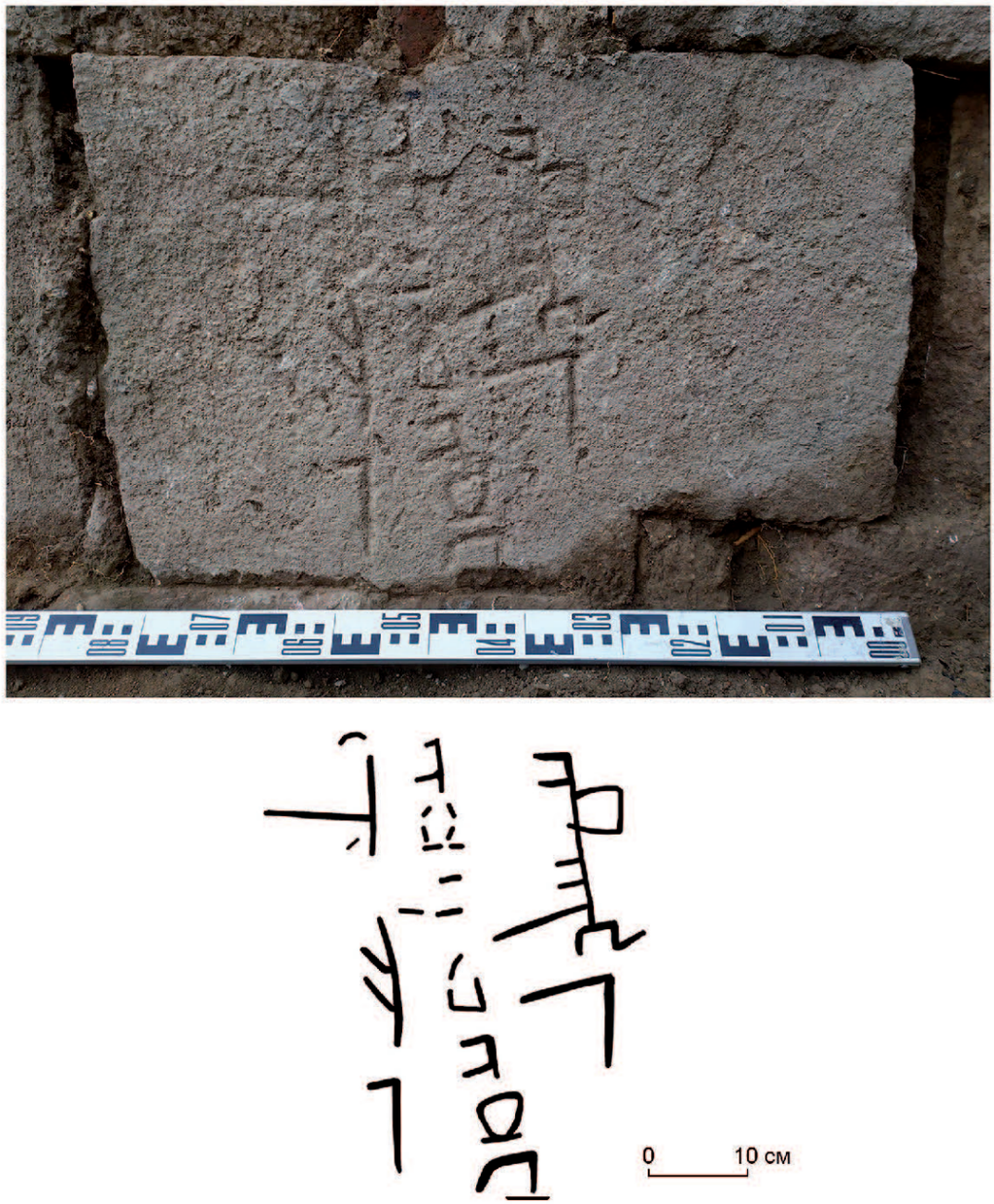


Fig. 3. Derbent. Middle Persian inscription No. 35

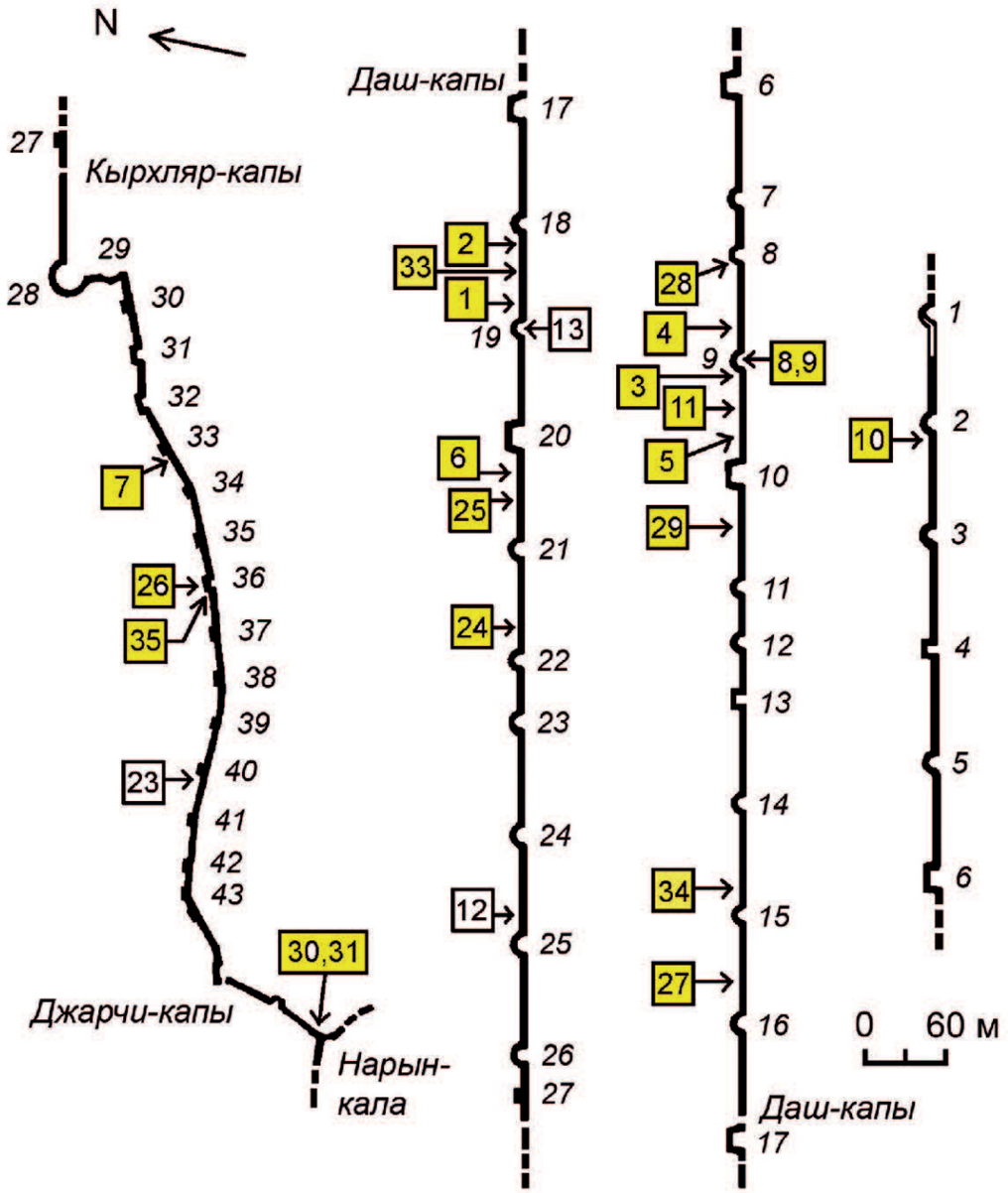


Fig. 4. Location of Middle Persian inscriptions on the northern city defensive wall of Derbent. Āmārgar Dariuš' inscriptions are highlighted in yellow

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NEW ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONUMENTS OF THE GUBA–KHACHMAZ REGION

Abstract. The article explores newly discovered monuments and pieces of material culture from the Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages in the Guba–Khachmaz region. The role of these new discoveries as a source for the study of the material culture of Caucasian Albania is also emphasized. The article stresses the necessity and relevance of comprehensive study in the region, taking into account previous historical-archaeological research. It highlights the significant role of archaeological monuments and material culture in revealing insights into the emergence of class society and an early state in Azerbaijan's northern territories. Specifically, it calls attention to the need for discovering and examining monuments from the Early Antiquity of the Caucasian Albanian state and early urban culture in the region. The article also underscores the importance of a systematic and interconnected approach to historical-archaeological research in studying the centuries-old monuments of Caucasian Albania.

Keywords: Ceramic, archaeological research, Tahmazi settlement, grave monuments

The objective of the study and the history of archaeological research of the region. In the Guba–Khachmaz region, archaeological monuments and examples of material culture from the Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages are often found. During this period, the region was densely and widely populated. The archaeological finds from the Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages in the region consist of settlements and grave monuments, as well as accidentally discovered archaeological monuments and examples of material culture. Despite the archaeological research carried out in the Guba-Khachmaz region covering all stages of the Bronze, Iron, Antiquity, and Middle Ages, historical-archaeological research has not fully covered the historical development issues and panorama of the region. Often, archaeological excavations were exploratory in nature, or were limited to brief excavation of archaeological monuments accidentally discovered during domestic work, road and canal construction, or soil erosion. Considering the rich material heritage of the region, it should be noted that there is a need for comprehensive historical-archaeological research of the Guba–Khachmaz region. Particularly, this issue is quite significant for the early Iron Age, i.e., the Antiquity when the class society was forming and Caucasian Albania emerged on the historical stage, because the studied archaeological monuments of this period in the north-eastern Azerbaijan are almost non-existent. With the exception of a few residential sites and burial mounds of the early Iron Age, large or urban-type settlements dating from the 5th–4th centuries BC to the 3rd century AD are rarely encountered and the historical-archaeological studies of this period have not been fully realized. Except for the Janakhir Hills (urban site), residential site and earthen graves of Rustov of the 1st–3rd centuries AD, the multi-layered Chinartala I monument (3rd millennium BC to the 8th centuries AD), including the graves found in the Kimaligeberish monument of the 4th BC – 7th AD centuries in the south-east of Khinalig village by I.N.Aliyev in 2018, the Early Antiquity archaeology of the region remains unexplored [Халилов, Кошкарлы и др., 1991, s.52-53, 109-113, 119-121; https://news.milli.az/culture/917683.html]. Specifically, periods from the 5th–4th centuries BC to the early centuries AD have been left out of archaeological and

historical research. The monuments frequently encountered and studied in this region are the settlements and various graves contemporary with the early medieval monuments of Albania. There could be several reasons for the lack of observations of the Early Antiquity:

1) To date, urban-type settlements and tomb monuments of the Early Antiquity have not been discovered, and cultural layers pertaining to this period have not been traced in settlements from previous periods;
2) The archaeological monuments of the relevant period are not observed because life in this region was not noticeably active during the Early Antiquity.

Both scenarios are encountered in the process of historical development and in research. However, if we pay attention to the history of the archaeological study of the region, we can shed light on some issues. Let us remind that the archaeological monuments of the region cover all periods from the Bronze Age to the Middle Ages. Of course, the archaeological monuments of the Early Bronze Age are not comparable in number with the monuments of the Middle Ages. As time went on, the number of settlements increased due to the increase in population and settlement over larger areas.

Archaeological research in this region first began in 1932 with A.K.Alakbarov in the Gusar region, following the discovery of several monuments that were uncovered during random earthworks. Later, in 1938, Y.A.Pakhomov conducted a short-term investigation associated with the discovery of earthen graves near the Guba–Khachmaz road during the construction of the Samur-Davachi, now Samur-Absheron canal. Based on the grave equipment, he noted that the findings belonged to the early centuries AD. In 1953, when the road of the Gusar region was expanded, ancient graves were disturbed between the villages of Avajug and Hil. At that time, I.M.Jafarzada and S.M.Gaziyev indicated that the findings belonged to the middle of the first millennium BC [Халилов, Кошкарлы и др., 1991, s.9].

From the second half of the last century, it is possible to observe the activities of archaeological explorations and stationary expeditions in the region. Extensive investigations have been conducted under the leadership of archaeologist C.A.Khalilov. However, in the exploration and discovery of archaeological monuments and material culture of the region, the services of A.Sh.Orujov, R.B.Goyushov, R.B.Arazova, G.O.Goshgarli, D.L.Musayev, T.R.Aliyev, M.J.Khalilov, I.N.Aliyev, T.M.Dostuyev, S.M.Aghamaliyeva, and others have been invaluable. The researchers mentioned have devoted attention to studying archaeological monuments and material culture remnants of various periods, as well as historical and ethnographic aspects of the region. J.A.Khalilov conducted archaeological excavations in many monuments of Guba, Gusar, and Khachmaz belonging to different periods. During the research, the region's material culture, residential and grave monuments were studied, and rich materials related to the economy and life, craftsmanship, and burial traditions of the Albanian population, including trade relations, were obtained [Xəlilov, Aslanov, 1973, s.176-184; Халилов, 1965, с.154-162; Халилов, 1965, с.175-179; Халилов, 1975, с.58-59; Халилов, Аразова и др., 1981, с.72-76; Халилов, Аразова и др., 1982, с.25-28].

During archaeological excavations, attention was also paid to studying urban-type monuments parallel to small settlements. Investigations carried out on the Janakhir hills have assisted in studying the formation of urban civilization and the structure and characteristic features of urban-type settlements that are of great importance to the region [Халилов, Кошкарлы и др., 1991, с.109-113; Достиев, 2002, с.50-51]. Thanks to some material culture samples obtained alongside the study of residential areas, grave monuments, ceramic production, and other areas belonging to the Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages, the international relations of Albania and the impact of other cultures on the local culture have been studied. Researchers participating in archaeological research in the north-eastern territory of Azerbaijan, including A.Sh.Orujov, G.O.Goshgarli, R.V.Arazova, and others, have implemented the study of various aspects of the material culture of Albania [Гошгарлы, 2012, s.23-25; Оруджев, 1977, s.495; Оруджев, 1978, s.500; Оруджев , 1980, s.18-19; Оруджев, 1979, с.24-26].

In recent years, stationary excavations have been carried out by M.J.Khalilov at residential and burial monuments from the Antiquity and Early Middle Ages in the Guba-Khachmaz region. A number of facts

observed with innovations in the economic life, household, craftsmanship, burial customs, religious beliefs, trade and cultural relations of the ancient population have been presented to the scientific community during the investigations. Extensive research has been carried out on the burial monuments of Albania related to the Early Middle Ages [Xəlilov M.C., 2006, s.101-114; Xəlilov M.C., 2007, s.398-402; Xəlilov M.C., 2011, s.209-211; Xəlilov M.C., Cəfərova, 2013, s.223-231; Xəlilov M.C., 2015, s.261-266; Xəlilov M.C., 2009]. At the same time, in this region, in recent years, archaeological excavations related to the Bronze and Antique periods have been carried out by I.N.Aliyev in the Khinaliq State Historical-Architectural and Ethnographic Reserve (https://news.milli.az/culture/917683.html), and by D.L.Musayev in various monuments of Khachmaz from ancient times..

When touching the problem from a general angle, it is impossible to deny the tight connection of each age with the historical periods before and after it. The emergence and formation of a settlement are related to the historical development before it, and it also plays a rol in the continuation of life after it. As the period and purpose of the current research presented is directly related to Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, it would be more appropriate to pay attention to the observation and area of archaeological monuments of this period in the region.

Archaeological monuments of the region related to the middle and end of the first millennium BC are quite limited. The Iron Age in this region is represented by the Late Bronze – Early Iron Age found in several monuments and Early Iron Age directly observed in some monuments. One of these monuments is the Aghyazi monument accidentally discovered in the territory of the Shabran region in 1970. J.A.Khalilov conducted preliminary explorations in the monument in 1973, collected various types of material culture samples and determined that the monument belonged to the early Iron Age [Халилов Дж. А., 1987, s.45-56]. Another discovery related to the Early Iron Age in the Shabran region is the Rustapa monument. The monument was identified and researched in 1980. A large number of material culture samples characteristic of the Iron Age have been collected from the monument [Алиев, 1984, s.85-88].

In separate years, the expedition studying archaeological monuments of Azerbaijan has examined Gullutapa II, Juhudtapa and Aghbil burial mounds of the Early Iron Age in Guba, the Ibrahimkhaliltapa settlement of Late Bronze–Early Iron Age, burial site of the Early Iron Age in the village of Nohurlar, the graves of the 1st millennium BC, the Gavdishan I and II burial mounds, Gaflatapa III settlement and Gukhuroba burial mounds of Early Iron Age in the village of Hil in Gusar, and Padartapa, Pirtapa, Haput, Chobantapa, Chinartala II burial mounds of the Early Iron Age on the road to Ashagi Zeyd in Khachmaz. These monuments shed light on the historical and archaeological aspects of the Early Iron Age [Халилов Дж., Кошкарлы и др., 1991, с.43-50, 75-76, 82-89, 114-122]. Despite the underrepresentation of the Iron Age settlements in the region, they could help illuminate some obscure aspects of the Early Antiquity. There could be several reasons why the Early Antiquity isn›t well-tracked in the region, as mentioned earlier. The observation of Iron Age monuments enables some possibilities. Without a doubt, the monuments and cultural layers belonging to the second half of the 1st millennium BC, that is, the period of emergence and development of Caucasian Albania, will be examined more broadly in future research. The widespread distribution of Late Antiquity – Early Middle Ages monuments across a large area in the subsequent phase suggests that the settlement here was continuous, although so far, very few monuments belonging to the classical antiquity period have been discovered. Uncovering monuments from the aforementioned period in the region will facilitate a deeper understanding of issues such as the emergence and development of urban culture, social relations, and state traditions, and the localization of the northern borders of Caucasian Albania. The purpose of extensive archaeological research on the newly discovered monuments is related to these factors.

Exploratory archaeological research uncovering new findings.

As a result of the exploratory archaeological research conducted in the Guba–Khachmaz region in 2021–2022, several new monuments, material culture samples and artifacts made of ceramic, stone, and metal of significant importance for the research period were discovered. During the research, monuments

and material culture remains belonging to the middle ages, but outside the chronological framework of the current research, were also found, and work has been done on their identification and determination of the period, and they have been registered for comprehensive research. The area where the newly registered monuments are densely located is observed on both banks of the Valvala and Chaghajug rivers (Fig. 1).

Artifacts belonging to various periods have been collected in the Rustov, Gamgam, Galagah, and Pustagasim villages within the Rustov Administrative Territorial Unit (ATU) of Guba district, among which materials related to the Antiquity and Early Middle Ages are not excluded. Exploratory archaeological search operations of a collecting nature have been carried out in the Guneymahalla, Shugna hill, Sudagalan (soil quarry) of Pustagasim village, and the entrance section extending along the Chaghajug river in Rustov village (Fig. 2.). It has been found that there was intensive life in these areas in the Late Antiquity, Early Middle Ages and Middle Ages. The discovered finds embody an important source function in the study of areas such as the material culture, economic life, craftsmanship and other social spheres, religious worldview, burial customs, etc. of Caucasian Albania during the indicated historical-archaeological periods.

Both the settlement and earth graves were studied by J.A.Khalilov in the territory of Rustov at the end of the last century. It was found out that life began to take shape in the territory of Rustov starting from the I–II centuries AD.Rustov, located on the right bank of the Chaghajug river, is one of the quite large and densely populated ancient residential monuments of Guba. There has been continuous and dense life in the village area for two thousand years. Finds belonging to different periods of the Late Antiquity and Middle Ages are often encountered in the village area [Халилов Дж., 1975, s.58-59; Халилов Дж., Кошкарлы и др., 1991, c.52-54]. The entrance of Rustov village extends along the Chaghajug river. The lowland residential area extending along the river bank is separated from the river bed by an area with steep slopes. In some places, a downward slope towards the river bank reminds of an ancient road that once led to a settlement. However, the strong influence of intensive settlement by the population for many years, the construction of various buildings, the conduct of agricultural activities has left no surface part of the settlement that would hint at any sign. Heavy machinery has intervened deep into the soil layers in many places, opening large cuts and canals. The layers of cultural layers are clearly observed in these cuts. Ceramic fragments and a large number of stone tools that came to the surface, as well as appeared during construction and agricultural works, have been collected from the area. The finds indicate an intensive and wide residential area of the Early Middle Ages. If extensive research is carried out, it is assumed that cultural layers of an older period can be encountered. Because frequent encounters with random archaeological monuments and finds from the Late Antiquity – Early Middle Ages in the territory of the villages within the Rustov ATU indicate that the population was densely settled in this region during this period (Table I). It is unquestionable that the initial phase of dense settlement (starting from the Early Antiquity) should be observed with residential sites of smaller scale compared to the Early Middle Ages. The complex and parallel exploration of this type of monuments plays a significant role in the process of researching the development features of the settlements and material culture of Caucasian Albania.

Archaeological and historical research in the area of Pustagasim village is being carried out at a new and initial stage. Preliminary studies of the material culture samples collected from this village area were published in 2015 in the articles collection of the National Museum of History of Azerbaijan [Mustafayev, 2015, s.299-308]. Pustagasim village is located on the Guba–Gonagkand road. In the soil quarry at the entrance of the village, in an area called Shugna hill, in the neighbourhood named Dahna, pottery vessels and fragments characteristic of the Early Middle Ages have been discovered. Some of them are decorated with deeply incised, glossed patterns which are iconic for the region. The mouthpiece of a certain portion of the water vessels is embossed and funnel-shaped. Among the findings, metal weapon objects and ornaments, and samples of grinding stones reflecting the characteristics of the ancient inhabitants' domestic life were also discovered (Pic. 1, Fig. 3-11, 13). The collected ceramic samples are typical for the region and stand out with their specific characteristics [Mustafayev, 2018, s.208-213; Xəlilov M.C., Cəfərova, 2013, s.227].

There are quite a lot of archaeological monuments from the early Middle Ages in the Guba–Khachmaz region. Minor exploratory excavations have been conducted in some of these monuments, while extensive excavation work has been carried out in some others. However, some monuments have only been registered and examined superficially. The medium-sized mound-like area named Ilanlı Tapa (or Ilantapa), belonging to the early Middle Ages, in the Aghbil village of Guba region is one of these types of monuments. Significant information for the period was obtained during the archaeological exploration works of collecting nature carried out around the monument in 2021. This monument located at the entrance of the village was accidentally identified by the villagers, and some rough unlawful excavations were conducted in several places. The preliminary analysis of the ceramic fragments collected from the monument allows us to say that this area belongs to the Late Antiquity – Early Middle Ages. The remains of buildings are observed in the excavated areas. Note that Aghbil village is rich with archaeological and historical monuments with a history of several millennia. Here, there are burial mounds of the Iron Age, settlements of the Early Middle Ages, and historical buildings of the Middle Ages [Халилов Дж., Кошкарлы и др., 1991, s.31, 48]. The research of Aghbil, with its long history and archaeological monuments, is quite fruitful for the complex study of the region. At the same time, it is a valuable source for learning about the local features of Albanian history and material culture.

Archaeological and historical monuments are also encountered in the territories of the Talabi and Kucheyi villages, which are part of the Talabigishlag municipality in Guba [Халилов Дж., Кошкарлы и др., 1991, c.59]. These villages are located on the Baku-Rostov highway, in the foothills to the west, between the Valvala and Chaghajug rivers. The observed settlements and graveyards in the area belong to the Middle Ages. However, there are areas in the foothill, partly mountainous area characteristic of Kucheyi village where the ruins of a fortress and fragments of surface ceramics were discovered. During the exploratory works in this area, large fortress walls carved from river stones with a late lime solution were indeed observed. Some of the fortress walls have fallen from the high summit where the monument is located into the valley. According to the informant, this area is pronounced as Galayho, Galeyho, or Galeylar among the villagers. It means fortresses. The distance from the post office area of the village to this area is 7.6 km. The monument is located in the north-west of the village. The dispersed and eroded walls of the fortresses and their observation over a large area indicate that this was not a watchtower or warning fortress. At the same time, it is clearly visible that there is a settlement on the east side when looking around the fortress wall remains. The potential residential area, covering several hectares, is close to where the fortress walls are observed. The area consists of an open space surrounded by a forest. Some areas of the site are covered with bushes, while part of it is used for farming purposes, that is, mowing grass and planting annual legume crops. A large number of unglazed pottery fragments and baked brick shards are observed in the area. Several ceramic fragments were collected for sampling. Remnants of the fortress walls are also encountered in the settlement. At the same time, there is a high oval-shaped hill in the part of the settlement extending from the north to the west. It is presumed to be a building remnant. Both the collected materials and the preliminary analysis carried out around the fortress wall remnants suggest that the monument belongs to the late stage of the Middle Ages. However, the lack of glazed ceramics in the monument and the absence of an exploratory excavation leaves some points in the dark. For instance, it cannot be ruled out that the initial settlement at the monument and the lower layers may belong to the Early Middle Ages as well. Early Middle Age ceramics, which are rarely encountered, are also found. It is also possible that there was initially a settlement in this area, which spread to the village of Talaby in the Middle Ages, and then continued to exist in this area again during the Late Middle Ages. This conclusion is initially hypothetical. In order to provide more detailed and comprehensive information and to determine the purpose of the monument, extensive research needs to be conducted. It should be noted for information that no research has been carried out on this monument so far.

New and notable discoveries include the monuments named Tahmazi and Takhtara in Sabatlar village, situated 30 km from the Guba region, on the right bank of the Valvala River, in a lowland area. Research

has revealed that Sabatlar village has an ancient and centuries-old history. Exploration and collection work performed in the village territory, as well as various cultural artifacts accidentally discovered from Sabatlar and other nearby villages at different times, provide substantial information about the village's history. Finds from the Antiquity and Early Middle Ages were uncovered from the lowland and mountainous areas south of the village. Several graves from the Antiquity were destroyed during road construction in the Takhtara area on the eastern side of the Tahmazi settlement in the 90s of the last century. These finds consist of two curved-mouthed and barrelled pottery liquid vessels, arrowheads, iron sickles, a blade fragment, and several bronze ornaments (Pic. 2). Similar items have been found during archaeological excavations conducted at individual monuments in the region and accidentally [Mustafayev, 2015, p.299-308; Xəlilov C.Ə., Aslanov, 1973, p.101-114; Xəlilov M.C., 2011, p.223-231]. The mouth part of an oinochoe-type vessel, characteristic of the Antiquity and Early Middle Ages, was discovered near the destroyed graves in the Takhtara area. Various pottery fragments and a large grinding stone were also discovered from the Tahmazi settlement and from the eastern and southeastern sides of Takhtara, in the forested area and high open slope.

The Tahmazi settlement is situated on a lowland area that spans more than 15 hectares. From this area, fragments of pottery, baked bricks measuring 34x34x8 cm used in construction, and part of a grinding stone have been discovered. Among the surface materials, fragments of pottery dating back to the Late Middle Ages are also found. The materials collected from the Tahmazi residential area and Takhtara, especially the ceramic samples, share similar characteristics with finds from various monuments in the Guba–Khachmaz region [Mustafayev, 2018, s.204-213; Orucov, 1989; Халилов Дж.,1985, s.107-126, 131-132, 136-151].

Based on exploratory research and collected material culture samples, it has been determined that Tahmazi was a substantial residential and urban site during the Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages. Life in this area ceased due to nomadic invasions during the Middle Ages but revived again in the Late Middle Ages. Exploring this new settlement could illuminate questions related to the formation of early cities in the region, the causes of changes in the social, political, and material culture of the Albanian state. The localization of Albania's northern borders and the identification and clarification of urban-type settlements are also among the main unresolved issues in Albanology today. It is worth noting that the Sirt Chichi village, which is rich in finds from Antiquity, is closely adjacent to the Sabatlar village. Archaeological excavations were conducted in this village's area at the end of the last century, leading to the discovery of a large number of material culture samples. These finds are associated with the Late Antique and Early Middle Ages, aligning with the historical development stage of Caucasian Albania [Xəlilov C., Aslanov, 1973, s.176-184].

Traces of settlements and cemeteries from the Middle and Late Middle Ages, known locally as Gizilgulushlun, Huleyli, etc., are found in the Tangaalti village's territory, adjacent to the Sabatlar village. It is evident that the population living in residential and urban sites during the Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages abandoned their homes during the nomadic invasions. They settled in more remote and inaccessible areas, with a portion returning in the Late Middle Ages due to population growth and economic expansion. This shift also correlates with the increase of settlements in Guba and Gusar's mountainous villages during the Middle Ages. Otherwise, people would not have extensively settled in such harsh mountain conditions. The construction of Middle Age castles in the region also supports this idea.

Additionally, there are unexplored monuments from the Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages in the lowland areas of Gusar and Khachmaz districts. Many archaeological monuments from this period, located in the lowland areas of Guba, Gusar, and Khachmaz districts, manifest as hills, sometimes taking an oval or elongated form [Халилов Дж., Кошкарлы и др., 1991, с.68-122]. Hills in the Jaghargishlag and Atlikhan villages of Gusar and the Uchgun hills of Khachmaz remain unstudied. During archaeological exploratory works conducted in these monuments in 2022, a significant amount of material consistent with the research period was gathered, mainly composed of pottery fragments. Pottery with depictions and patterns characteristic of the region is frequently discovered in these sites. The study of these monuments can play a significant role as a source in the investigation of the region's material culture and Caucasian Albania, shedding light on various historical-archaeological aspects.

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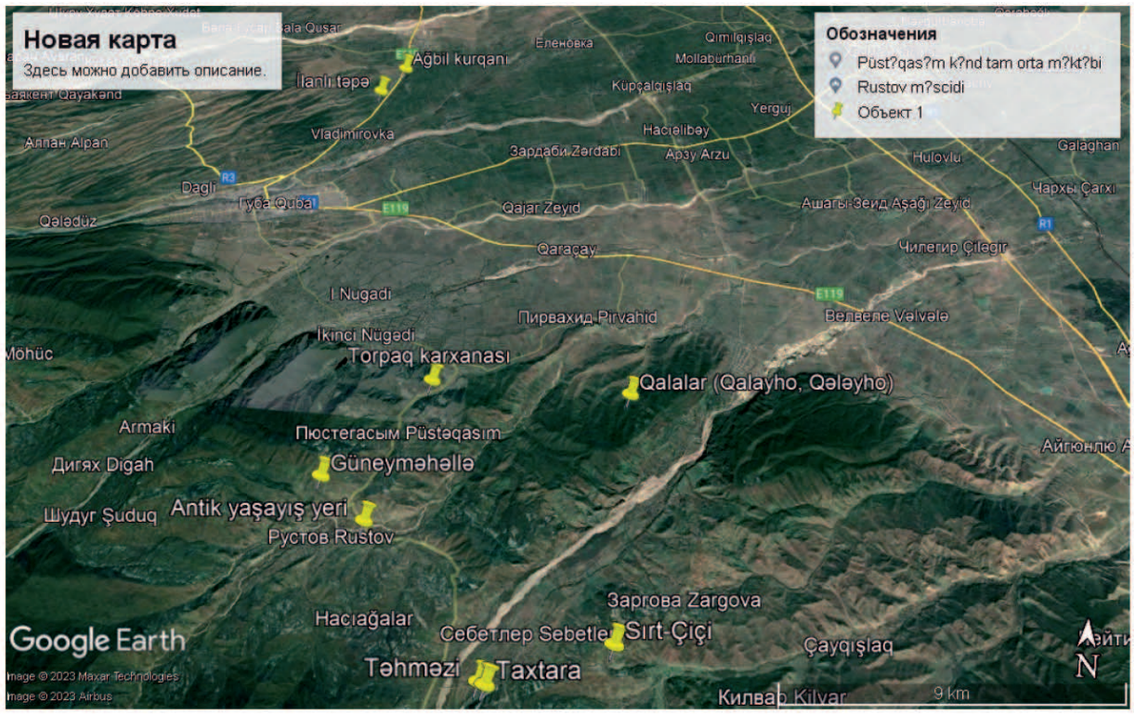

Новая карта
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Обозначения
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Rustov m?scidi
Объект 1
Ağbil kurqanı
İlanlı təpə
Vladimirovka
Alpan Alpan
Dəgli
Qələdüz
Qajar Zeyid
Qaraçay
I Nugadi
İkinci Nügədi
Torpaq karxanası
Qalalar (Qalayho, Qələyho)
Пирвахид Pirvahid
Mohüc
Armaki
Дигях Digah
Пюстеасым Püstəqasım
Güneymənəllə
Шудуг Şuduq
Antik yaşayış yeri
Рустов Rustov
Hacıağalar
Себетлер Sebetler
Sırt-Çiçi
Təhməzi
Taxtara
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Килвар Kilvar
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Fig. 1.

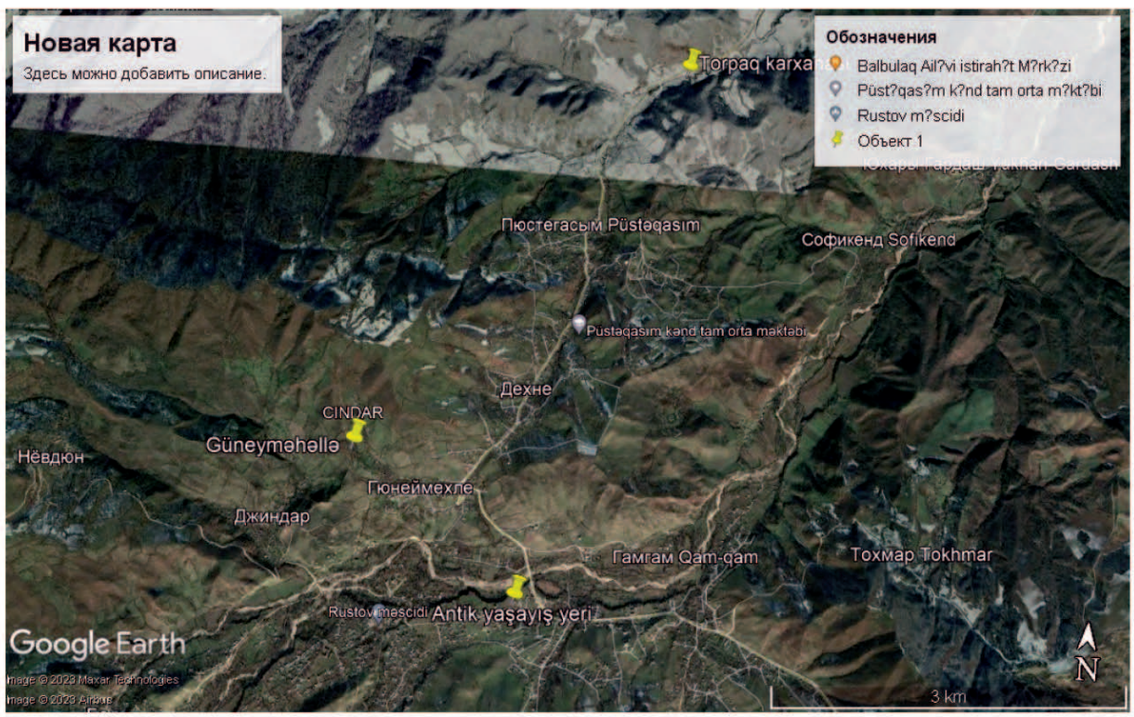

Новая карта
Здесь можно добавить описание.
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Püst?qas?m k?nd tam orta m?kt?bi
Rustov m?scidi
Объект 1
Torpaq karxa
Пюстеасым Püstəqasım
Софикенд Sofikend
Püstəqasım kənd tam orta məktəbi
Дехне
CINDAR
Güneymənəllə
Нёвдюн
Гюнеймехле
Джиндар
Гамгам Qam-qam
Тохмар Tokhmar
Rustov məscidi
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Fig. 2.



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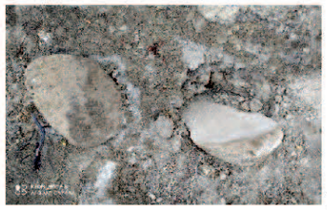
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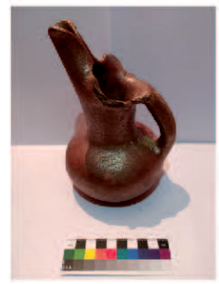
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Picture I. 1, 2 Galagah; 3 Shugnatapasi; 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13 Soil quarry; 6, 7 Dahna; 12 Rustov


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2

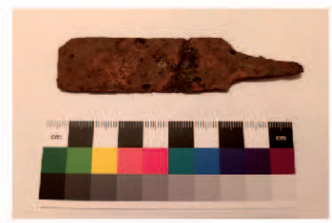

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Picture 2. Finds from destroyed graves in the area of Takhtara

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EXPLORING TAMGAS, SIGNS AND PATTERNS ON A GROUP OF ALBANIAN CROSS STONES (based on materials found in Gazakh, Gadabay, Dashkasan, and Shamkir districts)

Abstract. The study of the material cultural heritage of Caucasian Albania places significant importance on cross stones, which exhibit variations in their nature and content. This article specifically focuses on the Albanian cross stones recently discovered in the western regions of Azerbaijan, particularly during archaeological research at new construction sites. It also provides information on the signs, tamgas, and images engraved on these cross stones. These findings reveal the presence of Albanian crosses, symbolic marks, and tamgas etched on grave cross stones, reflecting the classical traditions of the region. What sets Albanian cross stones apart from other Christian variants is their intricate and compositional images, showcasing an organic synthesis of architecture, art, and religious symbolism of that era.

The distinctive feature of Albanian grave cross stones is the amalgamation of Christian iconography, Muslim ornamentation, and symbols from pagan religions, reflecting the religious freedom enjoyed by Albanians practicing Christianity or Islam. The Albanian grave cross stones discovered in Gazakh, Gadabay, Dashkasan, and Shamkir districts belong to the Khachin group. These cross stones exhibit a rich array of imagery, including depictions of the Sun, humans, animals, as well as geometric figures, patterns, signs, and tamgas. The exploration of these elements plays a pivotal role in unraveling the mythical religious beliefs of ancient Albanians.

Keywords: Antiquity, Caucasian Albania, Christianity, settlements, funerary monuments, cross stones, signs, tamgas

The historical-archaeological studies conducted thus far have revealed that the cross stones found in the South Caucasus can be classified into two distinct groups: grave cross stones and memorial cross stones. As their names imply, these cross stones exhibit differences in terms of their nature and content. While some cross stones are closely tied to the Christian religion, others incorporate pre-Christian religious-symbolic signs and symbols. Some researchers go as far as linking the origin of cross stones, which exhibit pre-Christian religious and cultural concepts, symbols, and signs, to ancient Turkic tribes [Gülensoy, 1989]. However, these views require solid scientific substantiation.

Based on current research and the studies conducted by authors, the historical origins of memorial cross stones and grave cross stones discovered in the South Caucasus region can be traced back to the early period of Caucasian Albania. These Albanian cross stones possess distinct characteristics and are rich in pre-Christian religious elements and symbols. One manifestation of this characteristic is their equilateral nature.

Equality characterizes both the four elements (earth, fire, water, air) and the world. Unlike other Christian cross stones, the cross stones of Albania are more adapted to its classical traditions [Геюшев, 1984].

D.A.Akhundov, who conducted scientific studies on Albanian cross stones and categorized them into distinct groups, emphasized that the cross stones offer valuable insights into the history of Albanian Christian monuments from both an archaeological and architectural standpoint and shed light on numerous aspects of Christianity [Ахундов, 2006, c.42-45]. Decorative art samples, diverse ornaments and other decorative samples were extensively used in crafting the material culture associated with Christianity during the Caucasian Albania period, including architectural monuments, target stones, funerary monuments, church supplies, epigraphic monuments, and other monuments with similar content. The researchers have referred to the monumental stelae found in Azerbaijan and present-day Armenia, predominantly originating from the medieval Christian principalities of Caucasian Albania and Karabakh, as "cross stones", and they have observed that the symbolic signs and markings on these stelae, possessing religious significance, are associated with pre-Christian religions such as Zoroastrianism and Mithraism [Ахундов, 2006, c.42-45]. Albanian cross stones are primarily classified into four groups: Khachin, Artsak, Culfa, and Yenivang. The majority of Khachin cross stones were discovered during research conducted in Kalbajar district [Ахундов, 2006, c.42-45].

Archaeological excavations in Azerbaijan, particularly in the western region, have yielded numerous remarkable examples of the material culture of Caucasian Albania [Мамедова, 1986; Гошгарлы, 2012]. Among these examples, tombstones, known as cross stones in scientific literature, hold a significant place. The marks, tamgas, and images engraved on these stones are of particular interest.

The depiction of the cross on Albanian cross stones is intricate and composite, setting them apart from other Christian cross stones. Some authors have suggested that the descriptions and symbolism found on Albanian cross stones draw inspiration from various sources, including fire-worship, Christianity, and even Islam [Якобсон, 1984, c.146-152]. In Albanian cross stones, the focus appears to be less on the main cross itself and more on the multitude of surrounding images that embellish and enrich it. The inclusion of prominent symbols like the sun, the tree of life, and other elements on these stones extends beyond the realm of Christian faith. The large central cross symbol depicted on Albanian cross stones often becomes intertwined with smaller crosses or is divided into smaller segments, blending seamlessly with the overall decorative elements of the stone. Consequently, the emphasis shifts from the main cross to the creation of a comprehensive physical composition, forming a unified artistic whole.

The history of the sign of the cross, considered one of the sacred symbols in the Christian religion, go back thousands of years before our era. The evolution of this symbol can be observed by examining petroglyphs and ceramics [Əliyev, 2022, s.46-47]. Various representations of the cross image have been discovered across pre-Christian material culture examples in Azerbaijan. Within Christianity, the sign of the cross serves as a depiction of Jesus Christ's association with the Sun, where the cross symbolizes both the Sun and Jesus Christ simultaneously.

While examining the semantics of the signs and tamgas found in the Gobustan and Gamigaya images, N.A.Museyibli successfully classified the cross signs into 15 distinct groups and provided a meticulous scientific explanation for these symbols [Müseyibov, 1992; Müseyibli, 1998; Müseyibli, 2004]. The researcher regarded circle- and wheel-shaped images featuring cross depictions as one of the most highly stylized symbols representing the Sun [Müseyibov, 1992, s.19-21].

Depictions and symbols featuring the sun and the wheel of fortune are frequently discovered on ceramics from the Khojaly–Gadabay culture as well as on clay pintaderas dating back to the Bronze Age [*Гусейнова*, 1982; Müseyibli, Nəcəfov, 2019, s.70-75; Наджафов, 2023, c.76-91].

Cross stones offer ample space for elements that are also incorporated into the edge strips. These edge strips are primarily positioned along the edges of the stones. They play a pivotal role in the decoration of cross stones, whether the surfaces are smooth or convex. The edge strips serve to frame the decorative area, dividing it into distinct sections. They can be depicted in various orientations, such as vertically,

horizontally, diagonally, or arranged in intricate patterns, forming an independent and cohesive composition. The small, medium, large and mixed mesh-like edge strips found on cross stones have been widely used in almost all decorative and applied arts [Əliyev və b., 2022, s.104-106]. These include stone carving, pottery, artistic ceramics, carpet weaving, metalworking, wood carving, and jewelry. Edge strips have evolved from simplicity to complexity since ancient times and continue to thrive as an enduring artistic tradition. In the past, they were engraved as simple lines on stone, clay vessels, and pottery, carrying symbolic significance. In the context of cross stones, edge strips typically adorn the top and sides of the stone.

Thanks to their artistic design and distinctive pictorial elements, Albanian cross stones achieved an organic synthesis of architecture, art, and religious symbolism of their time.

Some cross stones feature the depiction of an anthropomorphic "god" enclosed within a double rectangular frame. Instead of a face, heavenly bodies such as a star, the Sun, cosmic light, and the symbol of the "heavenly world" are represented within a circular shape on the figure's head. Additionally, an encircled symbol of fertility – a small Moon – is held in the figure's hand. Below, within a slightly smaller circle, there is a star denoting the "underworld" or its gateway. Researchers interpret these elements as a clear three-tiered representation of the world within the ancient Albanian worldview. The human figure serves as the axis connecting all the depicted realms. Such crosses are believed to date back to the early 1st century BC [Ахундов, 2006, с.42-45].

The religious significance of the anthropomorphic themes depicted on cross stones is undoubtedly profound. The distinctiveness of the memorials and tombstones of Albanians, who freely practiced both Christianity and Islam, lies in the amalgamation of Christian iconography, Muslim ornamentation, and pagan symbols [Геюшев, 1984].

According to researchers, the distribution of cross stones spans a vast region, stretching from Derbent in the north to Hamadan in the south. It begins from the shores of the Caspian Sea in the east and extends to the western areas encompassing the Zangezur region and the Goycha lake basin [Ахундов, 2006, с.42-45]. This region includes Karabakh and Nakhchivan.

In recent years, archaeological excavations primarily in the western region of Azerbaijan, including districts such as Gazakh, Aghstafa, Gadabay, Dashkasan, Shamkir and Kalbajar have yielded a significant number of Albanian tombstones-khachdash were discovered, which are considered relics of the Khachi principality, in connection with which experts attribute them to the Khachin group of khachdash [Ахундов, 2006, с.42-43]. Despite these territories not being part of the historical Khachin principality in terms of jurisdiction, the Albanian cross stones and other monumental structures discovered in these areas display unique architectural and artistic characteristics. Nonetheless, they adhere to the canons and forms typical of Albanian cross stones and other types of stelae.

The Albanian cross stone discovered in Abbasbayli village, located in the Gazakh district, showcases a remarkable array of ornamentation. The upper and lateral sections of the cross stone feature intricate designs, including eight-pointed stars and incised lines. In the central area, there is a prominent depiction of a large cross, surrounded by four smaller cross images positioned in separate sections. These deeply engraved crosses likely symbolize the four cardinal directions. Furthermore, images representing rays of the Sun are carved into the corners of the stone. Just below the large cross, two forked protrusions resembling ram's horns can be observed. The center, where the ram's horns converge, presents an image in a circular layout. The upper portion of the large cross takes the shape of a sword. These images on the stone were engraved using the relief technique (Fig. 1.1). When observing the overall composition, the images on the cross stone bear a resemblance to a door encircled by edge strips. Across various world mythologies, the door symbolizes the gateway to the universe and the earth, holding great significance. As such, there exist numerous expressions and ideas in myths, epics, and proverbs associated with the concept of a door. The notion of a door holds cultural connotations. The door is also deemed sacred within the Turkic belief system [Gülensoy, 1989]. The symbolic significance of the door in mythology arises from its role as a representation of the passage between this world and the next. The sacredness associated with the door originates from

the sanctity of the home itself. It signifies the shift from one realm of sanctity to another. In the ancient Albanian beliefs, the grave also serves as a doorway connecting this world to the afterlife [Геюшев, 1984]. The deceased would be transported to this threshold, and the burial process, where the grave is covered with earth, symbolically closes the door to this world for them.

In Khanliglar village of the Gazakh district, another Albanian cross stone has been discovered, featuring an intriguing and simplistic design. The relief-etched cross symbol on the light-red tuff stone takes the form of a tree, with branches extending to the edges. These branches, extending in six directions, create a "cross-tree" pattern adorned with blossoming flowers at each end. At the center of the main body, where the branches diverge, an eye-shaped circle is engraved. The depiction of the "Tree of Life" symbol is unmistakably evident on this stone (Fig. 2.1).

An interesting and simple relief image is also present on the Albanian cross stone, which was accidentally discovered on the bank of the Jogazchay River within the Gazakh district. While the lower portion of the stone is broken and lost, the remaining intact part depicts a figure of a man standing in an anatomical position, with arms and legs stretched out to the sides. It is worth noting that alternative interpretations may exist for this description. Nevertheless, this silhouette immediately catches one's attention, evoking the image of a human figure. Engraved in the shape of a cross, the image also features branches that extend in four directions, accompanied by circular markings at the ends (Fig. 2.2).

The Gadabay cross stone features a remarkable design. Towards the bottom, there is a large and expertly embellished circular pattern composed of interconnected mesh circles. Positioned at the top on the sides are two small circular patterns, which, when combined with the larger pattern, symbolize the Holy Trinity (Father, Son, Holy Spirit). Above the triangle formed between the two circular patterns, two nested small circles are depicted. The triangle and circle collectively represent the Sun, with the cross emerging as the Tree of Life, symbolizing fertility. Completing the cross stone is an exquisitely crafted arch with three petals, depicting a "god seated on a throne". Extending from the upper branch of the cross is a small fork enclosed within a winged circle.

The second cross stone discovered in Gadabay depicts a fascinating symbolism. Positioned above the symbolic entrance to the underground kingdom, a circular pattern featuring the Sun symbol (a cross) at its center is showcased. From this central symbol, the Tree of Life (also a cross) emerges, accompanied by three smaller crosses above and several others sideways, representing the trees of wisdom and knowledge. The stela features a decorative border on three sides. Both cross stones exhibit a three-tiered symbolism, providing an artistic representation of the world's structure. However, this expression is not as prominently depicted on the second cross stone. Below the decorative belt, the lower part showcases a large and intricately patterned rayed design, symbolizing the gateway to the other world. Above it, a cross (the Tree of Life) arises from a symbolic mountain depicted as a triangle. https://axtar.len.az/?q=Alban_xa%C3%A7_da%C5%9Flar%C4%B1 - cite_note-Artsak_xa%C3%A7da%C5%9Flar%C4%B1-15

The first stone discovered in the village of Gushchu, Dashkasan district, is incomplete due to the lower part being broken. However, the remaining portion provides an intriguing description. On the dark gray bedrock, a relief image resembling bull horns is evident. Positioned above the horns, small cross-shaped flowers are depicted on both the right and left sides. In the center of these crosses, a circular shape is engraved. The bull horns are depicted downward towards the end (Fig. 1.2). Overall, certain cross stones exhibit stylized animal images depicted with lines [Якобсон, 1984; Геюшев, 1984]. Furthermore, on most cross stones, the bird is predominantly represented as a peacock, while the bull is often substituted with a deer. Peacock images hold significant prevalence in Albanian culture.

Only a fragment of the other Albanian cross stone discovered in Gushchu has survived. Based on the description provided, it becomes evident that the Albanian cross engraved on the stone takes the form of a flower (Fig. 3.2). The portion of the Albanian cross stone unearthed during archaeological explorations in the Shadakh area of Dashkasan district bears a striking resemblance, both in shape and content, to the

second cross stone found in Gushchu (Fig. 3.1). Overall, the research indicates that flower-shaped crosses were predominantly engraved on most of the Albanian cross stones found in Dashkasan and Gadabay.

A remarkable example of flower-shaped Albanian cross stones was unearthed in the floodplain area of the Shamkirchay reservoir, near Gulanbir village in the Shamkir district. Carved from white marble, a rarity among tombstones, this cross stone showcases the image of a flower-shaped cross embossed on one side of the stone against a black background. To enhance the clarity of the cross, the background behind it was likely painted black using a special substance. This technique ensured precise visibility of the cross within a circular shape, achieved through the method of embossing (Fig. 5.1).

During the construction of the South Caucasus gas pipeline in 2005, archaeological excavations carried out in the area locally known as the wintering place, near Chaparli village in the Shamkir district, yielded significant discoveries. Among them were the remains of structures from the early Christian era, Christian graves, and temple remains. Notably, Albanian stones adorned with cross images were found among the temple remains (Fig. 4.1-2; Fig. 5.2-3). Additionally, an arched stone with intricate carved patterns was uncovered near the eastern wall of the temple [Aşurov, 2008, s.196-197]. The stone appears as if to be surrounded by a broad belt on both sides, featuring a pattern of intersecting diagonal lines. On the relatively wider upper section of the stone, a cross sign is meticulously carved (Fig. 5.3). The side wings and the central area of the cross are adorned with circles surrounded by frames, adding to the ornamental detail. Another stone, sharing the same composition, showcases a fascinating ornamentation. It bears a scratched cross, accompanied by two additional lines extending leftward from the upper part of the cross. Within the space between the two lines, five circular grooves have been meticulously carved. Notably, two of these grooves are positioned side by side in the area where the additional scratch lines intersect with the main cross (Fig. 4.1). Two more grooves are situated in the angular section between these lines and the primary line. In terms of their shape, these grooves bear resemblance to the symbol of the Aquarius zodiac sign [Aşurov, 2008, s.198-199].

In addition to markings and drawings, tamgas are frequently encountered as symbols on stones. Tamgas, over time, have evolved into distinct symbols and signs, embodying mystical and mythical meanings [Лавров, 1978, с.91-174]. The term "damga" in modern Azerbaijani language finds its roots in various older Turkic dialects, such as "tamka" in Old Turkic, "tamga" in Karakhanli, Tatar, and Chagatai dialects, "tamna" in Kumyk, and "tanma" in Oirat and Soyon dialects. Some researchers who propose the idea that tamgas have their origins in images also support the notion that the Turkic runic alphabet developed from tamgas [Gülensoy, 1989]. The ancient Turks incorporated tamgas into a wide array of material cultural relics, including petroglyphs, tombstones, banners and pennons, weapons, rings, and seals [Gülensoy, 1989]. Tamgas were used to indicate ownership and, in some cases, a special status within the economy. T.S.Gulensoy suggests that the emergence of tamgas was influenced by Ongons and totems [Gülensoy, 1989, s.78-84]. Indeed, tamgas carry profound mystical and mythical meanings. These symbols first appeared among the Turkic-Mongol and Finno-Ugric peoples in ancient times, persisting in certain regions and still being utilized by some communities, such as the Kyrgyz people. Tamgas can be found across a wide range of fields, from everyday household items to state symbols. They have spread from the Altai region to Anatolia, from Mesopotamia to Spain, along the Volga River, and across the steppes of Eastern Europe and Siberia [Лавров, 1978; Gülensoy, 1989].

In an interesting study, N.I.Rzayev explored the ancient Turkic inscriptions, including signs and tamgas, as an element of Turkic culture within the territory of Caucasian Albania [Rzayev, 2019]. The researcher highlights the occurrence of these ancient Turkic inscriptions in diverse forms and various locations. The author puts particular emphasis on the three-pronged pitchfork symbol, which he notes can also be found on coins minted during the Kushan dynasty in Fergana during the 1st century BC [Rzayev, 2019, s.84]. According to N.I.Rzayev, ancient Turkic signs and tamgas can be found among the collection of signs and tamgas compiled by A.P.Fituni in Shamakhi.

The presence of sun, human, and animal images, along with geometric figures, patterns, signs, and tamgas, on some cross stones, rocks, and stone fragments holds significant importance in examining the system of mythical and religious ideas of the ancient inhabitants of Azerbaijan.

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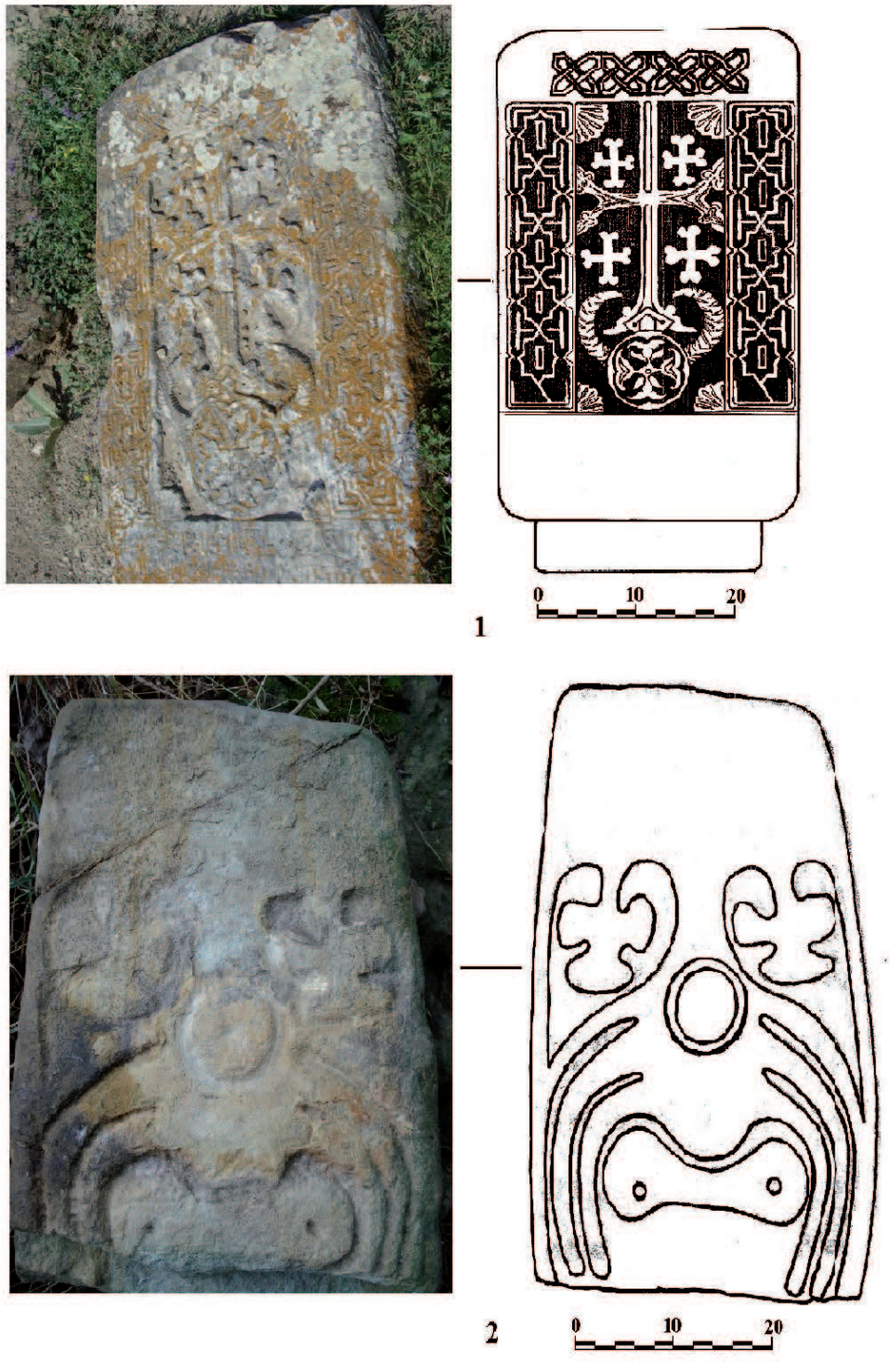


Fig. 1.

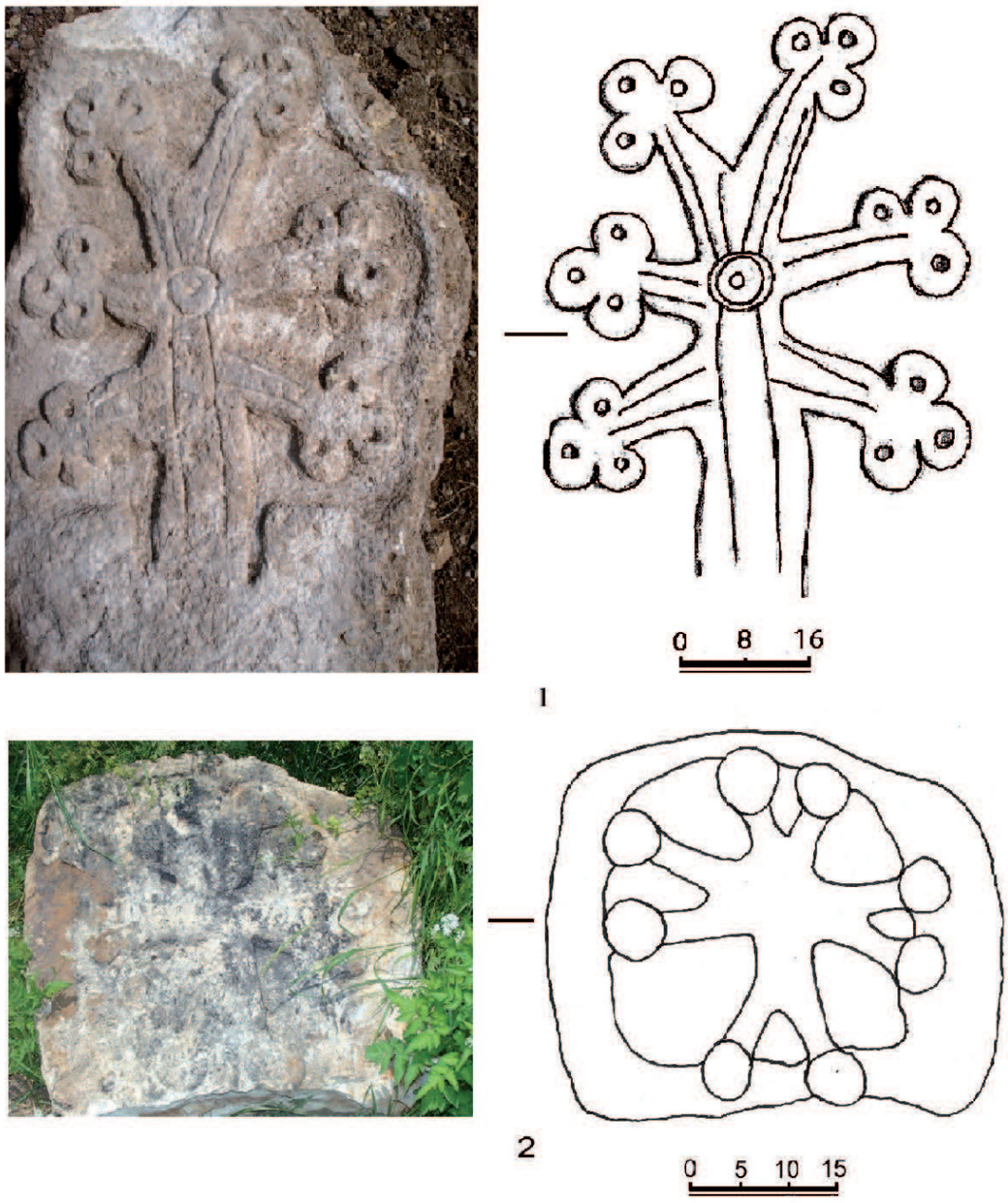


Fig. 2.

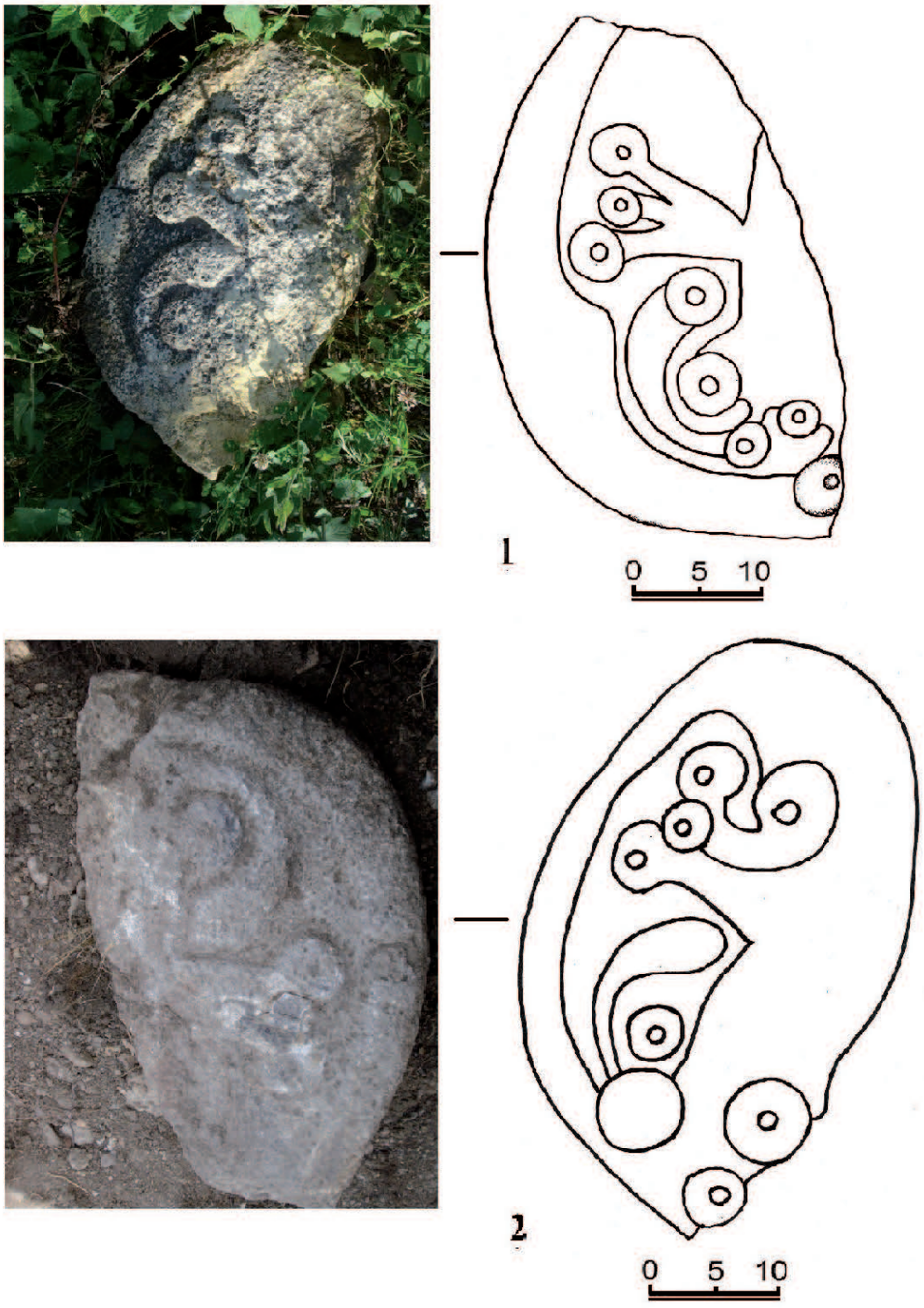


Fig. 3.

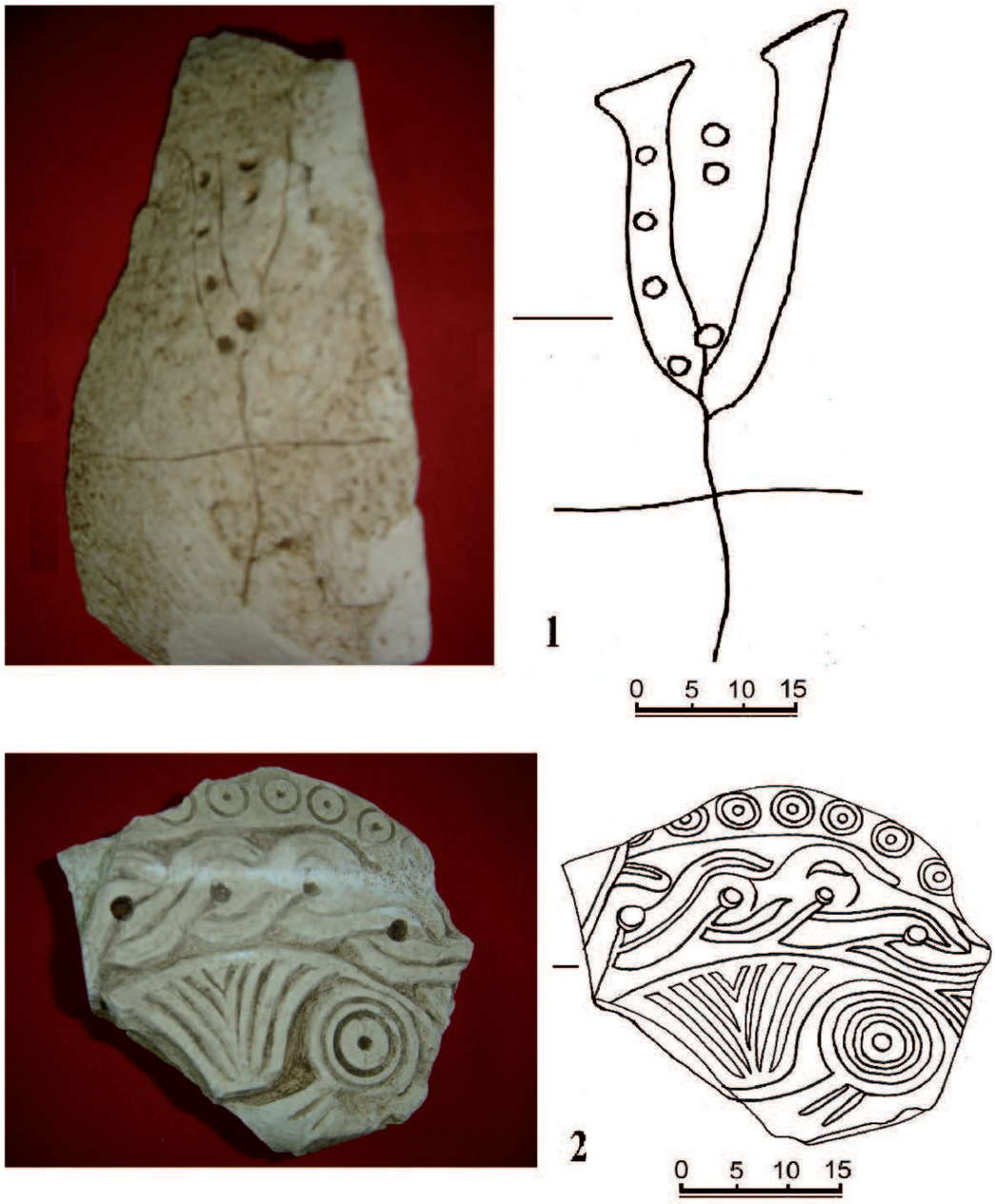


Fig. 4.

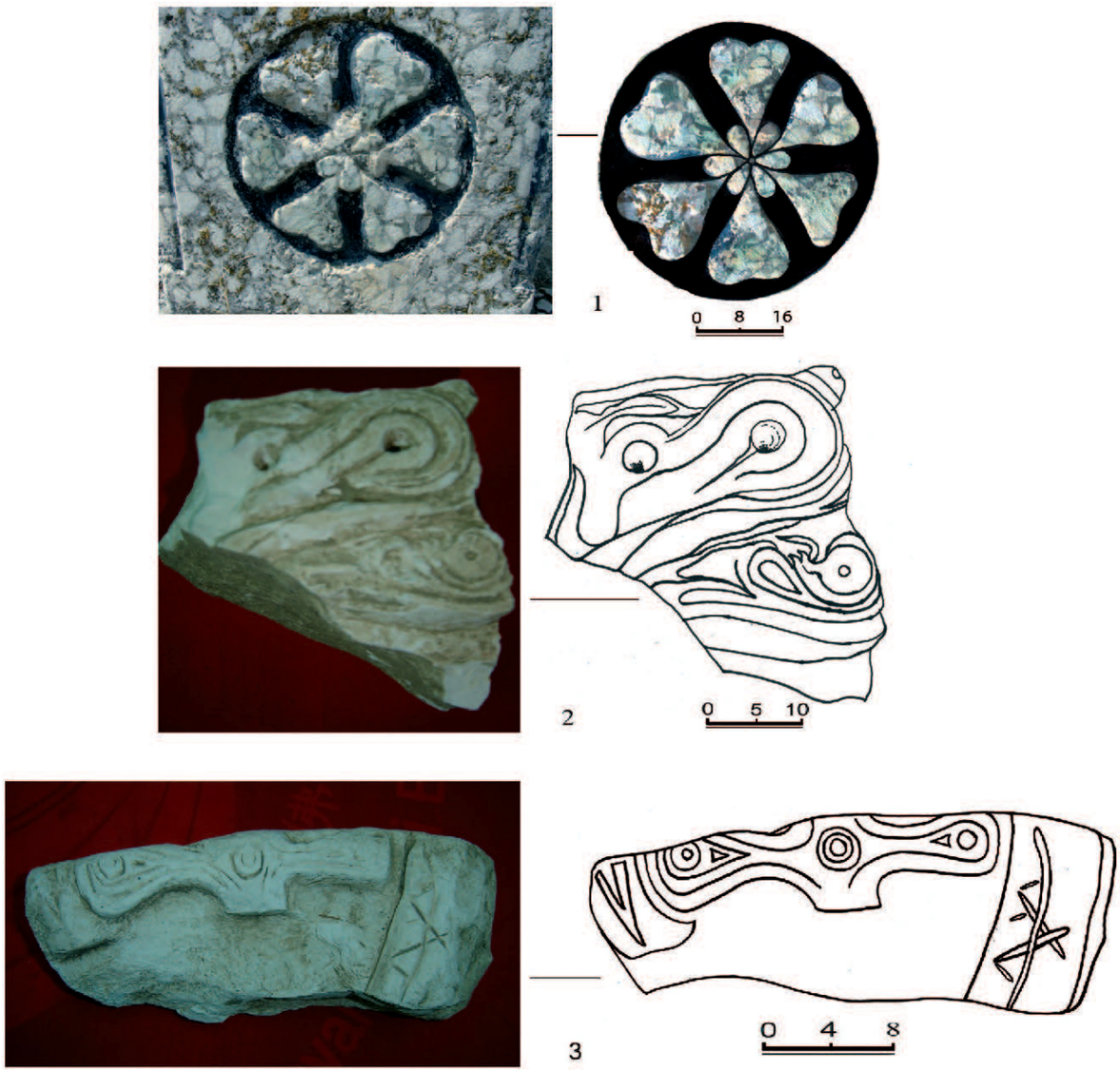


Fig. 5.

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ABOUT THE COINS OF THE EMPERORS GALBA, OTHO AND VITELLIUS IN THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF HISTORY OF AZERBAIJAN

Abstract. According to the presented research, 18 coins of the emperors *Galba, Otho and Vitellius*, who were in power for only a few months during the civil war of 68–69 years (between the reigns of the Julio-Claudian dynasty and the Flavian dynasty) were identified in the collection of coins of the Roman Empire of the National Museum of History of Azerbaijan.

Considering that the museum contains coins of all the emperors of the Julio-Claudian and Flavian dynasties, it becomes noticeable that Roman coins came to the territory of Caucasian Albania not by chance, but consistently. Coins of *Galba, Otho, and Vitellius* could also be a link in trade and monetary relations between Caucasian Albania and Rome in the 1st century.

In general, the attractiveness of Roman coins for the local market is confirmed by their presence in some hoards of different periods. In particular, for example, the discovery of *Otho's* coin from the 3rd century hoard discovered in the city of Gabala, the capital of Caucasian Albania.

Keywords: Rome, Caucasian Albania, coins, Galba, Otho, Vitellius, museum

Introduction

Coins of the Roman Empire in the collection of the Numismatic Fund *(hereinafter – NF)* of the National Museum of History of Azerbaijan *(hereinafter – the Museum)* covers the period from the end of the 1st century B.C. to the beginning of the 3rd century AD.

Emperors Galba, Otho, and Vitellius ruled for a very short time during the civil war of 68–69 in Rome. The fact that the NF of the Museum has coins of three emperors who ruled for only a few months for a year and a half outside the borders of the Roman Empire – Caucasian Albania *(hereinafter – Albania)* attracted attention and became the subject of this study.

Among the series of studied coins of Galba, Otho and Vitellius, some, for various reasons, raised doubts about belonging to these particular emperors. Therefore, in this article, only the coins that are undoubtedly owned by the three Roman emperors mentioned above will be presented. It should be noted

here that while studying the coins in the NF of the Museum, similar coins were also viewed in the collection presented on the official website of the British Museum *(hereinafter – BM)** .

When studying the coins of the three emperors, in the NF of Museum, whose names were mentiond, the difficulties in determining the places where these coins were found were also evident. According to the surviving documents of NF, part of the coins entered the museum in 1939 (No.13406); in 1948 (No.21375, 21376, 21461, 21581, 21582, 21762); in 1949 (No.21818); in 1963 (No.31868). It is known that the last coin of these was found in the Gabala treasury. Another part of the coins entered the museum in 1970 (No.37216, 37217, 37218, 37219, 37223, 37224, 37225, 37226, 37227) as part of the collection of E.A.Pakhomov. Unfortunately, no more information has yet been found.

But it is known that most of the Museum numismatic collection consists of coins discovered or minted on the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan. It should also be noted that according to I.A.Babayev, Roman coins were spread throughout Albania [Бабаев, 1990, с.164]. In this regard, it can be assumed that all or part of the Roman coins considered below could be found in the same territory.

By the time of the proclamation of the emperors, Galba, Otho and Vitellius were contemporaries and proteges of the emperors of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, including Nero. With the fall of Nero, Rome found itself in a difficult political situation, which led to the civil war of 68–69. At this time, the needs of the armies of the warring parties were met by minting military coins [Абрамзон, 1995, с.68]. Each of the three new emperors hastened to declare himself by minting his own coins [Абрамзон, 1995, с.11-12].

Thus, coins were distributed both in the territory of the Roman Empire and beyond its borders, as a means of payment, as well as political propaganda of the emperor's power and his alliance with the army [Абрамзон, 1995, с.9-10], as well as religious propaganda [Абрамзон, 1995, с.11] and so on. These nuances can be observed in the coins from the collection of NF of the Museum.

II.1. Copper coins of the Emperor Galba in NF

There are 3 copper (or copper alloy) coins of Emperor Galba in the form of a sestertius and an as in NF

obverse	*reverse*	*NF No.*
Head of Galba, laureate, right; circular inscription **IMP SER SVLP GALBA CAESAR AVG TR POT**	Composition depicting the emperor, standing to the left on a platform, turning to warriors with shields; letter [S] on the left, **C** on the right, inscription below **ADLOCVT**[IO]	37217 *sestertius*
Head of Galba, laureate, right; circular inscription **IMP SER SVLP GALBA CAESAR AVG TR** [P]	Libertas, draped, standing left, holding pileus in right hand and vertical rod in left hand; inscription [LIBE]**RTAS** on the left edge, **PVBLICA** on the right	37218 *as*
Head of Galba, laureate, right; circular inscription **SER GALBA CAESAR** [AVG TRP]	aquila, left, between two standards, all resting on bar; letter **S** on the left, **C** on the right	37219 *as*

These coins are quite informative, in addition to written sources, they can be presented as follows.

All 3 coins have portraits of Galba with a laurel wreath on the observe, which, according to Suetonius, [Suet., Galba, 8.1] shows that Galba was awarded this triumphal decoration for his services in Africa and Germania. Obverse inscriptions contain the shortening of his praenomen *Servius* (SER) and nomen *Sulpicius*

* Special thanks to the staff of the British Museum's Coins and Medals Department for Museum's online collection.

(SVLP); cognomen *Galba* (GALBA); It indicates that Galba had the title of *emperor* (IMP), was endowed with *the power of a tribune* (TR POT, TR P), was called *Caesar* (CAESAR) and *Augustus* (AVG). It should be noted that he received the name Caesar earlier [Suet., Galba, 11], that is, before the name Augustus.

It is known that **Servius Sulpicius Galba** ruled Hispania Tarraconensis, a Roman province, during the time of Nero [Suet., Galba, 8.1; 9.1], was proclaimed emperor by the troops and confirmed by the Senate [Машкин, 1948, с.397]. Galba was no longer young when he was proclaimed emperor [Suet., Galba, 10.1; 16.2], but he was an experienced commander, who also had experience in state administration [Suet., Galba, 6-8; Tacit., Hist., I.49. 2-4]. The minting of coins with the name of Galba as emperor showed his new status. However, he was emperor for a short time ***(from early June 68 to mid–January 69)*** [Morgan, 2006, pp.31, 285].

The reverses of the coins of Galba No.37217, No.37219 contain the letters S, C, which the Senate used to mark the coins minted in Rome, which means *"by decree of the Senate"* [Savio, 2001, p.152]. This shows that Galba was supported by the Roman Senate. No.37217 coin has an image of the scene of the *appeal* (ADLOCVTIO) to the soldiers when he was proclaimed an emperor with the consent of the army [Абрамзон, 1995, с.250]. The aquila on coin No.37219 is the sign of the legion, the goddess Libertas (Liberty) on coin No.37218 is depicted as an indication of the presence or striving for *public liberty* (LIBERTAS PVBLICA). We note that the concept of "liberty" (Libertas) was the main political idea of the Roman society in the considered period [Абрамзон, 1995, с.125], so its appearance on coins, including coins of Galba, is not surprising.

II.2. Silver coins of Emperor Galba in NF

5 coins of Emperor Galba in NF are silver denarii

obverse	*reverse*	*NF No.*
Head of Galba, laureate, right; circular inscription [IM]**P SER GALBA CA**[ESAR AVG]	Livia, draped, standing left, holding patera in right hand and sceptre in left hand; inscription [DIVA] on the left edge, [AV]**GVSTA** on the right	13406 *denarius*
Head of Galba, laureate, right; circular inscription [IMP S]**ER GALBA A**[VG]	Hispania, draped, advancing left, holding poppy and corn-ears in right hand and round shield and two transverse spears in left hand; inscription [H]**ISPA** on the left edge, [NIA] on the right	21581 *denarius*
Head of Galba, right; circular inscription [I]**MP SER GALBA AV**[G]	Oak wreath; three-line inscription inside **SPQR / OB / C S**	21762 *denarius*
Head of Galba, right; circular inscription **IMP** [SER G]**ALBA AVG**	Oak wreath; three-line inscription inside **SPQR / OB / C S**	21818 *denarius*
Head of Galba, right; circular inscription **IMP SER GALBA AVG**	Oak wreath; three-line inscription inside **SPQR / OB / C S**	37216 *denarius*

Thus, the portraits of Galba with or without a wreath on the obverse of these 5 coins, the shortening of his praenomen *Servius* (SER), his cognomen *Galba* (GALBA), are indications that he was *emperor* (IMP), *Augustus* (AVG) and *Caesar* (CAESAR). These silver coins clearly appear to have been minted earlier than the previous copper coins, as they do not yet bear the signs that Galba also had the power of a tribune.

The reverse of No.13406 coin is a sign of Galba's special respect for Livia Augusta [Suet., Galba, 5.2], wife of Emperor Octavian Augustus. It is known that she once patronized Galba and even included him in her will [Suet., Galba, 5.2]. Livia Augusta was posthumously deified by her grandson Emperor Claudius [Suet., Claudius, 11.2], so she is already shown on the coin as *"Divine Augusta"* (DIVA AVGVSTA).

The image of Hispania (HISPANIA) on coin No.21581 is related to the fact that Galba was the governor of the Roman province of Hispania Tarraconensis [Suet., Galba, 8.1] and was proclaimed emperor there [Suet., Galba, 16.2]. Paintings and inscriptions on coins Nos.21762, 21818, 37216 show that Galba was presented with an oak wreath as *a liberator of citizens* (OB/C S) by *the Senate and Roman people* (SPQR).

III.1. Silver coins of Emperor Otho in NF

5 coins of Emperor Galba in NF were silver denarii

obverse	*reverse*	*NF No.*
Head of Otho, right; circular inscription [IMP M] **OTHO CAESAR AVG TR**[P]	Securitas, draped, standing left, holding wreath in right hand and sceptre in left hand; circular inscription **SECV-RI-TAS P R**	21376 *denarius*
Head of Otho, right; circular inscription **IMP M OTHO** [CAESAR AVG] **TR P**	Securitas, draped, standing left, holding wreath in right hand and sceptre in left hand; circular inscription **[S]ECV-RI-TAS P** [R]	31868 *denarius*

It is noticeable that both coins are of the same coinage, portraits of Otho are placed on the obverse, the inscriptions contain the shortening of his praenomen *Marcus* (M), cognomen *Otho* (OTHO), indicates that he is *emperor* (IMP), *Caesar* (CEASAR), *Augustus* (AVG), had *tribune power* (TR P).

Marcus Salvius Otho, one of Nero's closest friends [Suet., Otho, 2.2], was removed by him and exiled to the province of Lusitania, which he ruled for 10 years [Suet., Otho, 3.2]. Otho seems to have been one of the first to support Galba because he was disappointed by some of Nero's actions [Suet., Otho, 4.1; Tacit., Hist., I.13.3-4]. However, later Otho himself became the organizer of the coup, as a result of which Galba was killed [Suet., Otho, 6.3] and Otho was proclaimed emperor by the praetorians in Rome [Tacit., Hist., I.27.3; 36.1-3; 74.3]. The issue of coins with Otho's name as emperor indicated his new status. According to Tacitus, Otho received from the Senate the power of tribune, the title of Augustus, and all the signs of honors appropriate to a princeps [Tacit., Hist., I.47.1], which is partially confirmed by inscriptions on the coins.

The reverses of the presented coins contain the image of the goddess Securitas (Security), which was supposed to show that Otho provides *security* (SECVRITAS) *of the Roman people* (P R). Moreover, Otho began to mint such coins already in the first month of his tenure as emperor [Morgan, 2006, p.97].

Otho tried to strengthen his imperial power [Tacit., Hist., I.71.1], but he had little time. He was emperor for only three months, ***from January 15 to April 16, 69*** [Morgan, 2006, p.285].

Shortly before Otho, the troops of the province in Germania proclaimed Vitellius emperor, who had not yet been supported by the Senate [Tacit., Hist., I.74.3]. Otho offered Vitellius a co-leadership [Suet., Otho, 8.1], but apparently the offer was not accepted. The conflict between the two emperors ended with the fall of Otho [Suet., Otho, 11.2].

III.2. About the coin of Emperor Otho found in Gabala



NF No.31868
Otho's silver denarius found in Gabala, obverse

NF No.31868
Otho's silver denarius found in Gabala, reversedenarisi, revers



An interesting fact is that the above-mentioned FN No.31868 coin was found in 1963 in a hoard in the capital city of Albania – Gabala (current the area near the village of Chukhur-Gabala in the Gabala region of the Republic of Azerbaijan). The coins collected from the hoard included 1 coin of King of Parthia Gotarzes II (38–51), 3 coins of the Roman emperors Otho (69), Vespasianus (69–79), Traianus (98–117) and 154 coins of Sasanian King Bahram II (276–293). According to the latest coins, the hoard is dated to the end of the 3rd century AC [Наджафова, Раджабли, 2012, с.211].

The Parthian and Roman coins in this hoard retained their value and demand in Albania for more than one or two hundred years after their minting (Otho's coin, too, two hundred years after its minting). It turns out that the owner of this treasury in Albania had the opportunity to pay for purchases with the coins from different periods of the countries [Babayev, Əhmədov, 1981, s.18-19] already familiar to the inhabitants of Albania. This fact may indicate a certain stability of the circulation of, for example, Parthian and Roman coins (regardless of the number) in Albania until the time of the creation of the treasury – that is, by the end of the 3rd century.

IV.1. Copper coin of Emperor Vitellius in NF

There is 1 copper (or copper alloy) coin of Emperor Vitellius in the form of an as in NF

obverse	*reverse*	*NF No.*
Head of Vitellius, laureate, right; circular inscription **A VITELLIVS GERMANICVS IMP AVG P M T**[R P]	altar with double-panelled doors; letter **S** on the left, **C** on the right, inscription below [PROVI]**DEN**[T]	37227 as

The obverse of this coin has a portrait of Vitellius in a laurel wreath [Suet., Vitellius, 9]; the shortening of his praenomen *Aulus* (A), nomen *Vitellius* (VITELLIVS), cognomen *Germanicus* (GERMANICVS) received by him from his troops [Suet., Vitellius, 8.2; Tacit., Hist., I.62.2], indicate that he is *emperor* (IMP), *Augustus* (AVG), *pontifex maximus* (PM) and has *tribune power* (TR P). It is known that he did not get the name Caesar [Suet., Vitellius, 8.2; Tacit., Hist., II.62.2], did not take the name Augustus immediately [Tacit., Hist., II.62.2; 90.2] and when he entered Rome he accepted the post of pontifex maximus [Suet., Vitellius, 11.2; Tacit., Hist., II.91.1]. It should be noted that in addition to the power of the tribune, according to Tacitus, Vitellius was the owner of both honor like other principes [Tacit., Hist., II.55.2] and full authority [Tacit., Hist., II.62.2].

Aulus Vitellius had various positions under the emperors Caligula, Claudius, Nero [Suet., Vitellius, 4-5]. Emperor Galba sent him to Germania Inferior [Suet., Vitellius, 7.1,3]. But shortly before the murder of Galba [Suet., Vitellius, 9], a little earlier than Otho was proclaimed emperor in Rome [Tacit., Hist., I.74.3], his soldiers in Germania proclaimed Vitellius emperor [Suet., Vitellius, 8.1]. This happened in early January

69, but Vitellius was recognized by the Roman Senate only after Otto's death in April 69 [Morgan, 2006, p.1]. This coin appears to have been minted after Vitellius was recognized as emperor by the Senate, as the reverse bears the mark (S C) *by decree of the Senate.*

The inscription (PROVIDENT) below the altar image on this coin indicates that it is the altar of the goddess Providentia. It is known that this altar is in Lugdunum [Абрамзон, 1995, с.518]. Its presence on the coin, possibly, indicates Vitellius's sign of respect for Providentia as a patroness [Абрамзон, 1995, 516-517].

IV.2. Silver coins of Emperor Vitellius in NF

7 coins of Emperor Vitellius in NF are silver denarii

obverse	*reverse*	*NF No.*
Head of Vitellius, laureate, right; circular inscription A **VITELLIVS IMP GERMAN**	Handshake; inscription above **FIDES,** below [E]**XERCITVVM**	21375 *denarius*
Head of Vitellius, laureate, right; circular inscription A **VITELLIVS GERM IMP AVG TR** [P]	Libertas, draped, standing, facing right, holding pileus in right hand, and long rod in left hand; inscription on the left **LIBERTAS**, on the right [REST] **ITVTA**	21461 *denarius*
Head of Vitellius, laureate, right; circular inscription [A] **VITELLIVS GERM IMP AV**[G TR P]	Concordia, draped, sitting left, holding patera in right hand and cornucopia in left hand; circular inscription **CONCO**[R-D]**IA** [PR]	21582 *denarius*
Head of Vitellius, laureate, right; circular inscription A **VITELLIVS G**[ERM IMP] **AVG T**[R P]	Libertas, draped, standing, facing right, holding pileus in right hand, and long rod in left hand; inscription on the left **LIBERTA**[S], on the right [R] **ESTITV**[TA]	37223 *denarius*
Head of Vitellius, laureate, right; circular inscription A **VITELLIVS GERM IMP AVG TR P**	Heads of son and daughter of Vitellius facing each-other; circular inscription **LIBERI IMP GERMAN**	37224 *denarius*
Head of Vitellius, laureate, right; circular inscription [A VITELL]**IVS** [IMP GERMAN]	Victory, draped, advancing left, holding shield inscribed [S P / Q R]; inscription on the left edge [VICTO]**RIA**, right edge **AVG**[VSTI]	37225 *denarius*
Head of Vitellius, right; circular inscription [A] **VITELLIVS GERMANICVS** [IMP]	Concordia, draped, sitting left, holding patera in right hand and cornucopia in left; circular inscription **CON**[COR-DIA] **PR**	37226 *denarius*

The obverses of these coins have a portrait of Vitellius with or without a laurel wreath. The inscriptions on the obverses are noticeably different, which may have been due to the difference in the time he received positions and names. All coins bear the shortening of his prenomen *Aulus* (A), the nomen *Vitellius* (VITELLIVS), the cognomen *Germanicus* (GERMANICVS). Judging by the inscriptions on the coins, the first title he received was the title of *emperor* (IMP), since only this title appears on all coins from the NF of

Museum. On some coins it is noticeable that Vitellius had both the name *Augustus* (AVG) and the *tribune power* (TR P).

Moreover, all these denarii were clearly minted earlier than the above-mentioned copper coin No.37227, since they still do not indicate that Vitellius also had the position of pontifex maximus (the highest religious position in the state).

According to M.G.Abramzon, the Vitellius coins were intended primarily to pay for the troops [Абрамзон, 1995, с.182], therefore it is not surprising that the reverse of the coin NF No.21375 bears the slogan *"troops fidelity"* (FIDES EXERCITVVM). The goddess Libertas (Freedom) on the coins FN No.21461, 37223 was supposed to show citizens that *freedom had been restored* (LIBERTAS RESTITVTA), since official propaganda represented Vitellius as a "liberator" [Абрамзон, 1995, с.116].

The Goddess Concordia (Consent) on the reverse of coins NF Nos. 21582, 37226 (if we consider the letters "PR' as the shortening of the word *"praetorians"*) must have been an indication of Vitellius's desire to obtain the *consent* (CONCORDIA) *of the Praetorians* (PR) to support him [Абрамзон, 1995, с.132; Morgan, 2006, p.74], because the Praetorians did not accept Vitellius [Tacit., Hist., II.82.3]. Or the letters PR can be considered as the shortening for the words *"Roman people"*. Then the reverse of these coins can be represented as the consent of the Roman people (CONCORDIA P R), which Vitellius clearly wanted to receive from the moment he became emperor (NF No.37226), and apparently received along with the title of Augustus and the tribune power (NF No.21582).

On the reverse of the coin NF No.37224 there is an image of the son and daughter of Vitellius in a new status for them - *children* (LIBERI) *of Emperor Germanicus* (IMP GERMAN). Moreover, it is known that children from the very beginning of their father's reign were advertised on the gold and silver coins of Vitellius [Morgan, 2006, p.149].

Finally, the reverse of the coin NF No.37225 with the image of the winged goddess Victoria (Victory), which Vitellius minted after the victory over the army of Otho [Абрамзон, 1995, с.182], is also interesting. Thus we read on the coin about *the victory of Augustus* (VICTORIA AVGVSTI), i.e. Vitellius Augustus. The coin in the NF of the Museum was heavily rubbed, making it impossible to see the inscription on Victoria's shield. However, an analogue of the same coin from BM No. R.10264 allows us to supplement our information and clarify that the shortening SP/QR, meaning *"the Senate and Roman people"* (SPQR), was also minted on the shield. That is, according to this coin, at the time of its minting, Vitellius had already received the support of the Senate and the Roman people, and the name of Augustus.

The short reign of Vitellius himself ***(April-December 69)*** [Morgan, 2006, p.1] was also turbulent. On July 1, 69, Vespasianus, commander of the troops in Judaea [Morgan, 1995, p.182], was proclaimed emperor [Suet., Vespasianus, 4.6-6]. Each of the emperors attracted supporters and troops, but in the end Vespasianus won the victory, having received the recognition of the Senate at the end of 69 [Машкин, 1948, с.398].

Thus ended the civil war of 68–69 and began the reign of the Flavian dynasty [Suet., Vespasianus, 1.1].

V. Conclusion

According to the NF collection of the Museum, Roman coins in the territorry of Azerbaijan dates back to the 3rd century BC – 3rd century AD. Geographically they mainly belong to the area of Albania and possibly, in part, to Media-Atropatene *(hereinafter - Atropatene)*.

Roman imperial coins of the FN of the Museum, starting from the time of Octavian Augustus [Раджабли, Наджафова, Мамедова, 2020, с.336], outnumber the Roman republican coins. This may indicate a significant involvement of Roman coins in trade and monetary relations between Rome and Albania (possibly, Atropatene) in the period of the Roman Empire.

As it can be seen, the coins of emperors Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, mentioned above, in various states of preservation and rubbing (apparently, from long circulation) are not an exception in this series.

Moreover, taking into account the discovery of Otho's coin in the hoard of the 3rd century in Gabala, it is noticeable that some Roman coins could have been in circulation much later than the time of their minting. In general, we note that the discovery of various Roman coins in some hoards [Алиев, Гадиров, 1985, с.28; Османов, 2006, с.116] shows the attractiveness and value of these coins for the local market.

It should be noted that according to this study, 18 coins of the emperors Galba, Otho and Vitellius, who ruled in 68–69 years (between the reign of the emperors of the Julio-Claudian dynasty and the Flavian dynasty), were found in the collection of coins of the Roman Empire of the Museum. Considering that the museum contains coins of all representatives of the Julio-Claudian and Flavian dynasties, it is noticeable that Roman coins fell into the territory of Albania not by chance, but sequentially. The coins of Galba, Otho, Vitellius could be a link in the trade and monetary relations between Albania and Rome in the 1st century.

However, in general, the coins of the Roman Empires in the 1st century AD did not form a significant part of the monetary circulation of Albania (and Atropatene), since Parthian silver dominated in this period [Azərbaycan tarixi, 2007, s.306; Алиев, 1989, с.61; Раджабли, 1997, с.24]. Perhaps this was also due to the fact that Albania (and Atropatene) was far from the borders of the Roman Empire.

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HISTORY, SOURCE SCIENCE, ETNOLOGY, EPIGRAPHY, LINGUISTICS

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TURKIC POPULATION OF CAUCASIAN ALBANIA: ON THE EVE AND DURING THE PERIOD OF ISLAMIZATION OF THE COUNTRY (7th–10th centuries)

Abstract. The article presents evidence from written sources regarding the penetration and settlement of Turkic nomads in the territory of Caucasian Albania before the Arab conquests. It explores the relations between the states of the South Caucasus and the northern nomads, examining their interactions in countering the expansion of Middle Eastern empires. Special emphasis is placed on topics such as the Arab Caliphate's policy to spread Islam in Caucasian Albania, as well as the role of the Khazar Turks in the Islamization of the country's population following the Arab-Khazar wars.

Keywords: Turkic nomads, Khazars, Caucasian Albania, Arab conquest of the South Caucasus, international trade routes, Islamization

Turks and Khazar Turks on the northern borders of South Caucasus.

From ancient times, the Greater Caucasus Range has served as a natural boundary between the realm of Eurasian nomads and the early Near Eastern and Middle Eastern states. Within this region, there were two significant passes that connected the Eurasian steppes to the South Caucasus. The central part of the Caucasus Mountains featured the Daryal pass, a narrow route through the mountain gorge of the Terek River, often difficult to traverse in winter. Alternatively, the road along the western coast of the Caspian Sea offered a more practical route. In this area, near the city of Derbent, the Caucasus Mountains draw close, leaving a narrow coastal strip approximately 3 km wide. This road was predominantly used by both nomads, penetrating the Middle East from Antiquity to the Golden Horde era, and trade caravans since the functioning of the Silk Road routes, to reach the markets of the Near and Middle East.

The country south of the Derbent Gates was Albania, which has been known to us since the campaigns of Alexander the Great. The interaction between nomadic and settled populations held great significance in terms of military, political, and economic aspects. This interaction shaped the nature of their relationship as inherently antagonistic because the economy of Eurasian nomads was based on adapting to fluctuating natural and climatic conditions, and in unfavorable circumstances, nomads had to rely on acquiring resources from the settled agricultural population, making raids for military plunder a vital necessity for them [Крадин, 2000, с.324-5].

The policy employed by ancient and medieval empires to leverage certain nomadic groups against others often involved settling nomads in frontier lands as border guards. This approach was adopted by Chinese and Byzantine emperors, as well as the Sassanids, who constructed grand fortifications along their borders. The Great Wall of China stands as the most remarkable monument from this era.

The Sassanids, confronted with the growing strength of nomads in the Caucasus, possessed abundant material and human resources to construct monumental fortifications. Nearly simultaneously, extensive walls were erected in the South Caspian region, known as the Gorgan Wall, and in the Caucasus, forming a complex of Derbent fortifications.

The construction of the Derbent fortifications appears to have commenced during the reign of Yazdegerd II (438–451) [Minorsky & Munajjim Bashi, 1958, p.87, n.2]. However, it was during the reign of Khosrow Anushirvan (531–579) that a large-scale construction of a defensive wall system stretching from Derbent to the west along the Caucasus Range was carried out [Гаджиев, 2001, с.80-81]. According to the account provided by the Arab historian at-Tabari, after the completion of the construction, the grand campaign led by the Turkic Khagan Sinjibu (possibly Istami Khagan, who died in 576) was easily repelled by a Sassanid army consisting of only 5,000 soldiers [At-Tabari, 2005, vol.1, p.251-252].

Interests of the South Caucasian states.

However, it is important to highlight that the interests of a superpower and the population residing on the border with nomads, particularly its military and political elite, were not aligned. At the time of the Sassanid state's expansion into the northern Caucasus, Caucasian Albania already had several centuries of statehood. The Albanians possessed a formidable army, as ancient sources have documented their involvement in battles alongside the Achaemenids against Alexander the Great [Chaumont, 1985, p.807]. The inclusion of their country in the realm of a major power partially addressed the issue of protection for the Albanian rulers against nomadic raids. However, the border forces of the empire were unable to provide full security for the population from the warlike nomadic neighbors. Moreover, the burden of maintaining the imperial army fell upon the local population, adding to the existing requisitions that benefited the central treasury. On the other hand, the political dependence on a major power significantly curtailed the income of the local nobility and merchants derived from profitable trade with nomads.

In the first quarter of 4th century, the Albanian kings officially embraced Christianity, which can be interpreted as a means to counteract the influence of Zoroastrianism as an ideology of subjugation to Sassanid Iran. In order to resist Sassanid imperial ambitions, the states and inhabitants of the contact zone with the nomads sought peaceful interactions with their warlike neighbors to the north. Albanian kings frequently sought assistance from the Caucasian nomads in their struggle against Sassanid domination. During the anti-Sassanid uprising of 459–462, Albanian King Vache II demolished Sassanid fortifications to establish a connection with the Maskut allies [Юзбашян, 2001, с.327; Мамедова, 2005, с.354]. The rulers and nobility of other South Caucasian states also pursued similar alliances. For instance, Georgian king Vakhtang Gorgasali (440–452) sought the support of the Huns in his struggle against the Sassanid state. However, the Huns only dispatched a small detachment of 300 horsemen [Мровели, 1976, с.90]. The Armenian nakharars, realizing their precarious position between Iran and Byzantium just before the arrival of the Arabs, sought an alliance with the nomadic Huns in their fight for the independence of their country. According to the Armenian historian Sebeos, there were negotiations between the Armenian nobility and the nomadic Huns to unite their forces on the left bank of the Kura River [Sebeos, 1999, p.32].

Caucasian Albania as a zone of contact and trade with nomads.

The accounts from various written sources highlight the territory of Caucasian Albania as a region with significant interactions with nomadic peoples. The Derbent pass served not only as a military route but also as a caravan trail for transporting goods from China and other northern Eurasian regions. Strabo mentions that the Sarmatian nomads, specifically the Aorsi, engaged in trade with India and the Middle East along the western coast of the Caspian Sea in collaboration with local merchants [Страбон, 1964, с.480]. In order to promote trade, the Albanian rulers issued their own coins modeled after ancient coinage. These coins, discovered in hoards and likely minted in Gabala, the initial capital of Caucasian Albania, indicate the supportive stance of the Albanian rulers towards international trade [Бабаев, 2002].

The organization of this trade involved collaboration between the settled and nomadic populations along the trade routes. Interaction with nomads on the northern border and their entry into Albanian territory occurred in three distinct forms: gradual infiltration of small groups or individual clans over time, military campaigns aimed at acquiring war spoils, and political subjugation of the territory through the establishment of nomadic tribal confederations and the creation of administrative and political structures in the subject territories [Ковалевская, 2001, с.3].

According to Strabo, the population of Albania had a stronger affinity towards cattle breeding and shared some similarities with nomads, but they were not as warlike [Страбон, 1964, с.501]. The Sassanids, recognizing this, settled groups of nomads in Albania who sought their patronage and entrusted them with border protection. Our sources provide direct references to this. Ibn al-Athir, for instance, reports that following Istami Khagan's unsuccessful campaign in the South Caucasus, Khosrow Anushirvan resettled ten thousand Turks in Azerbaijan [Ibn al-Athir, 2006, vol., p.337-8]. Additionally, eighty noble Turkic families were relocated from the southern Caspian region of Gorgan to the Caucasian border, possibly to provide protection for the Derbent fortifications [At-Tabari, 2005, vol. 1, p.251].

After establishing their presence in the former territory of Sassanid Iran, the Arabs faced the task of defining their way of interacting with the local population and political forces in the region. Certain publications by less-informed authors may contain claims of a severe ultimatum purportedly given by the Arabs to the inhabitants of the conquered regions. According to these accounts, the choice presented was either to convert to Islam or engage in battle, with defeat resulting in the loss of property and freedom. However, in reality, the Quran and the principles of Islamic doctrine and law did not impose the compulsory adoption of Islam. Instead, they promoted it through economic and ideological means. Two distinct legal statuses were established for the conquered lands and their populations: those taken by force ('anwatan) and those taken peacefully (sulhan). The latter category was formalized through the signing of peace treaties between the parties involved [Колесников, 1982, с.148]. Texts of such treaties with Azerbaijan, Mughan, and several other regions in the Caucasus have been preserved.

When the decline of the Sassanid state became apparent, the prudent Albanian prince, Javanshir, made a crucial decision to prevent any further attempts by the crumbling empire's military forces to encroach upon the Albanian territories. He fought against the Persians, rescuing his father from captivity where he was held as a hostage [Каганкатваци, 1984, с.96-97]. Both Varaz Grigor and his son Javanshir, the rulers of Albania, skillfully coordinated their actions by navigating between various powers such as the Arabs to the south, the Byzantines to the west, and the Khazars to the north. This astute maneuvering effectively preserved the independence of the state and ensured a period of relative stability [Буниятов, 1965, с.100-102]. It is intriguing, however, that Prince Javanshir established strategic ties with the Khazars through a matrimonial agreement involving the daughter of the "Hun" ruler, who served as a vassal to the Khazar Khagan [Каганкатваци, 1984, с.102-103]. This approach aligns well with the traditional strategy of forging alliances with nomadic groups to secure political independence from major powers. The Albanian ruler remained steadfast in his alliance with the Khazars, and it is possible that this allegiance shielded him from the expansion of the Arab Caliphate, which was experiencing internal unrest during that period [Новосельцев, 1990, с.175].

The accounts of the Arab-Khazar wars are intertwined with stories that reveal the presence of Khazar-speaking individuals among the populations of many cities. Within the country's townspeople, there were Khazars who had embraced Islam. A portion of these converts collaborated with the Arabs. It was through the alleged treachery of a Khazar warrior, who purportedly sought conversion to Islam, that the Arabs successfully captured Derbent. However, according to al-Kufi's report, immediately after the Arabs' departure, the Khazars swiftly returned and "reestablished themselves in the city of al-Bab, as they had done before" [ал-Куфи, 1981, с.14-15].

The absence of evidence regarding the Albanian king's significant engagements against the Arabs suggests the possibility that resistance to the Arab forces in Albania was carried out through a collaborative

effort between the Khazars and the Albanian rulers. Prince Javanshir viewed the alliance with the Khazars as a strategic opportunity to safeguard his authority and maintain his country's independence. For the Albanian rulers, forging alliances with nomadic groups was a longstanding policy in response to the looming threat posed by major powers. It was within this context that the forces of the Arab commander Salman ibn Rabia were lured towards the borders of the Khazar Khaganate, where the Khazars held the advantage of operating in familiar geographic localities and mobilizing their formidable forces. In the vicinity of the Khazar city of Balanjar, a momentous battle unfolded, resulting in a decisive defeat for the Arabs and the death of Salman ibn Rabia [Al-Kufi, 1991, p.343-5]. The results of this failed Arab campaign align with a familiar pattern: the Khazars once again advanced towards Derbent, thereby enabling Albania to retain its independence for a while [Большаков, 1993, с.175].

After the death of Salman ibn Rabia, Caliph Uthman appointed Hudhayfah ibn al-Yaman, a companion of Prophet Muhammad renowned for his authoritative transmission of hadiths, as the ruler of Azerbaijan and Arran. This marked a significant shift in the Arab's approach to warfare against their primary adversary. They sought to garner the support of the local populace. Agreements were forged with local cities and regions, incorporating provisions that exempted the residents from paying the poll tax on the condition that they serve in the Arab army. This arrangement led to the formation of infantry units comprised of Dhimmis, the population under the protection (dhimma) of the Arabs, who increasingly joined the Muslim army in military campaigns [Буниятов, 1965, с.83-84].

Contrary to popular belief, the Arabs did not rely on coercion to enforce the adoption of Islam among the inhabitants of the territories they conquered. Instead, they employed various means such as tax incentives and patronage in crafts and trade to facilitate the relatively swift acceptance of Islam in the cities of Azerbaijan. The landowners perceived the adoption of Islam as a means to secure political assurances and maintain ownership of their real estates. Furthermore, active cultural and creative endeavors were undertaken to propagate the teachings of Islam. Mosques were constructed, serving as centers for education and fostering religious awareness. For instance, historical records indicate that in either 733 or 734, Maslama ibn Abd al-Malik built a mosque specifically for the Muslim Khazars residing in Derbent [Brook, 2006, p.180]. Initially, mosques were constructed exclusively in areas where Arab military settlements were established. However, over time, mosque construction expanded to encompass a wider geographical range. By the 10th century, mosques had been erected in nearly all cities. The presence of a cathedral mosque became a distinctive feature of cities that that set them apart from villages [Vəlixanlı, 1993, s.72].

What occurred within the Khazar state? Despite the opinion held by some researchers that "...Islam was the least popular in Khazaria" [Плетнева, 1999, с.214], it is known that the striking force of the khagan's army was the Muslim guard. Additionally, the capital of the Khaganate was home to a population of 10,000 Muslims, with 30 operating mosques. Muslim merchants, upon fulfilling their trade tax obligations, enjoyed unrestricted freedom in their activities [Al-Istakhri, 1961, p.129]. During his mission to the Bulgar ruler Elteber in 921, Ahmad ibn Fadlan made observations regarding the governance of Muslims in Khazaria. He noted the presence of a dedicated statesman who oversaw the affairs of Muslims in the region and reported directly to the khagan [Togan, 1939, s.45]. A Muslim vizier held significant importance within the Khazar administration, with al-Masudi documenting the name of one such vizier, Ahmad ibn Kuya [al-Masudi, 2005, v.II, p.139]. Furthermore, according to al-Istakhri, some of the khagan's family members were Muslims [Al-Istakhri, 1961, p.129]. The Khazar guard, which consisted of Muslims, did not engage in conflicts against Muslim lands under the terms of their service [Golden, 2007, p.138]. Al-Istakhri's accounts repeatedly mention the religious diversity within the Khazar society, with Jews, Christians, and Muslims coexisting, though there were reportedly larger populations of Muslims and Christians compared to Jews [al-Istakhri, 1927, p.220].

In 732, Maslama ibn Abd al-Malik finally managed to drive the Khazars out of Derbent. Recognizing the importance of Islamizing the population for the success of Arab expansion, this talented commander and statesman divided Derbent into distinct city sectors and settled Arab warriors in four of them. According

to legend, he also constructed a mosque in each of these sectors. During that period, Derbent was home to approximately a thousand Khazar households (*buyut*). Certain details surrounding the capture of Derbent by Maslama's army indicate the possibility of some of them choosing to remain in the city, as the withdrawal of the Khazar garrison appears to have resulted from an agreement with the Arabs. The Arab forces withdrew from the fortifications to allow the besieged to depart. Moreover, there were inhabitants within the city who were inclined to cooperate with the Arabs and embrace the new faith. One such individual provided advice to Maslama on how to breach the city's fortifications and likely played a role in negotiating with the Khazars [Al-Kufi, 1991, p.249-250]. A mosque was constructed in the quarter where the Khazars resided [Brook, 2006, p.180]. This event positioned Derbent as a pivotal center for the Islamization of the entire Caucasus region, including the nomadic Khazars living in the area.

Muslim Khazars also established settlements in various other cities of Azerbaijan located south of the border city of Derbent. During one of the earliest military incursions deep into Khazar territory (722–23), the Arab commander Al-Jarrah ibn Abdallah al-Hakami, following several days of siege, reached a peaceful resolution with the Khazar city of Bazgu.[1] As part of the agreement, a portion of Bazgu's population was relocated to the outskirts of Gabala [Al-Kufi, 1991, p.219].[2] D.Dunlop affirms the identification of this settlement as the city of Gabala and emphasizes that Gabala had been inhabited by the Khazars since ancient times [Dunlop, 1954, p.64].

Further evidence of the settlement of Khazars who embraced Islam in Azerbaijan can be found in the account provided by al-Baladhuri, which pertains to the circumstances surrounding Marwan ibn Muhammad's campaign in 737. Marwan and the Khazar khagan reached an agreement to create favorable conditions for the propagation of the Islamic faith within Khazaria. As a result, Marwan relocated a group of Khazars who seemingly had converted to Islam to the region between Shabran and the Samur River [al-Beladsori, 1866, p.208].

Al-Baladhuri, our reliable source on the early caliphate history, reports that the Abbasid commander Bugha al-Kabir reconstructed the ruined city of *Shamkur*[3] in the northwest of Azerbaijan in the year 240 AH (854 AD), where he settled "...the Khazars who sought shelter from him due to their adherence to Islam" [al-Beladsori, 1866, p.203]. There is a plausible viewpoint that Bugha himself had Khazar origins and took them under his wing [Golden, 2001, p.21; Golden, 2004, p.281]. As evident from this information, Bugha played a significant role in facilitating the Khazars' settlement in Azerbaijan.

Conclusion. The nomads played a crucial role in aiding local rulers to safeguard their independence against the expansion of major powers. It is evident that the settlement of nomads in the territory of Caucasian Albania began in Antiquity, but this process notably intensified during the Sassanid rule. The Iranian rulers, aiming to fortify the border in the Caucasus, relocated sizable groups of nomadic Turks to provide protection. This process is also reflected in the toponymy of Caucasian Albania, with the occurrence of place names derived from Turkic ethnonyms. The amicable relations with the nomads exerted a profound influence on the forms of economic activity and facilitated the development of international trade routes traversing the lands of Albania.

The military-political balance that emerged following the initial conflicts between the nomadic Turks and Muslim conquerors resulted in peaceful relations that fostered mutually advantageous long-distance international trade. The Arab administration of the conquered territories, the nomadic elite, and the local merchant nobility in the Turkic border regions found their interests aligned. This convergence of interests

[1] This spelling is used in the text of al-Kufi that I used for this publication. Ibn al-Athir mentioned a variation, referring to it as *"Yargu"*. It appears that the more accurate reading would be *"Targu"*, which is associated with the location of Tarki near Makhachkala. For further details, please refer to: [Dunlop, 1954, p.64, n.32].

[2] In the text, the spelling appears as "Rustak *GYL*-a". It deviates from the spelling of the word "Gabala" by only featuring an additional dot below the second root consonant. Errors in the arrangement of diacritical points are commonly observed in the process of manuscript copying.

[3] The present-day regional center of Shamkir in Azerbaijan.

facilitated increased mobility of populations across the borders of the nomadic and sedentary realms in Central Asia and the Caucasus. The adoption of Islam played a significant role in facilitating favorable trade conditions and improved access to commercial hubs in the Middle East. Consequently, two interconnected processes unfolded in tandem and nearly simultaneously: the migration and settlement of the Turkic population along the borders of the Muslim world and key international trade routes, and the propagation of Islam in the contact zones between nomadic and agrarian societies. This dual phenomenon formed the primary pattern of economic and cultural transformations in Caucasian Albania, as well as in Central Asia. It is evident that the interaction with Eurasian nomads served as the determining factor in shaping the shared destiny of the populations in both regions.

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JEWS IN CAUCASIAN ALBANIA. PATHS OF MIGRATION

Abstract. The paper addresses the largely unstudied topic of the emergence of a Jewish sub-ethnic group in Caucasian Albania. The author endeavors to reconstruct the historical, economic, and political circumstances surrounding the relocation of Jews to the South Caucasus countries for the first time, drawing upon information from extant historical chronicles and archaeological excavations.

Keywords: Caucasian Albania, Jews, migration, trade routes, sources

Introduction. Throughout history, many countries have undergone name changes according to the predominant ethnic group of a particular era. Thus, it is unsurprising that inhabitants of specific territories have been identified differently by their neighbors and in their own self-referential terms.

The modern Azerbaijani people naturally descend from the ethnic groups who have resided in this region for millennia. Present-day Azerbaijanis are direct genetic descendants of their ancestors, irrespective of the religion they practiced or the language they spoke at any point in history. Historically, this region has been a crossroads for significant trade routes, a place where the interests of both large and small states converge. As a conduit for information exchange and intercultural dialogue, it has experienced constant flows from the West and East, North and South. Diverse religious views were birthed, nurtured, and disseminated from this area, with new beliefs being effectively integrated and adjusted to the local milieu. Many immigrants who arrived in this country found a home, adopting aspects of the local traditions and culture, while still preserving their own unique identities. A climate of tolerance and open dialogue fostered coexistence between bearers of various traditions and worldviews, allowing them to communicate as equals.

Paths and motivations for Jewish migration: Jews first arrived in Caucasian Albania following the establishment of the Achaemenid Empire by Cyrus II the Great, an empire which, due to a series of successful wars, encompassed both the former Babylonian kingdom and modern Azerbaijan. After Cyrus II issued his well-known edict in 538 BC, some Babylonian exiles returned to their homeland, rebuilding the Temple and restoring national traditions. However, those who chose to remain in their places of exile found themselves at the heart of the new state's economic, political, and social life.

The Great Silk Road, the principal trade artery connecting China with Europe, Central Asia, and the Near and Middle East, was constructed in the second century BC. A significant portion of this route traversed Caucasian Albania, whose geography awarded it a vital role within this expansive trade network. These roads, undoubtedly, were once part of ancient caravan routes. "During the first and second centuries BC, the most frequented route passed through the Land of Fire, often referred to as "Strabo's route", named after the eminent geographer who first documented it. This path extended from China and India through Central Asia and along the Uzboy River to the Caspian Sea, crossing the territory of Caucasian Albania. At this point, the route split into two branches: one proceeded upstream along the Kur River towards Colchis and Iberia, while the other veered along the western coast of the Caspian Sea, through Derbent and the Caucasian plains.

Caucasian Albania was the most secure segment of the route. Georgia, Iberia, and Colchis, which were located further afield, were politically stable nations capable of maintaining the operation of this route, thereby attracting a multitude of traders and travelers. The majority of this path is navigated by water, historically the most cost-effective mode of transportation, providing a distinct advantage. This factor explains the enduring stability and intensity of this trade infrastructure, both in antiquity and the Middle Ages" [Следы Великого Шелкового Пути...].

A close examination of the Great Silk Road's primary route and its branches reveals that "one of the offshoots, which follows the northern foot of the Kopet Dagh, enters Azerbaijan via the southern part of the Caspian Sea. The second branch skirts the Tekla-Mekan desert from the north and reaches Derbent, then proceeds to Shamakhi – Ganja, Batumi-Istanbul (Byzantium – Constantinople), crossing the Balkan Peninsula to reach the heart of Europe". On one of these important trade route branches, Barda, the capital of Caucasian Albania since the fifth century, emerged as the world's largest trade center. Until the tenth century, it was a vital hub in the development of crafts in the Middle East and Transcaucasia" [Следы Великого Шелкового Пути...].

It is well known that caravan paths and transportation arteries commonly traverse areas adjacent to oases, rivers, and other natural features, providing travelers with convenient locations for rest and resupply of food and water. Settlements, typically equipped with caravanserais, hotels, marketplaces, currency exchange offices, and warehouses, frequently sprouted alongside these routes. These locations facilitated the exchange of goods, ideas, and languages, and introduced various religious beliefs. The culmination of these events led to the emergence of thriving cities as different civilizations interacted. Since Jews have consistently been pioneers in the creation of new markets, they undoubtedly seized the opportunity to engage in trade along this route. A meticulous examination of the history of Jewish populations in the South Caucasus, Central Asia, and China (the Jews of Kaifeng) reveals that these communities predominantly arose along the Great Silk Road.

In the Sasanian Empire, established in 224, Jews were afforded equal rights and their own self-governance. However, as Christianity ascended in popularity, the conflict between the dominant Zoroastrianism in Iran and the new religion, whose adherents were actively proselytizing, escalated over time. As few people at the time understood the nuances of the emerging worldview that threatened the foundations of Sasanian power, Jews were also affected by religious intolerance. "Under Yazdegerd II (438–457), influenced by magicians, all non-Zoroastrians began to face persecution. Religious confrontations reached their zenith during the reign of Peroz I (459–484). Furthermore, Jews were involved in the Mazdaki movement (488–529), which further aggravated the authorities' antipathy towards them" [Беккер, 2011, с.196]. The second wave of Jewish migration to Caucasian Albania was triggered by the persecution they endured under the Armenian-born rulers of the Byzantine Empire. Heraclius I (575–641), renowned as a "historical enemy of the Jewish people", was especially notorious for his vehement anti-Semitism. He effectively drove the Jews underground, forbidding them from conducting Jewish rituals outside of their private residences. In 614, he expanded his edict to enforce a total ban, leading to a new wave of forced baptisms. Heeding his call, similar decrees were issued by the Frankish King Dagobert I (626) and the Lombard King Perctarit (661). Following the expulsion of Persians from Jerusalem (629), Heraclius, under the influence of Christian clergy, ordered the destruction of all synagogues in the city and the execution of any remaining Jews. Only a handful of individuals, who managed to flee to Egypt or seek refuge in the mountains, survived the brutal pogroms that ensued.

In 632, Heraclius I issued an edict calling for the forced baptism of all Jews remaining within the empire's borders. However, he only managed to enforce this in Carthage. To further his "universal mission", the emperor urged the Frankish king to eradicate all Jews residing in his realm, an appeal that was declined.

In 641, following Heraclius I's death, the Jews of Constantinople participated in mass unrest against his widow" [Ираклий I ...].

Material and Written Sources on the Jews of Albania: A 1990 archaeological excavation led by Professor R.Geyushov unearthed the remnants of a seventh-century Jewish quarter and synagogue in Shabran. According to Jewish tradition, the prosperity of a community necessitated the presence of at least ten adult men, i.e., those aged 13 or older. Additionally, its complete operation was impossible without a mikvah (a pool with running water) for ritual purification, etc. Based on the excavation findings, it can be inferred that Shabran was home to at least 25–30 Jews. "The existence of a substantial Jewish population in Shabran is also suggested by the accounts of the 13th-century Flemish traveler, monk, and diplomat, Willem van Rubroeck, who was sent to the East by the French king, Louis IX" [Беккер, Азербайджан-еврейская община...]. Modern research also posits that these individuals were authentic Jews, not locals practicing Judaism. The esteemed anthropologist L.Oshanin, who examined the Caucasus population, noted that the Mountain Jews "are characterized by pronounced features of the West Asian type" [Касимова, 1975, с.45]. This view is further bolstered by recent Caucasian population studies conducted by the renowned DNA ancestry researcher A.A.Klyosov. He observed the following: "the basic haplotype of the J2 haplogroup Jews looks as follows (deviations from the basic Caucasian haplotype of the same J2a haplogroup are highlighted in color):

12 25 14 10 14 16 11 15 11 14 11 30 – 16 9 9 11 11 25 16 20 30 13 15 15 18 – 10 10 21 22 15 13 20
21 34 37 10 10 – 11 7 14 14 8 12 10 8 9 9 12 20 24 16 10 12 12 17 8 11 25 20 14 13 11 13 10 12 12 11 – 31 16 8
15 12 25 26 19 11 14 11 11 12 10 11 11 10 10 11 30 12 12 22 14 8 11 25 15 17 11 20 17 11 14 25 12 21 19 9
14 17 8 1311».

The aforementioned data suggests that "the Jews' haplotypes are markedly different from those of non-Jewish Caucasians, specifically by 87 mutations in 111-marker haplotypes" [Клёсов, Что говорит ДНК-генеалогия о кавказцах...]. Other researchers' findings align with these observations. Geneticists L.Chernin from Israel and M.D. M.Shlyankevich from the U.S., after studying the genetics of various Jewish sub-ethnic groups, concluded that "minor Jewish populations are more conservative. In other words, the high frequency of a certain haplogroup identified in the communities of Georgian, Azerbaijani (Tats) Jews, and Mountain Jews (Dagestan and the North Caucasus - author's note) indicates their limited interaction with the surrounding population, which, given the small size of these communities, leads to a high degree of inbreeding. According to their research, Ashkenazi, Sephardim, Belmonte Sephardim (Portugal), Iraqi, Iranian, Georgian, Azerbaijani, Moroccan, and Uzbek Jews, as well as Syrians, Samaritans, and Druze all fall into one 'Jewish' cluster" [Красильщиков, Генетика и евреи...].

It follows from the above that the Mountain Jews of Azerbaijan have, for centuries, constituted a highly isolated sub-ethnic group. Many medieval authors also attest to their early presence in the "Land of Fire". The seventh-century historian Movses Kaghankatvatsi provides information about the "Christians, Jews, pagans" residing in the capital of Caucasian Albania, Barda [Мамедова, 2007, с.50]. Such ninth-tenth century Arab historians and geographers as al-Masudi, al-Istakhri, and ibn Hawqal wrote about the local Jews [Меликов, 2002, с.69]. Unfortunately, the medieval history of the modern Azerbaijani Jews remains poorly researched. Given that authors did not aim to highlight the presence of various sub-ethnic groups in this area, written sources are incredibly scarce. Perhaps in time, new discoveries will fill this gap, but for now, we make do with what we have.

Conclusion. This paper represents a first attempt to identify the causes of and trace the migration paths of the Jewish ethnic group to Caucasian Albania. Economic interests, being generally slow and barely noticeable, undoubtedly played a key role in this process. However, the atrocities and persecutions that Jews have suffered throughout history have uprooted entire communities, which has had an immediate impact on the nations to which these masses of refugees fled. Consequently, Jews found themselves in Caucasian Albania, Georgia, the North Caucasus, and even the Khazar Khaganate. Their futures diverged, but here in the South Caucasus, their lot proved to be more comfortable and stable than in European countries, particularly Poland, Germany, and the Russian Empire.

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THE ROLE OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN THE PROCESSES OF CULTURAL HERITAGE CONSERVATION

Abstract. For a long time civil society was not much interested or involved in the cultural heritage saugarding processes, leaving these work to professionals in history, anthropology, cultural studies, restauration etc. This tendency in post-Soviet coutries has continued until nowadays. The goal of the article is to identify what rights and opportunities local communities have now and how this affects their activities in the field of heritage conservation. The paper discusses the notion of 'heritage community', and also devotes considerable space to the various 'good' and 'bad' practices, problems and challenges faced by conservation activists and local residents working with natural and cultural heritage values.

Keywords: cultural values; heritage community; local community; heritage studines; post-Soviet countries

Introduction. Throughout the centuries, human societies have served as creators, consumers, and guardians of spiritual and material values, which are subsequently transmitted to future generations. However, it was not until the mid – 19th century that this particular endeavor began to gain increasing formalization. Eventually, in the latter half of the 20th century, it developed into the well-established discipline of *heritage studies*, encompassing both practical technological and socio-humanitarian aspects of this field [Gentry, Smith, 2019, pp.1-21]. However, a closer analysis of its development and, particularly, its present state reveals a paradoxical situation. As the field of heritage studies took shape and professionalized, with a growing emphasis on specialization, local communities – the very creators and initial guardians of cultural treasures – found themselves increasingly marginalized in terms of ownership rights and management processes. Instead, these assets increasingly came under the control of relevant governmental institutions and experts [Shyllon, 2016, pp.55-68]. As a result, the interest of local residents in these objects and phenomena decreased or even disappeared altogether, reducing them to mere tourist attractions served by local staff in the tourism industry.

These detrimental effects of distancing local culture from its means and methods of preservation are particularly evident in countries with a pronounced political hierarchy and a well-established bureaucratic apparatus, as was the case in the USSR, where local initiatives often faced initial mistrust, control, or even suppression by the authorities. In many other countries as well, until the beginning of the 21st century, cultural heritage resources and associated rights to ownership and management were primarily considered in terms of their cultural, political, or economic importance and benefits for the state or business structures. Meanwhile, civil society, with rare exceptions, had only limited involvement in the preservation of local heritage, leaving this task to experts and officials. The processes of globalization and the spread of mass culture also contribute to this observed exclusion. Such tendencies continue to persist in certain countries to the present day.

What methods and possibilities exist for addressing these types of problems? This article will attempt to answer this question by conducting a detailed analysis of the role and existing rights of local communities in the processes of selection, preservation, and interpretation of cultural and natural values.

The evolution of the concept of "heritage communities". "Heritage communities", as autonomous actors actively engaged in the conservation of cultural values, and the challenges pertaining to their rights and opportunities within the context of environmental changes at the local (especially urban) and national levels, have only recently gained widespread attention. In the mid – 19th century, in Western European and North American countries, the preservation of ancient architectural structures and exceptional natural monuments, as well as the development of the discourse on heritage, were primarily championed by small groups of antiquity enthusiasts. These groups were predominantly composed of representatives from the aristocracy and intelligentsia. However, thanks to the spread of Romanticism and the ideology of nationalism, which gained momentum throughout Europe and beyond in the late 19th century, historical monuments came to be seen as tangible evidence of the past, symbols of national identity, and sources of collective pride. Consequently, governments began to protect and allocate funds for their preservation and restoration [Leon, 1934, pp.2-52]. Therefore, political, legal, and administrative institutions and procedures gradually took control of this sphere, driving the development of heritage conservation towards increased professionalism and, as a result, bureaucratization. Legislative provisions, administrative structures, and research institutions emerged to regulate this field [Choay, 1988, pp.82-116]. It was only in the late 20th century, with the increasing spread of ideas regarding the preservation of intangible cultural relics [Smith, Akagawa, 2009, pp.1-9] that important changes took place in the understanding of what constitutes cultural heritage and how to safeguard it.

Thus, the evolution of heritage studies has gone through several crucial stages, during which there were shifts in the perception of the object of preservation, and high-quality approaches to its implementation were being developed. These stages ranged from addressing primarily narrow technical tasks of conserving or restoring exceptional historical monuments, to the formation of a more scientific approach and ethical principles for defining boundaries and forms of intervention in their substance, and finally to the introduction of an integrated structural approach to the preservation not only of the authenticity of form but also the function of monuments [Ashworth, 1995, p.15; Ashworth, 1997, pp.97-107; Jokilehto, 1999]. Alongside restoration architects, urban planners, ecologists, anthropologists, tourism managers, and other specialists have started to participate in this process, as the goals of heritage preservation increasingly focus on the need for regeneration and rehabilitation of sites through their diverse use and appropriate interpretation and presentation. As a result of these qualitative shifts and breakthroughs in the understanding of the very concept of heritage, there has been a gradual transition from preserving the "old" to the "not-so-old" (including modern works of art), from the "grand and impressive" to the "smaller and casual" and from the "monumental" to a much broader definition of "cultural value" that recognizes the integrity of natural, cultural, and urban landscape [Чепайтене, 2010, с.124].

Today, the discipline of heritage has evolved into a distinct area of scientific research and an integral part of territorial planning and management processes. The emphasis is placed on the economic use of natural and cultural resources. Through the process of "packaging", these resources are transformed into mass-consumption products that are marketed within the tourism industry [Albert, 2007, pp.26-32]. Of course, what is being sold is not the value itself, but rather the unique experience that visitors or observers gain through their interaction with these places, objects, or traditional practices. The preservation of cultural heritage today has become a comprehensive and multidisciplinary endeavor. It is carried out at the local level as an integral part of local governance, guided by specific legislative provisions, local policies, and professional ethics. Its primary focus is on meeting collective, particularly public, needs [Ashworth, 1997, p.92].

As political authorities at different levels seek to gain recognition and respect from citizens and shape their collective identity, the management of cultural heritage sites also becomes one of the spheres through which the state legitimizes its power, enhances its moral authority, and raises its prestige internationally. However, local communities often have little involvement with the state's system of cultural heritage protection or structures of power. Through specific artifacts, traditions, sites, and locations, communities

primarily focus on exploring their historical roots, strengthening their collective identity, and fostering a connection to a specific place - be it their hometown, urban neighborhood, and so forth. They are also inclined to prioritize the preservation and transmission of traditions and customs to future generations, as well as the celebration of local festivals, anniversaries, and dates associated with significant events, historical figures, and so on. As a result, conflicts and misunderstandings sometimes arise between state institutions and local residents, leading to mutual distrust. In wealthy countries with strong civil societies, these conflicts and issues are resolved or at least mitigated through the friendly support of local communities in preserving their local cultural features and values. Urban planners or cultural property managers also tend to consider the opinions and psychological characteristics of local residents in their projects.

Thus, shifting away from the elitist perception of heritage and specialized heritage protection agencies and agents who prioritized addressing technological issues [Чепайтене, 2010, с.118-124], experts have embraced the notion of progressively integrating the material and non-material aspects of local culture into all aspects of human life. *The UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (1972) was the first step towards expanding civic engagement in the field of heritage preservation and the development of methodologies for involving and actively engaging local populations in various processes related to World Heritage sites located in their living areas. This initiative aimed to foster a greater shared sense of responsibility for these sites. *The Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* also called for states to work based on a human rights approach, including intellectual property rights, thereby ensuring the balanced participation of a wide range of stakeholders, including rights holders, managers, local and regional authorities, local communities, indigenous peoples, non-governmental organizations, and others [World Heritage Committee.., 2019]. With the emergence of the concept of sustainable development, heritage preservation has shifted its reliance from solely the approaches and methods of the humanities to also encompass the social sciences, particularly the natural sciences. The circle of individuals involved in the processes of preserving and transmitting cultural and natural values has also been changing, thanks to a radical reevaluation of the role of heritage in society. Heritage is no longer seen as a narrowly specialized sphere of activity but has become a part of regulating diverse social, cultural, political, and economic processes.

On the other hand, in the realm of heritage preservation, no state, even the wealthiest, has the capacity to fully fulfill the commitments it has undertaken to society regarding the preservation of the entire array of expert-selected and register-listed heritage assets, nor can it afford the financial expenditures necessary for their maintenance, conservation, restoration, or regeneration. Therefore, in the modern sphere of cultural resource management, much emphasis is placed on increasing the self-awareness and social responsibility of citizens towards the natural and cultural values with which they directly interact in their daily lives. The push for democratization of this entire process inevitably leads to expanding access to management and granting greater rights to various interested groups and individuals. Cultural heritage is seen as a shared and divisible resource capable of bringing people and communities together, particularly in shaping collective identity, fostering loyalty to the state, and promoting the values of civic solidarity. Therefore, in European heritage practices, there is a growing emphasis on encouraging the initiative of local communities and actively developing new methods and forms of their inclusion in the aforementioned processes.

The qualitative shift in the role of local communities in heritage management processes is also supported by a number of internationally significant documents, such as *the Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society* adopted in the Portuguese city of Faro in 2005. The Faro Convention introduced the concept of "heritage communities" and affirmed their right to participate in local heritage management processes. In this way, the *Faro Convention* took a significant step towards defining the status and legal rights of communities within various mechanisms of cultural property management. It also strengthened the importance and significance of their engagement with heritage at the international level. The *Faro Convention* defines the concept of "heritage communities" as a group of people who value specific aspects of cultural heritage which they wish, within the framework of public action, to sustain

and transmit to future generations [Council of Europe..., 2005]. According to this formulation, "heritage communities" are not exclusively determined by territorial affiliation. In essence, the term "community" encompasses a wider range of individuals, including those who value specific objects and elements of tangible and intangible heritage, irrespective of their place of birth or residence. Despite the broad and ambiguous nature of this concept, it contributes to the emergence of discourse around communities that extend beyond professionals and specialists in the field, encompassing diverse individuals and groups with varying interests. The second significant innovation of the *Faro Convention* is that it not only ambitiously asserts the need for the involvement of all members of society in heritage-related processes but also emphasizes their direct responsibility for it, whether collective or individual.

However, it is important to make a clear distinction between the concepts of "local community" and "heritage community", as they may not always align completely, although there is often overlap between them. As previously mentioned, the *Faro Convention* defines "heritage communities" as individuals who consciously and intentionally identify with specific heritage sites and elements, actively engaging in their preservation and development, regardless of physical attachment to those places, while local communities occupy a different position in relation to heritage. Above all, local communities are characterized by their direct affiliation with the territory where heritage sites are located or with the protected heritage buildings they reside in, fostering an emotional bond with these places. In the discourse of productive engagement of local communities with heritage sites, psychological connection, as well as a sense of attachment to the place, is a crucial, if not the most important, aspect. Local communities view heritage sites and their surrounding territories not from a professional perspective of defining and assessing historical and cultural value, but from an emotional and spiritual value perspective, primarily for themselves as individuals or as a collective associated with that specific place. However, their self-awareness regarding the cognitive perception of the value and importance of these territories and sites may not be fully developed, and their willingness to protect them in the face of various threats might be lacking. Yet, due to their direct connection with heritage sites and their daily accumulation of diverse experiences with them, it is believed that local residents can engage with heritage on a deeper level. They go beyond simply acquiring specialized historical or technical knowledge about it, but also draw from their own feelings and local knowledge, which specialists often lack in order to fully grasp the social significance of these sites, territories, or traditional cultural practices.

This more democratic and inclusive approach is highly important in the process of redefining heritage as a common and shareable asset that can and should foster the cohesion of people and societies in the context of globalization. Local communities in this case act as social stakeholders rather than just users and beneficiaries, fostering a more open dialogue with other social participants in this process, as well as diverse heritage engagement practices. One vivid example of how community engagement can work in cultural heritage management is the World Heritage Citizens Dialogue project, which emerged in 2016 during the development of an integrated world heritage management plan for the Old Town of Regensburg. Residents and representatives of various civil society groups were invited to a forum to discuss the development of this area. Through participation in discussions with experts, more than 70 city residents contributed their ideas regarding the preservation and development of the historic center. They identified important issues and proposed potential solutions. Around 50% of the citizens' suggestions were accepted and incorporated into the plan's formulation. Furthermore, during the public discussion, two representatives from the local community were selected to join the working group responsible for devising the final version of the development plan for the area [*Community Involvement...*, 2017, pp.65-66]. Another example is a 2010 project in Spain aimed at restoring 54 Romanesque churches and monasteries, emphasizing the idea that if heritage can be a resource for local development, it must be valued and recognized by local people. Alongside the restoration work carried out on the selected sites, the project organizers conducted a series of activities with local residents. These activities enabled them to increase their awareness of the region's cultural heritage and helped identify ways for the restored churches to adapt more effectively, not only

from a religious perspective but also from social and cultural standpoints, to benefit the lives of the local population [Sani Lynch, Visser, 2015, p.14].

Currently, it is possible to observe that, thanks to more effective heritage management and the involvement of local communities in various sustainable development processes, conflicts between communities are being mitigated in countries of Western Europe, North America, and Asia. The engagement of local residents in heritage management is happening more smoothly [*People-Centred*..., 2021; Ubertazzi, 2022, Lee, 2023, pp.126-138].

Conflicts over heritage. However, as mentioned earlier, while striving to adhere to international recommendations and find the most efficient and appropriate solutions to protect heritage and foster local community development, it is unavoidable that conflicts and discord may arise. Such conflicts are primarily rooted in power/subordination relationships between government structures and local communities, and are often shaped by the question of whether or not to involve local residents more closely in the mechanisms of managing cultural and natural assets at the local level. While local communities often strive to gain as many rights and as much influence as possible in decision-making processes directly affecting their cities, or in other words, to transition to a *bottom-up* model, representatives of municipal and national authorities in the field of cultural management primarily seek to retain decision-making rights and enhance their own authority, namely by applying a *top-down* model. Each stakeholder also has their own hopes, plans, and aspirations that they want to achieve based on their needs and capabilities, believing that it will benefit the heritage sites themselves. These, of course, may not align with the views and interests of the other party. In situations where the heritage sphere is entirely controlled by state institutions, the interests of local communities are often ignored or suppressed, despite their status and role not only as a group directly involved in these processes but also as individuals psychologically and territorially connected to the cultural heritage sites and elements. When it comes to preserving a building or a tree in its original state or saving it from demolition or logging, the question always arises: *who* values it, *who* protects it, and *who* owns the said object? It is worth noting that the difficulties often encountered on the ground when attempting to directly apply the *Faro Convention*, as well as other similar documents, lie in the question of how to smoothly transition from an excellent theory to not always equally excellent practice [Diaz-Andeu, 2017, pp.2-6].

Preservation activities often become a field of various conflicts and grievances. They can arise in several ways, including: 1) between preservationists and owners of the objects (such as the government or private property owners); 2) between preservationists and the local community, which in everyday life serves as the consumer of the said object, for example, in terms of real estate prices or the potential for development in a city block; 3) within the preservation community itself, regarding the formation and mechanisms of working with the specific object, the local community, and so on.

A closer analysis of this topic in post-Soviet countries, including the Baltic States and Belarus, reveals that the implementation of these international provisions in managing specific heritage sites and territories is complex due to the lack of prioritization of an inclusive and participatory approach in the development of this sector. This is despite the legislative adoption of formal declarations regarding the rights of local communities in the protection of cultural property. In reality, applying these provisions is difficult, and sometimes even impossible. For example, due to the specific political regime, Belarus is following a path that practically excludes local communities from heritage management, not only in official documents but also in practice. There is still a prevailing perception in Belarus that cultural heritage is exclusively the domain of the state, following an expert-oriented model. This *top-down* model of managing cultural heritage favors processes that do not encourage the development of citizens' social responsibility. In fact, unauthorized activism in this field, even if driven by sincere intentions and objectives, is discouraged by the state and may even face punishment. Therefore, in such a situation, interinstitutional interaction mostly occurs through bureaucratic correspondence, which is not always effective. The state, unwilling to share governance rights

in any field of activity with interested societal groups, firmly holds the reins, including in the sphere of heritage management. These long-standing attitudes, practices, and customs that have persisted since Soviet times maintain a situation where heritage management is seen only as the domain of a narrow circle of administrators and experts, which goes against current global trends. However, despite this situation, non-governmental initiatives are still able to implement some new approaches that involve the direct engagement of non-professionals, yet interested individuals and communities, in heritage preservation efforts [Стурейко, 2017, с.62-77].

In Lithuania, despite the state's declarations and obligations to follow international principles regarding the involvement of local communities in cultural heritage management, there have been instances where efforts of local communities and activists to actively engage in development projects within their own territories, with the goal of preserving specific buildings or places, i.e., attempts to apply the *bottom-up* model, have not always yielded positive results [Daubarytė, 2015, p.113-128]. On the contrary, they sometimes face direct threats from both project developers and bureaucratic structures and procedures. In some cases, they even face legal persecution, intended to serve as a deterrent to future actions by local residents. A notable example is the decision to demolish the Lietuva Cinema Theater in Vilnius in 2005. However, in this particular case, it was primarily commercial interests that outweighed purely bureaucratic considerations. Thus, it is evident that local residents still face significant limitations in exercising their rights and pursuing their interests in the field of heritage within the post-Soviet region. This remains the case despite countries signing international documents at different levels and statuses to promote such involvement. These examples demonstrate that the absence of well-defined legal rights and adequate representation on a legal basis as key stakeholders in heritage management processes acts as a major obstacle to local communities exercising their rights in managing their heritage. Moreover, the lack of sufficient experience and successful outcomes in these endeavors also hinders progress in this field.

Conclusion. Drawing from various examples of engaging local residents in heritage management, it is evident that Western practices highlight efforts to transition from simple consultation with local citizens regarding heritage issues to more proactive measures that would foster shared responsibility for cultural heritage among all interested groups. In the context of heritage management in Central and Eastern European countries, it is worth noting that it continues to be viewed not as a catalyst for socio-economic development but rather as a financial burden on the state budget and a resource for unrestricted commercial exploitation. However, thanks to factors such as European integration, significant changes have occurred in the cultural sector of some post-Soviet countries, including the perception of the role of cultural heritage in society. Projects implemented by state institutions in the cultural sphere with the involvement of local residents, as well as projects initiated by local communities or non-profit organizations, may still encounter certain challenges and obstacles, as described earlier. However, these difficulties do not diminish their efforts; instead, they serve as a foundation for further action.

The new inclusive approach to heritage has been largely shaped by the *Faro Convention*, which emphasizes not only the protection and restoration of specific monuments but primarily focuses on addressing the basic needs of local communities and recognizing the value of heritage to them. Thus, the field of cultural heritage conservation, once limited and highly specialized, is gradually transitioning, albeit with challenges, towards a form of collaboration involving a broader range of stakeholders, societies, and organizations. On the other hand, it is also possible to argue that the so-called attachment to place and the everyday experience of local communities interacting with their heritage enable the development and application of new creative methods. These methods increasingly rely not on formal approaches and scientific knowledge but on the emotions, feelings, and experiences of the local residents themselves [Smith, 2021].

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SOCIAL–HISTORICAL EXISTENCE OF THE UDI PEOPLE AND THE PRESENT: AN ATTEMPT AT PHILOSOPHICAL RECONSTRUCTION

Abstract. This article substantiates the significance of the philosophical reconstruction of the social-historical existence of the Udi people as one of the world's oldest ethnic groups and an integral part of the thriving Azerbaijani multiculturalism. The author's research is driven by the need to determine the role and place of the Udi ethnic group in contemporary multi-ethnic and multi-religious Azerbaijani society. The work highlights that such small ethnic groups, being objects of society, are the first to experience the effects of imbalances and crises in social systems, increasing tensions and risks, threats, and conflicts.

The author convincingly demonstrates the unique value of Azerbaijani multiculturalism in the context of globalization and the accelerated dynamics of modern societies. Considering the main levels of globally accepted identity - civic and ethnic, he points out that in the Republic of Azerbaijan, a third, collectivist, traditional identity (mahalla/neighborhood) has been preserved and is continuing to develop its foundation. The country has a historically established system of common values, enabling people to voluntarily and willingly extend mutual assistance and support to each other, their neighbors, and relatives in an environment of inter-civilizational solidarity.

Keywords: The Udis, existence, multiculturalism, identity, intersubjective communications, ethnophore, marginality

The relevance and demand for philosophical research into the social-historical existence of the Udi, one of the world's oldest ethnic groups, is largely determined by the contradictions and conflicts of contemporary societies, their continuous imbalanced dynamics, turbulence, and ambivalence of external and internal processes, combining dichotomous trends: both globalization, regionalization, and localization.

Before examining the philosophical aspects and providing a reconstruction of the social-historical existence of the Udis, who have lived for millennia in their historical homeland - Azerbaijan, it is important to understand how and in what way, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the process of stabilizing the socio-economic situation of the republic took place, including the search for goals, new ideas, values, and directions for development, and determining prospects for the future.

The crisis and subsequent dissolution of the USSR posed significant challenges for all post-Soviet societies. By the end of the 20th century, each of these newly independent and sovereign countries had to find its central, unifying idea for the new state. Importantly, they had to independently undertake the transformation of their political and social systems while preserving historical traditions, common values, and the cultures of both major and minor ethnic groups historically residing within their territories.

Over the past decades, thanks to the vigorous efforts of the leadership of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the scientific community, and public organizations, it was not only possible to preserve, but also promote the development of a distinctive multi-ethnic and multi-religious culture, traditions, customs, and way of life of the peoples of the country.

One of the most important components of such efforts was the regular holding of international scientific-practical conferences in Baku dedicated to the study of the rich historical, cultural, religious, linguistic, and ethnic heritage of Caucasian Albania. At these forums, discussions have always revolved around the history, social, and religious life of the multi-ethnic Azerbaijani society, with a particular focus on its integral part, the ancient Udi ethnic group, its history, language, cultural and religious heritage, traditions, and way of life.

The disappearance of communist ideology and the previous model of social development posed the most complex problems for the multi-ethnic Azerbaijani society. What was to be done? The Udis, like all ethnic groups in Azerbaijan, found themselves in a situation of socio-economic, cultural, spiritual, and moral crisis. Interethnic conflicts, and then a full-scale war unleashed by Armenia against the Republic of Azerbaijan, led to the fact that some Udis could not find "answers" to new "challenges", and adapt to crisis realities. They were forced to emigrate to Russia and former Soviet republics, as well as other countries of the world.

The Soviet model that emerged in the 20th century, or rather the outdated, dogmatized theory and practice of socialism with primitive needs and services, proved incapable, especially in crisis conditions of existence, to cope with rapid and dynamic changes. There was a need for a careful development and advancement of a new concept of intercultural interaction of peoples, which would take into account all the specifics of the current stage of development of Azerbaijani society.

Since then, more than 30 years have passed. During these years, a unique Azerbaijani model of tolerance and multiculturalism has emerged, gaining worldwide recognition. Despite the remarkable achievements, scholars and specialists in Azerbaijan continue to study the interethnic and interfaith processes in the country, which allows them to enrich it with new meaning and content. In the West, despite the political practice of insignificant efficiency and the marginality of the discourse of multiculturalism, the search for a solution to the problem of multiculturalism remains a relevant task [Веретевская, 2018, с.7]. Comparing Western policy of tolerance and multiculturalism with the theory and practice of socio-cultural and moral-spiritual development of modern Azerbaijani society, several qualitative differences can be identified. A comparative analysis of foreign models and Azerbaijani multiculturalism reveals the qualitative specifics of the nature and essence of these phenomena and realities. The uniqueness of Azerbaijan's multiculturalism lies in the fact that its successes have been achieved in an environment where the overwhelming majority of the population are Muslims.

The principle of unity in diversity has been instrumental in understanding the intricacies of Azerbaijan's multi-ethnic and multi-religious society, as well as the directions and characteristics of its further development. Additionally, the application of dialectical methodology has contributed to understanding the systemic and holistic nature of Azerbaijani multiculturalism and the continuity of its successful dynamics.

The use of a poly-paradigmatic approach helped to identify two main levels of identity in the Azerbaijani model of multiculturalism: **the national (civic) identity** and **the ethnic identity**. The former is universal and shared by all citizens of the state, regardless of their cultural and other differences, while the latter divides them into social groups, encompassing the unique and specific lifestyle of each group. However, while acknowledging these two main levels of identity, it is crucial to draw attention to another important aspect. In the Republic of Azerbaijan, a third, traditional, **collectivist identity** (mahalla/neighborhood) has retained its foundation; a historically formed system of common values has been in effect for centuries, where people demonstrate intercultural and inter-civilizational solidarity, willingly and voluntarily offering mutual assistance and support to each other, neighbors, and relatives at all times.

One should agree with the idea put forward by the creators of the collective work "Cross-Cultural Psychology: Research and Application". In particular, its authors J.W.Berry, A.H.Poortinga, M.H.Segall, and P.R.Dasen rightly note: "Multiculturalism" implies the existence of a unifying structure of common values that act as a foundation in a multi-ethnic state. This is a flexible structure that is responsible for the diversity of cultures and ethnic groups that make up the nation" [Кросс-культурная психология, 2007, с.410].

Let's pay attention to the important fact that multiculturalism implies constant cooperation, joint peaceful coexistence of different ethnic groups and religions, within the same state. The Republic of Azerbaijan historically - in Antiquity and Middle Ages – been and continues to be a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country. The current Constitution of Azerbaijan, adopted in November 1995, guarantees equal rights and opportunities for all citizens of the country, regardless of ethnic or religious affiliation. In particular, in paragraph 3 of Article 25, "Right to Equality", of Azerbaijan's Constitution, it is noted that "The State shall guarantee the equality of rights and freedoms to everyone, irrespective of race, ethnicity, religion, language, sex, origin, property status, occupation, beliefs or affiliation with political parties, trade union organizations or other public associations. Restrictions of rights and freedoms on the grounds of race, ethnicity, religion, language, sex, origin, beliefs, or political or social affiliation are prohibited" [Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan of November 12, 1995, p.51].

Indeed, the cornerstone of national unity is the preservation of the natural habitat of the indigenous peoples inhabiting the territory of Azerbaijan, along with their rich historical, social, and cultural heritage, including their language, values, traditions, and customs.

The successful functioning of the Azerbaijani model of multiculturalism is largely associated with the **strict observance of both state laws and the rights of national minorities and ethnic groups** in the country. To develop this important strategic area, on May 15, 2014, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, signed a "Decree on the Establishment of the Baku International Multiculturalism Centre". The Decree states that "Located at the junction of civilizations, Azerbaijan possesses a rich cultural and spiritual heritage and traditions of tolerance, which is one of the truths recognized on the international stage. The existing environment of national cultural diversity and religious-ethnic tolerance has turned it, as a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country, into a unique space for intercultural dialogue on a global scale. The successful state policy pursued today in the Republic of Azerbaijan, aimed at preserving this cultural, linguistic, and ethnic diversity, dictates the need for special care and enrichment of the vast historical experience accumulated over centuries in the field of multiculturalism and strengthening the promotion of the unique achievements attained within the society in this area" [Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the Establishment of the Baku International Multiculturalism Centre, p.1].

For many years, the Baku International Multiculturalism Centre, under the direct leadership of Executive Director Ravan Hasanov, has been successfully implementing the state policy of tolerance and multicultural existence. The Centre supports the work of cultural and educational and public organizations of all ethnic groups in Azerbaijan, constantly initiating various scientific events such as conferences, round tables, meetings, and dialogues involving representatives of different cultures and civilizations, by inviting scholars from dozens of countries worldwide, including Europe, Asia, Africa, and other continents. In many universities in Azerbaijan and some foreign countries, the Centre has organized and ensured the highest level of teaching of such courses as "Azerbaijani Multiculturalism" and "Introduction to Multiculturalism". It's worth noting that just in the past few years, the Baku International Multiculturalism Centre has organized and successfully held several international conferences dedicated to Caucasian Albania, including the Udis, held in Rome, Italy (2015), Nij village, Azerbaijan (2019), and Baku (April 2023).

Today, in the Republic of Azerbaijan, the state policy aimed at preserving and developing the rich historical, cultural, linguistic, and ethnic diversity continues successfully. This policy emphasizes the importance of safeguarding the extensive historical experience in the field of common cultural dynamics accumulated over millennia, while also enhancing international recognition of the unique achievements within the society. Multiculturalism has played a significant role in promoting Azerbaijan on the global stage, gradually becoming a way of life for the majority of ethnic-religious communities, fostering a new form of harmonious coexistence with a shared vision for the future.

As is well known, Islam, its traditions, and values continue to hold strong positions in Azerbaijan, which contributes to the preservation of the established ethnic and religious balance among its peoples and enables effective action against radical forces. A testament to the success of the policy of tolerance and

multiculturalism can be seen in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, where various religious institutions coexist peacefully side by side: a Muslim mosque, an Orthodox church, a Catholic church, a Jewish synagogue, and others. Experience shows that the religious factor is a significant social, cultural, spiritual, and moral determinant of society. In the early decades of the 21st century, Azerbaijan hosted numerous world forums, international and interregional conferences, and other events dedicated to the dialogue of cultures and civilizations, Caucasian studies, Azerbaijani studies, Albanian studies. They took place at the highest level and still retain their significance, carrying a profound meaning.

It is worth emphasizing once again that during the years of independence in the Republic of Azerbaijan, new synagogues and a Catholic church have been constructed, while Orthodox temples and mosques have been restored. Particularly noteworthy is the restoration of two religious places of worship in the Nij village of Gabala district: the Church of Saint Elisæus and the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Today, they successfully operate, hosting religious services, celebrating religious holidays, and performing rituals such as baptisms and sacrifices.



Baku, April 14, 2023

Today, the Azerbaijani model of tolerance and multiculturalism should be promoted as an exemplary framework for all national minorities and ethnic groups across Europe, Asia, Africa, and other continents. It skillfully and successfully combines all religious values and traditions of both ancient indigenous ethnicities and modern peoples who have lived in the Republic for only a few centuries. The keen attention given to the Azerbaijani model of multiculturalism is largely due to its high political, social, cultural, and spiritual potential, which allows it to define principles, approaches, and paths to address the goals and challenges of intercultural communication and interpersonal interaction, both within the highly multi-ethnic and multi-religious Azerbaijani society and on the international stage. For many years, Azerbaijan has remained the initiator and organizer of numerous international events of religious and secular character. As noted, Baku has long been a recognized and active platform for holding large-scale events, dialogues, and global exchanges of ideas. Just in the last decade, Baku hosted the 7th UN Alliance of Civilizations Global Forum,

the Summit of World Religious Leaders, Eurovision, the first European Games, and several Formula 1 racing events.

The policy of tolerance and multiculturalism enables active engagement and creative development of a multinational educational environment, with a primary focus on preserving and advancing the Russian language. Today, in the Republic of Azerbaijan, there are 335 secondary schools and 27 universities offering education in Russian, catering education to over 100,000 students. Additionally, 435 kindergartens and 248 pre-school educational institutions provide instruction in Russian. Russian language teaching is carried out in 379 general education schools, and in 16 schools, it is the sole medium of instruction. Many schools have also implemented projects for in-depth study of the Russian language. Moreover, approximately 500,000 students attending Azerbaijani-language departments are learning Russian as a foreign language. Notably, in recent years, there has been a consistent trend of an increasing number of children studying in Russian in primary classes [Гаджиев, 2017, с.247].

Today, Russian schools are functioning in many districts of Azerbaijan, including Gabala city. Since the 1950s, three Russian schools have been operational in the native village of Nij. Here, students learn several languages, including Russian, Azerbaijani, Udi, and English. The multilingualism of the Udi people creates not only a tolerant and multicultural environment but also fosters a unique inter-ethnic atmosphere of dialogue, equality, mutual respect, good neighborliness, mutual assistance, and friendship. Naturally, Baku stands as a model, where Russian, French, Egyptian, German, and Turkish cultural centers are currently active. The capital of Azerbaijan serves as a vivid example of how **unity in diversity** can be ensured. Modern Azerbaijan combines Turkic, Muslim, European, Christian, Jewish, and other shared cultural values.

Addressing the nature and essence of multiculturalism, it is important to note that there are several models of it, such as European, Canadian, American, Australian, and Asian. It is no secret that all these models represent specific theoretical constructs, and their implementation in practice depends on the particular context, actions of national leaders and elites, political will, and the prevailing state of affairs. A few years ago, the leaders of several developed Western European countries declared a failure of their policies of tolerance and multiculturalism. These Western countries struggled to address the segregation of foreign ethnic groups into enclaves, the hardships faced by these groups in their everyday life, and the realities of isolation they experienced, as well as the rise of religious extremism and terrorism, and conflicts rooted in nationalism and migrant phobia. In contrast, the Azerbaijani model of multiculturalism is currently gaining a new theoretical meaning and practical development. It continues to foster harmony, trust, and friendship within Azerbaijani society.

Azerbaijani multiculturalism, as a unique phenomenon, was formed based on the policy of Azerbaijanism, proposed back in the 1990s by the National Leader of Azerbaijan Heydar Aliyev, whose 100th birthday anniversary was celebrated this year. The special concept of Azerbaijanism is based on the shared historical experience and multicultural existence of the peoples of Azerbaijan, the principles of humanism and tolerance, and the unique traditions and customs of each ethnic group of the Republic. The policy of Azerbaijanism is a theory and practice of implementing the principle of unity in diversity in the real life of Azerbaijani society, recognizing the political, social, and cultural unity of different peoples and religions of the country. It advocates for unity in diversity, recognizing their differences and specific forms of integration, while preserving traditions and embracing the best of each of Azerbaijan's ethnic groups.

Today, the Azerbaijani model of multiculturalism is founded on a well-established **system of unified national knowledge, perspectives, and ideas that seamlessly blend and continue to synthesize diverse cultural, ethnic, religious, ethical, aesthetic, and familial values and traditions**. This worldview and set of values have become inherently **inseparable** for Azerbaijani citizens, characterized by the **syncretism of traditional and modern elements**, thus fostering the creation of a strong, unified, and unique sociocultural space for the coexistence of the country's peoples.

Another important aspect is the ability of the multi-ethnic Azerbaijani people to not just coexist but to live in harmony with other nations, ethnic groups, religions, and cultures, which testifies to the resilience

of the Azerbaijani multiculturalism model. Despite the functioning of a market economy in the Republic for the past 30 years, along with the public's awareness of liberal values, individualism, and consumerism, and the presence of a highly developed service sector, traditionalism maintains its foundations and continues to strengthen. Although Turkish, European, Russian, Iranian, Arab, and other cultures continuously influence the political, social, cultural, and spiritual spheres of Azerbaijani society, Azerbaijani multiculturalism is gaining widespread acceptance, being skillfully integrated into society, strengthening and developing, and showcasing its uniqueness to the world.

Relying on the principle of the common, the individual, and the specific, let's now undertake a concrete philosophical reconstruction of the socio-historical existence of the Udis, and briefly examine their life from a historical and contemporary perspective. According to ancient written sources, the Udis have a history that spans twenty-five centuries. They have lived and continue to live in the Caucasus region since time immemorial, and their historical homeland is Azerbaijan. The coexistence among representatives from different ethnicities and religions is reflected not only in the language, culture, traditions, everyday life, and behavior of the Udis but also in their worldview—how they perceive nature, society, human beings, and their thinking.

Through millennia of living in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious environment, the Udi people have developed a distinctive identity and mentality, reflecting their unique notion of what is rational or irrational. The hallmark of their existence is their ability to respect their partners, engage in equal dialogue, actively listen to and understand the perspective of others, and live in peace with neighbors of different ethnic backgrounds. Simultaneously, the Udis have always remained deeply connected to their ethnic and religious roots, holding steadfastly to the customs and traditions of their people.

How can a community preserve their existence and national heritage in a heterogeneous multicultural environment? In this regard, the role of religion deserves mention. Over the course of 1700 years of living within Christianity, the national customs and traditions of the Udis have been intertwined with Orthodox ones. Moreover, Christian teachings, traditions, rituals and ceremonies have become ethnicized. In modern times, they began to be perceived as national phenomena and inherent aspects of Udi life and behavior. All Udis are polyglots, skillfully using their multilingualism in interactions and dialogues with representatives of other ethnicities. In the village of Nij, Udi students attend a Russian school. The Russian language, being one of the international languages, greatly facilitates interethnic communication and dialogue. It is in high demand in multi-ethnic Azerbaijan, particularly for equitable dialogues and encounters with foreigners and guests, and sometimes even among a segment of the younger Udi generation from the CIS countries and beyond [Данакари, 2017, с.288].

The chairman of the Albanian-Udi Christian community of Azerbaijan, Robert Mobili, regards it as the primary task of his organization to promote the ancient and modern history, culture, and traditions of his people. Today, the organization's most crucial objective is to revive the Albanian-Udi Church in its historical homeland, the Republic of Azerbaijan, based on the native Udi Christian community as the sole successor of the rich ancient, medieval, and contemporary religious heritage. In an era of globalization and integration, the preservation of one's culture is a concern not only for small ethnic groups but also for many national minorities. The Udis serve as an example of how this issue can be addressed. We are not an isolated island or mountain tribe, nor have we mixed with other larger ethnic groups, nor dissolved in the "melting pot" of peoples [Мобили, 2018, с.26].

Today, as representatives of a small ethnic group, the Udis have adapted to life in the majority of multi-ethnic post-Soviet societies of the CIS countries, such as Azerbaijan, Georgia, Russia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, the Baltic countries, and others. They seek self-fulfillment and purpose by addressing personal and collective interests and needs. Naturally, all these complex and nuanced processes occur within the framework of the Basic Law - the Constitution of the state of which they are citizens. Experience shows that the lives and activities of the Udis unfold within a space of dialogue and communication, involving interactions with representatives of many nations and ethnic groups. The traditions, customs, moral and

ethical values of the Udis serve as fundamental elements of their existence, enabling the preservation of their identity and providing answers to existential questions. Consequently, this collection of values forms a "channel" that contributes to shaping a person's identity in the context of the ever-changing modern world.

Due to circumstances, the Udis turned Christianity into a "home religion", where they began to uphold their Orthodox faith in a unique spiritual atmosphere, privately, intimately, and within the confines of their homes, in a new setting. After the year 1836, following the Edict of Nicholas I, which abolished the Albanian Patriarchy, the Udis started to perform many of their religious rites and ceremonies at home. It was within the circle of family, relatives, close friends, and neighbors that they engaged in prayers and sought connection with God. Many cultic practices often took place in the courtyard or near a spring, in their neighborhood, where they would light candles at a "sacred" stone, especially on weekends. It was also common for sacrificial rituals to be performed there, where animals and birds like rams and roosters were offered as sacrifices.

One of the distinct features of the socio-historical existence of the Udis, especially over the last 200 years, has been their aspiration to preserve their ethnicity, self-consciousness, and ethnic identity through the observance of religious cults, rites, precepts, and commandments. Primarily, this involves the solemn celebration of such Christian religious holidays as Christmas, Epiphany, and Easter, as well as, importantly, the performance of ritualistic and commemorative rites and preservation of traditions. By performing Christian cultic practices and rites, they not only fulfill their religious but also their national duty, consistently affirming their connection to the ancient historical community - the Udi ethnic group.

Concluding the research and returning to the universal intentions, it is worth noting that at the current stage of development of societies in the post-Soviet space, the issues of individual and group self-identification of representatives of ethnic groups hold a special place. Many post-Soviet societies are still in a transitional and unstable state as they have not yet defined their main existential goals, development strategies, and values. Consequently, for small ethnic groups like the Udis, the quest for identity, dialogue, comprehension of the substantial and ontological basis of their existence, and the establishment of axiological and ethical references for the present and future become profoundly significant. Today, these issues hold relevance not merely for understanding daily life, the present, and self-awareness but also for comprehending their history, envisioning possibilities, making forecasts, and planning for the future, both at the collective and individual levels within each ethnic group.

Today, many philosophers, anthropologists, psychologists, and ethnologists believe that "one cannot see a collective as a homogeneous social body, where members inevitably adhere to unified ideas due to their group affiliation. When perceiving information, individuals process and reinterpret it, largely influenced by their own social experiences. By sharing certain societal notions about the past, an individual can interpret them in their own way and give them their own interpretations" [Шнирельман, 2018, с.12].

In today's rapidly changing reality, the circumstances and conditions of the environment in which an ethnic representative lives, are constantly shifting. As reality evolves, so do the motives and stimuli of their existence, along with their goals and values, influencing their responses to the dynamic nature of daily life. For the Udis, understanding the multi-ethnic environment in their historical homeland and the post-Soviet space, where some found themselves after the dissolution of the USSR, largely involves adapting to the specific market reality. The emergence and growth of the information society, the impact of media, mass culture, primitive norms, and stereotypes add complexity to their development, hindering their integration into new societies and impeding the formation of new collective identities, which, in turn, affects individual self-realization.

Through close interaction with our fellow tribespeople and representatives of other cultures, we not only acquire invaluable experience in interethnic and inter-civilizational solidarity but also accumulate knowledge about respect for different beliefs and traditions. This, in turn, leads to a deeper understanding of our own identity and lays the foundation for internal "civilizational solidarity" [Расторгуев, 2019, с.4].

"Furthermore, the Azerbaijani model of multiculturalism is currently receiving further theoretical interpretation and development" [Liu S., 2007, Vol.31, p.57], which, in our view, will contribute to strengthening harmony and friendship Azerbaijan's multi-ethnic society. However, it must be admitted that the ever-changing modernity and the Internet network pose certain challenges to multiculturalism as a multifaceted phenomenon. P.M.Rukavitsyn points out its negative aspects, stating that "the experience of Western countries, especially the USA and Canada, shows that multiculturalism fosters dependency sentiments in society and diminishes the sense of confidence among cultural minorities" [Рукавицын, 2012, с.229]. Today, it is of paramount importance for Azerbaijani society to minimize or eliminate these negative tendencies from its sociocultural development within the context of an open information society and a world without borders. The resolution of these issues, in which the Udis play a significant role, depends to a great extent on skillful and professional management by state structures and civil society organizations, as well as the effective implementation of the established Azerbaijani model of multiculturalism.

Acknowledging the role of the ethno-confessional factor in the existence of the Udis, it is important to highlight that for millennia, Christianity with its traditions, cults, and rituals has aided them in preserving their selfhood, identity, and awareness of belonging to a unified ethnic group. It has ensured continuity, fostered the development of material and spiritual culture, and upheld traditional values.

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POMPEY'S CAMPAIGN AND THE QUESTION OF THE SOUTHERN BORDER OF CAUCASIAN ALBANIA

Abstract. The question of the southern border of Caucasian Albania still remains a subject of academic debate. According to the Armenian traditional historiography, the Kura River, throughout the entire historical period of the existence of Caucasian Albania, served as the border between it and Armenia [История древнего мира, т.II, 1989, с.392]. Azerbaijani historical school, on the other hand, believes that the main southern border of Albania is the Aras River. In this aspect, the campaign of the Roman army under the command of Gnaeus Pompeius in 66–65 BC to the South Caucasus and, in particular, to Caucasian Albania, is of certain interest.

Keywords: Caucasian Albania, Kura, Pompey, Lucullus, Oroezes, Strabo, Plutarch, Aras, Armenia

Considering the campaign of the Roman commander Gnaeus Pompey to the Caucasus[1] and, among others, to Caucasian Albania, it should be remembered that it was one of the military episodes of the so-called Mithridatic wars, or more precisely, one of the events of the Third Mithridatic War (74–63 BC). It was while pursuing the Pontic King Mithridates VI Eupator, who was defeated by Pompey in 70 BC on the Euphrates bank and sought refuge from the Romans with the Armenian King Tigranes II, that the Roman commander Lucullus invaded Armenia. Realizing that Rome would strive to conquer the entire South Caucasus, the Albanians, Iberians, and many other nations of the South Caucasus, who lived next to the Armenians, sent military aid to Tigranes II. However, despite this, Lucullus defeated Tigranes II and his allies in 69 BC at Tigranocerta, and captured the capital of Armenia. Soon Lucullus was replaced in the Caucasus by a new commander Gnaeus Pompey, who very quickly forced Tigranes II to acknowledge his dependence on Rome.

From Armenia, Pompey planned to move through Albania to Iberia, but considering the onset of winter cold, he decided to winter in Albania on the right bank of the Kura. The Roman historian Plutarch describes this event as follows: "Then Pompey left Afranius to guard Armenia, and he himself, seeing no other way out, set out to pursue Mithridates through the lands inhabited by Caucasian tribes. The most numerous of these tribes were the Albanians and the Iberians" [Плутарх, 1994, Т.II, гл.34].

As K.V.Trever rightly noted, the Roman historians Titus Livius and Plutarch differently illuminate the further development of events. Thus, Titus Livius asserts that the Albanians and Iberians did not want to let the Romans through their lands, while Plutarch, on the contrary, claims that the Albanians agreed to allow the Roman troops to pass through their lands [Тревер, 1959, с.94].

Meanwhile, the Roman Senate, dissatisfied with the course of military operations under the command of Lucullus, recalled him, transferring the command of military operations in the East to the energetic

[1] It should be noted that a typographical error was made in the published abstracts of the X International Conference on "Caucasian Albania: Religious and Social Life". Thus, in the phrase"2. In this aspect, the march of the Roman army under the command of Gnaeus Pompey to the Caucasus, and in particular, to Caucasian Albania, in **the second half of the 1st century BC"** – it should be in **the first half of the 1st century BC** [Гошгарлы Г. Поход Помпея и вопрос о южной границе Кавказской Албании / Тезисы X Международной конференции на тему «Кавказская Албания: религиозная и социальная жизнь» (Баку, 14 апреля 2023 г.). Баку, 2023, с.14].

commander Gnaeus Pompey, who had distinguished himself in the successful fight against pirates at sea (История древнего мира, т.2, 1989, с.392).

With skilled diplomacy, Pompey weakened Mithridates VI's main ally – the Armenian king Tigranes II, causing a rift between him and his own son, Tigranes the Younger. Soon, the thoroughly defeated Mithridates VI fled to Pontus, where he ended his life by suicide, and Tigranes II, after the defeat at Tigranocerta in 69 BC, tried to resist Rome for some more time, but in 66 BC, he signed a peace treaty with Pompey in Artashat, acknowledging his dependence on Rome.

After Mithridates VI fled to Pontus, Pompey, no longer considering him a threat, decided to winter in 66–65 BC on the right bank of the Kura. Dividing his army into three parts, Pompey positioned them not far from each other. According to Plutarch: "The Albanians initially agreed to let Pompey pass through their country. But when winter caught the Roman army in this land and the Romans were celebrating the festival of Saturnalia, the Albanians, gathering no less than forty thousand, crossed the River Kirn and attacked them" [Алиев, 1992, с.51]. This passage in Plutarch's work is very interesting. According to Plutarch, winter overtakes the Romans in Albania, and the Romans wintered on the right bank. From this, it follows that the Kura was not at all a border between Albania and Armenia. This point of view was once expressed by the Azerbaijani Albanologist K.Aliyev [Алиев, 1992, с.51].

If we proceed from the Armenian interpretation that Kura is the border between Albania and Armenia [Свазян, 2015, с.48-56], it turns out that the Romans are wintering in Armenian territory and do not violate the border by invading Albania, hence, they do not breach the concluded treaty. Then the question arises - why would the Albanians attack the Romans in the absence of, so to speak, a "casus belli"?

There had to be very solid reasons for the Albanians to dare to attack the Romans without the support of other peoples of the Caucasus. Moreover, they had already had experience of military confrontation with the Romans. In 69 BC, the Albanians, like many other peoples and tribes of the Caucasus, came to the aid of the Armenian king Tigranes II, but even such a combined army of many peoples of the Caucasus was still defeated by the Romans.

The conclusion here is unambiguous – the Romans planned to winter in Albanian territory, and supplying the entire Roman army with food and forage throughout the winter, without having any idea of their subsequent actions, was economically burdensome and politically very dangerous. Therefore, Plutarch is absolutely right in pointing out that the Romans stopped to winter in Albania and the Albanian attack on the Roman units wintering on the right bank of the Kura is absolutely logical.

Thus, the analysis of Pompey's campaign to the Caucasus in the 60s BC refutes the assertion of the Armenian historical tradition about the Kura as a constant border between Armenia and Albania.

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EXAMINING BELIEFS AND CONVICTIONS, ARCHITECTURE AND TOPONYMS IN KARABAGH REGION

Abstract. The article provides explanations for information originating from local sayings and legends about the pre-Christian beliefs and convictions related to cosmic forces and natural phenomena among the population of Karabakh during the period of Caucasian Albania. It reviews data on sanctuaries located at the peaks of the Karabakh mountains and explores Albanian religious architecture. Additionally, the article addresses issues concerning the renaming of Karabakh's toponyms by Armenians.

Keywords: beliefs, faiths, Karabakh architecture, Karabakh toponyms, religious factor

Religious factor. In the History of Karabakh the religious beliefs, symbols, and worship practices of Christians, churches, and monasteries displayed distinctive characteristics. Turkic elements are found on Christian monuments not only in Karabakh, but also in Zangezur, in the Goycha lake basin, in the Darachichek district. The individual elements of the pagan layer underlying the pre-Christian culture are visible on the cult monuments of the Karabakh region. These monuments provide a glimpse into the views, customs, culture, and daily life influenced by paganism and Zoroastrianism, which played a significant role in shaping the cultures of Eastern peoples.

Religion encompasses scientific, moral, and spiritual teachings sent down by God to guide humanity. By having faith in these beliefs and following their instructions, individuals believe they can find happiness and serenity in this life and the hereafter. Religion advocates for good morals, humane qualities, and encourages people to perform benevolent deeds. Religion is divided into three key concepts: belief, morality, and practice. Kindness and humanity are fundamental principles shared by all religions [Edward G.Carmines, 2015].

Beliefs, faiths and convictions. The beliefs and faiths of people should not be interpreted exclusively through the prism of religion (Christianity, Islam). Beliefs, faiths, customs and traditions such of the practices like worshiping fire or the Sun, conducting wedding and funeral ceremonies, and venerating nature, trees, and springs formed thousands of years before them and have reached our time. In Karabakh, we can explore these beliefs and faiths in the remnants of cultural heritage, such as ancient castles and artistic stone images, which were damaged or destroyed by the Armenians during the period of occupation.

Numerous specific beliefs and customs in Karabakh align can be attributed to the period of ancient Albania. Preserving everything that holds significance in people's consciousness as sacred has always been a prevailing trend. Thus, the belief that defiling water and spitting in fire is a sinful and reprehensible act originated from pre-Christian beliefs. Among these customs, the abhorrence of evil and the avoidance of harmful actions have endured through the ages. Gathering around bonfires and leaping over them was a practice meant to cleanse themselves of bad habits, believing the fire would burn away negativity.

In Karabakh, the reverence and affection for fire and the sun was so profound that they became sacred objects of oath. This unwavering faith and belief have endured for centuries and continue to be

present in our time. Even today, in Azerbaijan, expressions such as "I swear by the sun", "I swear by the fire", "the light of my eyes", "may his/her grave be filled with light", and "I swear by the flames of the sun" are commonly used by people as oaths and expressions of their beliefs. The worship of fire and the sun has persisted in folk sayings to this day. Just as it was thousands of years ago, one can still encounter people who hold deep beliefs in the Moon, the Sun, and other sources of light.

In Karabakh, alongside diverse forms of Sun and light worship, there existed customs aimed at protecting against evil forces. These beliefs associated evil forces with the setting of the Sun and the arrival of darkness. This fear led to the prohibition of certain types of work after sunset. The time when light transitions into darkness was popularly referred to as the "time of evil". Some of our old sayings, such as "you should not sleep at the time of evil", "you should not travel at the time of evil", and "you should not work at the time of evil" are associated with this period [Aynur Babək, 2011, s.14].

As can be seen from ancient legends, in material culture the symbol of the cross occupied a special place in the worldview of the population of Albania, and the Turks, including long before Christianity [Şeyx Səduq, Janr: Əqidə, 2017]. The cross, now widely recognized as the primary symbol of the Christian world, it predates it long before. Albanian crosses hold special significance in the study of this symbol, as they embody classical traditions and incorporate elements from pre-Christian religious practices. The cross stones of Albanian Christians feature a unique blend of decorative elements. These compositions symbolize the connection between heaven and earth, representing the sun, light, illumination, and fertility. The originality and distinctiveness of Albanian stone inscriptions, encompassing cross stones, tombstones, and target stones, fundamentally set them apart from the stone inscriptions of other cultures.

The places of pilgrimage for the population of Karabakh are mainly located in the mountains and on mountain peaks, which in Karabakh include: the Damrov sanctuary and Daghdaghan sanctuary in Salaketin village of Khojavend district, the Jijim sanctuary in Khojavend village, the Bahmanli shrine in Bahramli village, the Seyid Rza dome in Mughanli village, the sanctuary of El in the village of Garadaghly. The sanctuaries on the peaks include Jamyshdag in the north, the city of Ziyaratdag in the south and two peaks of Mount Kirs in the central part. These peaks have always attracted Karabakh pilgrims. The peak of Jamyshdag rises in the same ridge between the fortresses of Jrabert and Gulustan.

In the southern region of Karabakh, Ziyaratdag reigns supreme, commanding a breathtaking view over the surrounding peaks. Its majestic presence is marked by steep, bare cliffs, making it a prominent mountaintop. At the summit, a small chapel from the Caucasian Albanian era provides shelter to pilgrims from rain and cold.

Similar to Jamishdag and Ziyaratdag, the deification of the Kirs peaks is attributed to the presence of sanctuaries on these summits, rooted in the faith and beliefs of the people. According to legend, the sky god transformed a woman with her child into stone on the peak of Kirs, safeguarding them from wild animals. This event eventually turned the top of Mount Kirs into a shrine. This highlights the importance of all mountain peaks in Karabakh within people's beliefs and faiths.

However, during the period of occupation, the Armenians brought and placed cross stones belonging to the Armenian Gregorian religion on these peaks, which is a manifestation of disrespect, because in folk beliefs, the places of pilgrimage in these mountains are sacred and inviolable.

Illnesses, misfortunes and failures led people to place increased faith in the miracles of nature. The belief in the "healing properties of water from specific springs" and its potential to bestow "immortality" encouraged people to worship her.

Belief and faith in springs turned water into an object on which oaths were sworn. Expressions like "I swear by the angels of water" and "I swear by water" were commonly used, alongside a tradition of confiding sorrows to water to find solutions to seemingly insurmountable problems. It was customary to make wishes and reunite with loved ones at the spring, while voicing hopes and dreams to the flowing water, as it was believed to mark the beginning of success for the individual. Numerous mineral water sources like the "hot water" at the foot of Jamishdag in Kalbajar district, the "hot water" near Ishigli Mountain in Lachin district,

and the "sour water" in the mountainous region of Karabakh in Shusha district, proved to be remedies for thousands of ailments: "hot water for scabies", the "water for eyes", and the "water for stomach".

Grateful for nature's benevolence, the local population built facilities around the springs, enhancing their beauty, and advocated for the responsible use of this precious resource. Water was revered as a symbol of purity and clarity. Any disrespectful actions towards water, such as polluting it or spitting in it, were regarded as sins.

Over time, the desire to preserve the sanctity of these holy places led to the creation of intricate memorial monuments dedicated to the saints, which held significant philosophical importance for the people. One of these monuments is the Seven Gates monument of unusual architecture, which has no analogues in other regions of Azerbaijan, dating back to the 5th century BC near the village of Susanlyg, at the foot of the town of Yuhusen, Khojavend region. There is no information about the Seven Gates Temple in the scientific literature. Although the date of construction is not specified in official sources, its belonging to pre-Christian culture seems to be more convincing [http://monuments.az/2022/03/29/yeddiqapi-məbədi-monastr-deyil-xatirə-abidəsidir].

There is only one legend that the temple was built in memory of the seven brothers who died fighting for freedom on Earth. The memorial, built in honor of these seven brothers, at the same time became a manifestation of the pilgrimage of people. When the sister died, she was buried in the courtyard of this temple, and the grave of this selfless girl was also preserved as a shrine.

According to the etymology of the name "Seven Doors" of the monument is derived from its unique architectural feature. It showcases seven apses, each of different sizes, resembling seven doors in homage to the seven brothers. The circular arrangement of these doors complements the overall design of the temple. The apses are adorned with elegant semicircular domes.

The origin of the Seven Doors monument is tied to the cultural and mythical significance of the number 7 in Azerbaijani tales and legends: "travelling for seven days and seven nights", "holding wedding celebrations for seven days and seven nights", and "moon of seven nights", as well as its association with the seven days of the week and the seven shades of color further.

Dozens of such sanctuaries, places of worship and pilgrimages built in Karabakh have survived to our time.

Karabakh architecture. The construction of memorial places became a tradition that encompassed all administrative settlements of Karabakh. This influence began to manifest itself especially in the architecture of the Albanian period. In an environment of mutual communication and influence, the Albanian Christian and Islamic architecture of Karabakh began to develop. This was a requirement not only of a centuries-old architectural and construction tradition, but also of economic, political and ethnic unity [İsmayılov, 2022, s.8].

The most interesting examples of Albanian architecture that have come down to our time are defensive fortresses, fortifications, churches and monasteries. In Karabakh, Albanian architectural art has always aroused interest and stood out for its unique complex color, technique, unique beauty and style. Although the territory of Karabakh is small, all types of architecture related to Eastern Christianity were developed here. Church buildings were characteristic of the early times of Albanian Christianity. These churches consisted of single-nave temples with an elongated prayer hall. The top of such temples was covered with two layers of plain stone. In Albania, a special architecture called round temples was widespread, built in the early Christian period by the Albanians, who still worshiped the Sun. Chapels and churches were common. The walls of the cells, as a rule, were decorated with iconic stones with elegant patterns. The most complex buildings of the Albanian period are basilicas and monasteries. During the period of occupation, the Armenians caused significant damage to the wall frescoes inside the Albanian churches of Karabakh.

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The Turkic ethnic groups played an indisputable role in the history of the Albanian state. Some of them converted to Christianity, and later, most of them became Muslims. They are the creators of the beautiful Muslim architecture of Karabakh: palaces, fortresses, mosques, caravanserais, mausoleums, baths. The traditional dwellings of this region include garadam, chovustan, lam, dahal, stone houses, etc. Karabakh stone houses were distinguished by their volumetric layout and architectural style.

Armenian "reform" of toponyms. The collapse of the Soviet Union and Armenia's subsequent independence led to the rise of separatism in Nagorno-Karabakh, resulting in the killing of hundreds of Azerbaijani civilians, the displacement of hundreds of thousands of innocent people, and the occupation of 20% of Azerbaijan's territory by the Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia.

In 2020, a significant counterattack by the Azerbaijani side led to the liberation of the occupied lands in just 44 days, culminating in a tripartite agreement on **November 10, 2020.**

During the years of occupation, all Turkic toponyms in Karabakh were replaced by Armenian ones.

It is no secret that, in addition to killing and maining Azerbaijani citizens, forcibly displacing them from their historical homeland, engaging in the destruction and appropriation of material cultural monuments belonging to Azerbaijanis, Armenians also conducted extensive falsification of the region's history. After the first Karabakh war, Armenians adopted another tactic in their ideological warfare by altering almost all original place names (toponyms) in the occupied territories. The primary goal behind this action was to drive out the local population of Western Azerbaijan and Karabakh from these areas and erase any memory of Azerbaijani presence in these places. The replacement of toponyms and administrative settlement names in Azerbaijani territories with Armenian names commenced towards at the beginning of the 19th century following the abolition of the Karabakh Khanate and the occupation of Azerbaijani territories by Tsarist Russia. This toponymic expansion by Armenians was executed similarly to the process carried out in Western Azerbaijan (present-day Armenia), involving ethnic cleansing and the alteration of toponyms and place names.

After the ethnic cleansing of the territories of Western Azerbaijan in 1988–1990, the Armenian government implemented Article 6 of the Law of the Republic of Armenia, dated November 7, 1995, titled "On the Administrative-Territorial Division of the Republic of Armenia". This article states that "the alteration of the names of residential areas, with consideration of the opinions of the local population, is carried out to exclude foreign, dissonant, and repetitive names". On November 23, 1999, the Republic of Armenia passed a special law on geographical names, which laid the groundwork for the extensive replacement of Azerbaijani toponyms with Armenian names in the region.

Karabakh toponyms. Indeed, facts have come to light, indicating that the renaming of toponyms in Karabakh by Armenians was conducted at the state level. This issue has been a subject of frequent discussion in the publication "Sovetakan Karabakh" (Soviet Karabakh), the official organ of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Province. Over the years, materials have been prepared with the intent of falsifying the history of Azerbaijan and presented as the basis of "historiography" ["Yuxarı Qarabağın Toponimləri – Akademik Budaq Budaqovun Şəxsi Veb Portalı", 2013].

The Armenians, in their quest to change toponyms, devised their own set of rules for a toponymic system and sought to portray it as a novel science of toponymy. As a result, they presented the toponymic system they applied as the historical and cultural values of the Armenian population living in Karabakh: Tsamdzor (Derekend), Arakul (Aragul), Khnushinak (Khanoba), Spitakashen (Aghkend), Mushkapat (Mgshkapat), Karakulukh (Dashbashi), Karintak (Dashalty), Noragyugh (Tazabine), Khandzk (Khanyeri), Vank (Vangli) and others.

Historically, in Karabakh you can find traces of different ethnic groups that have left a trace over the centuries, which could not but leave a mark in the toponymy of the region.The assertion of the Armenians that such names as Mehtikend, Dashkend, Farrukh, Sardarkend, Seyididkend, which belong to the Azerbaijanis, come from the Iranian dialect and belong to the Armenians, is incorrect.

In the new toponym system created by Armenians in Karabakh, Azerbaijani names like Dahraz, Sarsang, Childiran, Cherekdar, Khojavend, Hadrut, Khanabad, Dashbulag, Aghbulag, Khirmanjyg, Garabulag, Chayli, and others are incorrectly explained as Iranian and Russian toponyms.

On top of all the previous issues, some have ludicrously suggested that certain Armenian toponyms had subsequently transferred to the Azerbaijani language. Examples like Vank-Vangli, Shosh-Shushikend, and Edilu-Edilli are presented to bolster these claims. Additionally, they argue that names such as Aranzamin, Dashalty, Tazabine, etc., were wrongly translated from the vernacular, citing names like Karaglukh-Dashbashy, Krasni-Daghdaghan, and others as supposed evidence. However, Armenian historians seem to forget that toponyms and place-names are included in the system as they appear in the vernacular, and lose their unique toponymic identity when translated into another language.

During the Soviet period, state policies also resulted in the forced change of toponyms in the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Province. These toponyms were not rooted in the historical heritage of the local population but instead reflected the era in which they were established. For instance, names like Kuropatkino, Levonarkh, Leninavan, Kolkhozashen, Stepanakert, Kirov, and others cannot be claimed to exclusively belong to Armenians.

The adaptation of Karabakh toponyms to Armenian dialects serves as clear evidence of their falsification. This practice indicates that these toponyms have been altered to fit Armenian national mentality, leading to the creation of multiple Armenian names that resemble the original toponyms, for instance, Tumi-Domi, Khtsaberd-Khozaberd, Tsor-Tzur, etc.

When the names of some villages in Karabakh are replaced by Armenian toponyms, they lose their original meaning. Examples like Galadarasi, Karakishlag, Karakend, Gizgala, Demirchilyar, Aghjakend, Dudukchu, and others are affected by this change. Hence, many of our official village names (oikonyms), when used in the Armenian language, differ from how the inhabitants of these villages pronounce them. Toponyms are divided into two parts: transparent and opaque, that is, perceptible and incomprehensible. Names such as Noragyugh, Yegtsag, Getavan, and Jagatsner are toponyms that are not sufficiently understood not only by Azerbaijani but also by Armenian speakers.

Armenians brought the names of some settlements to Karabakh when resettling from Iran and Turkey in the 18th–19th centuries: such names include Maragha, Hasangaya, etc. Since Armenians consider these toponyms as part of their own heritage, they are less inclined to change them. During the renaming of residential areas, Armenians displayed a lack of awareness regarding the need for a rigorous and well-thought-out approach.

Armenian historians responsible for the naming function fail to explain these unique names. They often provide inaccurate explanations for the toponyms, pretending they conform to folk "etymology". Consequently, the modern perception of Armenian names presented as toponyms does not align with their original form and content.

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SOME NOTES ON THE UDIS OF CAUCASIAN ALBANIA

Abstract. The article examines controversial issues regarding the place and role of the Udis, one of the oldest indigenous tribes of Caucasian Albania, within the union of Caucasian Albanian tribes and their settlement territory. The author supports the hypothesis of several well-known scholars that the Udi language served as the written language of Caucasian Albania. The author expresses the view that the ethnonym "Udis" reflects the self-designation of the ancient Albanians, and the Albanian language was identical to the ancient Udi.

Keywords: Caucasian Albania, Utik, Udis/Uti, the Udi language

The history of Caucasian Albania, the ethnic composition of its population, the territory and settlement of its tribes, and the presence of its own script and written language are at the center of scholars' attention and serve as the subject of heated scientific debates and discussions.

Regrettably, many works by scholars dedicated to addressing the history of Caucasian Albania exhibit clear signs of political bias. Consequently, numerous mythical representations of the historical past, devoid of any objective scientific basis, are being propagated and imposed on public opinion.

There is a significant debate concerning the place and role of the Udis, one of the oldest indigenous tribes of Caucasian Albania, within the alliance of Caucasian Albanian tribes and their settlement territory. Scholars interpret the data from ancient and medieval sources differently, often leading to contradictory conclusions. Throughout history, politics and ideology have always influenced the field of history as a science, and the history of the Udis, as an ethnic group, has been directly impacted by this influence.

Some Armenian scholars, driven by personal interests and preferences, interpret information from ancient sources in ways that aim to downplay the status and role of the Udis in Caucasian Albania. A notable example is A.Akopyan, who, unable to deny the existence of a province called Uti, employs various maneuvers to associate it with Armenia and completely disassociate it from any connection to the Udis. Here are some of his arguments:

– "In ancient sources, the Armenian province of Utik appears under the name of Otene... There is an apparent difference (udi/uti-ote), from which it follows that at least in the ancient tradition, there was no perceived connection between Utik-Otene and the Udis-Utii".

– "In ancient Armenian sources, the term 'Utians' refers only to the population of the province of Utik. However, the population of the left bank of the Kura River, i.e., the settlement territory of the Udis known from the 18th century [in the 2022 edition. – "from the 10th century". – *K.A.*], is never referred to by this term in any context".

He comes to the conclusion that, "at least from the 4th century BC, it is impossible to speak of a non-Armenian, hence also Udi population inhabiting the territory of the Utik province". His proposed explanation for the name of the province is as follows: "The province of Utik got its name because it was located opposite the left-bank Udis-Utians" [Акопян, 1987, с.82-83].

The recent trend of associating the Udis with the Lezgins, particularly active in recent years, raises serious concerns, especially among the Udis themselves. The reasoning behind this trend cannot withstand any criticism, as it solely relies on a linguistic fact – the classification of the Udi language by linguists as part

of the so-called Lezgin group within the East Caucasian language family. The logic behind this claim appears rather simplistic: if the Udi language belongs to the Lezgin group, then the Udis, like other ethnic groups whose languages are part of this group, must be Lezgin-speaking people, and consequently, the Udis are Lezgins. It is then assumed, quite naturally, that the place and role of the Udis in the history of Caucasian Albania belong to the Lezgins, suggesting that Caucasian Albania historically represented a Lezgin state, with the Lezgins being the leading tribe in all respects. However, it is evident that the tendency to label the Udis as a "Lezgin-speaking people" and to classify the Udis among the "Lezgin peoples" is fundamentally unacceptable and directly contradicts the ethnic and linguistic identity of the Udis. After all, the Udis stand out as the only one among all the Albanian peoples who have not only preserved their ancient ethnic name (Uti) but also maintained their Christian faith" [Аликберов, 2015, с.25]. Researchers highlight the historically unjustifiable tendency among some Lezgin intellectuals to equate the Caucasian Albanians with modern-day Lezgins. Thus, the politicization of the scholarly study of Caucasian Albania's ethnic history directly gives rise to heated public discussions.

Moreover, it is important to note that the classification of the Udi language as part of the Lezgin language group is not uncontroversial. A number of scholars, from N.S.Trubetskoy to W.Schulze, have emphasized the unique place of the Udi language within the East Caucasian language family. N.S.Trubetskoy believed that Udi does not belong to the Lezgin group, which he called "Samur" [Трубецкой, 1987, с.235]. S.A.Starostin also did not consider the "commonly accepted association of the Khinalug and Udi languages with Lezgin" appropriate [Старостин, 2007, с.18].

Wolfgang Schulze preferred to refer to the Lezgin language group as the "Southern branch of the East Caucasian language family", noting the unique place of Udi among the languages of this branch [Schulze]. Some scholars even suggested the existence of a distinct language group that could include Udi, Urartian, and even Hurrian, given their substantial lexical, phonetic, and morphological similarities and/or parallels.

Unfortunately, some bias regarding the history of the Udis has also been evident in the works of some Azerbaijani scholars.

In her monograph "The Shirvanshah State (6th–16th centuries)", Sara Ashurbeyli mentions the "region of the Utii" once, quoting from the "History of the Albanians" by Movses Kaghankatvatsi. She also makes a total of three references to the Udis, all on the same page. Even then, it's in relation to the intriguing similarity between the ethnonym 'Udi' and the name of the Udon River, which flows beyond the northern border of Caucasian Albania. Based on this, she put forward the hypothesis that the "The Udis... in the first centuries of our era were one of the Turkic tribes on the territory of Albania, which were assimilated with neighboring Albanian tribes..." She then adds, "However, it is certain that the Udis, as Markwart believes, having been in contact with Turkic-speaking tribes, adopted a large number of ancient Turkic words" [Ашурбейли, 1983, с.60-61].

In his work "Ancient Caucasian Albania", published in 1992, Kamal Aliyev dedicates a section to the Udis following his discussion of the Albanians and Gargars. He begins the section by stating, "Other tribes also inhabited the territory of ancient Albania", and concludes, "Thus, the Utii, Udis or Uds are not localized within the territory of ancient Albania, and their connections have not been studied yet, although the similarity in ethnonyms creates an illusion of ethnic kinship between them and the Udis of Albania" [Алиев, 1992, с.31-32]. However, in other sections of his monograph, the author states that the Udis inhabited a significant territory of Albania, including the Partav region. In the "Afterword", he emphasizes that "the Albanians were the most significant and comparatively numerous. Only because of this, the country was named Albania after the ethnonym of the Albanians". Yet, in the same work, he considers the Gargar-speaking population to be the most substantial in political, economic, and cultural terms among the inhabitants of Albania. This conclusion is based on information from Armenian sources, which has been rightly questioned by other researchers, about Mesrop Mashtots inventing the script for the Albanians and, more specifically, for the Gargar speakers. He further notes: "Individual signs found on ceramic products, and epigraphic monuments

associated with the Early Middle Ages, suggest that the Albanians had their own language, called Gargar, in the Middle Ages" [Алиев, 1992, с.46].

It should be emphasized that this viewpoint was held not only by Kamal Aliyev but also by a number of other researchers. I will note again that this perspective was based on the assumption that the Gargar language served as the written language of Albania, although the sources speak not of the language of the Gargars, but of the Gargar dialect.

It is also worth recalling that S.V.Yushkov, relying on the information that the sacred books of the Albanian Church were translated into the Gargar dialect, considers the Gargars to be the most numerous and significant tribe in Albania [Юшков, 1937].

The settlement area of the Udis/Utii is defined as the territory between the Kura and Aras rivers, including the vast province of Uti, as well as individual territories from the coast of the Caspian Sea to the border of Iberia.

The Udis/Utii are first mentioned in classical sources in connection with events that unfolded on the historical stage during the first quarter of the 5th century BC. However, prominent scholars, including I.M.Diakonoff, S.A.Starostin, Igrar Aliyev and others, have advanced well-founded hypotheses about the kinship between the Udis/Utii and ancient Gutians and Etiunians.

I.M.Diakonoff and S.A.Starostin held the belief that the assumption that "the name Udi represents a reflex of **Qutī* ... may turn out to be likely, since Proto-East Caucasian *q̇ > Udi Ø, Proto-East Caucasian * t̲ > Udi d" [Дьяконов, Старостин, 1988, с.66].

Rauf Malikov identifies the Udis with the ancient Gutians and to support his view, he reports that "Z.I.Yampolsky once proposed a quite plausible assumption to I.M.Diakonoff that the name of the Gutians is the same ethnic designation that later sources preserved in the form of 'Uti', 'Utii', 'Uds', 'Udis', 'Otens', which, as he notes, was apparently the self-designation of the Albanians" [Меликов, 2003, с.70]. Rauf Huseynov and Gamarshah Javadov asserted: "The Gutians are Utii/Udis... Many pieces of evidence suggest that, if the Udis were not the main tribe of Caucasian Albania, they were at least the most numerous" [Гусейнов, Джавадов, 2017, с.88].

Some contemporary researchers consider the language of the Caucasian Albanians – the Albanian/Arranian language spoken by the inhabitants of Barda/Partav, the capital of Caucasian Albania – to be identical to the Udi language, and they equate the Albanians with the Udis, noting that the ethnonym "Udi" was the self-designation of the Caucasian Albanians. Ziya Bunyadov notes that A.E.Krymsky, V.F.Minorsky, S.Nafisi, and Z.I.Yampolsky shared the opinion that in the 9th–10th centuries, the Arranian language was spoken around Barda; they assumed that the Udis (Utii), living in the northern parts of the Republic of Azerbaijan and in Georgia, are the direct continuators of Albanian language traditions [Bünyadov, 2007, s.107]. Similarly, Igrar Aliyev emphasizes that "Albanians, possibly, are the same as the Utii of ancient authors... The modern Udis are almost undoubtedly the descendants of the ancient Utii-Otens... In any case, there is no doubt about the ethno-linguistic proximity of the Albanians and Utii" [Алиев, 1989, с.142]. K.V.Trever expressed her views very clearly about the settlement area of the Udis: "The fact that Strabo, Pliny, and Ptolemy, when speaking about the Utii-Udis, indicate the Caspian coast as their place of residence, is likely due to the use of Patroclus' account by all these writers. Patroclus, surveying the coast from the sea, could only become acquainted with the part of the Utii who lived in the coastal mountainous areas, while the main part of this tribe inhabited the left bank and the right bank of the Kura River (below the mouth of the Alazani)" [Тревер, 1959, с.44]. K.V.Trever straightforwardly identifies the Albanian language with the Udi, asserting that "the Albanian, i.e., Udi (Uti), language continued to be spoken by the population of the plain part of the Utik region (now the plain Karabakh) even during the period of Arab rule. Arab historians and geographers referred to this language as 'Arranian' and to the Utik region as 'Arran', meaning Albania in the narrow sense of the word" [Тревер, 1959, с.295]. The population of Barda, the capital of Arran, spoke the Arranian language. By the way, Istakhri and Ibn Hawqal noted the presence in Barda of a large market called Kurki, which locally meant 'Sunday'. I dare to suggest the etymology of Kurki is from the Udi words

K'ur, which means 'top', and ***G'I, which means 'day'***, i.e. Kurki is the same as Udi ***K'urg'i, referring to the top/main day of the week, Sunday.***

Some scholars anticipated that the question of which tribe's language was dominant in Albania would only be clarified with the discovery of Caucasian Albanian manuscripts. However, as Timur Maisak notes, "the hypothesis that Caucasian Albanian represented an ancient state of the Udi language was generally accepted among specialists" [Майсак, 2010, с.89].

Indeed, the presence of a script and written language became clear with the discovery and decipherment of the Sinai Palimpsests. As we see it, the decipherment of the Sinai Palimpsests has put everything in its place in this matter. It provided evidence of a full-fledged literature in the Albanian/Old Udi language in the distant past. What some scholars had predicted long ago came true. In particular, Academician A.Shanidze was convinced that, "The written language of an entire people, who played a prominent role in the cultural and political life of the Caucasus in the Middle Ages, could not have disappeared without a trace" [Шанидзе, 1938], that ancient Albanian written monuments based specifically on the Udi language would be discovered, that "The language of the Caucasian Albanians ...was closely related to Udi and possibly even identical to Old Udi...", and " ...The Udi language is one of the Neo-Albanian dialects, or Albanian is the literary language of the ancient Udis, i.e., Old Udi" [Шанидзе, 1960]. G.A.Klimov noted that it is commonly believed that the Agvan (Caucasian Albanian) writing monuments, dating back to the 6th–8th centuries, reflect the ancient state of the Udi language [Климов, 2009, с.20].

Azerbaijani scholar Voroshil Gukasyan, who himself was an ethnic Udi, emphasized that "the Udis were part of the tribal union of Caucasian Albania and played a leading role in it" [Гукасян, 1974, с.15].

In light of the results of deciphering the Sinai Palimpsests, it is worth reminding that in the works of some Armenian scholars there was a clear tendency to deny the existence of a full-fledged literature in the Caucasian Albanian language due to what they believed were cultural and economic backwardness, as well as tribal and religious disunity among the tribes of Caucasian Albania. For instance, Sh.V.Smbatyan, in his comments on "The History of the Country of Aluank" by Movses Kaghankatvatsi, asserts that the Albanian alphabet "did not find practical application and was soon completely abandoned. The Aluans, or rather the Aluan tribes, who did not form an ethnic community, failed to create literature in the language of the Gargareans, and by the time of the Arab conquests, they were almost completely de-ethnicized" [Смбатян, 1984, с.177].

Based on the above, it would be logical to draw the following conclusions:

– The place and role of the Udis in the history of Caucasian Albania, within the union of Caucasian Albanian tribes, and the territory of their settlement, remain as subjects of ongoing scholarly debates. However, it is not difficult to notice that some of these works, despite their seemingly academic nature, are influenced by ideological considerations that go beyond the realm of science;

– The Udis were the most significant tribe in Albania in political, economic, and cultural aspects;

– The ethnonym "Udis" reflects the self-designation of the ancient Albanians, and the Albanian language was identical to Old Udi. The ethnonym "Albanian" appeared in the historical era when a tribal union called "Albania" was formed, and I will take responsibility to etymologize this ethnonym based on the Udi language. In Udi, the verb root *"a'l"* is used in the sense of "bind, unite", and by adding *"yan"* it forms the word *"a'lyan",* meaning *"(we) are united, (we) are bound together",* which is equivalent to *"union"* and, in this specific case, *"tribal union".* Later, Armenian chroniclers transformed it into Aluank/Agvan/Aghvan, while Latin sources rendered it as Alban/Albania;

– The Gargar dialect is nothing more than a dialect of the Old Udi language, representing the dialect of the Udi inhabiting the Gargarchay river basin, who were named Gargars after their place of residence.

A careful and objective scientific investigation into the origins and ethno-political history of the Udis during Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages would help clarify many controversial points in the history of the South Caucasus and modern Azerbaijan.

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PARADIGMATICS OF THE CAUCASIAN ALBANIAN ALPHABET

Abstract. All researchers have observed the typological proximity between the Caucasian Albanian and Armenian alphabets. This fact constitutes one of the primary arguments put forth by proponents of the "Armenian" theory regarding the origin of the Caucasian Albanian script.

In our opinion, if the author of the Armenian script had also been the creator of the Caucasian Albanian alphabet, he would have included specific letters of the Albanian language either after the "Armenian" section of the alphabet or scattered them among the "Armenian" letters, without breaking the order of the latter. However, out of the 15 specific letters of the Armenian script, at least 6 do not have phonetic counterparts in the corresponding positions in Albanian. Moreover, in the Caucasian Albanian alphabet, the order of letters that have counterparts in the Greek alphabet is never broken. This, in our view, demonstrates that the paradigmatics of the Caucasian Albanian alphabet are original and not blindly copying the system of any other script. This is further supported by the analysis of letter names.

Keywords: Paradigmatics, Alphabet, Caucasian Albanian script, Armenian script, Paleography

The Caucasian Albanian alphabet is primarily known to us through the discovery of Etchmiadzin manuscript No. 7117 by I.V.Abuladze in 1937 (currently preserved in the Matenadaran Library in Yerevan). This is practically the only source in which, presumably, a complete list of Albanian letters, their names, phonetic values, and the order of their sequence are provided. The second list of the Caucasian Albanian alphabet is presented in a 16th century Armenian manuscript found in the United States in 1953 by the Armenologist A.Kurdian. The alphabetical section of this manuscript is believed to be a later copy of the Matenadaran manuscript No. 7117.[1] This manuscript reveals some discrepancies with the Etchmiadzin manuscript (7117), both in the script and in the names of graphemes (No. 11: **jud** instead of **mud**; No. 33: **šak** instead of **čak**), although the alphabetical sequence and the number of letters correspond exactly to the data in the "Abuladze manuscript".

In order to determine the reliability of the paradigmatic indicators of the Albanian alphabet provided in these sources, we employ the method suggested by Academician A.Shanidze in the study of the "Abuladze manuscript". We can examine how accurately the grapheme order and quantity of other alphabets such as Greek, Latin, Georgian, Coptic, and Arabic are presented in the "Armenian" manuscript. The Greek and Coptic alphabets are depicted without any errors. In the Syriac alphabet the letters Nos. 21-22 are placed between Nos. 16-18, and the letter No. 17 is placed between Nos. 18-19. In the Latin alphabet, the graphemes No. 5 **(e)** and No. 22 **(w)** are missing, while in the Georgian alphabet, the grapheme No. 3 **(gan)** is missing. The only alphabet in which the order is significantly broken is the Arabic alphabet. This can be attributed to

[1] A different hypothesis regarding the origin of this list was proposed by A.G.Shanidze. According to the researcher's belief, the Caucasian Albanian alphabet found in the manuscript was directly copied from an original source shared by both lists, presumably dating back to the 10th century [Шанидзе, 1959, с.204-206].

the fact that scribes wrote Arabic letters from left to right, thus deviating from the traditional direction of Arabic writing.

Despite these errors, it should be noted that their number is noticeably smaller compared to the number of errors in the grapheme and phoneme order. Based on the above, one must acknowledge: despite the fact that the Caucasian Albanian alphabet, among the ones mentioned above, is the most impressive (with 52 graphemes) and had not been in use for a long time by the time of our source's writing (15th century), the alphabetical order presented in the manuscript, overall, is trustworthy. This is indirectly supported by the results of the Mingachevir excavations, specifically two incomplete epigraphic lists of the Albanian alphabet: "Inscription on Candlestick No. 2" and "Inscription on Shard No. 2". These inscriptions contain fragments of the Caucasian Albanian alphabet, specifically letters Nos. 1-10 and 29-32, and the order of the letters in these fragments accurately corresponds to the alphabetical sequence of the Albanian alphabet as given in the Armenian manuscripts. Lastly, after studying the Sinai Palimpsest (W.Schulze, J.Gippert), we are aware of the numerical values and, consequently, the alphabetical sequence of the initial part of the Caucasian Albanian script from the first to the twenty-first letter, as well as, possibly, the value of the thirty-first letter of the Albanian alphabet [Гипперт и др., 2008: IV-3]. It is important to note that the positions of the characters Nos. 1-21 in the Albanian palimpsest correspond precisely to the positions of the corresponding letters in Matenadaran manuscript No. 7117 and A. Kurdian's list.

The above fact demonstrates that, similar to Armenian, Albanian "scatters" graphemes for its specific sounds among the letters of the "Greek" section of the alphabet. However, it can be presumed that in Albanian, a similar principle of arranging letters emerged independently of the Erkatagir.

Georgian script, also attributed to Mesrop Mashtots, differs from Armenian and Albanian in that it is based on different structural principles and represents a diametrically opposite system. The letters Nos. 1-24 of the Georgian alphabet repeat the Greek alphabetical order and numerical values. With the exception of one easily explainable deviation, the phonetic values of the letters in the Georgian and Greek alphabets are identical: the Greek letter No. 16 Ξ **(σίγμα)** with the value *"ks"* was foreign to the Georgian phonological system, and it corresponds to ⴉ **j (je)** in the Asomtavruli script. It should be noted that the Greek alphabetical order is preserved in Georgian, even in the case of the so-called episemons. The second part of the Asomtavruli script (letters Nos. 25-36) consists of letters representing "specific" Georgian consonants. The Asomtavruli script also ends with the "Greek" letter ⴍ **(hoe)**, which corresponds to the last letter of the Greek alphabet, **Ω**.

As already noted, the Armenian alphabet is also based on the Greek paradigmatics. It consists of 21 "Greek" and 15 specific "Armenian" letters. The fundamental difference between Georgian and Armenian lies in the fact that, as already noted, Armenian places its specific letters not after the "Greek" section like in Georgian, but scatters them among the "Greek" letters without any apparent logic. Consequently, the position and numerical value of the Greek letters in the Erkatagir change.

A.G.Shanidze also noted that the Albanian alphabet is based on the Greek paradigmatics, emphasizing the typological proximity of the Caucasian Albanian and Armenian alphabets [Шанидзе, 1957, с.41-42]. A.G.Abramyan, on the other hand, believed that the adherence of the Albanian alphabet to the Greek order is a consequence of the Albanian alphabet following the Armenian alphabetical order (based on the fact that Armenian itself adheres to the Greek alphabetical order) [Абрамян, 1964]. This opinion is also shared by S.N.Muravyev, who proposed a complex scheme for the arrangement of the "non-Armenian" letters of the Albanian alphabet among the "Armenian" ones, albeit with numerous inaccuracies (as the phonetic values of most Albanian characters were not established at that time) [Муравьев, 1981, с.241-259], and the authors of the Albanian Palimpsests, who note: "It has been noticed a long time ago that the 22 Armenian letters which have a Greek equivalent keep up the same relative position in the Armenian alphabet as they have in the Greek. The 14 letters that are Armenian proper seem to have simply been inserted among them. We now know that the 26 additional letters of the Albanian alphabet have similarly been inserted among the 36 letters which have an Armenian equivalent, without changing their relative order. This is a

serious reason to conclude that the Albanian alphabet was derived from the Armenian and that it is likely to have been created in the same circle, perhaps by the same person. On the contrary, Koriwn's report on the Georgian alphabet, whose internal structure is completely independent from the Armenian, raises serious doubts" [Гиппepт и др., 2008: II-15-II-17].

To determine whether the Armenian alphabet serves as a prototype for the Caucasian Albanian alphabet, it is necessary to establish how closely the positions of the specific "non-Greek" letters in the Armenian alphabet coincide with the corresponding phonetic equivalents in the Caucasian Albanian script.

In Armenian, the Greek letters λ and ρ do not correspond to identical phonemes, but to similar-sounding ones, ղ and ռ. The fact that Albanian letter ⱄ (No. 42 r) occupies the position of Armenian "hard" ղ (ṛ; resp. Greek ρ), rather than ռ (r) is purely a "Greek" phenomenon in the Caucasian Albanian alphabet. By contrast, following the same principle, the Albanian letter ⰾ (l) should have been in the place of the Armenian ղ (ł), but it corresponds to the Armenian "plain", yet "non-Greek" լ (l). This does not mean that the Greek λ does not correspond to a similar-sounding Albanian letter. It may correspond to the Albanian letter ⰵ «liṭ» (l̃), which is No. 22 in the Albanian alphabet, independently of the Armenian ղ.

It is particularly important to note that the positions of Armenian letters յ, ջ and ձ do not coincide with the Albanian letters ⰻ (j), ⰶ (ʒ) and ⰹ (ǯ). In the Caucasian Albanian alphabet, there is no equivalent for the Armenian letter ը, which, in our opinion, also does not support the idea of the Albanian alphabet being created by Mashtots.[1] It can be concluded that the Caucasian Albanian alphabet does not strictly adhere to the Armenian alphabetical order (if it adheres at all), and the order of letters of the Greek alphabet is not broken anywhere in the Albanian alphabet.

Based on simple logic, if the creator of the Armenian script had also been the creator of the Caucasian Albanian alphabet, they would have placed the specific letters of the Albanian language either after the "Armenian" section of the alphabet or scattered them among the "Armenian" letters, without breaking the order of the latter. In other words, the Caucasian Albanian alphabet would have been based on the paradigmatics of the Armenian alphabet, just as the Armenian alphabet is based on the Greek one. For example, the Armenian alphabet includes 21 correspondences to the classical Greek alphabet, letters No.1-24, excluding "episemons" and ξ «σίγμα», which would be unnecessary in the Armenian alphabet. In the Erkatagir, the order of Greek letters and their phonetic values are indeed preserved, with a few exceptions. Even those exceptions represent phonemes with similar sounds. On the other hand, when comparing the Armenian and Caucasian Albanian alphabets, it becomes evident that at least five Albanian letters are "misplaced" (do not correspond to similar-sounding Armenian letters): Armenian յ (j) corresponds to Albanian ⰷ (q); Armenian ջ (ǯ) to Albanian ⰸ (γ); Armenian ձ (ʒ) to Albanian ⰾ (x//*q); Armenian ը (ə) to Albanian ⰲ (ž). Armenian շ may correspond to three Albanian letters, but none of them have a close phonetic value: ⰶ (š^{ʃ}); ⰲ (o^{ʃ}); ⰳ (*ç^{ə}). It is also important to note that the Armenian letter ժ (ž) corresponds not to the "plain" ž in Albanian (ⰲ), but to the pharyngealized ⰻ (ž^{ʕ}). Thus, out of the 15 specific "non-Greek" letters of the Erkatagir, 6 do not have exact phonetic counterparts in corresponding positions in Albanian.

A brief review of the paradigmatics of the Caucasian-Albanian alphabet once again raises doubts about the information provided by Armenian sources, which claim that Mesrop Mashtots was the creator of all three Caucasian alphabets. If we assume the authenticity of such information, it is completely unclear why Mashtots, when "creating" the Caucasian Albanian alphabet, would revert to the old system of arranging specific letters that he had used in the Armenian alphabet but then abandoned during the "creation" of the Georgian script.

It is also unclear why the method of constructing the alphabet used in the Caucasian Albanian script is a priori considered borrowed from Armenian. The exact time of the creation of the Caucasian Albanian alphabet is unknown, and it is possible that it was created before the Armenian alphabet. In any case, the

[1] The sound ը (ə) in Grabar did not have a distinctive function. Based on this, an equivalent of this grapheme could have been used in Caucasian Albanian as well.

scattering of specific letters among the characters of the "Greek" section of the alphabet appears more organic for the Caucasian Albanian script, as it contains approximately one and a half times more specific characters than letters that have counterparts in Greek. Otherwise, the creator (or creators) of the Caucasian Albanian alphabet would have been forced to place the bulk of the alphabet after the Greek section. In addition, due to the political realities of the central and eastern parts of the South Caucasus at that time, the connection between the Albanian alphabet and Greek could not be directly demonstrated. The same can be said for the Armenian script as well. The distinctive structural principles of the Georgian script can be explained by the greater political autonomy of Kartli from Sassanid Iran. For example, among all the South Caucasian countries, Dyophysitism, which was usually the official religious doctrine of Byzantium, prevailed only in Kartli. A similar process that occurred in the Albanian Church was reversed through the use of force, but this took place during Arab domination. Another possibility is that the Georgian script could have originated in Palestine, where the earliest dated Georgian script artifacts were discovered.

Table 1. A comparative table of the Caucasian Albanian, Armenian, and Greek alphabets

Numeric value	*Albanian*	*Phonetic value*	*Numeric value*	*Armenian*	*Phonetic value*	*Numeric value*	*Greek*	*Phonetic value*
1	𐔰	a	1	Ա ա	a	1	Α α	a
2	𐔱	b	2	Բ բ	b	2	Β β	b
3	𐔲	g	3	Գ գ	g	3	Γ γ	γ
4	𐔳	d	4	Դ դ	d	4	Δ δ	d
5	𐔴	e	5	Ե ե	e	5	Ε ε	e
6	𐔵	z	6	Զ զ	z	7	Ζ ζ	z [ʒ]
7	𐔶	ej	7	Է է	[ē]	8	Η η	ē [i]
8	𐔷	ž	8	Ը ը	ə			
9	𐔸	t	9	Թ թ	t	9	Θ θ	tʰ
10	𐔹	čˢ						
20	𐔺	j						
30	𐔻	žˢ	10	Ժ ժ	ž			
40	𐔼	i	20	Ի ի	i	10	Ι ι	i
50	𐔽	(ˢ)//*šˢ						
60	𐔾	l	30	Լ լ	l			
70	𐔿	n˜						
80	𐕀	x	40	Խ խ	x			
90	𐕁	ǰ						
100	𐕂	ç	50	Ծ ծ	ç			
200	𐕃	ǰˢ						

300	𐤊	ķ	60	Ҟ ҟ	ķ	20	Κ κ	k
*400	𐤓	ʳ				30	Λ λ	l
*500	𐤋	h	70	Ҳ ҳ	h			
*600	𐤍	x//*q	80	Ҙ ҙ	ʒ			
*700	𐤎	?	90	Ӌ ӌ	ɬ [ɣ]			
*800	𐤏	ǰ						
*900	𐤐	ǯ	100	Ӡ ӡ	ǯ			
*1000	𐤑	?						
*2000	𐤒	m	200	Ԝ ԝ	m	40	Μ μ	m
*3000	𐤓	q	300	Ɜ ɜ	j			
*4000	𐤔	n	400	Ն ն	n	50	Ν ν	n
*5000	𐤕	?				60	Ξ ξ	ks
*6000	𐤖	š	500	Շ շ	š			
*7000	𐤗	?						
*8000	𐤘	o	600	Ո ո	o	70	Ο ο	o
*9000	𐤙	*ǯ						
*10000	𐤚	f						
*20000	𐤛	*ʒ						
*30000	𐤜	č	700	Չ չ	č			
*40000	𐤝	ƥ	800	Պ պ	ƥ	80	Π π	p
*50000	𐤞	γ	900	Ջ ջ	ǯ			
*60000	𐤟	r	1000	Ռ ռ	ŗ	100	Ρ ρ	r
*70000	𐤠	s	2000	Ս ս	s	200	Σ ς	s
*80000	𐤡	v	3000	Վ վ	v			
*90000	𐤢	ţ	4000	Տ տ	ţ	300	Τ τ	t
*100000	𐤣	šʲ	5000	Ր ր	r			
*200000	𐤤	oʲ						
*300000	𐤥	*ǯ						
*400000	𐤦	c	6000	Ց ց	c			
*500000	𐤧	w	7000	Ւ ւ	w	400	Υ υ	ü [i]
*600000	𐤨	p	8000	Փ փ	p	500	Φ φ	f
*700000	𐤩	k	9000	Ք ք	k	600	Χ χ	x

Note: The asterisk (*) in the column of characters of the Caucasian Albanian alphabet indicates an unconfirmed grapheme in the palimpsest; the asterisk (*) in the column of phonetic or numeric values of the Caucasian Albanian alphabet indicates a tentative value for the grapheme; the symbol ˁ is used to indicate pharyngealized sounds.



— cases of coincidence in the positions of Albanian, Armenian, and Greek letters;



— cases of unambiguous non-coincidence in the positions of Albanian and Armenian letters;



— cases of coincidence in the positions of Albanian and Armenian letters, and the possible range of this coincidence;



— cases of coincidence in the positions of only Albanian and Greek letters.

The names of the letters in the Albanian alphabet appear to be original. In only a few cases do we have coincidence or similarity with corresponding names in Aramaic, Greek, Armenian, or Georgian: *Aramaic:* **ālaph** – *Albanian:* **alt;** *Aramaic:* **bēth** – *Albanian:* ***bet;** Aramaic:* **zain** – *Albanian:* **ǯajn;** *Aramaic:* **hēth** –*Albanian:* **hejt;**

Greek: **xi** – *Albanian:* **kiw;** *Greek:* **fi** – *Albanian:* **piwr;** *Greek:* **taw** – *Albanian:* **ça**w;

Armenian: **čaj/ča** – *Albanian:* **čaj;** *Armenian:* **coj** – *Albanian:* **coj;** *Armenian:* **gim** – *Albanian:* **gim**.

Georgian: **en** – *Albanian:* ***ejn;** Georgian:* **in** – *Albanian:* **ina;** *Georgian:* **hae** – *Albanian:* **haj** *and so on.*

A.Shanidze noted that some names have real meanings in the Udi language: **zoq** *means "young branch" or "shoot";* **ķaţ** *means "droplet";* **žil** *means "tumult";* **so** *means "one" or "only";* **un** *means "you";* **ša** *means "sand (fine, fluvial)";* **ça**w *means "glitter";* **ča** *means "rope (made of wool)";* **ar** *means "pear"* [Шанидзе, 1938, с.37]. It should be noted that some of these comparisons are outdated; for example, the letter named **ķaţ** definitely represents the phoneme **r, un** represents **o,** and **zoq** (or rather **zox**, as it appears in Manuscript No. 7117, even though **q,** which does not exist in the phonological system of the Armenian language, could have been expressed by the grapheme ⱳ x) most likely represents **ǯˁ**.

The names of the letters, apparently, reflect the Aramaic tradition rather than the Greek one [Гукасян, 1968, с.62]; in the Caucasian Albanian language, the names of 47 letters end in a consonant, while 5 end in a vowel. In the names of the letters of the Caucasian Albanian alphabet, several common endings can be identified, which are attached to the initial consonant or vowel that represents the phonetic sound of the letter. These are (the clarified names of the Albanian letters are given under an asterisk, and the names according to Manuscript No. 7117 are given in parentheses): -a (ča, ža, ša, *n˜a (ina)); -aj (*xaj/qaj (haj), čaj, žaj, *č◌ͣaj (ţaj), ʒaj); -ajn (žajn, cajn); -oj (*čˁoj (coj), *šˁoj (soj)); -ar (*çar (čaŗ), ķar, *qar (ķaŗ)), -aţ (*daţ (gaţ), čaţ, *raţ (ķaţ)); -an (lan, *žan (dan)); -iwr (ţiwr, piwr).[1]

[1] According to V.L.Gukasyan, the names of the Albanian letters serve another function as well. In his opinion, the harder the sound appears in the auslaut, the harder the sound is conveyed by that particular character: "The authors of the textbook devised a very ingenious method of conveying the names of the letters. That is, taking into account the specific characteristics of the names of the letters in the Albanian alphabet, they followed a general rule: they replaced the final letters of the names based on the correlation between the represented sound and letter" [Гукасян, 1969, с.62-63]. For example, in the Caucasian Albanian alphabet, there are three letters designated as ķ. The first one (No. 21 "ķar"), according to V.L.Gukasyan, represented a preruptive consonant. The second one (No. 42 "ķaţ"), whose name ends with ţ, denoted an abruptive conso-

Table No. 2. Names of letters and phonemic values of the Caucasian Albanian alphabet

No.	Manuscript No. 7117	Name	Palimpsests	Phonemic value	A.G.Abramyan	G.A. Klimov	S.N. Muravyov	V.L. Gukasyan	Z. Aleksidze	J. Gippert, W. Schulze
1	𐊰	alt	𐊰	a	a	a	a	aˤ	a	a
2	𐊱	odet	𐊱	b	b	b	oˤ	b	b	b
3	𐊲	zim	𐊲	g	g	g	b	g	g	g
4	𐊳	gaṭ	𐊳	d	d	d	g	ɣ	?	d
5	𐊴	ejb	𐊴	e	e	e	e//eˤ	e	e	e
6	𐊵	zaṛl	𐊵	z	z	z	z	z	z	z
7	𐊶	en	𐊶	ej/e	ē	eˤ	eˤ//e	eˤ	ē	ej
8	𐊷	žil	𐊷	ž	ə	ə	ž:	ž	ž	ž
9	𐊸	tas	𐊸	t	t	t	t	t	t	t
10	𐊹	čˌa	𐊹	čˌˤ	ž	ž	čˌ:	čˌ	?	čˌ˜
11	𐊺	jud	𐊺	j	i	j	j//j:	j	j	j
12	𐊻	ža	𐊻	žˤ	i	?	ž	ž:	ž?	ž˜
13	𐊼	irb	𐊼	i	i	i	i	i	i	i
14	𐊽	ša	𐊽	[ˤ]/š	l	?	š:	š	š	ʕ
15	𐊾	lan	𐊾	l	l	l	l	l	l	l
16	𐊿	ina	𐊿	n˜	x	?	iˤ//ə	iˤ	?	n˜
17	𐋀	χejn	𐋀	χ	x	x	x	x	q//x[1]	x˜
18	𐋁	dan	𐋁	ǯ	x	?	d	d	d	d˜
19	𐋂	čaṛ	𐋂	*ç	ç	ç	ç	čᵓᵒ	čˌ?	ç
20	𐋃	zoχ	𐋃	ǯˤ	ç	?	z:	z:	z?	ǯ˜
21	𐋄	ḳar	𐋄	ḳ	ḳ	ḳ	ḳ	kᵓ	ḳ	ḳ

nant of the same series (ḳ). The third one (No. 30 "ḳaṛ") represented q̧.

It is difficult to agree with V.L.Gukasyan's opinion. It is impossible to assume that the compilers of Manuscript No. 7117 in the 15th century could have been aware of the articulation peculiarities of Albanian sounds. V.G.Gukasyan himself agrees with the opinion of A.G.Shanidze, according to which the prototype of the alphabet manuscript dates back to no later than the 10th century [Гукасян, 1969, с.61]. If V.L.Gukasyan suggests that the names of the Albanian letters were already changed back then (although this is inconsistent with his statement about the textbook compilers), it is still difficult to assume that the scribes altered the letter names at will. Moreover, it is illogical to compare such non-original names (as implied by V.L.Gukasyan himself) with the names of letters in Aramaic, Greek, and other alphabets [Гукасян, 1969, с.61-62].

It should be noted that V.L.Gukasyan inconsistently applies his principle. For example, in the case of letter No. 6 "zaṛl", the researcher considers it a "plain" phoneme z, despite the presence of the "hard" ṛ in the name of this letter. In addition, judging by the methods of V.L.Gukasyan, the phonological qualification he proposes for the following characters is not clear: e "ejb" – eˤ "en"; ž "žil" – žᵓ "ža"; i "irb" – iˤ "ina"; pᵓ "pen" – p̧ "pes". The last example is surprising. It is unclear why the researcher considers the character 𐋁 (p) as abruptive, and 𐋅 (p̧) as preruptive.

Such an assumption seems justified in the case of names with the "hard" ṛ (= 𐋆). This phoneme was foreign to the Caucasian Albanian language and could have been used by Armenian scribes as some kind of diacritical mark, as evidenced by the example "ḳar" (ḳ) – "ḳaṛ" (q̧). In addition, ṛ is found in the names of two more letters: No. 19 "čaṛ" < "*çaṛ" and No. 6 "zaṛl".

No.	Manuscript No. 7117	Name	Palimpsests	Phonemic value	A.G.Abramyan	G.A. Klimov	S.N. Muravyov	V.L. Gukasyan	Z. Aleksidze	J. Gippert, W. Schulze
22		liṭ		*l˜	h	?	l‘	l˜	?	l˜
23		hejṭ		h	h	h	h	ʕ	h	h
24		haj		q/χ	ʒ	?	h:	h	?	χ/q
25		ar	-	-	ä	ʒ	aˤ	a	ā	aº
26		coj		čˤ	ö	?	j://j	c	c?	č˜
27		čˌi		čˌ	čˌ	čˌ	čˌ	čˌº	čˌ	čˌ
28		čaj	-	-	ɣ	?	č:	č	?	*c˜
29		maḳ		m	m	m	m	m	m	m
30		ḳaṛ		g̱	j	?	ḳ ∘ //g̱ ∘	g̱	g̱	g̱
31		nuc		n	n	n	n	n	n	n
32		žaj	-	-	š	?	ž//ʒ:	ž	č¹//ʒ	*ʒ˜
33		šak		š	š	š	š	š:	š²	š
34		žajn	-	-	š	?	ž://ʒ	žº	?	*ž
35		un		o	o	o	o	o	o	o
36		ṭaj		*čˌ	č	?	ṭ:	tˤ	?	t˜
37		χam		f	č	č	x://ɣ	q	ɣ	f
38		ʒaj		ʒ	č	?	ʒ	ʒ	ʒ?	ʒ
39		čaṭ		č	č	?	č	čˤ	č	č
40		ṗen		p̱	p̱	p̱	p̱	pˤ	p̱	p̱
41		pes		ɣ	ž	ž	p̱:	p̱	p?	ɣ
42		ḳaṭ		r	ṛ	r	g̱ ∘ //ḳ ∘	ḳ	r	r
43		sejḳ		s	s	s	s	s:	s	s
44		vejz		v	w	w	v	v	v	v
45		ṭiwr		ṭ	ṭ	ṭ	ṭ	ṭ	ṭ	ṭ
46		soj		šˤ	ṭ	?	s:	s	s?	šˤ˜
47		ion		oˤ	r	oˤ	iˤ//ə	r	?	ü
48		ça̱w		*çˌ	c	?	r	ç	?	çˤ˜
49		cajn		c	c	c	c	cº	c	c
50		jajd		(w)	w	w	w	w	w	(w)
51		piwr		p	p	f	p	p	p	p
52		kiw		k	k	k	k	k	k	k
35+50	–	–		u	u	u	u	u	u	u
47+50	–	–		uˤ	–	uˤ	–	–	āw	ü
14+1	–	–		aˤ	–	–	–	–	–	ʕa
14+5	–	–		eˤ	–	–	–	–	–	ʕe
14+13	–	–		iˤ	–	–	–	–	–	ʕi

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ANCIENT BELIEFS AND CHRISTIANITY IN ALBANIA (up to the end of the 5th century)

Abstract. Throughout ancient times, the region encompassing historical Albania witnessed the existence of local cults alongside Zoroastrian and Christian beliefs. Following the establishment of Christianity as the state religion of Albania in the early 4th century, these various beliefs coexisted harmoniously. The Sassanids' endeavors to impose orthodox Zoroastrianism upon Albania through force proved unsuccessful. Despite the implementation of the Aluen Canons (488 AD) and the concerted efforts to combat paganism and Zoroastrianism, complete eradication of these beliefs remained elusive. For an extended period, the multi-ethnic population of Albania retained its characteristic of being multi-confessional.

Keywords: Pagan beliefs in Albania, the spread of Christianity throughout Albania, attempts of the Sassanids to forcefully impose orthodox Zoroastrianism, the Aluen Canons (488 AD), the multi-confessional nature of Albania

The religious landscape in Albania exhibited remarkable diversity, encompassing a wide array of beliefs. Just like in other parts of the world, ancient local cults thrived within its borders. Considering the presence of numerous related and linguistically distinct tribes within the territory of historical Albania, it is reasonable to assume the existence of a considerable variety of local cults. Nevertheless, it is also possible that common Albanian cults emerged alongside these diverse beliefs.

Among the earliest tribes documented in historical Albania is the tribe of *Mycoi* or *Micoi* (Gr. μύκοι), mentioned by Hecataeus in his description of Asia (6th century BC): "...from the Mycoi to the river Araxes" (Hecat., fr. 170). In Herodotus's History, written in the 5th century BC, the Myci are referenced as being located in the vicinity of the Utii tribe (Herod., III, 93; VII, 68). Many researchers draw a comparison between the ethnonym "*Mycoi*" and the name of the Mughan region, which was initially mentioned in Pahlavi inscriptions dating back to the 3rd century AD in the form of "*Mūkan*" [Касумова, 1983, с.53]. From the 7th–8th centuries until the early 13th century, this region was consistently referred to as "Mukan" in the works of Arab geographers, such as Abu Dulaf, Al-Baladhuri, Ibn Khordadbeh, Al-Istakhri, Ibn al-Athir, and others. The local population of the region associated the name of Mukan with the mughs (magi), which indicates the spread of Zoroastrian beliefs in the area [Дьяконов, 1956, с.376; Меликов, 2003, с.122–124].

Another tribe that resided in the territory of historical Albania were the Caspians. The earliest accounts of the Caspians can be traced back to Aramaic documents discovered on the island of Elephantine in southern Egypt, dating back to the 5th century BC The Elephantine papyri have preserved 14 proper names belonging to the Caspians [Меликов, 1988, с.74–75; Меликов, 2003, с.91]. Among the preserved names, the names of Atarli, Bazu, Bagazushta, Misdai, Shatibara, and Shatibarzana stand out as particularly relevant to our theme.

According to some scholars, the name Atarli is a Babylonian proper name [Kraeling, 1953, p.164]. In our interpretation, we observe an Iranian root in the first part of the name, specifically "*atar-*" or "*atarš-*", which means "fire" [Меликов, 2003, с.99]. In Zoroastrianism, sacred fire was a symbol of ritual purification.

Scholars derive the name Bazu from the name of the Midian tribe of the Bus, as mentioned by Herodotus (Herod., I, 105). They also associate it with a group of words, including the Persian word "*būza*", which means "intoxicating drink". The cult and traditional use of intoxicating drinks were indeed widespread among the Iranian peoples, including those of West Iranian origin [Грантовский, 1970, с.181; Меликов, 2003, с.98–99]. The name Bagazushta has its origins in the Midian language and carries the meaning of "pleasing to God" [Kraeling, 1953, p.158; Меликов, 2003, с.98]. In Zoroastrianism, the term "*baga*" (god) often referred to Mithra, who was considered the god of friendship, covenants, and contracts. The name Misdai can be confidently traced back to Ahura Mazda, the supreme deity in Zoroastrianism [Грантовский, 1970, с.276]. The names Shatibara and Shatibarzana feature the term "*š(y)āti-*" in their initial parts. In the Avesta, this term signifies the state of the soul, representing concepts of "joy, bliss, and happiness" [Грантовский, 1970, с.200; Меликов, 2003, с.100–102].

Strabo (1st century BC – 1st century AD), in his "Geography", describes the funeral rites practiced by the Caspians as follows: "...when their parents reach the age of over 70, they are kept locked up and starved. This custom is less cruel and similar to the practices observed in Keos, although it is of Scythian origin" (Strabo XI, XI, 3). Strabo further writes: "It is important to note some of the bizarre traditions of the utterly barbarous peoples who reside in the region surrounding the Caucasus and the remainder of the mountainous nation... They starve individuals who have reached the age of over 70, after which their lifeless bodies are discarded in desolate locations. They then observe from a distance: if birds drag the corpses off the stretcher, it is believed to signify a state of blessedness; if wild animals and dogs are the ones to approach the corpses, it is seen as a lesser form of blessedness; and, if the corpses remain untouched, it is considered a sign of a wretched fate" (Strabo XI, XI, 8). The account provided by Strabo actually describes the Zoroastrian rite of exposing corpses to be cleansed by birds and beasts, known as excarnation. However, there are doubts regarding Strabo's report on the starvation of the elderly. In contrast, it is important to consider his observations about the Albanians, where he states: "Old age among the Albanians is highly respected, not only for parents but also for others" (Strabo XI, IV, 8).

The above analysis of the onomastic material from the Elephantine papyri, along with Strabo's account of the funeral customs of the Caspians, provides clear indications of the prevalence of Zoroastrian beliefs among the Caspian people.

Strabo describes the religious views of the Albanians as follows: "Of the gods they [Albanians. – *R.M.*] venerate Helios, Zeus and Selene, with a particular emphasis on Selene..." (Strabo XI, IV, 7). According to some researchers, each of these deities had counterparts within the Zoroastrian pantheon. One of them is Helios, the sun god, who corresponds to Mithra in Zoroastrianism. The second one is Zeus, the supreme god, who corresponds to Ahura Mazda, the supreme deity in Zoroastrianism. And the third one is Selene, the moon goddess, who corresponds to Anahita in Zoroastrianism [Тревер, 1959, с.151; Алиев, 1974, с.353; Алиев, 1992, с.164].

Strabo mentions that the sanctuary of Selene "is near Iberia" (Strabo XI, IV, 7). Cassius Dio (2nd–3rd centuries AD), in his account of Pompey's march, provides details on the Roman army's winter stay: "And he [Pompey. – *R.M.*] spent the winter in the region known as Anahitida [which means the region of the goddess Anahita. – *R.M.*] and near the Cyrn [Kura. – *R.M.*] river" (Cass. Dio, XXXVI, 53, 5). Both Strabo and Cassius Dio mention the existence of temple regions in western Albania. While there are differing opinions among researchers regarding the exact location of Anahitida, it was most likely situated on the right bank of the Kura river, in the vicinity of ancient Khalkhal, near present-day Gazakh [Меликов, 2021, с.161]. According to Strabo, within the temple precinct of the moon goddess (referred to as Anahitida by Cassius Dio), the practice of ritual killing and divination using a corpse was observed (Strabo XI, IV, 7).

Interestingly, within the burial sites of the Albanian period on the territory of Azerbaijan unearthed on the territory of Albania, a portion of the ceramic artifacts and other objects accompanying the deceased are adorned with depictions of the moon in the form of a crescent, which supports the existence of a cult of the moon goddess [Алиев, 1974, с.330; Алиев, 1992, с.153]. Ethnographic research carried out in the Guba

and Gabala districts of Azerbaijan has uncovered ancient gravestones adorned with depictions of the Moon, the Sun, and the Tree of Life. These symbols are distinctively associated with the ideology of the Albanian tribes. Elements of astral cults once practiced by the Albanians are still preserved in the beliefs of the local populations in Azerbaijan and Eastern Georgia [Меликов, 2021, с.164]. The existence of a triad of deities corresponding to Anahita, Ahura Mazda, and Mithra provides evidence of the early influence of Zoroastrian ideological concepts in the territory of Albania, predating the spread of Christianity.

According to the account of Pomponius Mela (1st century AD), the island of *Talge* (*Talgae*, or *Talerat*) in the Caspian Sea was considered sacred by the neighboring inhabitants. Pomponius Mela reports the following about it: Talge, located in the Caspian Sea, is naturally fertile and abundant with various fruits and vegetation. However, the neighboring communities regard it as a crime and sacrilege to consume anything produced there. They believe that these offerings are destined for the gods and must be preserved exclusively for deities. Several islands border the desolate shores we mentioned earlier. These islands are also devoid of human habitation and, lacking their own names, are collectively referred to as the Scythian islands" (Pomp. Mela, De chor., III, 6, 58).

Ptolemy (2nd century AD) also mentions the island of Talca or Talci (*Τάλκα* or *Τάλκη*) (Ptol., Geogr., VI, 9, 8). Pliny the Elder (1st century AD) refers to this island differently, stating: "In the entire [Caspian. – *R.M.*] sea, there are numerous islands, but the most famous one is Zazata" (Plin., Nat. hist., VI, 52). The name of the island in this particular form is not found in other ancient authors. However, various manuscripts of Pliny's Natural History preserve different variants of this name, such as *Zanzata*, *Tazata*, *Tuzaga*, and others. The variant *Tazaca* is closer to the names of the island mentioned by Pomponius Mela and Ptolemy.

The majority of researchers identify Talge with the modern island of Cheleken in the eastern part of the Caspian Sea [Подосинов, 2002, с.284-285]. A different perspective is presented by S.N.Muravyov, who suggests that the accounts of Pliny and Ptolemy reflect a period when the water level of the Caspian Sea was approximately 15–20 meters higher than its present level [Муравьёв, 1988, с.235-247]. He leans towards the interpretation that the islands mentioned by Ptolemy in his account as "Two marshy islands lie near Albania, the space between them falling within 87°30′–45°" (Ptol., Geogr., V, 12, 8) can be identified with two elevations forming the tips of the Harami Ridge and the Alat Range [Муравьёв, 1983, с.141-142]. According to S.N.Muravyov, the Lesser Harami Ridge is situated on the border of the Kura Lowland and Gobustan, with the Pirsaat River valley separating it from the latter. And the Alat Range is located approximately 40 km southwest of Gobustan. However, Ptolemy does not provide the names of these two islands specifically, but he does mention the island of Talca elsewhere in his work. It is possible that he considers them to be distinct islands.

Z.I.Yampolsky identifies Talge with the island of Pirallahi [Ямпольский, 1962, с.13-14, сл.]. According to K.G.Aliyev's hypothesis, Talga is identified as Absheron, and the desolate islands correspond to the islands of the Absheron archipelago [Алиев, 1974, с.311]. K.Aliyev believes that, "...in the Caspian Talga we are dealing with a sanctuary of a more primitive character [than the sanctuary of Selene. – *R.M.*] or with a peculiar ancient shrine" [Алиев, 1992, с.152]. Just like Talge, the Pirallahi Island is known to be surrounded by desolate islands off the western shores of the Caspian Sea. Even in the 18th and 19th centuries, several sources of fresh and delicious water and fertile soil were observed on the Pirallahi Island. It was noted that the island was "very well suited for agriculture, and in places where the plow had recently touched it, it was adorned with lush vegetation of grains and small shrubs". On Cheleken Island (now a peninsula), situated along the coast of contemporary Turkmenistan, the predominant landscape consists of sands and salt marshes, which hinder the growth of the majority of plant species. Furthermore, Pirallahi Island served as a destination for religious pilgrimages up until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries [Ямпольский, 1962, с.13–14]. The name of the island itself suggests the presence of a deity's shrine in that location. Therefore, Z.I.Yampolsky's assertion that Talge should be identified with Pirallahi Island appears to be accurate.

During this period, Christianity started to gain influence in Albania. According to Albanian tradition, Saint Elisæus (Elisha, Yegishe), a follower of the Apostle Thaddeus, is regarded as the enlightener of Albania.

He began his preaching mission among the Maskut tribe in the Chola region, and later extended it to the Uti gavar (district). Eventually, he reached Gish, where he constructed a church. As the Albanian historian points out, "Our Church of the Eastern Region was established in this very location" (Movses Kaghankatvatsi, I, VI). The events depicted here took place during the latter half of the 1st century AD. F.Mammadova refers to this period of Christianity's expansion in Albania as the apostolic or Syrophilic era. During this time, Christianity was propagated in the Syriac-Aramaic language by the apostles, their disciples, and Syrian missionaries. According to F.Mammadova, this period persisted until the 4th century [Мамедова, 2005, c.525]. As Christianity took root in Albania, it coexisted with the preservation of ancient cults. It is plausible to suggest that elements from these cults were incorporated into the local variation of Christianity.

Archaeologically documented funerary rites at Albanian monuments a valuable source for studying the cults and beliefs that existed within its territory. One of the intriguing aspects of burials in Mingachevir is the discovery of various types of burials.

In 1949, S.M.Kaziev made a significant discovery in the Galaget area near Mingachevir. He uncovered two timber graves dating back to the 2nd–3rd centuries AD. One of these graves contained the skeleton of a woman, and three additional skulls positioned beneath the feet of the buried woman. Alongside these remains, a collection of grave goods was found, including jewelry, an iron knife, a dagger, and a long sword. S.M.Kaziev dubbed this grave as "the grave of an Amazon". In the other timber grave, a skeleton was found, and at its feet lay another skeleton in a strongly bent position, with a crack in the temporal part of the skull. Based on the observed circumstances, S.M.Kaziev postulated the existence of a funeral custom involving the killing of another person through a blow to the temple, followed by placing the deceased individual at the feet of the primary individual [Казиев, 1949, c.96].

Out of the over 300 jar burials unearthed at Mingachevir (Galaget) between 1946 and 1953, burial No. 17 is particularly notable. It was discovered on the right bank of the Kura River, within an underground burial chamber constructed with mud bricks and covered with wooden planks. The size of the burial complex measured 3×5 meters, larger than the typical dimensions of 2×3 meters [Ионе, 1955, c.54]. The skeleton within the burial jar was found lying on its side in a flexed position. This particular burial can be dated to between the late 1st century BC and early 1st century AD [Ионе, 1955, c.54–56]. The presence of abundant grave goods, such as weapons, jewelry, etc., indicates the wealth of the individual interred in the burial and suggest that the buried person belonged to the military nobility [Ионе, 1955, c.61]. The central burial was accompanied by two bones of pack animals (possibly a camel and a horse) and a human skeleton found near the central burial in subsoil, in an unconventional position for burials; it was situated almost beneath the jar, lying on its chest, facing downwards, with his arms bent. This observation suggests that during the period around the turn of the era in Mingachevir, the burial of tribal nobility was accompanied by the brutal killing of dependent individuals or slaves [Ионе, 1955, c.62].

During the 2nd century AD, a small number of burials in Mingachevir (Galaget) featured log cabins covered with wooden planking. These particular burials stood out due to the abundance of grave goods. In both male and female burials, the remains are accompanied by several additional bones positioned inside the burial chamber, but outside the log cabin structure, arranged in a seated position. According to G.M.Aslanov, the central burials belonged to wealthy individuals or the military nobility, whereas the seated remains belonged to servants or slaves. These burial practices existed in the 2nd–3rd centuries AD but gradually disappeared, likely merging with catacomb burials [Асланов, 1955, c.64-71].

In the Derbent burial ground, dating from the 1st–2nd centuries, burials No. 9-11 are interconnected by a single burial pit, representing a collective burial. Within this burial complex, the central burial is accompanied by the interment of skulls. Burial No. 9 is a stone-lined grave containing the body of a male laid out on his back. This burial is notable for its abundance of grave goods, in addition to a skull and skeletal fragments of a horse buried alongside. Underneath the feet of the male skeleton in burial No. 11, there was an oval depression containing five human skulls and limbs, some of which were intentionally

broken. Adjacent to these remains, there was a dog skull. Another human skull was positioned at the head of the buried individual within a niche created in the stone lining. To the left of the buried man in burial No. 10, there was an earthen grave containing the body of a woman laid out on her back. The only artifact found in burial No. 10 was a ring adorned with a blue paste inlay [Гаджиев, 1985, с.46]. According to A.A.Kudryavtsev, this burial complex is interpreted as the interment of a noble individual accompanied by his wife or concubine, as well as a group of dependents such as slaves or captives, who were killed on the day of their lord's funeral [Кудрявцев, 1982, с.60].

The similarity of certain details in burials, particularly the positioning of skulls under the feet of the deceased, observed in the Mingachevir (burial No. 11) and Derbent (burials No. 9 and 11) burial sites, specifically in synchronous burials, indicates the likelihood of identical ideological beliefs and burial rituals among various tribes in Albania [Гаджиев, 1985, с.48].

In 1884, D.B.Schultz discovered numerous Roman-era graves near the village of Sartachali (modern-day village of Sartichala in the Gardabani municipality of Georgia). In one burial, a stone coffin contained a skeleton laid on its back, with nine skulls placed at its feet, while no grave goods were present [Шульц, 1907, с.3-4]. It is worth noting that in ancient times, this territory served as the northwestern periphery of Albania or as a bordering region of Iberia.

According to the majority of researchers, the aforementioned burials with human sacrifices may have belonged to noble or privileged individuals of the tribe (chieftains, representatives of the tribal aristocracy, or priests). It is likely that the victims were wives (or concubines) and slaves. M.S.Gadzhiev, in agreement with previous researchers, also maintains that these burials were associated with noble members of the tribe. Furthermore, he proposes that the burial practice observed in Scythian kurgans, where women were buried and accompanied by victims placed at the feet of the deceased, has a direct parallel in the Derbent burial site [Гаджиев, 1985, с.50-51]. According to his opinion, the form of the ritual of human sacrifices, as manifested in the burial of severed skulls of slaves rather than their complete skeletons, may have been influenced by the well-known practice of decapitating enemies, which was prevalent among the Scythians, Alans, Persians, and Parthians [Гаджиев, 1985, с.52]. M.S.Gadzhiev concludes that the timing of the emergence, along with certain details of this burial ritual, coincide with a period of active interactions between the local population and the Sarmatian-Alan world. According to his viewpoint, it is probable that the visual aspects of this ritual were influenced by the spiritual beliefs and ceremonial practices of the Sarmatian-Alan culture, which were intertwined with military customs and the veneration of the god of war [Гаджиев, 1985, с.54-55].

However, based on the available examples, burials with human sacrifices were not prevalent in Albania. Therefore, it can be inferred that these burials are directly associated with the leaders or military commanders of tribes within the Sarmatian-Alani range.

From its earliest decades, the Sassanid state embarked on ambitious conquests. In 252–253, Shahanshah (King of Kings) Shapur I (241–272), launched a campaign into the South Caucasus region. The inscriptions of the priest (at that time called "herbad") Kartir mention that his forces reached "Iberia, Albania, Balasakan, and even as far as the Albanian pass [Derbent. – *R.M.*]" [Луконин, 1969, с.87-88]. The endeavor to impose orthodox Zoroastrianism in Albania is linked to this military campaign. Based on the victory inscription of Shapur I on what is called the "Kaaba of Zoroaster" (dating back to around 262 [Касумова, 1994, с.3]) located in the Naqsh-e Rostam area, Shapur I assigned Kartir the task of establishing fire temples and priestly communities in both Iran and the conquered territories. One of the inscriptions discovered in Sar-e Mashhad (dating back to around 290–293 [Касумова, 1994, с.3]) states that Kartir "...established sacred fires everywhere - in Armenia, Georgia, and Albania - and appointed magi to serve them".

However, in the second half of the 3rd century, the populations of the South Caucasus, whose Zoroastrian practices varied from orthodox Zoroastrianism, rebelled against the Sassanids. According to F.Mammadova, the influence of Manichaeism and Mazdakism, which originated in Iran, also extended to

Albania [Мамедова, 2005, с.377]. The early medieval author Agathangelus recounts that during the war against Shahanshah Shapur, the Armenian king Khosrov "gathered the armies of Albania and Iberia, opened the gates of the Alans and the Chor Pass, and permitted the entry of the Hunnic troops". Soon, he was joined also by the Lpins, the Chilbs, the Caspians, and other tribes from the region, consisting of many courageous, brave, and well-equipped horsemen (Agathangelus, "The Life and History of Saint Gregory", 19). Evidently, the Sassanids were unsuccessful in establishing orthodox Zoroastrianism in Albania.

Following the Treaty of Nisibis (298) with the Roman Empire, the Sassanid state experienced a prolonged period of internal and external political turmoil. The countries of the South Caucasus came under the influence of the Roman Empire, resulting in a shift in the religious and ideological landscape of the region. In 303, Emperor Diocletian issued an edict targeting Christians, which called for the destruction of Christian temples and the burning of their sacred texts. This circumstance within the Roman Empire created favorable conditions for the expansion of Christianity in the Sassanid state [Гаджиев, 2022, с.674]. The Sassanid Shahanshahs willingly provided refuge to Christians who were persecuted in the Roman Empire, with the hope that those Christians who stayed would become their allies against the Romans [Мамедова, 2005, с.350-351].

Following the Edict of Milan in 313, which declared religious tolerance in the Roman Empire, Christianity was proclaimed as a state religion in Albania under King Urnayr, as well as in neighboring Armenia and Iberia. This marked the beginning of the second phase of Christian expansion in Albania, known as the Grecophile period, closely associated with the figure of Gregory the Illuminator. However, the Grecophile period was short-lived, as the Albanian Church soon embarked on a path of ethnic Albanian development, driven by the growth of Albanian literature [Мамедова, 2005, с.525-526]. Despite this, Christianity initially struggled to gain widespread acceptance, and the majority of the common population continued to adhere to ancient beliefs. According to F. Mammadova, Christianity was embraced by the king, the court, the nobility, and a portion of the population of Albania. However, the majority of the population remained faithful to their ancient pagan beliefs, while a portion adhered to Mazdeism [Мамедова, 2005, с.349].

From "The History of Albania" by Movses Kaghankatvatsi, it is evident that even after the acceptance of Christianity in Albania, the existence of witches, sorcerers, pagan (including Zoroastrian) priests, a sect of finger-cutters, and poisoners persisted. Despite the efforts of Albanian kings such as Urnayr, Vache II, and Vachagan III to combat paganism and Zoroastrianism, certain political circumstances led to their conversion to Zoroastrianism or their return to Christianity.

Following the Roman Empire's adoption of Christianity as its state religion (Council of Nicaea, 325), Shahanshah Shapur II (309–379) started viewing the Christian countries of the South Caucasus as ideological allies of Rome. In the 330s, the Sassanids initiated a persecution of Christian priests, implementing the death penalty for those practicing Christianity and refusing to embrace Zoroastrianism. The Persians supported the population of the "great fortress city of Albania", Tsri, in their rebellion against the Albanian king; they seized the city, executed Christian priests, and orchestrated the assassination of the Albanian enlightener Grigoris, who was engaged in missionary work among the Maskut people [Гаджиев, 2022, с.676]. However, starting from the mid-4th century, Shapur II, recognizing the strategic importance of the South Caucasus, reversed his stance and adopted a policy of religious tolerance in the region, fearing the potential weakening of the Sassanid position.

In the 440s, numerous Albanian nobles, including the rulers of Albania such as King Vache II (mid-5th century – 462), the son of a Sassanid princess and the daughter of Shahanshah Yazdegerd II (439–457), and his future successor Vachagan III (487–510), embraced Zoroastrianism. The Albanian historian describes these events as follows: "During the reign of the haughty Yazkert [referring to Yazdegerd II. – *R.M.*], the devil instigated and fueled in him the idea of eradicating the Christian religion. The strictest command came to Aluank: renounce the Christian faith and obey the teachings of the magi - fire worship... The Persian army... invaded our country. Along with them came... numerous cavalry. Furthermore, they brought along three hundred instructors [magi. – *R.M.*] and divided the country... Under the king's [shahanshah. – *R.M.*]

command, they coerced everyone, proclaiming, "If you willingly accept our faith, you will be rewarded and honored by him [shahanshah. – *R.M.*], and you will be exempt from royal taxes, and if you do not do so willingly, we have been commanded to build shrines in villages and settlements, to kindle the fire-vram ["Bahram's fire", in Middle Persian *ātaxš Wahrām*. – *R.M.*] within them, and to appoint magi and mobads (masters of magi) as the guardians of faith in your land. Those who resist will be executed, and their wives and children will be expelled [from the country. – *R.M.*]" (Каланкатуйкский, II, II).

As further evidence, it should be noted that the burial monuments of Albania from the 4th to 5th centuries, particularly in its peripheral territories, primarily exhibit pagan burial customs, and some types of burials (such as jar burials) can be seen as variations of the Zoroastrian burial tradition [Халилов, 2003, c.358-359; Xəlilov, 2009]. By the way, Christian burials of the mentioned period in Albania, such as mud-brick tombs and catacombs in Mingachevir [Асланов, 1963, c.18; Vahidov, 1965, s.117-118], show notable deviations from the dogmatic rituals [Халилов, 2003, c.359].

The Albanian historian records that around 447 AD, a Sassanid army led by Mirsebukht, the Marzban of Chor, returned from the "land of the Huns" to Albania with the purpose of "destroying the churches of Albania". According to the chronicle of the city of Karka de Bet Selokh (5th–6th centuries), the forces of Yazdegerd II in the Chol region subdued local minor kings, expelled Christians, and built the city of Shahristan-e Yazdegerd, which is reliably identified with the large settlement of Torpakh-kala, located 25 km south of Derbent, where, apparently, was also the residence of the marzban [Гаджиев, 2022, c. 681-682].

The excessive taxation, which greatly worsened the situation of the masses, and the large-scale crackdown on Christians became the main reasons (alongside political factors) for the anti-Iranian uprising of 450–451 in the South Caucasus countries led by Vardan Mamikonian [Тревер, 1959, c.201-202]. During the uprising, fire temples were destroyed or converted into churches, their attendants were subjected to torture and execution, and the Zoroastrian priests [magi. – *R.M.*] who arrived in Albania were "put to the sword, with their corpses left exposed for the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth to consume" (Каланкатуйский, II, II).

According to the Albanian historian, the coerced conversion of the Albanian king Vache II to the "faith of the magi" by Yazdegerd, and the king's refusal to renounce his beliefs, sparked another anti-Iranian uprising that erupted after the death of the shahanshah [Каланкатуйский, I, X]. However, according to K.V.Trever, "there is hardly any doubt that the main causes could have been political" [Тревер, 1959, c.214], rather than religious: Vache capitalized on the political turmoil in Iran following the death of his uncle, Shahanshah Yazdegerd II, and the ensuing power struggle between Yazdegerd's sons, his cousins Hormizd (457–459) and Peroz (459–484). In the course of this struggle, King Vache chose to abdicate around 462 AD, against Peroz's plea for him to remain on the throne [Каланкатуйский, I, X].

The Albanian historian also records additional endeavors to enforce Zoroastrianism during the Marzban era in Albania (462–484) under Shahanshah Peroz, who "sought to annihilate all the kingdoms of the world, demolish churches, eradicate the Christian faith, and establish the fervent worship of devas throughout his realm. And thus, by his wicked hand, much innocent blood of the blessed and holy martyrs of Christ was shed. An immeasurable multitude of innocent individuals were slain by the sword of the villain. Even women with children, in tears and lamentations, were taken captive to foreign lands into bitter slavery. He destroyed [the souls of. – *R.M.*] many nakharars (nobles) of Armenia, Iberia, and Albania, converting them to the faith of the magi who worshipped devas, some through force and others by bestowing gifts and great princely power. In many places, he [Peroz. – *R.M.*] built shrines and intensified the worship of evil gods [by. – *R.M.*] fire... Vachagan [the future Albanian king Vachagan III (487–510), who was the brother of Vache II and the son of Yazdegerd II. – *R.M.*] was forced to adopt the religion of the magi against his will (Каланкатуйкский, I, XVI).

In 482, Vakhtang Gorgasali, the king of Kartli, initiated military actions against the Sassanids. The uprising was supported by Albania and Armenia. The confrontation continued until 485, when the successor of Peroz, Shahanshah Balash (484–488), made significant concessions. He entered into a treaty with the

nobility of the South Caucasus, according to which the rights and privileges of the local nobility and Christian clergy were preserved inviolate. Mutual commitments were made not to forcibly convert Christians to Mazdeism and Zoroastrians to the Christian faith [Гаджиев, 2022, с.684]. The Albanian historian on this occasion writes: "Divine providence inspired the king [of Persia], and the king of Persia Valarshak [Valash, or Balash. – *R.M.*] commanded that everyone should firmly adhere to their own faith, by their own free will, and that no one should be forcibly converted to the faith of the magi. Upon hearing this, the pious and God-loving king Vachagan [King Vachagan III of Albania. – *R.M.*] rushed with great joy and jubilation to the church of God" (Каланкатуйкский, I, XVII). It can be assumed that from that time onward, the intense religious confrontation between Zoroastrianism and Christianity in the Sassanid state came to a virtual halt [Гаджиев, 2022, с.684].

This marked the beginning of a new phase of Christianization in Albania. "The pious king Vachagan turned away from sinful deeds and the path of evil, dedicating himself to numerous acts of goodness... Through his exhortations and teachings, he persuaded the nakharars of his country to embrace the true Christ, completely cleansing their minds and souls from the abhorrent faith of the magi, and their bodies from immoral debauchery. ... And he urged those who, after experiencing the grace of the font of salvation, had turned to fire worship, to embrace repentance. He also commanded that those who had followed the path of destruction from a young age be enlightened in the font of salvation" (Каланкатуйкский, I, XVII).

This situation, which contributed to the spread of Christianity in the Caucasus, was made possible not only by the intricate political circumstances in Iran and the resistance against forced conversion to Zoroastrianism but also by the adoption of the Nestorian creed – a creed that had been condemned in the Byzantine Empire – by the Syrian Church in Iran in 484, while the Christian churches of the South Caucasus, following a moderate Monophysite doctrine, positioned themselves in opposition to the Byzantine Chalcedonian (Dyophysite) Church. The official split, however, occurred a little later, at the Council of Dvin (506), where the Armenian, Albanian, and Georgian churches rejected the decisions of the Fourth Ecumenical (Chalcedonian) Council of 451 [Гаджиев, 2022, с.684-685].

Vachagan III the Pious pursued an active policy of spreading Christianity and eradicating paganism and Zoroastrianism. The Albanian historian reports: "[Vachagan] implemented strict penalties and fines against those who built temples, engaged in sorcery, worshipped some evil idols, or disrupted the order of Christianity. And if sorcerers, enchanters, and priests... continued to engage in their vile practices, they were subjected to horrifying tortures, beaten with rods, tied up, brought before the royal court, and the king punished them severely. Thus, he issued orders to maim or expel many sorcerers, enchanters, and priests [from the country], or to enslave them, while also providing instruction and guiding many others onto the path of knowing God through the sacrament of Christian baptism" (Каланкатуйский, I, XVII).

The Council of Aluen, convened by Vachagan III in 488, marked a pivotal event in the religious and political landscape of Albania. The Council was organized in response to religious and social conflicts between the clergy and laypeople, as well as within the clergy itself, and between the nobility and the common people. The Council of Aluen adopted state decrees that were sealed with the ring seals of the king and the Albanian ecclesiastical and secular nobility. This document, preserved as the sole legal record in the "History of the Albanians", stands as the primary monument of ecclesiastical law in Albania (Каланкатуйский, I, XXVI).

Several canons of the Aluen Council (X–XIII) were directed against pagan and Zoroastrian beliefs, which were apparently widely prevalent among the population. For instance, Canon X states: "No one shall dare to marry a relative within the third degree of kinship or the wife of a brother". This canon, which allowed marriage only within the fourth degree of kinship, prohibited consanguineous marriages. It serves as evidence of the existence of such marriage practices in Albania, as prescribed by Zoroastrianism. In particular, the Albanian king Vache II, who was the nephew of Shahanshah Yazdegerd (being the son of his sister) and the cousin of Peroz, was married to Peroz's niece, which means she was his first cousin and possibly even his sister (Каланкатуйский, I, X).

Canon XI of the Aluen Council contains provisions regarding family and marriage law, as well as criminal and judicial law: "Those who abandon their wives without cause and take [another] wife without nuptials, or those who turn to sorcerers [i.e., Zoroastrian magi. – *R.M.*], as well as murderers and lawbreakers, should be tied up and brought to the royal court to be sentenced to death by torture". This law, which equated unjustified divorce, unlawful marriage, and consulting magi with the gravity of taking someone's life, aimed to introduce and reinforce Christian legal norms and moral principles.

According to these canons, adherence to paganism and Zoroastrianism was punishable by death and enslavement. Thus, among the penalties for this transgression, we observe the same punishments prescribed by the decrees of Shapur II and Yazdegerd II during the imposition of Zoroastrianism in the South Caucasus countries. It appears that the aforementioned severe and proportionate punishments for religious crimes were not consistently enforced and only gained legal validity during periods of escalated Albanian-Sassanid and Christian-Zoroastrian relations, as observed at the beginning of Vachagan III's reign [Гаджиев, 2022, с.687].

The Albanian historian reports on Vachagan's struggle against the pagans: "Vachagan commanded the gathering of children of sorcerers, enchanters, priests, finger-cutters, poisoners, and sending them to schools to be taught the divine faith... [Then] he undertook to seek out, expose, and investigate the activities of the evil sect of finger-cutters and poisoners, as these were causing harm to people... For as Vachagan had heard, this wickedness had existed in Aluank since ancient times. Previous kings of Aluank either failed to capture them or simply ignored their presence. And though the accursed and wicked Persian marzbans often captured them, they were blinded by bribes and set them free... There were also other rituals associated with devil worship... The king would capture them and [subject them to] gruesome tortures before exterminating them within his country. He also eradicated other individuals engaged in harmful superstitions and banditry in Aluank" (Каланкатуйский, I, XVIII).

According to F.Mammadova, "During the period up to the 7th century, Christianity held dominant positions among religious systems, but it was not universally embraced, and polytheism [including Zoroastrianism. – *R.M.*] had not been completely eradicated" [Мамедова, 2005, с.159]. Thus, it can be concluded that during the mentioned period, the population of Albania was both ethnically diverse and multi-confessional.

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ACTIVITY OF THE FIRST CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES IN CAUCASIAN ALBANIA

Abstract. The presented study, based on antique sources, historical-toponymic materials of the 19th–20th centuries, and reports of archaeological-ethnographic expeditions, is dedicated to one of the main points of Azerbaijan's Christian past – the activities of the first Christian missionaries in Caucasian Albania. The study explores the historical-ethnographical aspects of the route map of missionaries from Syria and Jerusalem to Albania, myths and legends related to apostles Bartholomew, Thaddeus, especially to Elishe, who founded the first church in Albania and his disciples, as well as the Syrian missionary George, who was sanctified under the name of Prophet Jarjis among the people. The traces preserved in historical memory of legends circulating among the local population about the first Christian missionaries have been studies. The study also touchs upon the narratives and beliefs related to temples such as Komrad, Kala Gerges, and Chotari associated with the first Christian missionaries and their successors, as well as monasteries like Urekvank/Urekan, Khudavank, Amaras, and Saint Elishe.

Keywords: Albania, apostles, missionary work, Christianity, shrine

Azerbaijan is among the countries where the first Christian communities emerged. The existence of Caucasian Albania, a state that existed on these lands (from the early 4th to the early 8th centuries AD), at the crossroads of significant trade routes between East and West, turned these territories into a center of political-ideological processes from ancient times. Albania's multiethnic and multiconfessional environment, as well as its economic, political, and cultural relations with the Near East, provided fertile ground for the Christian mission. In this regard, even though the first Christian missionaries who traveled a long distance from Jerusalem and Syria to the lands of Caucasian Albania encountered the rigid pagan traditions of the local tribes in the Caucasus and they were often killed here, the pagan beliefs mixed with Zoroastrianism could not pose a serious obstacle to the new religion.

Christianity penetrated these lands as early as during the time of Jesus Christ and his apostles. It is possible to trace the formation process of the early apostolic era of Christianity in Caucasian Albania. The Syrians, traveling through caravan routes from Mesopotamia and Iran to the Caucasian countries such as Georgia and Albania, not only engaged in trade in these lands but also spread the new ideology of Christian teachings. Even though the local population's commitment to pagan cults in Albania was incredibly strong, the first Christian missionaries managed to spread Christianity here despite severe persecutions, heavy trials, and even at the cost of their lives. This is confirmed both by sources and historical-ethnographic data [Каганкатваци, 1861, I, 4-6; Мхитар Гош, 1960, с.8; Мамедова, 1986, с.217].

Especially, M.Kaghankatvatsi's work "The History of Albanians" is an invaluable source for studying Christianity and the activities of the first Christian missionaries in Caucasian Albania. Information preserved

in Kaghankatvatsi's work allows for tracing the activities of missionaries coming from Syria in Albania [Каганкатваци, 1861, I, 14; II, 29-30].

The spread of Christianity in the territory of Caucasian Albania is associated with the names of the apostles Bartholomew, Thaddeus, especially Elishe, the disciple of Thaddeus. The first Christian preacher who came to the territory of Albania, Bartholomew, was one of the twelve apostles recognized as the fourth after Andrew, Peter, and Philip. According to the legend, Bartholomew, who preached Christianity in the cities of Asia Minor, later continued his missionary activities in Iran and India. One of the main reasons for the establishment of close religious and trade relations between Albania and India since ancient times was related to the spread of the Zoroastrian religion in these countries. Many Zoroastrian temples were located in Caucasian Albania. These temples were destinations for caravan routes coming from India and Iran. It seems that Bartholomew came to ancient Albania via these caravan routes.

The missionary activity of the Apostle Bartholomew was closely associated with the Syunik province of Albania. Sources inform that Bartholomew began his activities in the Ordubad village of the Syunik province after crossing the Aras River from the territory of Atropatene [Каганкатваци, 1861, I, 4, Мамедова,1986, c.223]. It is known from research that the Apostle Bartholomew was crucified upside down in 71 AD in the religious center Arta temple, in the city of Albane or Albanopolis, where strong fire-worship traditions were present on the western coast of the Caspian Sea, and where pagan priests resided [Никоноров, 2005, c.50; Мамедова, 2005, c.535]. The city of Albane is identified with present-day Baku, and church sources indicate that the place where the Apostle Bartholomew was martyred is located in the territory of the Old City (Inner City), at the foot of the Maiden Tower [Никоноров, 2005, c.50]. During archaeological excavations around the Maiden Tower, remnants of an ancient temple were discovered [Ахундов, 1986, c.72]. Later, an Albanian church was built at the site where Bartholomew was crucified [ibid.].

The second apostolic source of Christianity in Albania was Saint Elishe, a disciple of the Apostle Thaddeus. Since Thaddeus was killed on the way from Jerusalem, his disciple Elishe had to continue his mission of spreading Christianity in Albania. In Christian literature, especially in the Albanian Christian tradition, Elishe is recognized not only as a disciple of Thaddeus but also as a saint. It has been determined that Elishe's mission to spread Christianity in Albania took place approximately in 51–62 AD [Мамедова, 2005, c.532]. According to the sources, Elishe, who laid the foundation of the first church in the Albanian lands, received a blessing for this from James, the brother of Jesus. Since Elishe practically laid the foundation of the first Albanian church on the territory of Albania, he has been one of the saints most revered by the Albanians. The Albanian church has always considered Saint Elishe its apostle and patron [Каганкатваци, 1861, I, 6, 28; II, 30, 42, 48; III, 8, 23]. Based on the information related to Elishe in Kaghankatvatsi's work, it can be said that Saint Elishe was not only a disciple of the Apostle Thaddeus but also one of the witnesses of the life and religious mission of Jesus Christ [Каганкатваци,1861, II, 48].

The missionary path of Elishe from Jerusalem to Albania, particularly the toponyms mentioned along his route and their localization, is one of the most intriguing and debated issues in the study of Eastern Christianity's history. It should be noted that toponyms such as the *Chola – the country of Maskuts, Uti, Sogarn, Gis, Zargun, and Homenk* in the Albanian lands, where Elishe started his Christian mission, have found some explanation and confirmation in scientific literature [Никоноров, 2005; Ибрагимов, 1999, s.174; Мамедова, 2005, c.251], but the location of the final resting place and site of martyrdom of Saint Elishe, Zargun valley and Homenk, still remains uncertain.

According to an Albanian source, Elishe, after establishing a church in Gis, on his return crossed the *Zargun* valley and went to the place where the ignorant pagans' sacred shrines were and was martyred there. The killers threw the holy body into a pit at a place called *Gomenk/Homenk* [Каганкатваци, 1861, I, VI]. A comparison of sources, toponymic and archaeological-ethnographic materials strengthens the probability that the Zargun valley, where the pagan shrine mentioned by the Albanian author was located, is near the village of Zaragan in the Gabala district. It should be noted that the local population calls the Zaragan village as Zargan/Zargun, as in the sources. Based on the results of archaeological-ethnographic research

conducted in the Gabala region in the 1960s, it is possible to say that the *Zargun valley* [Каганкатваци, 1861, I, VI], *where the pagan shrine* mentioned by the Albanian author was located, is in the territory of the Zaragan village in Gabala.

The analysis of the region's toponymy also supports the idea that this area was an ancient shrine of pagans. The etymology of the former name of the Gabala district, Kutkashen, is explained with ancient Turkic languages. The word *Kut* signifies spirit or spiritual force and destiny in ancient Turkic beliefs [Çeribaş, 2021, s.1188; Kirişçioğlu, 2007, s.234-238]. *Kutku/utku* is known as the God of Sacrifice in Turkic mythology [Karakurt, 2011, s.221]. In Azerbaijani dialects, "Shen/shenlik" is used to mean a residence or a prosperous living place. Therefore, the toponym Kutkashen can be interpreted as the residence of spirits or the God of Sacrifice-Kutka. The results of archaeological excavations confirm this. During the archaeological excavations in the 1960s in Gabala (formerly Kutkashen), traces of ash, likely remains from fire-worship ceremonies, were found [Qazıyev, Babayev, 1967, s.39]. According to the ethnographic survey conducted in the region at the time, the local population also states that there was a *pagan temple* in this area in the past [Qazıyev, 1962, s.46]. All these arguments - archaeological-ethnographic and toponymic materials, when compared, suggest that the Zargun valley, the final stop on Elishe's missionary path in Albania and where the pagan shrine was located, is in the Zaragan village of Gabala district.

As for locating the place where Elishe was killed - Gomenk/Homenk - based on the results of our scientific expedition conducted in Gabala district in 2017–2019, it is possible to say that this area is the Bum village near Zaragan village [Paşayeva, 2019]. Ethnographic field research reveals that there is a water shrine, named by the local population as Yelsuy Baba, in the ancient cemetery in the forested area at the entrance of Bum village. This ancient shrine in Bum village has been a sanctified place in the Gabala region for centuries. Sources from the early 19th-20th centuries indicate that people, believing that Saint Elishe was martyred near Bum village, have been visiting this village at least once a year from the surrounding villages, especially from Nij village where the Udis live compactly, since the 19th century to commemorate Elishe [Яновский, 1848, с.165; Арутинов, 1905, с.73-96]. It is also known from the reports of a scientific expedition conducted in this region in 1963 that there was a stone slab at the shrine with the words: "This is the monument of the powerful, saint Elishe" carved on it [Qazıyev, Hesabat, 1963, s.11]. Until the early 20th century, there was a large influx of visitors to this place [Qazıyev, 1962, s.46].

The ethnographic field research we conducted in the village of Bum in 2017-2019 confirmed that this ancient Albanian shrine associated with Elishe has remained the main shrine of the village to this day [Paşayeva, 2019]. The villagers remember this shrine as being associated with Saint Elishe. The inhabitants of the village of Bum sanctify the ancient cemetery area located in the lower part of the village, especially the valley that divides it, and believe that a saint, whom they call "Elishe Baba", was killed here. This place of shrine is currently considered the most sacred and main shrine of the village and is known among the people as '*Yelsuy* (Elishe) Baba'. In Azerbaijan, it is customary to add the words "ata" (father) or **"baba"** (grandfather) to the name of the saint who gave his name to the shrine. The naming of this shrine as Yelsuy Baba indicates that Elishe is accepted as a saint by the local population. The nearby healing spring is considered sacred. People come here to find healing. According to belief, only drinking from the water coming from the spring is allowed, even washing hands and face is prohibited because it is considered disrespectful to this sacred place. Based on expedition materials, the remains of a sacrificial site and underground construction have also been discovered in the area. According to the information recorded in the 1960s, visitors used to block the mouth of the hole leading to the underground structure with a headscarf, and if the air inside threw the headscarf out, they believed their wishes would come true [Qazıyev, 1962, s.46].

Sources from the beginning of the 19th–20th centuries, as well as historical-ethnographic research, make it clear that in the 19th century, the Nukha district, covering the north-western part of Azerbaijan, was rich in monuments and narratives associated with Elishe. Shrines such as Kala Gerges (Oghuz), Chotari (Gabala district, Nij village), Komrad (Gabala district, Dizagli village), Yelsu Shrine (Gabala district, Bum village), and Kish (Sheki district, Kish village) that bear traces of ancient Albanian beliefs are directly related

to Elishe's missionary activity in Albania. This was associated with Elishe's spread of Christianity in these lands. In the region, beliefs associated with the Elishe myth still vividly persist in the memory of the people. Ancient Albanian temples such as *Kala Gerges* (Oghuz), *Kala Tsisik, Komrat* (Gabala district, Dizagli village), *Chotari* (Gabala, Nij) are the main places of worship on religious holidays for both the Muslim populations and the Udins, the Christian population of the region.

St.Elishe, who actually laid the foundation for the first Albanian church in the territories of Albania, was among the most venerated saints in Albania. In the Christian world, Elishe is remembered and sanctified only in relation to Albania. Emphasizing the special influence of Elishe among Albanians, the Albanian author wrote that the local population always considered him their apostle and patron [Каганкатваци, 1861, I, 6, 11, 17, 32; II, 7]. The first Christian church in Kish, founded by Elishe in Albania, is one of the oldest apostolic churches not only in the Caucasus, but also in the entire Christian world. R.Afandiyev, in the early 19th-20th centuries, also emphasized that this church was "*from the time of the apostles*" [Əfəndiyev, 1928, s.3]. The tradition of making a "bloodless sacrifice", i.e. votive offering, which was noted by an Albanian author in the 7th century [Каганкатваци, 1861, I, 6], still remains in the Kish temple.

In Oghuz, the Albanian temple, which is referred to as Gala Shrine by the Muslim population and Kala Gerges (The Great Church) by the Udis, is also one of the shrines bearing the name of St. Elishe. According to Rashid bey Afandiyev, this church was built on the tomb of Elishe. After his death, the local population buried Elishe and his disciples here [Эфендиев, 1903, s.4]. Note that the shrine, which the Udis call Kala Gerges (The Great Church), is known as *Gala Shrine* among Azerbaijanis, and holds the same influence among both Muslims and Christians in the region.

The 19th-century author of Udi origin, Bejanov, wrote that Udis performed rituals and made sacrifices in this church almost on all holidays [Бежанов, 1892, c.213-262]. The church attracts the largest number of visitors during the Udis' Easter celebrations. Both Christian and Muslim populations perform various religious rites and make sacrifices at each of these temples. Such a sacrificial place still exists today in the yard of the Chotari church. Local residents continue to make sacrifices on this stone, whether for religious holidays or ceremonies related to their daily life.

In Albanian Christianity, along with the myth of Apostle Elishe, there were also narratives circulating among the local population related to the fate of Elishe's disciples. Authors such as Barkhudaryan, A.A.Arutinov, A.O.Yanovski, in the late 19th to early 20th centuries, recorded legends circulating among the local population regarding the burial places of St. Elishe's disciples [Бархударян, 1893, c.217-218, 281; Арутинов, 1905, c.5; Яновский, 1848, c.165].

There are narratives regarding one of St. Elishe's disciples being killed and buried in an area called *Kala Sisik* (Big Flower), located in the highland region southeast of Vartashen (modern Oghuz), and that a church was built at the place of his burial in Nij [Яновский, 1848, c.165], there are also narratives about the third disciple of the apostle being buried in Komrad [Бархударян, 1893, c.217; Эфендиев, 1903, c.8-9]. Mount Komrad, where one of Elishe's disciples is presumed to have been buried, is one of the most famous shrines in the Gabala district. Komrad is a shrine for all Azerbaijanis, regardless of their faiths. Ancient Albanian gravestones, depicting the sun, are preserved around Mount Komrad. This ancient Albanian shrine is one of the most visited places of worship by the Udis. The Udis perform rituals and make sacrifices here on all religious holidays.

In the notes of the 19th century author A.Yanovsky, there are rumors that one of Elisey's students was killed in Nij and a church was built there [Яновский, 1848, c.165]. At the beginning of the 20th century, Arutinov also wrote that the students of Yelysei were killed in Nij [Арутинов, 1905, c.73-96]. It should be noted that the Udis, the only Albanian tribe living compactly in the village of Nic, who have preserved Christianity to this day, still remember the memory of St. Eliseus and the legends about the construction of an ancient Albanian temple at the place where his students were killed. The church, which is now known as Chotari Church, was built on the land once owned by the Chotari family, so it was gradually renamed as Chotari Church.

It should be noted that the sanctification of Elishe has not been recorded in any other Christian community. Elishe's name is mentioned in the sources only in connection with events in Albania. Since Elishe laid the foundation of the first church in Albania, he became one of the most venerated saints among the Albanians. Therefore, a large part of the Albanian Christian temples in Azerbaijan is associated with Elishe's name. Many churches and monasteries were erected in honor of St. Elishe not only in Sheki, Gabala, and Oghuz districts of Azerbaijan but also in Karabakh and Zangazur, in districts such as Khojavand, Tartar, and Kalbajar. Several churches and monasteries, such as Elishe Monastery (Tartar district), the Aghoghlan Monastery (Lachin district), the Khudavank Monastery (Kalbajar district), and the Amaras Monastery (Khojavand district), which are considered jewels of Albanian architecture, are associated with the names of apostles and their successors. Sources mention various narratives related to the Elishe myth in Albanian sacred places like St. Elishe Monastery (Tartar district, Talish village), Urekvank/Urekan Monastery, St. Elishe Monastery (Khojavand district, Chartar village). Kaghankatvatsi wrote: "Although the relics and skull of St. Elishe, who established Christianity in Albania and was martyred in the Zargun valley, were initially brought to a place called Urekan [Urekvank. –*P.M.*], later, the relics were moved to the sacred Nersmehr/Jirvishdik church [St. Elishe Monastery. –*P.M.*]" [Kalankatuklu, 1861, I, 7]. Therefore, the monastery initially named Ners Mihra/Jirvishdik started to be called St. Elishe Monastery later. Based on this information, Barkhudaryan, an author of the 19th century, wrote that the skull of Apostle Elishe was brought to the Urekvank Monastery and was buried there during the reign of Vachagan III [Бархударян, 1895].

The Saint Elishe Monastery located in the territory of Chartar village, Khojavand district, was also built in honor of Saint Elishe, the first Catholicos of Albania. From an inscription dated to 1124 discovered on the church grounds, it is known that it was one of the most important shrines of the province [Бархударян, 1895, s.107]. As with all Albanian temples, both Christian and Muslim locals would visit this place of worship. According to an ancient legend, during the time Apostle Elishe was preaching Christianity in Albania, another disciple of Apostle Thaddeus, Dadi, whose tomb the Dadivank/Khudavank Monastery was built upon, was preaching Christianity in these lands [Никоноров, 2005, с.50; Православная Энциклопедия, 2001, с.458]. The Khudavank Monastery complex, one of the first Christian temples in the South Caucasus, is one of the earliest Albanian Christian religious monuments attributed to the time of the Apostles. It is noted in sources that it was founded by Dadi, a disciple of Thaddeus, who was one of the apostles of Jesus Christ [Бархударян, 1895, II, с.215].

The belief is that in the Amaras temple, located in Jutju village of Khojavand district, lies the gravestone of Gregory, who was one of the preachers of Christianity in Albania in the 4th century. The 19th-century author Barkhudaryan wrote that there was an ancient burial site beneath the altar in the temple. This was the gravestone of Gregory the Illuminator, who was the semi-legendary patriarch, Catholicos of Caucasian Albania. This place, where the gravestone of Gregory was believed to be, was considered a primary and ancient shrine among the people. Both Christian and Muslim locals visited the shrine. Even Azerbaijanis from the most remote villages came here [Бархударян, 1895, с.229]. The large stone slab under the altar of the temple was a pilgrimage site [Ямпольский, 1962, с.228]. The Amaras temple was visited by both Christians and Muslims who believed that patients with fever and infertile women would find a cure [Ямпольскии, 1962, с.35]. Roosters were sacrificed inside and at the entrance of the temple. There were many candle residues and feathers of slaughtered roosters on the gravestone inside the temple [Ямпольский, 1962, с.228]. There was a belief among the local population of Karabakh that people with illnesses who took soil from the ground where the bodies of saints were buried would find healing. The fertility of Amaras soil has often been associated with Gregory being buried here [Göyüşov, 1975, с.23].

Another shrine in Azerbaijan that has existed since the spread of Christianity in Caucasian Albania and is still visited by Azerbaijanis today is the Shrine of the Prophet Jarjis in the Beylagan district. This shrine, which is sanctified in Azerbaijan with the name of Prophet Jarjis, is associated with George, a missionary who spread Christianity in Albania in the early 3rd and 4th centuries. This shrine in Beylagan has a tomb believed to belong to Syrian missionary Saint George. It is narrated that he was killed by Zoroastrian priests for his attempts to

spread Christianity in Beylagan, known as the Paytakaran province of Albania, after coming to Albania from Syria for missionary activity. Known in the Christian world as Saint George/Georgius, this Syrian missionary's name changed due to the influence of the Arabic language and reached us in the form of Jarjis. This Syrian missionary, whose real name is Jarjis ibn Anak, has many Syrian churches named after him in his birthplace of Mosul, as well as in Athens, Greece, and regions of Turkey such as Urfa, Mardin, and Diyarbakir.

According to a legend widely circulated among the people regarding the Shrine of the Prophet Jarjis, which has existed since the spread of Christianity in Caucasian Albania and is still visited by Azerbaijanis today, the arrows shot at Saint George did not harm him, instead, he fell into a well. To this day, hundreds of Muslim visitors come to this shrine every day, where it is believed the tomb of Prophet Jarjis is located. They sacrifice at this temple in order for their wishes to be fulfilled. This shrine is also known as the "Zanjirli Pir" (Shrine with Chain) among the people. People throw a scarf on a loop at the end of a chain hanging from the middle of the dome in the shrine. According to belief, if the scarf is stuck on the chain, their wishes will come true.

The preservation of the traces of the activities of first Christian missionaries in Albania in the people's memory through Albanian temples and shrines, the fact that all the Azerbaijani people visit the ancient Albanian temples regardless of their religious affiliation, and the sanctification of these shrines by both Christian and Muslim populations to the same extent are affirmations that the Azerbaijani people have not forgotten their Albanian roots and are the inheritors of their ethnogenetic heritage.

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SITUATION OF THE ALBANIAN CHURCH IN TIMES OF FOREIGN ENCROACHMENT

Abstract. The article examines the issue of the state of the Albanian Church during periods of foreign influence based on primary sources and specialized scholarly literature. The author has employed interdisciplinary research methods. During the Persian period, the spread of Christianity in Albania began to decline. Arab domination during the 8th to 10th centuries subjected the Albanian population to cultural and ideological influences, including Islamization, Gregorianization, and Georgianization. In the Qizilbash state during the 15th to 17th centuries, the Etchmiadzin Catholicosate began its activities in the canonical territory of the Albanian Church in Chukhursaad and Kapanat. The Russian conquest facilitated the mass resettlement of Armenians onto the canonical territory of the Albanian Church, i.e., to the Chukhursaad and Karabakh regions, Kapanat, and partially to the Shirvan region, the Armenization of Albanian Monophysites, and the complete liquidation of the Albanian Autocephalous Church.

Keywords: Caucasian Albania; Albanian Church; Albanians-Monophysites; Armenization; Gregorianization

Introduction. Faith, as a component of the ethnic dominance of each ethnic group, holds significant practical value and meaning. In the lives of people, religions and beliefs occupy a substantial place. Religious beliefs serve as a foundational element of spirituality and permeate many other spheres of ethnic groups' and individuals' lives.

The spread of Christianity in the South Caucasus, including Albania / Arran, is associated in local tradition with the preaching of the Saint Elisæus, Apostle Bartholomew, and Apostle Thaddeus. The Albanian Church is an apostolic church, being the oldest in the Caucasus and one of the earliest in the entire Christian world. Christianity was proclaimed a state religion in Armenia and the Caucasian countries of Georgia and Albania in the early 4th century. In the same century, the Albanian king Urnayr was baptized along with his courtiers. Christianity was proclaimed as the state religion in Caucasian Albania, but it did not immediately gain widespread acceptance. It encountered strong resistance from followers of the traditional local cults of Zoroastrianism. According to the records of the First Council of Dvin from 506 AD, the Albanian language was the official language of the Church [Книга посланий, 1901, с.51].

The Albanian Apostolic Autocephalous Church in the 5th to 8th centuries had over 12 bishoprics / eparchies. The ecclesiastical-administrative division of the Albanian Church closely corresponded to the historical borders of the Albanian state, and the boundaries of the eparchies were consistent with the political-administrative division of the state into regions, provinces (nahangs) and districts (gavars). As an autocephalous church, the Church of Albania had eparchies in all regions and almost all provinces of the country. Thus, the canonical boundaries of the Albanian Church encompassed Siunia, Tashir-Lori, and Cambysene. All these lands were under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Albanian Catholicos. Christianity held dominant positions among the religious systems till the 7th century included, but polytheism was not entirely eradicated.

The spread of Zoroastrianism and the migration of Iranian tribes to Albania.

Under the Sassanids, by the 3rd century, "Young Avestan" Zoroastrianism became the official state religion, forcibly imposed on the conquered territories [Касумова, 1983, с.102]. The initial spread of Zoroastrianism in Albania is linked to the reign of the Sassanid Shahanshah Shapur I (243–273). In the triumphant inscription of Shapur I on the "Ka'ba-ye Zartosht" (the "Kaaba of Zoroaster") at Naqsh-e Rostam (composed around 262 AD) [Касумова, 1994, с.3], Albania and the Albanian Gates (Derbent Pass) are mentioned among the countries that were part of Sassanid Iran. In this inscription, it is reported that Shapur I instructed the herbad (priest) Kartir to organize fire temples and priestly communities in Iran and the conquered regions and countries. One of the inscriptions discovered in Sar Mashhad (dating back to around 290–293 [Касумова, 1994, с.3]) states that Kartir, who had become the magupat (chief priest) of the Ahura temple, "...established sacred fires everywhere – in Armenia, Georgia, and Albania – and appointed priests to serve them" [Меликов, 2017, с.14-15].

In the 440s, numerous Albanian nobles, including the rulers of Albania such as King Vache II (mid-5th century – 462), the son of a Sassanid princess and the daughter of Shahanshah Yazdegerd II, and his future successor Vachagan III (487–510), embraced Zoroastrianism. Movses Kaghankatvatsi, in his work "History of the Albanians", describes these events as follows: "During the reign of the haughty Yazkert [referring to Yazdegerd II (439–457). – *R.S.*], the devil instigated and fueled in him the idea of eradicating the Christian religion. The strictest command came to Albania: renounce the Christian faith and obey the teachings of the magi – fire worship..." [Каланкатуйский, II, II]. The information provided by the Albanian historian regarding the sending of magi to the countries of the South Caucasus is corroborated by the early medieval Armenian author Yeghishe [Егише, 1853, II].

In 461, the Sassanid Shahanshah Peroz (459–484) abolished the royal power in Albania and made it a province under his rule, governed by an appointed Marzban. The Albanian historian also reports subsequent attempts to impose Zoroastrianism in Albania: "...King Peroz of Persia [Sassanid Shahanshah Peroz-Firuz (459–484). – *R.S.*] ...sought to annihilate all the kingdoms of the world, demolish churches, eradicate the Christian faith, and establish the fervent worship of devas throughout his realm...He destroyed [the souls of. – *R.S.*] many nakharars (nobles) of Armenia, Iberia, and Albania, converting them to the faith of the magi who worshipped daevas, some through force and others by bestowing gifts and great princely power. In many places, he built shrines and intensified the worship of evil gods [by. – *R.S.*] fire. The proliferation of numerous heresies associated with the malevolent devil tormented the unfortunate people of Albania. Accusing them of planning to revolt, this reprehensible [Peroz. – *R.S.*] subjected them to chains and prisons, coercing them into converting against their will to the religion of the magi. Alongside them, even Vachagan [the future Albanian king Vachagan III the Pious (487–510). – *R.S.*] was forced to adopt the religion of the magi against his will..." [Каланкатуйский, 1861, I, XVII].

It is known that the Sassanid shahanshahs embarked on extensive construction in coastal Albania to fortify the empire's northern borders against invasions by nomadic tribes. In response to frequent raids by Turkic steppeans, starting with the Huns, followed by the Bulgars, and later the Sabirs, the construction of fortifications in Derbent was initiated as early as Yazdegerd II's reign [Касумова, 1994, с.25]. The shahanshah Kavad I (488–531) and his son Khosrow Anushirvan (531–579) constructed numerous fortifications at the exits of the gorges formed by the Caucasus Mountains along the Caspian coast, and around 570 AD, they completed the construction of the Derbent Gates [Касумова, 1994, с.27]. In order to reinforce the fortifications, the Iranian-speaking population from Adurbadagan and neighboring regions of Iran was resettled in the Albanian provinces of Bazkan, Khursan, Shirvan, Chola and Derbent.

Although Movses Kaghankatvatsi writes that Christianity was dominant in Albania, the spread of Zoroastrianism gained significant momentum in the southern and eastern provinces of Albania, including Nakhchivan and other provinces of Siunia. Thus, when Vachagan III the Pious assumed the throne of Albania and embraced Christianity once again, he ordered the inhabitants of Artsakh, a country [province. – *R.S.*] under his rule that was difficult to access, to forsake the rituals of idolatry, sacrifice, and the worship of wicked

idols [Каланкатуйский, 1861,I, XVII]. Zoroastrianism held significant influence in the region of Paytakaran (formerly known as Caspiane), referred to as Balasakan in Pahlavi inscriptions and known by various names in Armenian sources, including Kaspk, Kazbk, Parsk, Bagasakan, or Balasakan. According to S.B.Ashurbeyli, in the 4th to 5th centuries, the territory of Paytakaran encompassed areas between the lower reaches of the Kura and Aras rivers. It included the main city of the same name, the southeastern part of Shirvan along the Caspian Sea coast, including the Absheron Peninsula, and a portion of Mughan [Ашурбейли, 1983, с.32]. The significant influx of Zoroastrians further fueled the expansion of Zoroastrianism in Albania, resulting in a decline in the number of Christian adherents, particularly in the eastern and coastal provinces of Albania.

In the history of the Christian Church, the ethnic peculiarities of the Eastern Mediterranean peoples manifested themselves in a religious schism. Albania in the 5th and 6th centuries found itself embroiled in the doctrinal struggle between Monophysites and Dyophysites, which consumed the Christian Mediterranean world. Following the abolishment of royal authority, Albania, during the periods of 463–487/488 and 510–629, became part of the Sassanid Empire. The Sassanid kings began to persecute orthodox Christians and support various sects and heresies within the empire that opposed the official church [Мамедова, 1986, с.234-235]. The onset of escalating tensions between the Armenian and Albanian Churches, on one hand, and the Greek Church, on the other, played into the hands of Iran in its enduring struggle against Byzantium over the centuries. The Armenian Church effectively severed its hierarchical ties with both the Byzantine and Roman Churches. Without delving into the specifics of the theological disputes, it is sufficient to note that the Monophysite doctrine of Gregorianism was promptly denounced as a heresy and essentially rejected by the Christian community [Гюрюн, 1993, с.42]. As a result, in 551, at the Council of Dvin, the Albanian Church, following the example of the Armenian Church, severed its ties with the Byzantine Imperial Church and gained legal autonomy as an autocephalous entity. The Monophysite doctrine gained prominence in these regions with active support from the Sassanids. The division within the Albanian Church between the Monophysites and Dyophysites deepened even further. The decline of Sassanid political influence in the South Caucasus coincided with the disintegration of Monophysite church dominance. By the end of the 6th and the beginning of the 7th century, with the growing Byzantine political influence in the South Caucasus, the Albanian Church, along with the Georgian Church, embraced Dyophysitism.

The political sovereignty of Albania ensured the autocephaly of its Church. After gaining independence, the princely dynasty of Mihranids, who ruled in Albania (629–705), tended to align themselves more closely with Byzantium and the Dyophysite version of Christianity. The national traits of Syrians, Egyptians, and Armenians, who were part of the Byzantine Empire, manifested themselves in the religious schism and divergence from the Orthodox Church. In the absence of their own statehood, the national church remained the sole institution for expressing national identity and political aspirations among the Armenians.

Albanian Church during the Arab conquest. The Arab expansion and the spread of Islam marked the onset of Zoroastrianism's decline, as its sphere of influence rapidly diminished, along with a decline in the spread of Christianity in Albania and Armenia. In the struggle against Byzantium, both the Persians and later the Arabs adeptly capitalized on the Armenians' anti-Greek sentiments, leveraging their presence as an element of stronghold along the Byzantine border. In the countries of the Azerbaijan Viceroyalty, the Armenians stood out as the sole supporters of the Arabs in their fight against Byzantium. The intense conflict with Khazaria, a Byzantine ally, further heightened the ethno-political significance of the Armenians in the eyes of both Persians and Arabs. Later, discontented with the autonomous stance of the local Mihranid dynasty, particularly its allegiance to Byzantine Orthodoxy, the Arabs deposed it from power. In 705, the Arab Caliphate abolished the independence of Albania.

Having consolidated their control over the South Caucasus in the 720s, the Caliphs subjected the Albanian Catholicoi to the influence of the Monophysite Armenian Church. Although Armenians did not share a border with Khazaria, the Caliphate exerted its control over the Chalcedonian movement within the Georgian and Albanian churches through the Armenian Catholicos. The latter adeptly, albeit unscrupulously,

capitalized on the conflict between the Albanian Dyophysites and Monophysites [Алекперов, 1960, с.88-90; Буниятов, 1965, с.95-97]. The activities of the Armenian Catholicos Ilia and his report to the Caliph regarding Albania are extensively described in the work of the Albanian historian Movses Kaghankatvatsi [Каганкатваци, 1861, с.239-241]. The Armenian Catholicos, aided by Arab rulers, forced the Georgian Church into subordination and deprived the Albanian Church of its autonomy. With the backing of the Armenian Church, the Armenian Catholicos converted the Albanian Church to Monophysitism, subjecting it to the hierarchical control of the Monophysite Armenian Church [Аннинский, 1900, с.111-115].

The Arab occupation of the South Caucasus from the mid – 7th century to the late –10th century marked a new phase in the ecclesiastical, ethnic, and religious history of Albania. The Caliphate's primary means of control in the conquered lands was through Arab-Muslim military colonization and the Islamization of the local population. During the 8th to 12th centuries, in the absence of Albanian statehood and due to the ethnic diversity in Albania, a significant portion of the Albanian population was either forced to embrace Islam or voluntarily embraced it, joining the Muslim community on the periphery of the Caliphate in the Caucasus region. In such circumstances, the national church remained the sole institution for expressing the national identity and political aspirations of the Albanian Christians. However, following the deposition of Albanian Catholicos Nerses Bakur (689–706), the Aghuans [Albanians. – *R.S.*] remained under the authority of the Armenian Catholicos for 137 years, likely until the reign of Catholicos George II (876–897) [Аннинский, 1900, с.154].

During this period, the Armenian Church aimed to Gregorianize the Albanian Church in order to culturally and ideologically assimilate it. This behavior of the Armenian Church was a result of the policy pursued by the Arab administration, which favored the Armenian Catholicosate, as it was engaged in an ideological struggle against the hostile Byzantine Empire at that time [Алекперов, 1960, с.88-90; Буниятов, 1965, с.94-95; Велиханова, 1987, с.52-53]. These circumstances explain the unification of the South Caucasus countries into a single administrative region called "Arminiya", which was part of the Azerbaijan Viceroyalty, i.e. the Northern quarter of al-Jarbi.

During the Arab era, the political and geographical borders of Albania (Arran) and, accordingly, the canonical territory of the Albanian Church began to change. The Arabs adhered to the Sassanid principle of dividing the state into four parts based on the cardinal directions. The northern quarter (al-Jarbi or al-Jady in Arabic) included Azerbaijan, Ray, Damavand, Arminiya [Ибн Хордадбех, 1986, с.106], as well as Jazira (Diyar Bakr, Diyar Rabia, and Diyar Mudar), and sometime Iqlim as-Sugur (border zone) [Тер-Гевондян, 1977, с.151-155]. All the Christian countries of al-Jarbi, namely Armenia, Iberia (Kartli), and Arran (Albania), were united under the administrative region of Arminiya starting from the 8th century. The viceroy of the North resided in Azerbaijan, which served as the central region of the Northern or Adurbadagan kustak (viceroyalty) during the Sassanid era [Колесников, 1970, с.93-98]. The viceroy maintained the security of the borders and ensured the proper collection of taxes.

For military-strategic reasons, the Arab emirs of Arminiya chose to establish their residence in the Albanian city of Debil (known as Debil in Azeri and Persian, Dabil in Arabic, Tovin in Greek, and Dvin in Armenian), located on the border of Azerbaijan, Arran, and Armenia [Буниятов, 1965, с.380-381, карта; Велиханова, 1987, с.74, карта]. Muslim authors describe the conventional division of Arminiya into four parts: Arminiya I, Arminiya II, Arminiya III, and Arminiya IV. This division was traditionally borrowed by the Arabs from the Byzantines. Based on the accounts of Ibn Khordadbeh and other Arab authors, Arminiya I, under Arab rule, encompassed Arran, along with Sisajan (Siunia) and Tiflis, as well as Barda, Baylakan, Kabala, and Shirvan. These sources suggest that Arminiya I, as an Arab administrative entity, was predominantly composed of the territories that are considered Arran proper, rather than being actually Armenian. As part of Arminiya III, the Arabs incorporated the Albanian city of Debil (Dvin) along with Busfurrajan (Vaspurakan) and other Armenian provinces.

Thus, the lands of Arran, including Siunia, Lori-Pambak and Gardman (along with Dilijan), i.e. a significant portion of modern-day Armenia, were incorporated into Arminiya I. According to the provided information, Arminiya III and IV included the territory of Armenia proper. Additionally, Arminiya III encompassed a portion of the southwestern periphery of historical Albania. It is evident that the Arab division of Arminiya into four parts reflects not only administrative and political boundaries but also geographical and ethnographic boundaries of the former South Caucasus countries, with some exceptions. First and foremost, Dvin and several southwestern districts of Arran were incorporated into Arminiya III due to military and political considerations, as well as the Arab's national policy. From the 9th century onwards, the administrative designation of Arab Arminiya was abolished [Велиханова, 1987, с.57]. Nevertheless, all the mentioned countries continued to be part of the Northern Quarter, with its center in Azerbaijan.

As the power of the Caliphate weakened in the Azerbaijan Viceroyalty, new political entities started to emerge in the regions of Arran: Azerbaijani Muslim emirates, including Debil (Dvin), Tiflis, Derbent, Shirvan, and several other smaller holdings began to take shape. The canonical territory of Albania in the Siunia region was divided between the Dvin Emirate and the Armenian Shirak (Ani) Principality. The common border between them ran along the Zangi River [Сафаров, 2003, с.94; Сафаров, 2008, с.47]. Therefore, the territories spanning from the Zangi River to the lower reaches of the Western Arpachay River were relinquished to Shirak. Additionally, among the remaining Albanian Christians, the principalities of Khachen, Lori-Dashir [Юзбашян, 1988, с.72], Hereti, and others were established. The Albanian Christians of the Kura-Aras interfluve, for the most part, adhered to the Monophysite doctrine of Eastern Christianity. They constituted the majority among the Albanian Christian population. The remaining portion, the Albanian Christians of the left bank of the Kura River, followed the Dyophysite doctrine, i.e. Orthodox Christianity. In the northwestern territories where they resided, the Shaki (Hereti) Principality arose with its capital in Nukha, encompassing the Shaki province and a portion of the Cambysene region within the former Albanian state. The border between Georgian and Albanian Christians ran along the Hereti province.

From the late 10th century until the establishment of the Ildenizid state of Azerbaijan in 1136, Hereti was subjected to pressure from both the Principality of Kakheti and the Kingdom of Kartli. By the mid – 10th century, a considerable portion of the Albanian population in Hereti had renounced Monophysitism (known as "Armenian heresy") and embraced Byzantine Orthodoxy. Consequently, the close cultural ties between the people of Hereti and Eastern Georgia resulted in their assimilation into the Georgian Church. The Albanian population in most of Cambysene (Kambizana) and the western part of Hereti experienced a gradual process of ethnic Georgianization.

Thus, due to the Arab conquest and the emergence of Arab-Muslim civilization, the Albanian population and the Albanian clergy, during the 8th to 10th centuries, were subjected to a triple impact of cultural and ideological influence: Islamization, Gregorianization, and Georgianization.

Restoration of the independence of the Albanian Church. From the late 9th century onward, the Albanian Catholicos, together with the peripheral metropolitan of Siunia, separated from the Armenian Church and restored their autocephaly [Orbelian, 1864, Ch.LII, p.159]. Alexander Anninsky clearly emphasizes that "Siunia Metropolitan Jacob began to seek holy peace from the Archbishop or Catholicos Sahak of Aghwank [Albania. – *R.S.*], rather than the Armenian Catholicos" [Аннинский, 1900, с.152-153]. Shortly after the death of Jacob (958), Catholicos Gagik of Albania also passed away. However, the sympathy for Greek Orthodoxy in Albania, including Siunia, did not disappear even after that. Likewise, it appears that the successors of Vagan (965–970) were the same. At least during the time of Catholicos Stepanos III (970–972) and Khachik (972–992), the Siunia metropolitans did not seek confirmation letters from the Armenian Catholicos [Аннинский, 1900, с.156].

In the early 10th century, the Armenian Church split into two Catholicosates: Ani and Aghtamar. In the first half and middle of the 11th century, both Armenian patriarchal seats were transferred to Asia Minor by the Greeks, further strengthening the independent position of the Albanian Church.

During the Byzantine offensive, the Shaddadids, a Kurdish dynasty that had gained power in Arran, seized the Emirate of Dvin in 1022 and ruled over it until 1130 [Minorsky, 1953, p.6-8, 15-16, 50-52]. At the same time, capitalizing on the complete weakening of the Baghdad Caliphate, Byzantium in the second half of the 10th century destroyed the Arab system of fortifications in the Taurus and Euphrates regions and reached the borders of the Muslim and Christian principalities of Arminiya. As a result of their aggressive actions against Georgians and Armenians between 1021 and 1065, the Greeks successively captured the principalities of Vaspurakan in 1022, Shirak in 1045, and Vanand in 1065. At the emperor's insistence, the Vaspurakan prince, along with 90,000 Armenian subjects, fled to Cappadocia, terrified by the enemy's aggressive actions [Микаелян, 1952, с.58]. According to A.Anninsky, "The Greeks' first concern after capturing Ani was the expulsion of the majority of Armenian military commanders and nobles, as well as the disbandment of the Armenian army" [Аннинский, 1900, с.171]. Matthew of Edessa portrays this period with a somber tone and expresses strong hatred towards the Greeks. According to his account, the Greeks would seize and blind or drown anyone who had gained renown as a warrior. They would expel others from Armenia and resettle them within the Greek population. During this period, numerous noble Armenian clans met their demise. The surviving population was subjected to exorbitant taxes. They took not only money, but also boys, who were turned into eunuchs [Matthieu, 1958, p.114; Аннинский, 1900, с.172]. Following the forced resettlement of the Armenians from Ani to Cappadocia, a massive migration of Armenians began. The Catholicos of Aghtamar also relocated to the same region [Аннинский, 1900, с.169]. In 1050, the Greeks transferred the Catholicos' seat from Ani to the Asia Minor city of Sivas [Bournoutian, 1982, p.10-17]. After 100 years, the location of the center of the Armenian Gregorian Church changed once again. In 1147, the Catholicos' seat was transferred to the Armenian principality established by settlers in Cilicia (1080–1375).

This situation further ensured the independence and religious freedom of the Albanian Church. From the 11th to the 15th centuries, the canonical territory of the Albanian Church remained unchanged. Ethno-political processes from the 8th to the 15th centuries resulted in the territories under the jurisdiction of the Church of Caucasian Albania being inhabited not only by Muslim Azerbaijanis, but also by ethnic Albanians themselves, as well as other Christian peoples such as Armenians in Chukhursaad (formerly Siunia) and Georgians in Cambysene [Православная энциклопедия, 2000, с.455-464].

Etchmiadzin Patriarchate. During the Turkoman-Azerbaijani ethnogenesis process, starting from the 14th century, one of the newly formed states of this people was the Qara Qoyunlu state, which, among other territories, ruled over the Azerbaijani region of Chukhursaad. This region was established in the former Siunia region of Albania.

Centuries passed since the Armenian people lost all the attributes of statehood. The Armenian Church remained as the sole national symbol for the Armenians. However, even the Armenian Church, once unified, became fragmented into several patriarchates, each vying for supremacy in the national and spiritual life of the Armenian people. A significant event took place in the religious life of the Armenians, the consequences of which would have an impact on the future of the Albanian Church, the ethnic history of the Albanian Monophysites, and the ethno-political situation of Chukhursaad.

This significant development involved yet another relocation of the Catholicos' seat of the Armenians, with the Armenians themselves becoming subject to political influence from Europeans. The growing influence of the Roman Catholic Church among the Armenian population in Cilicia reached a point where it generated unrest and discontent among those Armenians who aimed to protect the autonomy of their Church. In an effort to free their Church from the influence of the Vatican, the Armenian clergy, with the consent of the ruler Jahan Shah Qara Qoyunlu in 1441, relocated the Catholicos' seat to the village of Uchkilsa (Uchmuedzin) in the Chukhursaad region of Azerbaijan, that is, to the Siunia eparchy of the Albanian Church [Аннинский, 1900, с.213-214, 249-257]. In this village, there are well-known ancient Albanian temples called Uchmuedzin. The names "Uchkilsa" and "Uchmuedzin" mean, respectively, "three churches" and

"three muezzins" in Azerbaijani. Muezzin, meaning "caller", refers to a person who announces the call to prayer (adhan), proclaiming the start of worship and inviting people to prayer from the minaret of a mosque. In a figurative sense, the name "Uchmuedzin" meant "three church belfries", as if referring to three pastors announcing the worship. Of the two names, only Uchkilsa is mentioned in the lists of Ottoman fiscal registers (Tahrir defterleri) of the 16th century. For example, it is mentioned in the Brief Register of the Irevan Eyalet (Province) from 1590 to 1595 [İrəvan, 1996, s.163]. However, among the Armenian population who migrated to Uchkilsa following the relocation of the patriarchal see, the village came to be known as Uchmuedzin due to the presence of three churches and the monastery complex built there. In the first third of the 18th century, the name "Uchmuedzin" is mentioned in the Comprehensive Register of the Irevan Liva (Province) of 1724–1727, albeit in a slightly distorted form as "Ichmiezin".Thus, based on the facts provided above, it can confidently be stated that the name "Etchmiadzin" is a later form that evolved from the Armenianized version of "Uchmuedzin" [Сафаров, 2008, с.86, прим. 131]. Subsequently, at the suggestion of the Armenians in European and Russian historical and geographical nomenclature, the village of Uchkilsa began to be called "Etchmiadzin" in the Armenian way.

It is worth noting that from the 11th century onward, the Turkic-Muslim (Azerbaijani) population became predominant not only in certain provinces but also in North Azerbaijan as a whole, including the region of Chukhursaad in particular. The most ancient inhabitants of the region, the Albanians, the adherents of Monophysite Christianity, continued to make up a large proportion of the population in the western provinces of ancient Albania, in the Karabagh provinces of Lori, Pambak, Kazakh-Shamshadil, Ganja, and the Siunia provinces of Kapanat-Zangezur, Nakhchivan, Goycha, and some mahals (distrikts) of Irevan, where the Christian population also comprised Albanians. Since the establishment of the Armenian Patriarchate in Uchkilsa (Etchmiadzin) with the permission of the Azerbaijani ruler Jahan Shah Qara Qoyunlu in 1441, the Armenian population in the region started to grow. This event marked another phase of Armenian penetration into the Azerbaijani region of Chukhursaad. In general, Azerbaijani rulers of the regions, known as beylerbeys, showed great initiative in populating their vilayets with Armenian taxpayers who were skilled in agriculture, trade, and crafts. These measures had practical importance in augmenting the size of the taxable population [Папазян, 1972, с.57].

From the second half of the 15th century, there were four Armenians patriarchates rivaling among each other – the Cilicia, Aghtamar, Etchmiadzin, and Constantinople Patriarchates, and later a fifth one was added – the Jerusalem Patriarchate. In the 16th century, the Ottoman Empire deprived the Qizilbash state of all its Asia Minor territories with an Armenian population. Consequently, the Etchmiadzin Patriarchate, in its struggle to increase congregation, directed its efforts towards limiting the rights of the Albanian Catholicosate in North Azerbaijan and the Aghtamar Patriarchate in South Azerbaijan.

Armenians were consistently treated benevolently, as evidenced by their freedom to choose a new location for the Armenian-Gregorian Patriarchate. After 1441, the Etchmiadzin Patriarchal See entered a new phase of subordinating the Albanian Church. The Qizilbash government also showed benevolence towards the actions of the Etchmiadzin Catholicos in this matter. Throughout their almost 1000-year wandering, the Armenian Patriarchate frequently changed its place of residence, but it was only in the 15th century that it finally found a long-awaited refuge on Azerbaijani soil, where it continues to exist to this day. However, the sphere of activity of the Armenian Patriarchates continued to mainly exist in Asia Minor, outside the borders of Azerbaijan's South Caucasus region. It was during this time that the Armenian congregation extended its reach into Chukhursaad. The Etchmiadzin Catholicos, Armenian monasteries, and wealthy merchants purchased ancestral lands from Azerbaijanis and settled them with Armenians. It was not uncommon for monastery lands to be exempted from various taxes. The Qizilbash government often favored Armenians in land disputes and other legal matters. It was not only land that was granted to them. Entrepreneurially-inclined Armenians were entrusted with the external trade of silk and other valuable goods of the Qizilbash state. The population of the cities of Irevan, Nakhchivan, and Julfa was replenished by Armenians.

The purchase of church lands and monastic estates by Armenian clergy, as well as the resettlement of Armenians, had an impact on the history of the Albanian Monophysites and the position of the Albanian Church. In the 1560s, with the tacit approval of the Qizilbash Shah Tahmasp Safavi, the Etchmiadzin Catholicosate succeeded in taking away the eparchies of Nakhchivan, Goycha (Gegharkunik), Kapan, Aghstafa, and Lori from the Albanian Church [Симеон, 1958, с.89]. The Albanians of Chukhursaad were the first to undergo confessional Gregorianization and linguistic Armenization, followed by those in Kapanat. However, the Christians of North Azerbaijan who adhered to Monophysitism strongly emphasized their ethnic affiliation with the Albanians. In the documents of the 18th century, they expressed their own identity using the term and toponym "Albania (Aghvania)" and the ethnonym "Albanians" [Эзов, 1898, с.162, 166, 317, 326, 378]. Despite the decrees of Azerbaijani shahs regarding the transfer of certain eparchies or territories to the control of the Etchmiadzin Patriarchate, the Albanian Catholicoi pursued an independent religious policy, only occasionally acknowledging the primacy of Etchmiadzin [Арутюнян, 1958, с.10]. Despite the official recognition of the rights of the Armenian Church by the Ottoman and Qizilbash states, by the time of Russian conquest, it did not possess any eparchies in Azerbaijan's territories in the South Caucasus.

Prior to the Russian conquest of the South Caucasus, the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Albanian Catholicos extended to the Monophysite community of the Shirvan, Karabakh regions, as well as certain parts of Kakheti and Kartli in Borchali and Lori, including the two medieval Albanian monasteries of Haghpat and Sanahin [Бархударянц, 1907, с.169; Раффи, 1991, прим. с.87; Каганкатваци, 1861, с.363]. In the 1780s, the Russian government had a "plan for the establishment of the Albanian kingdom" [АВПРИ, 1779-1783, *л*.224]. Moreover, the possible plans of Russian diplomacy at that time did not foresee the preservation of the territorial integrity of the canonical territory of the Albanian Church. However, after the signing of the treaty with King Heraclius II of Kartli-Kakheti in 1783, the Russian intentions of 1780s regarding the projected "Albania" were no longer realized.

Complete liquidation of the Albanian Autocephalous Church. The explicit favoritism shown towards the Etchmiadzin Catholicosate over the Albanian Catholicosate was affirmed in the decree regarding the annexation of Georgia, dated September 12, 1801. The decree was addressed by Emperor Alexander I to General Lieutenant Knorring, who served as the Commander-in-Chief in Georgia and the Caucasus. Point 11 of the decree prescribed: "...to attract the Armenian nation through all kinds of favor. ...to establish the influence of Christians...by providing patronage to the Ararat Patriarchal Monastery of Etchmiadzin and maintaining friendly relations with its church leader" [Акты, 1866, №548, с.436]. During the conquest of Azerbaijani khanates and sultanates, Russia began depriving the Albanian Catholicosate of its eparchies and community, and subordinating it to the Armenian Patriarchate of Etchmiadzin in matters of church administration.

In the first quarter of the 19th century, the overwhelming majority of Armenian-Gregorian population in the Caucasus consisted of local Albanians. The colonial policy of the Russian tsarist regime, conducted primarily in the interests of incoming Armenians and at their instigation, aimed at the rapid de-ethnicization of the local Christian population, specifically the Albanians, with the purpose of their Armenization. The provisions of the Treaty of Turkmanchay in 1828 marked the initiation of the systematic relocation of Armenian populations from the Qizilbash state to Northern Azerbaijan. Thus, for the first time in the ethnic history of Karabakh, Armenian settlers were being resettled in large numbers on its territory.

To secure the support of the Armenians, it was necessary for them to hierarchically submit to the pro-Russian Etchmiadzin Catholicos in religious matters. In pursuit of this goal, the Russian government made a series of concessions and indulgences towards the Etchmiadzin Catholicosate, leading to the establishment of an exclusive position for it and its followers, which was regulated by the 1836 law. According to this law, the Albanian Patriarchate was ultimately abolished, and the community of the Albanian Church was placed under the authority of the Etchmiadzin Catholicosate [Мамедова, 1986, с.238-239]. In accordance with the Regulations on the Administration of the Armenian-Gregorian Church in Russia, issued on March 11,

1836, the regions where Russian Armenians resided were divided into six spiritual eparchies: Irevan, Karabakh, Shirvan, Georgia, Astrakhan, and New Nakhichevan and Bessarabia [Полное, 1837, №8970, с.194-200; Парсамян, 1972, с.81-82]. The territories of the initial three eparchies were previously under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Albanian Catholicosate. The boundaries of the first four eparchies mostly align with the boundaries of the former Caucasian regions of the Qizilbash state.

Conclusion. Political interests pushed Russia to take a drastic step: in 1836, the authorities made the decision to fully liquidate the Albanian Autocephalous Church, which had been functioning in the territory of North Azerbaijan, and transfer its property to the Armenian Church. Under such circumstances, the Monophysite Albanians, who had already been assimilated linguistically, were deprived of the last stronghold of ethnic identity – their national church. As a result, the process of de-ethnicization of the local Monophysite population, the descendants of the Caucasian Albanians, was accelerated dramatically. Over a relatively short period, a portion of the population became Armenians and identified themselves as such. Another portion embraced Orthodox Christianity (becoming Georgianized), and yet another portion converted to Islam. However, the Udins (descendants of the Albanian *Udi* ethnic group) were an exception; settled on the left bank of the Kura River, they have maintained their Albanian ethnic identity and adherence to their Albanian Christian roots in their religious beliefs to this day.

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CAUCASIAN ALBANIA AND ANCIENT DERBENT

Abstract. This article examines the history of the spread of Christianity in the medieval state of Caucasian Albania, which encompassed the territories of most of present-day Azerbaijan, parts of southern Dagestan, and Georgia. It had its independent church with an apostolic origin, and the preaching here began in Derbent, a city that not only served as an integral part of the Christian world of Caucasian Albania but also housed its patriarchal seat for an extended period. Among the 26 tribes that once constituted the Albanian union, only one ethnic group, the Udis, has survived and remained faithful to Christianity. The Albanians were among the first in the Caucasus to adopt Christianity as the state religion (in 313 AD), and have preserved their faith and ethnic identity. Today, the Udis strive for self-determination in religious and canonical terms.

Keywords: Caucasian Albania, Christianity, Udis, apostolic church

The study of the heritage of Caucasian Albania in present-day conditions gains particular significance due to the intensification of religious and national conflicts, alongside the inevitable impact of globalization. This is especially important considering that our region serves as a border zone between the Christian and Muslim, as well as the Slavic and Turkic realms [Сеидова, 2014, с.121-122]. Studying the historical and cultural legacy of Caucasian Albania helps complete the overall picture of the historical destinies of the peoples of Transcaucasia and sheds light on their mutual cultural influences. Undoubtedly, this ancient state, which thrived from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages, played a pivotal role in the history of the Caucasian peoples. It is also noteworthy that the propagation of Christianity began in Derbent, which fuels our eagerness to explore the history of Christianity in our city [Сеидова, 2020, с.11-17]. In various regions of Azerbaijan, Christian basilicas from the 5th to 6th centuries have been discovered, and the names of bishops in Albania are known from the records of Ecumenical and Local Councils. A significant achievement is the fact that a complete list of Albanian Catholicoi and the names of hierarchs who represented them at Ecumenical Councils have been preserved, with their relics resting in monasteries bearing their names. Albanian religious unity existed from the 4th century AD to the 19th century, with the Albanian Patriarchate and the Albanian Patriarchal Autocephalous Church serving as its main consolidating forces.

Prior to the arrival of the Arabs in Transcaucasia, which led to the abolition of the Albanian statehood and the decline of the Albanian Church, medieval Caucasian Albania encompassed almost the entire territory of present-day Azerbaijan, the southern regions of Dagestan, and the Alazani valley in Georgia. As noted by F.Mammadova, the Director of the Center for Caucasian Albania Studies, "The strategic position occupied by Albania (with the presence of the Caucasian passes), along with the geographical locations of Albania, Georgia, and Armenia, as well as the external and internal political situations in each of these regions, contributed to the secure stability of Albanian borders. From the 3rd century BC to the 8th century

AD, for approximately 1000 years (with a few exceptions), the territory of Albania remained roughly within the same boundaries" (Fig. 1) [Мамедова, 2001, с.16].

According to the contemporary researcher of Christianity in the Caucasus, Hieromonk Alexy (Nikonorov), "Starting from the 4th century, Albania had its own independent Church with a three-tier hierarchy, a sufficient number of cathedrae, its own monastic institute, divine services, doctrinal teachings, and canons - in essence, the entire liturgy and public service of the Church. The history of Christianity in any nation can and should be viewed as a part of the history of the Universal Church. Moreover, the history of Christianity in a specific region is justifiably regarded as a part of the history of that nation". The same author also reports that according to church tradition, five holy apostles visited the South Caucasus: four out of the twelve apostles – Andrew, Matthew, Bartholomew, and Jude Thaddeus - and one from the seventy disciples, Thaddeus, and in Caucasian Albania, the faith of Christ was preached by Apostle Bartholomew [Никоноров, 2012, с.10, 41] (Fig. 2).



Fig. 1. Conference in the city of Derbent



Fig. 2. The village of Nij

According to Albanian historian Movses Kaghankatvatsi, the second apostolic source of Christian piety in the region was Saint Elisæus. He states, "...by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Elisæus was ordained by the hand of Saint James, the brother of the Lord, who was the first patriarch of Jerusalem. Elisæus, destined for the East, embarked on a journey from Jerusalem to Persia. He bypassed Armenia and began preaching in Choga, instructing many in different places and leading them to salvation. From there, he arrived in the region of Uti, specifically in the city of Sogarn, accompanied by three disciples" [Каганкатваци, Кн.1, гл.6]. The fourth chapter of this book recounts that afterwards, "the holy high priest arrived in Gis, established a church, and offered a bloodless sacrifice. It was in this place that the first churches, metropolitanate, and enlightenment emerged" [Каганкатваци, Кн.1, гл.4] (Fig. 3).

According to researcher P.K.Uslar, "The earliest period, known as the Syrophilic or Apostolic period, is associated with the names of the Syriac missionary, Apostle Thaddeus, and his disciple, Saint Elisæus, who first preached the ideas of Christianity in Caucasian Albania" [Услар, 1992, с.15]. There are noticeable distinctions in the architecture of temples, cross symbolism, elements of Christianity, representatives of spiritual leadership, and the Catholicos lineage. From the given information, one can perceive the existence of a well-developed church organization, rich worship traditions, and the establishment of new bishoprics while preserving the old ones.

A number of scientific conferences have been dedicated to the heritage of Caucasian Albania in Azerbaijan, and we were fortunate enough to participate in them. One particularly memorable experience was visiting the village of Nij in Gabala district, as well as the state historical and architectural reserves of "Yukhary Bash" in Shaki and Kish. These visits left an indelible impression on us (Fig. 4).


ДРЕВНЪЙШІЯ СКАЗАНІЯ
О
КАВКАЗѢ
Сочиненіе
БАРОНА П. К. УСЛАРА
1881.



Portrait of P.K.Uslar



Fig. 3. Map of the spread of Christianity in Albania



Fig. 4. The Kish village

The observations made allow us to speak not only of the visual similarities among Christian monuments in Azerbaijan and southern Dagestan but also of the undeniable unity of traditions. When exploring Azerbaijan's historical heritage, it is essential to acknowledge the monograph by academician Z.Bunyadov, "Azerbaijan in the 7th–9th Centuries", which, based on Albanian, Byzantine, Georgian, Armenian, Arab, and Syriac sources, sheds light on the history of Christianity in Caucasian Albania, the Albanian Church, its structure, and Albanian literature for the first time in the history of scholarship [Буниятов, 1965]. The monograph "Essays on the History and Culture of Caucasian Albania" by K.V.Trever makes a significant contribution to the study of this subject. Referring to Tacitus' "Annals", the monograph reveals that "...we learn that local kings ruled in Albania during the first decade of the 1st century. We learn about their peaceful relations with Rome, about their embassy sent to Augustus, presumably requesting a treaty of 'friendship'. We also learn that the Albanians held a prominent position among the peoples of the Caucasus, as they are mentioned first in the inscriptions" [Тревер, 1959, с.115-116]. The "Essays" cover the period from the 4th century BC, which marks their first documented appearance in historical sources, up until the 7th century AD. Renowned historian and orientalist A.E.Krymsky devoted two articles to the topic of Caucasian Albania. The first article, titled "Pages from the History of North or Caucasian Azerbaijan" (Classical Albania), was published in 1934 and focuses on the ancient city of Qabala. The second article is dedicated to Shaki. He wrote that "Kabalaka" entered the Greco-Roman world undoubtedly through those historians and chroniclers who accompanied the "great triumvir Pompey" during his Roman campaign to Albania in 66–65 BC or received information from other eyewitnesses who participated in the campaign [Крымский, 1938, с.369-384]. According to the prominent Azerbaijani historian Abbasgulu Agha Bakikhanov, Caucasian Albania was bounded on the north by Shirvan and Derbent [Бакиханов, 1991, с.18-19].



Although the Arab conquest of Transcaucasia marked the end of Albanian statehood, it certainly did not put an end to its cultural life, including its spiritual sphere, particularly related to missionary activities. The evidence of this activity is fragments of a stone slab with "Albanian" alphabet letters found in Dagestani villages such as Khushtada, Lower Gakvari, Tlondoda, and Upper Labkomakhi. Of particular value is the discovery made near a 6th–7th century settlement in Upper Labkomakhi – a small tablet filled with the Albanian alphabet [Закарьяев, 1978, с.57-60] (Fig. 5).

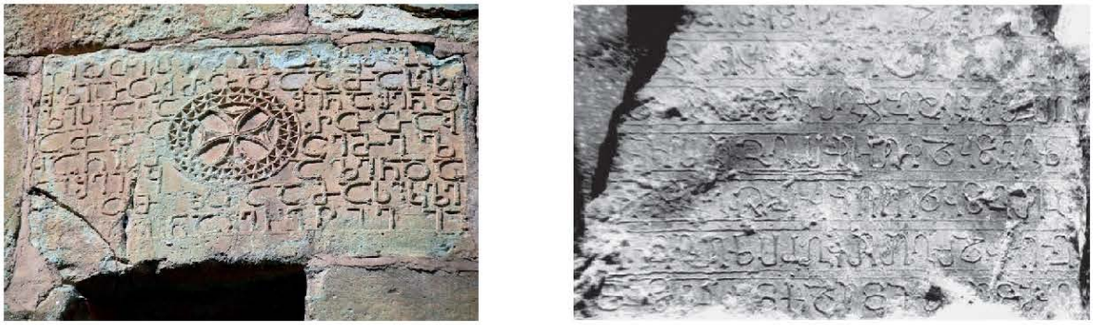


Fig. 5. Albanian inscription slabs

In the early 6th century, King Vachagan the Pious ordered to teach literacy to young people from all regions of Albania [Тревер, 1959, с.308]. According to the Dagestani historian I.G.Ibragimov, the flourishing of Albanian literature is believed to have occurred between the 5th and 7th centuries. However, after the 7th century, this script gradually fell out of use as the Albanian Church came under the control of the Armenian Church, where Old Armenian was the official language [Ибрагимов, 2013, с.103]. Although by the middle of the 7th century, Caucasian Albania managed to briefly free itself from Persian rule, it was soon followed by Arab conquests. While earlier the preaching of Christianity in the southern territories of present-day Dagestan was predominantly carried out by Albanian and Georgian missionaries, the spread of Byzantine Orthodoxy began in the 8th century. Nevertheless, "...a portion of the Christians in Dagestan and among the Khazars maintained their allegiance to the Albanian Church, south of Derbent, in the ancient Albanian lands" [Гасанов, 2008, с.40].

The existence of the Albanian language and Albanian script is reported by various sources such as Strabo, Hippolytus of Rome, Movses Kaghankatvatsi, Koryun, Sebeos, Movses Khorenatsi, "The Book of Letters", Zacharias Rhetor, Hethum, and many Arab authors. However, documentary confirmation of this fact was obtained thanks to the invaluable discovery made by the corresponding member of the Georgian Academy of Sciences, Z.N.Alexidze. In 1996, a Georgian-Albanian palimpsest (M/8t-13, 'M/5sh-50) was found by him in St. Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai. The scientist notes, "The discovery of a complete Lectionary with Albanian script in the Albanian language is a direct indication of the existence of advanced Christian script writing in Albania... Only a people possessing the complete text of the Bible in their native language can have a Lectionary. It is also noteworthy that some readings found in the Albanian Lectionary are not found in the oldest Armenian and Georgian Lectionaries. This circumstance possibly suggests that the Albanian Lectionary is not a translation from any of these languages but was independently compiled based on a now lost Greek Lectionary" [Алексидзе, 2001] (Fig. 6).



Fig. 6. St. Catherine's Monastery. Sinai

Studies of the language lead us to the conclusion that it is the closest of all the surviving Caucasian languages to the Udi language, both in terms of vocabulary and phonetic and grammatical forms. The acquisition of the two-volume book "The Albanian Palimpsest", with the support of the Board of the Public Association for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage of Shaki, has become an invaluable gift for the revitalized Albanian–Udi Christian community. It has been translated into six languages: Udi, Russian, Georgian, Armenian, Greek, English, and Syriac. This provides an opportunity for reconstructing the ancient

Albanian language as a liturgical language by comparing the literary texts that have been recorded with both modern Udi and the group of South Dagestani languages.

It is known that the preaching of Christianity began in Derbent. In one of the lists appearing in the Derbent-name (The Book of Derbent), there is information about the residents of Derbent embracing Christianity in 335 AD, "...in the name of a certain Nesmanshah" [Козубский, 1906, с.12]. By the early second half of the 5th century, as a result of the policies of the Albanian king Vache II, Derbent was transformed into one of the strongholds of Christianity in the Eastern Caucasus and became the main center of resistance against "teachings of the Magi" [Кудрявцев А.А., Кудрявцев Е.А, 2013, с.20]. The ancient city was not just one of the centers of Christianity, but also home to its patriarchal seat. For a significant period of time, the residence of the Catholicos (patriarch) of the country was located here, later transferred to Partav in 552 AD. According to academician V.V.Bartold, the patriarchal court remained here until 733 AD [Бартольд, 1963, с.672]. Azerbaijani researcher T.M.Mammadov also believes that the residence of the Albanian Catholicos was originally the town of Choga, near Derbent [Мамедов, 1993, с.127]. Professor A.R.Shikhsaidov, the patriarch of oriental studies in Dagestan, believes, "It is possible that Choga continued to be a stronghold of Christianity even after the transfer of the patriarchal seat" [Шихсаидов, 1969, с.23]. The presence of Christian monuments in early medieval Derbent, including a large Christian temple from the 5th to 7th centuries, attests to the significant position held by the Christian clergy within the social structure of Derbent during that time. There is no doubt that even after the transfer of the patriarchal seat from Derbent (after 551 AD), the early medieval city remained one of the most important Christian centers in the Eastern and Northeastern Caucasus during the 5th to 7th centuries, and it housed a large episcopal see [Козубский, 1906, с.48-51]. It appears that two significant monuments of monumental cult architecture in Derbent can be attributed to the period of widespread Christian ideology. The first is the cruciform central-domed structure in the citadel, and the second is one of the largest buildings in the medieval city, which was later converted by the Arabs in the 8th century into the Cathedral Mosque (Juma Mosque). The identification of the first structure with Christian antiquities of the city has only emerged in recent years [Кудрявцев, 1980, с.127-128], while similar assumptions regarding the second structure have been proposed by several researchers as early as the 19th century [Березин, 1850, с.143; Бестужев-Марлинский, 1958, с.321] (Fig. 7).

The cruciform-domed structure in the citadel of Naryn-Kala bears striking similarities to some Christian buildings of West Byzantine architecture in Italy, such as the monuments of 5th-century Ravenna [Golasanti, 1926, p.1]. A clear analogy in the layout of the structure can be observed between these buildings in our city and those in Ravenna (Fig. 8).



Fig. 7. Juma Mosque



Fig. 8. Cruciform-domed temple

To commemorate the role of Derbent as one of the most significant Christian centers of Caucasian Albania, the All-Russian scientific and practical conference titled "1700th Anniversary of Christianity's Adoption in Derbent as the State Religion of Caucasian Albania" took place here on November 14-15, 2013. The ancient city welcomed a substantial contingent of scholars from Moscow, St. Petersburg, Baku, Omsk, Stavropol, Makhachkala, Krasnodar, Vladikavkaz, and other cities. The presentations of the guests from Baku, Robert Mobili and Rizvan Huseynov, were received with special interest and lively response. Robert Mobili, the Chairman of the Albanian-Udi Christian Community of Azerbaijan, highlighted in his speech that significant efforts are being made in the Republic to preserve and restore the Albanian cultural, historical, and religious heritage. He noted, "The immediate and long-term cultural and political effects and outcomes of this event are invaluable" [Мобили, 2013, с.107]. At scientific forums across various European countries, notably in Stuttgart, Germany, he voiced the position advocating the necessity of addressing the consequences of Tsarist Russia's colonial policy in the early 19th century in Transcaucasia that led to the subordination of the Eastern Orthodox population to the Armenian-Gregorian Church through the Etchmiadzin.

As is well known, this occurred on the basis of the decree by Tsar Nicholas I dated March 11, 1836, which endorsed the "Regulations on the Armenian-Gregorian Church" and effectively dissolved the Albanian Church, transferring its property to the Armenian Church both practically and legally. Nevertheless, despite all these historical vicissitudes and cataclysms, the Udis, one of the Azerbaijani ethnic groups, managed to preserve their ethnicity, language, customs, traditions, and their adherence to Christianity of Caucasian Albania. The Udi Church today is an integral and inseparable part of the Albanian Church, and the Udis, accordingly, are the successors of this heritage [Мобили, 2013 (1), с.234-236]. Rizvan Huseynov, another guest from Baku, emphasized in his presentation, "Today, the study of the heritage of ancient Caucasian Albania, which existed as state entities for over 1000 years (from the 4th century BC to the 8th century AD) and then as small semi-independent entities for about another 1000 years until the 18th century, gains particular relevance" [Ахундов, Гусейнов, 2013, с.72-80].





Robert Mobili, Rizvan Huseynov in Derbent

Credit should also be given to other representatives from Azerbaijan, including Professor Z.Guluzade, R.G.Fatullayev-Figarov, F.Akhundov, A.Salimova, and R.Aliyeva, whose articles undoubtedly became a notable addition to the collection published based on the conference materials in Derbent. Our current meeting should also contribute to filling in the "white spots" in the study of the arrival and development of Christianity in the Caucasus. It appears that this question is still not sufficiently studied and explored, despite the fact that Christianity is one of the three monotheistic religions that spread in the Caucasus in general and the Northeastern and Eastern Caucasus in particular, during a very early period, which in itself is highly significant. Delving into the history of the ancient states of the Caucasus, the historical path of Christianity's entry into the region, and the subsequent development of the Church holds great interest for historical science, philosophy, religious studies, cultural studies, and other fields of humanities.

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EXAMPLES FROM CLASSICAL ALBANIAN TRADITIONS: HISTORICAL–ETHNOGRAPHIC INDICATORS OF THE KRYTS AND THE UDIS

Abstract. In the article, while exploring various aspects of classical Albanian traditions, we will briefly touch upon the language factor through the abundance of similar words in their languages, even though they are not territorially close to each other and demonstrate that this similarity is not coincidental, but indicates the historical proximity of these ethnic groups, their belonging to the same language family, and their settlement in Azerbaijan since ancient times.

Keywords: Albanian traditions, pre-Christian beliefs, the Kryts, the Udis, language

It is known from history that during the era of Caucasian Albania, which reflects the millennia-old history of Azerbaijan (4th century BC – early 8th century AD), there were various Albanian tribes who spoke different languages and played a significant role in the ethnogenesis of the Azerbaijani people. Research has shown that ethnicities of Turkic, Caucasian, and Iranian origin lived in Caucasian Albania. These ethnicities, who played an important role in the ethnic formation of the Azerbaijani people, were able to preserve their ethnic names in full or in a somewhat distorted form to the present day and have been able to keep Albanian traditions alive in their worldviews, customs, and beliefs. The Udis, the Ingiloys, the Lezgins, the Khinalugs, the Kryts, who are the heirs of Albanian tribes such as the Udis, the Gelae, the Hers, the Gats, the Legae, etc. united in the Union of Albanian Tribes, with Turkic peoples, have preserved their Albanian identity in various aspects up to the present day, reflecting it in their gravestone monuments, temples, monuments, ceremonies, and even in the names and meanings of their tribes.. Research on the origin, history, and ethnography of the Kryts and the Udis provides a basis for saying that these ethnic groups were one of the Albanian tribes, considered the main creators of the ancient and medieval civilization of the Caucasus.

Kryts is an ethno-oeconym and the main village of the Kryts who speak in the language belonging to the Lezgian group of the Caucasian language family, which is part of the Shahdagh subgroup. The toponym Kryts was first encountered in tenth century sources. They call their villages *"ggaraz"*, themselves *"ggarazar"* (ar[2] - one of the plural suffixes used in the Kryts language, others –bi, -ib, -ni, -ri, -r, -ar, -yar, -im, -ım, -imbi, -rim, -mbi) [Саадиев, 1969, s.111-119; Хидиров, 2006], and their villages *"ggaraza kum"* and their language *"ggaraza mez"*. Although there are various legends about the toponym Kryts, the most appropriate and confirmed by the village population is the form of "Kryts" (Qrıts) from the combination of two elements - the word "Q" meaning "height", "elevation", "highness" and the word "rıts" meaning "smooth, polished", collectively meaning "smooth, polished ground position in height". This also fully corresponds to the geographical location of the village. Therefore, Kryts is an ethnonym given later, and the detection of the component "her", "er" in other ethnicities naming them rightly forms the idea among researchers that these peoples are the heirs of the Hers, one of the ancient Albanian tribes [Гейбуллаев,

1985, c.83-86; Пашаева, 2015, c.150-151]. We will try to substantiate our idea by demonstrating the word "Q" in the composition of other words used in the Kryts language. As we mentioned, the way words are expressed in the Kryts language and dialects varies depending on direction and location. For example, there are 14 forms of the expression "there is/there are" in the Kryts language, depending on the direction of use. For example: there is barley in the composition of wheat – *Qəlik mıx çici* (indicates what is inside, what is in the composition); there are leaves under the tree – *dar qənik beş kici* (what is under something); there is snow on the mountain – *bellə hadü yiz qici* (what is on something, what is on high). As can be seen, the "q" element is already used in the meaning of "there is" in the expression "there is snow on the mountain", due to the expression of "height", highness". Or there are many variants of the word "existing" in the Kryts language, and when we look at these variants, we have seen the expression of the meaning of "height, highness" where the "q" element is used (qiyi, həyi,vəyi, çiyi, tsiyi, kiyi). Therefore, based on what has been said, it can be said that the meaning of the toponym has arisen later in the Kryts language, in accordance with the geographical location. The fact that the Haputs, a sub-ethnic group of the Kryts, call themselves the Hers, also shows that these peoples are indeed one of the ancient Albanian peoples.

Our research on numerous ancient grave monuments, beyond anonymous graves, in the ancient cemetery of the village of Kryts in Guba, reveals that the majority of these graves belong to the 12th–13th centuries. Therefore, just as G.Geybullayev, M.Pashayeva, and many other scholars have noted, the Kryts have indeed migrated to their present homeland at a later date. These tribes, crossing over snowy mountain passes, have settled in the northeastern part of Azerbaijan. Numerous pieces of information about the path crossing the mountain passes from the northwestern part of Azerbaijan to the Khinalug area have been documented in the sources of the 19th century [Гейбуллаев, 1985; Пашаева, 2015,c.152]. The absence of any Christian temples in the Shahdagh villages area also reinforces our opinion. Despite the geographical distance between the areas where the Udis, who lived in the northwestern part of Azerbaijan, and the Kryts have settled, the similarity of words in their vocabulary indicates that the Shahdagh peoples have indeed migrated from the northwestern part of Azerbaijan to its northeastern region. Thus, although a portion of the Udis lived in the Karabakh and Gazakh–Tovuz regions until the beginning of the 19th century, they now predominantly live in the Nij village of Gabala district and in Oghuz district, whereas the Kryts live in the Guba–Khachmaz–Khudat regions. Even though the number of Kryts and Udi speakers is limited, they have managed to preserve their languages and historical-ethnographic identities to this day. For instance, the word for "we" in Kryts is *"yin"*, and in Udi, it's *"yan"*. Similarly, *"vin"- "van"* denotes "you", *"mez-muz"* means language, *"arfar-afar"* means gutab (traditional Azerbaijani dish), *"mux-mu"* means barley, *"moqul-muqul /mugul/mungul"* means broom, *"nis^i- ğusmi"* means cheese, *"yeç – eʸsʸʷ"* means apple, *"meğ – məq, məx"* means oak, and *"mec-mec"* means nettle, etc. [Мобили, 2010; Хидиров, 2006], Language is a mirror that reflects the people's history, worldview, customs, and traditions, in one form or another. The existence of words derived from the Turkic language in the vocabularies of both ethnic groups, as well as common customs and traditions, implies that these peoples have cohabitated since time immemorial. The kinship relations and languages of the Kryts and Udis can also be found in the studies by authors such as M.Ikhilov, N.Yakovlev, N.Marr, and others [Ихилов, 1969, c.105; Яковлев, 1930, c.28, 67; Марр, 1920, c.44].

The topic of our research is also the study of the names of the clans of Gryz – one of the Albanian tribes and the features of these names associated with Albanian culture and beliefs, as well as mention in the names of some clans such as Masahar, Shamliyar, Babasi of the fact that their grandfathers were from city of Damascus in Syria [Şalbuzova, 2021, s.27-28]. Historical-ethnographic sources reveal that the first missionaries came to Caucasian Albania from Jerusalem and Syria in the early years of Iran to spread Christian ideas. It is indicated in the sources that Christianity came to Albania from Syria, and religious literature was first translated into Albanian from the Syrian language. Farida Mammadova, who noted that the spread of Christianity in the country went through two distinct phases, stated that in the first phase, during the Apostles' era, the first Christian missionaries, Apostles and disciples of the Apostles began to come to the country from Jerusalem and Syria, resulting in the formation of Christian communities [Мамедова,

2019, c.10-11]. Moreover, we can see information about the historical roots of confessional relations between the East and the Caucasian Albanians, the visits of the Caucasian Albanians to Jerusalem during the 5th–13th centuries, obtaining numerous sacred relics from there, and the construction of Albanian Christian churches in Jerusalem in a number of scientific articles [Гаджиева, 2019, c.143-150]. From archaeological and epigraphic studies, it is clear that multi-faceted relations between Azerbaijan and Syria have existed since ancient times [Рзаев, 1976, c.197]. Thus, while the Udis could preserve Christian traditions, like other Albanian tribes, the Kryts have undergone a transformation by accepting the Islamic religion, and were only able to preserve the aspects related to Christianity in the names of the aforementioned tribes.

Although Albanian culture has undergone certain transformations due to various religions and cultures, some of the rich traditions of this culture have been preserved and maintained in various forms to this day. From the works of Movses Kaghankatvatsi, Strabo, and many other authors, it is known that Albanians worshipped the Moon, Sun, water, trees, mountains, and earth before Christianity. The worship of natural forces is found among various Turkic ethnicities of Altai and Siberia, both Caucasian- and Turkic-speaking. Astral beliefs typical of Albanian culture, symbolic signs related to natural forces, their reflection in tomb monuments and sacred places, and their meanings have been studied and analyzed. Throughout history, the remnants of the ancient belief system in the traditions and worldviews of all peoples living in Azerbaijan have been merged with the mindset of subsequent religions and survived in a unique form. As seen from the tomb monuments found in various parts of our country and in the territory of the Shahdagh peoples, the ancient Albanian ethnos worshipped the sun, moon, sky, and natural forces. The discovery of tombstones with half-moon, solar figures in archaeological monuments confirms that ancient beliefs related to the moon and solar cult existed in the 3rd millennium BC in Azerbaijan [Гейшев, 1984, c.29]. Some symbolic signs related to astral beliefs and natural forces, similar structures, are found in the ruins of the Abu Muslim Mosque in the Kryts village, in the mosques in the villages of the same name, Khinalug and Jek, and on the tombstones in the villages.

It is possible to see sun figures, various symbols, and Arabic inscriptions on the tombstones we recorded during our ethnographic visits to the Kryts village in Guba, which bear traces of Albanian thought. The tomb monument shown in (Fig. 1), features the phrase "Death is like a goblet, everyone will taste it, the Grave is a door, everyone will pass through it" written in Arabic and the entire surroundings of the grave are surrounded by solar symbols. Or, the solar signs carved with the inscriptions on the remains of the Abu Muslim Mosque in (Fig. 2-3) confirm that these beliefs have always been alive within Christian and Islamic ideologies. The decorations, solar symbols on the buildings built on steep rocks, and representation of solar symbols on tribe names, as well as the Shahdag villages, prove that the historical roots of these villages go back to very ancient times. Although the symbol on the Abu Muslim Mosque in the Khinalug village cannot be fully read and translated, according to the words of the village resident Yusif Shabanov, it gives the meaning of "sunrise" or "birth of a new era". Another ancient tradition of the Caucasian Albanians is the anonymous tombstones we encountered in the old cemeteries in the Kryts villages. Along with the phrases we read on the walls of the Pir Jalal tomb located a little far from the area of Kryts village, it is also possible to come across various shaped signs (Fig. 4-5).

From the expression "I swear by my father Jebu Khan's sun" in "The History of the Albania", it is clearly understood that the worship of the sun in the traditions of the Turkic and Caucasian peoples living in Azerbaijan was one of the characteristic features of the ancient Azerbaijani people [Kalankatuklu, 2006, s.181]. In addition, tombstones with plant and zoomorphic patterns characteristic of Caucasian Albania, as well as symbolic signs related to astral beliefs and natural forces, show the compatibility of religions. Whether in written sources or in archaeological and historical-ethnographic research, traces of moon worship are found in many regions of our country. Beliefs related to the lunar cult also manifest themselves in traditions. The tradition of giving the bride a gold in the shape of the moon-star in the Guba–Khachmaz region, and the practice of a infertile woman crossing running water in the light of the moon in the northwestern region of Azerbaijan is associated with this belief.

We witness traces of the ancient Albanian belief in the Solar and Lunar cult of the people of the North–West region of Azerbaijan, especially in the Christian traditions of the Udi people. The fact that the Udis call Sunday the "Day of the Sun", and watch the sunrise as a family on that day, as well as the Vertivar festival held in the middle of summer where the Udis weave cross-shaped ornaments from wildflowers symbolizing the sun, are celebrations in honor of the Sun. Our ancestors' rituals related to the red color, the symbol of fire and the sun, in ancient burial traditions also confirm our statements. The hearth traces, red paint (deep ocher) found in grave tools as a result of archaeological excavations in various regions, and stone works with sun shapes are evidence of what we say. All of this is associated with our ancestors' desire for their final resting place to be illuminated, and expressions like "May their grave be filled with light" and condolences traditions stem from this belief. We can see traces of the belief in starting a new life after death, like the rebirth of nature, the setting and rising of the Sun and Moon, in the popular elegy in Azerbaijani funeral ceremonies, "You were born like the moon, you set like the sun" [Paşayeva, 2016, s.85].

Traces of the Solar cult also found their reflection in old wedding traditions. The Shahdagh peoples, who believed in the protective feature of the fire symbolizing the sun, gave the bride coal when she was moving from her father's house, and her face was covered with red veil. Among the people, it is known that white and yellow are symbols of the moon, and red is the symbol of the sun. In general, as in other regions of Azerbaijan, surrounding the brides-to-be with fire, stove, and tandoor in the Shahdagh villages is an indication of the traces of the Solar cult. Fire worship is one of the forms of sun worship, that is, it is one of the manifestation images that have gained official religious status and have their own rules and rituals [Yaqubqızı, 2016, s.33]. In addition, the custom of hanging a rooster from a decorated branch in the wedding ceremonies of the Shahdagh people is a remnant of the Solar cult. The rooster, generally heralding the sunrise, holds a special place as a symbol of the sun and blessing in the wedding ceremonies of the small ehtnicities of the Sheki-Zagatala region. For example, there are traditions such as sending a roasted rooster and 3 eggs to the bride's house among the Udis, bringing a live rooster to the groom's house among the Avars, etc. Indeed, the rich and ancient traditions of the Albanian culture have been preserved in today's wedding traditions of Azerbaijan and other ethnicities living in Azerbaijan.

As in many countries around the world, the tree cult has been considered sacred in Azerbaijan. From antiquity to this day, the tree cult has been revered among the world's peoples with various beliefs and views, and has held an important place in the belief system of the Udi and Shahdagh ehtnicities. In his work "The History of the Albania", Kaghankatvatsi wrote about the Albanians' practice of sacrificing to trees, sprinkling the sacrifice's blood on the leaves of the tree, and hanging skin and skulls from the branches. Referring to the information of Bakhtiyar Tunjay Sagalayev, it was shown that the Huns also sacrificed a horse to a tree and hung its head and skin from the branches [Tuncay, 2013, s.190]. Azerbaijanis living in the Oghuz region of Azerbaijan and the Udis also lit candles under an old forest tree and no one dared to cut the dried branches of this tree. According to "The History of Albania", it was believed that those who collected the dead branches of forest trees for their purposes were punished by the tree. When we pay attention to ideas related to trees in the origin myths of Azerbaijani Turks, there are suggestions not to throw away even when the branches of trees dry up. On the grave monuments in the Shahdagh villages, along with plant and zoomorphic images, a half-moon symbol and the image of the tree of life have been observed. In the Islamic period, the most respected cypress tree motif in art, especially its extensive use on tombstones, was reflected [Seher, 2014, s.60]. So, belief related to trees existed in all religions. The custom of "branch decorating", widespread in Azerbaijani wedding traditions, also carries the trace of the tree cult and represents the tree of life. For this reason, branches that did not bear fruit were not decorated. Although the concept of the tree of life, which is related to the religious notions of the early Bronze Age tribes, lost its original meaning, it is still preserved as an attribute in wedding ceremonies today.

It is known from Albanian chronicles that there was a tradition of singing elegies during mourning ceremonies in Caucasian Albania. In addition, the tradition of mourners singing elegies and praising the deceased at mourning ceremonies held among the Caucasian Albanians exists in mourning ceremonies

among all ethnic groups living in Azerbaijan, as well as among Christian Udis and Ingiloys. The elegies and records of mourners at funerals in Albanian ecclesiastical canons, and the remnants of ancient Yug sermons are also related to this. The elegy of the poet Davtak on the death of the Albanian Prince Jevansher is an example thereof. As is known from history, Albanians buried the deceased's wealth and property with the deceased. The tradition of distributing the deceased's clothing and belongings or giving them to mosques in many parts of Azerbaijan is, so to speak, a remnant of this custom. According to Strabo, the corpse in Albania was brought to the necessary place for the cleansing ceremony and everyone passed over it for purification. According to the superstition, it is not good to jump over a person, as all the diseases and discomforts on the earth can pass to the people on the ground. This superstition has remained in the traditions of Azerbaijanis and it is not a good sign to jump over a person lying on the ground [Bəkirova, 2013, s.132]. This belief still lives in the thoughts of other ethnic groups living in Azerbaijan.

As a result of written-comparative research, ethnogenetic and ethnic relations between the Kryts and the Udis have been studied based on both the language factor and beliefs, and it has been seen that these facts prove the shared traditions of the ancient Albanian ethnos, their common ethnogenetic roots.

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Fig. 1. Tombstone we recorded in the Kryts village (foto N.Shalbuzov's)





Fig. 2-3. Signs engraved on the remnants of the Abu Muslim Mosque





Fig. 4-5. Pir Jalal Tomb and the signs, inscriptions recorded at its entrance





Fig. 6-7. Signs we recorded on the columns and walls of the Abu Muslim Mosque (Khinalug village)



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ABOUT THE CROSS-SHAPED AND THREE-HALL CHRISTIAN CHURCHES OF CAUCASIAN ALBANIA (NORTH–WEST REGION)

Abstract. Numerous Christian religious edifices were built during the early Middle Ages in the north-west areas where Caucasian Albania was located. Early Christian architecture is intrinsically connected to its preceding antiquity, mirroring not only construction art traditions, but also direct influences of architectural designs of existing types. One such architectural form noticeable in early Middle Age hall-churches in Albania became prevalent in subsequent periods, ultimately turning into a distinctive feature of Albanian churches and chapels. The three-nave basilica represents another early version of the Christian temple with an arched hall. The cross-shaped design, implemented in several variations, played a key role in early Middle Age dome architecture of Caucasian Albania. Presently, remnants of multiple cross-shaped domed temples are spread across Azerbaijan's territory.

Keywords: Caucasian Albanian, temple, church, religion, altar apse

Caucasian Albania entered a new historical epoch in the early fourth century. At this stage, adoption of Christianity as the state religion was a significant factor.

The territory of Albania was undergoing rapid construction between the 4th and 7th centuries. These intensive constructions took place during the reign of Albanian tsars Vachagan III the Pious (487–510) and Javanshir (637–684). M.Kaghankatvatsi, the author of "The History of Albania", stated: "Vachagan III the Pious, a descendant of Arsacid dynasty, built as many churches in the East as there are days in a year".

In pre-Christian times, various celestial bodies, Greek gods and goddesses, as well as fire, were worshipped by Albanian tribes. Furthermore, it is well documented that temples dedicated to the Moon goddess Selene were built in Albania. The first Christian churches in Albania were established centuries before Christianity was adopted as the country's official state religion [Мамедова, 2004, с.34]. Christianity spread throughout Caucasian Albania following the apostolic activities of Saint Elishe in the first century AD. Hence, the Albanian church is often referred to as the apostolic church [Xəlilov, 2011, s.29].

Most of the earliest Albanian churches were built from wood. Over time, these initial wooden structures were replaced by churches constructed from stone and brick. The distinctive and complex coloration, technique, and unique beauty of Albanian architectural art have always rendered it intriguing and distinctive. Other Caucasian ethnic groups benefited from the ancient Albanian culture, developing their own architecture and culture in response to innovative content that invariably garners attention. During the earliest era of Christianity in Albania, church buildings were prevalent. These churches typically consisted of single-nave temples with elongated prayer halls (for instance, Kish, Mazimgaray, etc.).

As noted by D.Akhundov and many researchers, in Albania, there were also instances of a special type of structure known as circular temples, built in the style of Christian architecture (for instance, Lekit, Kilsadagh, etc.). This trend had a reason behind it: the construction of circular temples in Albania dates back

to the early Christian period. According to researchers, these temples were built by Albanians who were Sun worshippers at the time – that is, a time when Christianity had not yet been fully assimilated and was still intermixed with the worship of other celestial bodies. The most dominant form of Christian architecture in Albania was the chapel. Chapels truly functioned as memorial structures, even though they also served as small shrines along the caravan routes. In Albania, one can find chapels both with and without an altar. The walls of these chapels are typically adorned with symbolic stones featuring elegant patterns. Basilicas and monasteries were regarded as the most complex buildings of the Albanian era.

Some preserved monuments have undergone so many changes that they have lost the majority of their original appearance [Геюшев, 1984, с.81]. In various regions of Albania, remnants of architectural structures were unearthed during archaeological excavations. These discoveries allow us to make certain assertions regarding early Christian architectural buildings. It's worth noting that Albania's geographical position, along with its fertile natural conditions and diverse building materials, including stone, clay, and various types of wood, enabled builders in the country to construct structures of increasingly complex composition, starting from the construction of a simple church.

As a result of several research works, R.B.Goyushov divided Albanian Christian temples into four groups: 1) single-nave halls; 2) circular temples; 3) three-nave basilicas; 4) chapels. However, further research led to the addition of a new type of temple – cave temples – forming a fifth group [Геюшев, 1984, с.120].

Comprehensive scientific information about these monuments was published until 2011 in the works of D.A.Akhundov and G.G.Mamedova. M.Khalilov in 2011 gives his classification: 1) single-nave rectangular; 2) three-nave basilica; 3) cross-shaped (free cross); 4) circular; 5) three-hall; 6) cave; 7) semi-dugout; 8) mobile-tent temples (tabernacle) [Xəlilov, 2011, s.85].

This article will discuss the cross-shaped or "free cross" type of Albanian-Christian temples, one of the categories in the classification of Christian temples. Our research will specifically focus on these temples, which are located in the northwest region of Azerbaijan. The districts in the northwest region of Azerbaijan are abundant with Christian buildings from the Albanian era. In this region, we come across many monuments from Albania's Christian era that stand out for their captivating architectural structure. However, in this article, we'll concentrate on the monuments that are particularly distinguished by their cross-shaped layout. This type of monument was established in the shape of a cross, either externally or internally. The cross-shaped or "free cross" type churches are believed to have been established in connection to cross-shaped Christian martyria [Xəlilov, 2011, s 133; Мамедова, 2004, с.41]. According to G.Mammadova, "the genesis and evolution of simple cruciform monuments has nothing to do with hall-vaulted churches" [Мамедова, 2004, с.41].

Three-nave basilicas constructed after the seventh century often had either two or one pair of columns. The roofs are usually dual-sloped, and the middle nave is not elevated. In this regard, three religious buildings situated in the area known as Pipan in Yukhari Tala village, Zagatala district, which were investigated by A.Garaahmadova, are of particular interest (Fig. 1, 2). One of these structures is a temple with a cross-shaped layout that possibly resembles a mausoleum, while the others are buildings referred to as "three-church basilicas" in scientific literature. According to researchers, the expansion of religious rites, the necessity of worshipping several times a day, and the prohibition against performing worship in the same shrine are reasons for the emergence of this type of church [Məmmədova G., Məmmədova Z., 2013, s.260-261; Гаджиева, 2011, с.73]. Temples in this architectural style can also be found among Georgia's Christian-era religious buildings. Chubinashvili has referred to these temples as "three-church basilicas" in scientific literature, noting that they were constructed until the 10th century [Мамедова, 2004, с.91-92]. The scientific idea expressed by the authors of earlier studies was repeated by M.Khalilov, who emphasizes that these temples as three-hall temples rather than three-church basilicas, emphasizing that they are descendants from three-nave basilicas [Xəlilov, 2011, s.161].

Chubinashvili also mentioned that similar temples can be found outside of Georgia, in regions such as Syria and the Balkans. It is no coincidence that the majority of the three-church basilicas currently listed

within the boundaries of the Republic of Georgia are temples that originally existed in the Kambisena province of ancient Caucasian Albania [Мамедова, 2004, с.91-92].

The architecture of domes, which began to develop between the 5th and 7th centuries, encouraged the re-emergence of already developed types, with minor changes, until the end of the early Middle Ages. Domed basilicas, halls, and small temples of the "simple cross" type were built, while cross-domed temples with chapels on all four sides began to take form.

Some examples of temples in Caucasian Albania from the final stage of the early Middle Ages are represented by "simple cross" type temples. These differ from one another not due to common architectural elements but because of the structure of the dome.

One of these temples is situated in the forest near the mountain in a place called Pipan in Zagatala (Fig. 1, 2). This cross-domed temple is constructed of river stone. It is built in the form of a free-standing cross and features a rectangular apse with shelves at each corner. The eastern wall of the apse from the facade side is attached to the others, and this wall is constructed from river stones. Sound-adjusting jars were discovered in the corners of the temple's walls. A.Garaahmadova noted that the temple underwent extensive renovations in the 12th century. Due to similarities to monuments in the South Caucasus, Asia Minor, Chersonesos, and Ravenna, this monument can be dated back to the 6th or 7th century [Карахмедова, 1986, с.19-20].

One kilometer north of the cross-shaped temple lies a relatively well-preserved, albeit not very large, temple. The temple, referred to as a three-church basilica from the 7th–8th centuries, is of particular interest. This basilica comprises a rectangular single-nave hall surrounded on three sides by a corridor. A.Garaahmadova and G.G.Mammadova conducted research on this monument. A.Garaahmadova noted that the width of the central hall is 3.2 m [Карахмедова,1986, с.20]. G.G.Mammadova conducted research and measurements later and in more detail: the central hall (3.4x6.5 m) features a relatively high semi-circular altar apse on the east side and arches deep on the sides [Мамедова, 2004, с.88]. Insignificant discrepancies (2 cm) are justified on monuments heavily overgrown with plants and located in hard-to-reach places. The hall of the temple is crowned by a girth-shaped arch, supported by two pilasters on the wall. The western entrance of the temple is not aligned with the central symmetry. The building is illuminated by small windows on the east and west sides. Beneath the main hall is another similar basement, also lit by windows on the east and west sides at a height of three meters. The prayer hall is connected to two arches that span the length of the hall from the north and south. These elongated structures, with their girth-shaped arched covers supported by two pilasters, are reminiscent of the side naves of three-nave basilicas. The floors in the adjacent rooms are significantly lower than the floor in the main hall. The absence of connections at the wall joints suggests that the main and side parts of the monument originate from different periods. The western corridor, which houses the stairs leading to the temple, is separated from the adjacent areas by an arched opening. The temple was constructed using river stone and lime mortar. This temple has a two-slope roof, characteristic of basilica-type Christian temples. The building's spatial structure has various heights throughout: the high central part (about 6.5 m in volume), the relatively low western part, and the even lower side parts sequentially follow one another. Upon examining the original structure of the temple, one observes its architectural style to be simple and undecorated, in line with early Christian monuments [Məmmədova G., Məmmədova Z., 2013, s.260; Карахмедова, 1986, с.20-21]. Pottery jars were installed in the corners of the temple walls to fine-tune the acoustics. Upon surveying the surrounding area, remnants of a stone fence and other structures can be seen. According to A.Garaahmadova, the foundation of this temple dates back to the early Middle Ages, with the galleries built between the 7th and 8th centuries [Карахмедова, 1986, с.20-21].

The remains of a third temple were found three kilometers from the Pipan temples, at the peak of a very tall mountain in the wooded area known as Bukhovlu (Fig. 3). All that survives of the Bukhovlu temple are its fallen walls; its roof has been entirely destroyed. This temple, larger than the other two in terms of size, includes a pair of pilasters in the center and a large hall with a girth-shaped arch. Unlike the second

temple, the pilasters in this temple are T-shaped and not only support the arch, but also hold the arches running along the wall in the longitudinal direction. This temple consists of a single nave, a semi-circular apse, and galleries on three sides. It has a rectangular shape. The inner room (12.4x5.5 m) is divided by pilasters, which were also made of bricks. The surviving walls' arches were made of bricks that measured 25x25x4 cm. The apse consists of two circular and two rectangular shelves. Large circular shelves are located 1.5 m above the floor. The other shelves are 1.4 and 1.3 meters high, and the temple's apse is elevated above the floor. The apses are visible as a result of the cleaning of the gallery's eastern part [Карахмедова, 1986, с.21]. There are two chapels, circular in plan, inside the wall at the corner of the altar apse. On the north side, the rectangular shelf surrounding the gallery and the wall have been cleared. It was added after the gallery was constructed. Openings on the north, south, and west provide a connection with the corridors that surround the central hall. The plan shows that the passage is not separated, and is designed as a three-way corridor [Məmmədova G., Məmmədova Z., 2013, s.261]. Additional building remnants were also discovered while examining the temple's surroundings. The monument was constructed using river stones and bricks, with tiles used to cover the roof. Based on her research, A.Garaahmadova has dated the monument to the 7th and 8th centuries [Карахмедова, 1986, с.21].

However, M.Khalilov argued that the monument dates back to the 50s and 60s of the 10th century, considering that the Bukhovlu temple was built using small-sized square baked bricks [Xəlilov, 2011, s.164].

The dome architecture, which began to evolve between the 5th and 7th centuries, prompted a resurgence of already developed types, albeit with minor modifications, persisting until the end of the early Middle Ages. Domed basilicas, halls, and "simple cross" type smaller temples were constructed, while cross-domed temples with chapels on all four sides began to take shape.

Among the examples of temples in Caucasian Albania in the final stage of the early Middle Ages are the "simple cross" type temples, differing not by shared architectural elements but by the structure of the dome [Məmmədova G., Məmmədova Z., 2013, s.161-162].

The Albanian temple in the village of Kabizdara offers the most distinctive example of this type of temple (Fig. 4). A ruined temple is located at the confluence of the Kilsachay and Murovchay rivers, in the northern part of the Kabizdara village in the Zagatala district. The church is situated on the road to Dagestan, nestled in the forest, in the flat part of the mountain [Карахмедова, 1986, с.22; Гаджиева, 2011, с.83]. River stones were used to construct the church's walls, with bricks utilized in the covering. G.G.Mammadova notes that the temple's doors and windows are framed with carved stone, whereas according to A.Garaahmadova, the doors, windows, and shelves are made of lime. Gradually collapsing, the dome of the temple fell. The entrance to this one-room temple is from the south side, and its illumination is carried out through the windows located on the western wall of the temple. G.G.Mammadova noted that the altar apse is located in the east direction, semicircular from the inside and pentagonal from the outside, according to A.Garaahmadova, the altar apse has nine ledges [Мамедова, 2004, с.95; Məmmədova G., Məmmədova Z., 2013, s.262; Карахмедова, 1986, с.22]. The temple's room measures 7.7 m in length and 6 m in width, with walls constructed from flat river stones. The roof of the temple was built with bricks measuring 21x21x5 cm, while the lower parts of the church walls were constructed with rectangular bricks measuring 40x21(23)x5 cm and 36x23x5 cm. On the east wall of the temple's left wing, there is a relatively small shelf [Карахмедова,1986, с.22].

Over time, the temple's dome collapsed inward. This single-hall temple has its entrance on the south side, while windows on the western wall of the temple provide illumination. While G.Mammadova noted that the altar apse faces east and is semi-circular on the inside and pentagonal on the outside, A.Garaahmadova pointed out that the altar apse has nine-fold outcrops [Мамедова, 2004, с.95; Məmmədova G., Məmmədova Z., 2013, s.262; Карахмедова,1986, с.22]. The altar in the temple is lit by three small windows that expand inward. This type of lighting is found in all churches up to the beginning of the 20th century. The altar apse causes the eastern arm of the church to be significantly longer than the others. The temple's cornice, typical of Middle Age temples, consists of five rows of brick masonry stacked one on top of the other. This

small church in Kabizdara represents one of the most unique examples of "simple cross" type temples [Məmmədova G., Məmmədova Z., 2013, s.263].

The Kabizdara temple has been dated by various researchers to different periods: G.Mammadova to the 8th and 9th centuries [Мамедова, 2004, с.97], V.Karimov to the 5th and 6th centuries [Керимов, 2008, с.30-32], and M.Khalilov to the seventh and eighth centuries [Xəlilov, 2011, s.139].

Near the village of Orta Zayzid, situated in the northern part of the Sheki district, lie the remnants of a temple bearing the same name (Fig. 5) [Карахмедова, 1986, с.19; Керимов, 2008, с.18; Məmmədova G., Məmmədova Z., 2013, s.263]. The Zayzid temple is a small, slightly elongated, cross-shaped building. All arms of the church, except for the eastern one, are rectangular, while a semi-circular apse occupies the temple's eastern arm. The western arm is longer than the eastern because it accommodates the entrance door [Мамедова, 2004, с.97]. In the apse of the temple, there are three windows, and each arm of the cross also has a window. The temple's window niches are 1.5 meters high, and one of them is 0.4 meters wide. Pilasters, up to 0.5 m wide, the chapiter of which consists of a rectangular plate, were built at the corners of the cross. The western arm, which is longer than the others, is where the temple's entrance is located. The door space here is up to 0.9 m wide and 1.8 m high [Керимов, 2008, с.14-15]. According to A.Garaahmadova, the temple is not very large, is cross-domed, and has a relatively protruding pentagonal apse; the arms of the cross in the temple lead to arched wall shelves [Карахмедова, 1986, с.19]. G.Mammadova categorizes the Zayzid temple as a free-cross type church [Мамедова, 2004, с.97]. In agreement with A.Garaahmadova, V.Karimov also considers this temple to be a cross-domed church [Керимов, 2008, с.14-15].

The final phase of early medieval architecture in Caucasian Albania was characterized by several known churches designed in the "simple cross" style. These structures distinguish themselves not only through their overall composition but also their layout. Notably, a significant number of churches with a basic cruciform design were constructed across various provinces of Caucasian Albania and in other Christian countries. This architectural trend gained even more prominence in the South Caucasus from the 7th century onwards. As previously noted, the inception of churches in the "simple cross" style is closely linked to cruciform pagan monuments. Intriguingly, this cruciform layout extends to mausoleums, which are illustrative of later periods of Islamic architecture in Azerbaijan. Notably, the tomb chambers in mausoleums such as Barda (1322), Sharafan (13th century), Ashagi Veysalli (14th century), and Khachin Darbandli (14th century) were designed in the shape of a cross. The Shakir Agha Mausoleum in Absheron from the 14th–15th century serves as an illustrative instance of this phenomenon. Remarkably, this mausoleum features not only a tomb chamber shaped like a cross but also follows a cruciform layout. In "free cross" style Albanian temples, the positioning of the altar in the eastern wing enables a relatively elongated structure, whereas in cruciform Muslim mausoleums, all sides of the cross typically maintain equal dimensions [Мамедова, 2004, с.190-199].

Given the deep-rooted connection between the early medieval Albanian architectural practices and the traditions of Antiquity, the development of either simplified or intricate variations of Christian monuments was not time-bound, but rather contingent upon factors such as the significance of the structure, its location, costs, and other considerations. Christian temples were predominantly constructed by drawing inspiration from the architectural forms of basilicas, vaulted halls, and circular buildings from the era of Antiquity. In contrast to these, the middle-domed, cruciform ("free cross"), and three-hall types of temples were emerging as novel forms. The wide chronological span of monuments of the same type facilitated their connection with diverse architectural forms, giving rise to new variations and temples constructed in blended styles. One illustrative example is the creation of the domed basilica, a synthesis of basilica and domed structures.

During the initial phase, the simplicity of temple designs and the absence of windows were seen by experts as an endeavor to evoke an essence of "divine darkness". In our perspective, the architectural choice for such temple structures likely aimed to enhance their defensibility.

The cross-domed composition persisted in later Albanian-Christian architecture. Notably, examples like the Chudullu Bina temple (16th century) in Zagatala and the Kurmuk temple, initially established in the 1st–3rd centuries and rebuilt in the 19th century, showcase this architectural approach.

It's worth noting that the construction of cross-domed churches in Caucasian Albania began around the 5th–6th centuries. This architectural trend gained widespread traction throughout the region from the 8th century onward. These churches were designed with a cross-shaped layout, featuring auxiliary chambers at each corner and crowned by a central high dome atop the intersection of the cross.

Upon thorough analysis, the temples discussed in the article emerge as cruciform or cruciform-domed local Albanian temples. The temples that appeared in later periods evolved from the foundation of the cross-domed local Albanian temples, retaining distinct architectural features inherent to Albanian design.

There is scarcity of information about the earliest architectural structures and traditions of Caucasian Albania. This is due to the limited availability of sources from that era, as well as the fact that the churches built in later periods often reused the sites of older places of worship, and in some instances, were erected directly atop the foundations of former temples. In essence, Albanian monuments and architecture have consistently stood distinct from their counterparts in other nations, characterized by their diversity, design richness, and grandeur. This distinction arises from the fact that the churches and monasteries of Caucasian Albania are closely related to the history of Azerbaijan and are an integral part of its heritage.

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Fig. 1. Exterior of the cross-shaped Pipan temple (7th–8th centuries). Yukhari tala village, Zakatala region

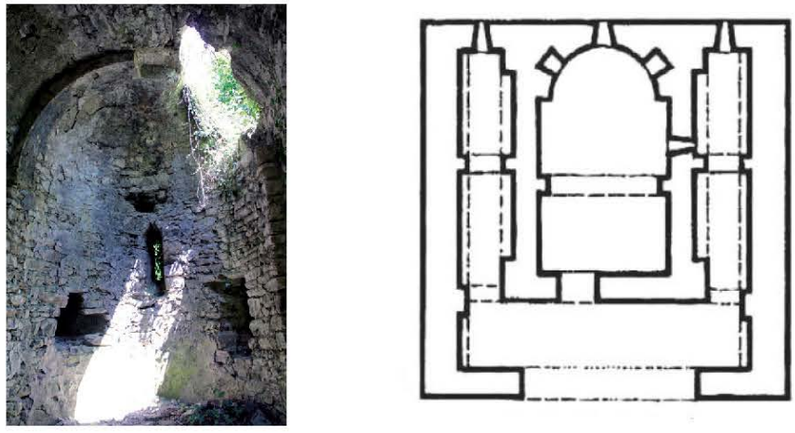


Fig. 2. Interior and plan of the three-hall Pipan temple [Мамедова, 2004, с.91]



Fig. 3. Exterior and plan of the Bukhovlu temple (7th–8th centuries). Zaqatala region [Мамедова, 2004, с.94]



Fig. 4. Kabizdara temple and its plan (6th century). Zaqatala region [Мамедова, 2004, с.40]



Fig. 5. Exterior, plan and interior of the Orta Zayzid temple. Sheki region [Мамедова, 2004, с.98]

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THE ZANGAZUR BRANCH OF THE KARABAKH ARCHITECTURAL SCHOOL

Abstract. The 12th–13th centuries are considered the renaissance period of the Great Seljuk Empire in Azerbaijan. In Azerbaijan, the leading artistic ornaments of the architecture from Ganja to Qazvin became famous under the name "Seljuk style" or "Seljuk architectural decor" and found their reflection in scientific literature. This can also be traced on the architectural monuments in Karabakh and, at the same time, in the Zangazur region.

The 13th–15th centuries of the Karabakh architectural school, considered to be the advanced branch of the Arran architectural school, are associated with the name of the master architect Ali Majdeddin. Research has shown that the unique style of his architectural school extends like a red line from Anatolia to Nakhchivan, present-day Armenia, Zangazur, Karabakh, and up to Beylagan. Then (in the 16th–18th centuries), a new construction and architectural style appears in Karabakh and also in Zangazur. This is associated with the name of the talented architect Sheikh Bahaeddin. We recall that monuments belonging to Sheikh Bahaeddin's architectural school are found in Zangazur as well as in Iravan, Karabakh, and the Ganja region. The influence of Sheikh Bahaeddin's architectural school continued until the end of the 18th century. Afterward, this architectural school is continued by the talented Eastern architect Karbalayi Safikhan from Karabakh. While in the 19th and 20th centuries the eclecticism of Western architecture had a strong influence on all regions of Azerbaijan, it could hardly affect the architecture of the Karabakh and Zangazur regions. This is due to the strength and power of the Safikhan architectural school.

Keywords: Architectural schools, architectural tradition, architectural style, architectural uniqueness



In Azerbaijan, the 12th–13th centuries are considered the renaissance period of the Great Seljuk Empire. During this time, there was a rise in the empire's politics, economics, culture, fine arts, and particularly in its architecture. It is no coincidence that in Azerbaijan, the leading artistic ornaments of the architecture, extending from Ganja to Qazvin, have become famous under the name "Seljuk style" or "Seljuk architectural decor" and have found their reflection in scientific literature [Arseven, 1984, s.395]. This trend

was not only in Azerbaijan, but also prominently displayed in the Greater Turkish art, including the architecture and fine arts of Central Asia, Iran, and Iraq. This can be traced in the architectural monuments in Karabakh and the Zangazur region as well. Monuments like the eleven-roomed Bugukar shrine (8th century) in the Megri region, the Cinar, Hasan, Albendi, Kleytan, Bahaci shrines, and the Shah Abbas caravanserai located on the Karchevan (Kirxchivan) plain are of this type. However, in this context, the personal creative style of master artisans leading the local architectural school also holds exceptional importance. Of course, we can speak not only about the overall regional, but also about the creativity of individual master architects and the architectural school they led. While any architectural school led by a master artist has its own specific features, they have also been closely tied to the regional architectural school. In this respect, the 13th–15th centuries of Karabakh architectural school, considered to be the advanced branch of the Arran architectural school, are associated with the name of the master architect Ali Majdeddin. (Fig. 1). Of course, to provide more comprehensive information about this architect's school, the tradition of the architectural heritage he created, the construction techniques, and stylistic uniqueness should be scientifically analyzed. Along with this, tracing the chronological succession of the architect's creative biography is also a crucial requirement. Let's immediately note that our information about the architect's life is quite sparse. This is because the name of the architect has only survived on the inscription of a single mausoleum. This mausoleum is located in the village of Mammadbeyli in the Zangilan district (Fig. 2).



Fig. 1. Architect Ali Majdeddin. 13th century. Drawing by R.Garabagli



Fig. 2. General view of the Mammadbeyli mausoleum, its inscription above the portal and the inscription plate

Unfortunately, as in Turkey, Central Asia, Iran, and Iraq, so far, we have not come across a second inscription bearing the name Ali Majdeddin in Zangazur, Karabakh, and Nakhchivan regions. Therefore, by researching and analyzing the artistic connections between the mausoleum in the village of Mammadbeyli

and other monuments in different territories, we have tried to shed light on the existence of his architectural school.

During the research, it became clear that the stylistic uniqueness of his architectural school extends like a red line from Anatolia to Nakhchivan, present-day Armenia, Zangazur, Karabakh, and up to Beylagan. It was also confirmed that Ali Majdeddin studied the Turkish and Nakhchivan architectural schools that existed before him, was inspired by them, and used them in a novel way in his creations. This is evident in the many caravanserais, mosques, and mausoleums in Anatolia, the mausoleums in Nakhchivan (Momine Khatun, Yusif ibn Kuseyir), the Pir Hussein mausoleum in the village of Jafarabad in Western Azerbaijan (now Armenia) (Fig. 3), the caravanserais in Deraleyez (Selim (Fig. 4), Agkend (Fig. 5), Sinig (Fig. 6)), and also in the octagonal mausoleums in the village of Demirchiler in Gubadli district (Fig. 7), in the village of Gurjuler of the same district, the Sheikh Baba shrine in the village of Shiklar in Jabrayil district, the octagonal and circular mausoleums in the villages of Khudayarli and Dag Tumas, the "Sheikh Babi Yaqub" (Fig. 8) in the village of Babi in Fuzuli district, the Arqali mauseloum (Fig. 9) in the village of Ahmadalilar, the Mirali mausoleum in the village of Veysalli (Fig. 10), the mausoleum in the village of Sherifan in the Zangilan district, and finally, the mausoleum of Yahya ibn Muhammad in the village of Mammadbeyli, on which the architect's name is written.



Fig. 3. Pir Hussein mausoleum



Fig. 4. General view of Selim caravanserai, its inscription and interior

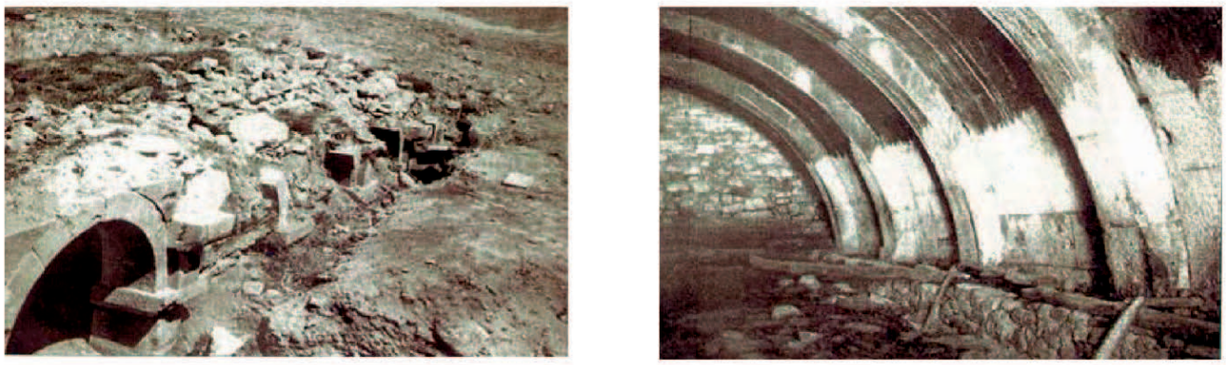


Fig. 5. Agkend caravanserai and its interior



Fig. 6. Sinig caravanserai



Fig. 7. Demirchiler mausoleum



Fig. 8. Sheikh Babi Yaqub mausoleum. 13th century



Fig. 9. Ahmadalilar mausoleum

Certainly, it would not be correct to emphasize that the monuments mentioned above were built by Ali Majdeddin himself, building upon the fact that their construction periods coincide and their architecture is similar. However, based on these or other construction and architectural uniqueness, as well as their



Fig. 10. General view of the Mirali mausoleum

construction in the same place and time, these monuments can be attributed to the architectural school of Ali Majdeddin.

Scientific analysis of many monuments, both mentioned and not mentioned above, shows that although Ali Majdeddin was inspired by architecture in various areas, he was mainly one of the artists who kept alive the Seljuk architectural style. This is evident in all the monuments named above. Their artistic architectural details, especially the "three-leaf" type stalactites in the portal and cornice, are very similar to the cornices and portals of caravanserais, mosques, and mausoleums built on the Aksaray-Kayseri, Konya-Aksaray, Karatay-Malatya and other Anatolian roads in Turkey. This line of his, more precisely, the "signature" (seal) indicating the location of the architectural work, is visible in all the monuments mentioned above.

Interestingly, the Pir Hussein mausoleum, dated to the 15th century and located in the village of Jafarabad in present-day Armenia, is one of the most magnificent mausoleums that embodies the creative style of the Ali Majdeddin architectural school. Its entire cornice is bordered with stalactites characteristic of the Ali Majdeddin architectural school. It's worth noting that such foresight of the architect can be found in the works of artists who lived and created after him. For example, the unique portals of the architect Sheikh Bahaeddin (Fig. 11), who lived and created about four centuries after Ali Majdeddin, or the "cypress" shaped and octagonal stone columns in all the works of the talented architect Karbalayi Safikhan Karabagi (Fig. 12), who lived and created in Karabakh six centuries later, can serve as examples.



Fig. 11. Architect Sheikh Bahaeddin



Fig. 12. Architect Karbalayi Safikhan Karabagi Drawing by R.Garabagli

Research shows that in the 13th century, not only in Zangazur and Karabakh, but also in all of Azerbaijan, a stagnation occurred in architecture. This was related to the Mongol invasion. However, after the Mongol invasion (1239), with the emergence of the architectural school of Ali Majdeddin, the architecture of Zangazur and the Arasbar area of Karabakh revived again, started its rise, and retained its strength until the 15th century. Afterwards (in the 16th–18th centuries), a new construction and architectural style emerges in Karabakh and Zangazur. This is associated with the name of the talented architect Sheikh Bahaeddin.

Recall that monuments belonging to the architectural school of Sheikh Bahaeddin are found not only in Zangazur, but also in Iravan, Karabakh, and the Ganja region. Zangazur caravanserais, bridges, Shah Abbas mosque in Iravan (Fig. 13), a number of neighborhood mosques, caravanserais, hammams, palaces, residential and other buildings, Shah Abbas mosque (Fig. 14), hammam (Fig. 15), caravanserai (Fig. 16) in Ganja, Shah Abbas caravanserai in the Gargabazar village of the Fuzuli district (Fig. 17), Juma Mosque in the Yanikh village of the Tovuz district (Fig. 18) are the heritage of the Sheikh Bahaeddin architectural school. The ornate portals and central domes on the main facade of these monuments are identical to the monuments in Ganja and Iravan. Research shows that this construction and architectural style can be felt on monuments built afterward. The Ozan mosque (Fig. 19) and the Kazakhlar mosque in Ganja, the village mosque in Gizilhajili of Goranboy (Fig. 20), and others are such monuments.

Recall that the influence of the Sheikh Bahaeddin architectural school lasted until the end of the 18th century. From this time on, a new architectural school makes itself known here. This architectural school is associated with the name of the talented architect of the East, Karbalayi Safikhan Karabagi [Qarabağlı, 1995].

Karbalayi Safikhan Karabagi, the son of Sultan Hussein, a builder, was born in Karabakh in 1817 and died in Shusha in 1910. He is buried in Shusha's "Mirza Hasan" cemetery – next to the graves of his sons. The architect, who lived a worthy life of 93 years, was awarded the word Karbalayi in front of his name after visiting Karbala, and the word Karabagi at the end of his name after establishing his own architectural school in Karabakh. The architect's early education and work experience were in Shusha. For a while, he was a close assistant to his father and had a deep understanding of the secrets of folk architecture. The talented architect became famous not only in Karabakh but all over the East in his youth. This is why, in 1870, Karbalayi Safikhan was invited to Odessa to build a "Tatars" mosque for Muslims there, and in 1880, on his way back from a trip to Karbala, he was invited to Ashgabat and built the "Karabaglar" mosque there.



Fig. 13. Shah Abbas Mosque in Iravan

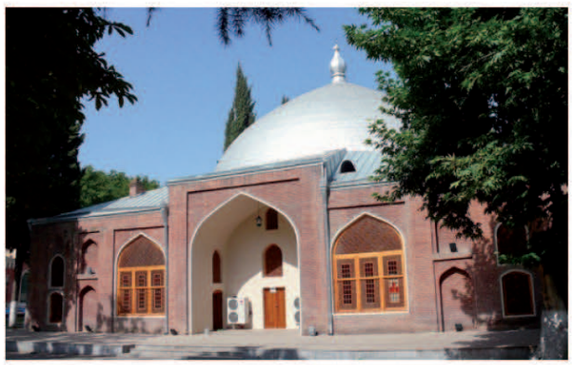


Fig. 14. Shah Abbas Mosque in Ganja

As is known, Karabakh, an integral part of Azerbaijan, has been turned into a battlefield by numerous foreign invaders throughout history. This has inflicted substantial damage on its economy and cultural monuments. However, despite this, palatial residential buildings, caravanserais, mosques, and other

structures with beautiful architecture in Karabakh have survived to the present day. A significant portion of these structures were built in the late 19th and early 20th centuries by the famous architect Karbalayi Safikhan Karabagi and his construction teams. A study of the architect's creative activity revealed that he was intimately familiar with the folk architecture that had been developed before him, and with the styles of the architectural schools active in Muslim countries. At the same time, he had a good grasp of the progressive traditions of local folk architecture. The architect, who built his artistic ability on such a strong foundation, created his own unique school of architecture. Safikhan, possessing fine taste and innate talent, brought a novelty to each building he constructed and paid special attention to all the requirements arising from the climatic conditions of the place where the buildings were constructed, as well as from the context of time and space. The use of identically shaped stone columns in all his buildings, the constructive beauty rather than decorative interiors, as well as the installation of special verandas and balconies for women, are considered characteristic features of his creativity. Of course, the activities of the Safikhan architectural school, rich in such high architectural qualities, are not limited to Karabakh alone. As mentioned above, his architectural monuments are also found in countries neighboring Azerbaijan. It goes without saying that the artistic composition ideas of the Karbalayi Safikhan Karabagi architectural school have had some influence on the architecture of these countries. On the other hand, while the eclecticism of Western architecture strongly influenced all regions of Azerbaijan in the 19th and 20th centuries, it was barely able to influence the architecture of the Karabakh region. This is due to the power and strength of the Safikhan architectural school.



Fig. 15. Chokak hammam in Ganja



Fig.16. Shah Abbas caravanserai in Ganja



Fig. 17. Shah Abbas caravanserai in Gargabazar village, Fuzuli district



Fig. 18. Mosque in Yanikh village, Tovuz district

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Fig. 19. Ozan mosque in Ganja



Fig. 20. Mosque in Gizilhajili village, Goranboy district

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KILVAR CHURCH

Abstract. This article focuses on the Christian church located in Kilvar village of Shabran district. The village derives its name from the Kilvars, who were among the Christian population of Albania. It is believed that the Kilvars embraced Christianity during the Albanian era. Until recently, the Kilvars, who spoke Armenian, also conversed in Tat and Azerbaijani languages. The construction of the Kilvar church likely took place no later than the late 15th or early 16th century.

Keywords: Christianity, church, archaeological research, door and window openings, epigraphic materials

The Christian population of Kilvar village (184 individuals) is mentioned as early as 1831 in the "Description of Quba province", compiled by recorder A.Khotyanovsky [Xotyanovski, 2008, s.366-369]. In addition to Christian (Armenian) names, Turkish names were also recorded among the male and female residents of this settlement, which was part of the Sheshpara district and had an entirely Christian population. Some of these names included Aghasi, Qaragada, Aghibughan, Babai (Babay), Khudabakhish, Bakhshi, Giygul, and other male names. Examples of female names are Altaran (Alatoran), Aghtaran (Aghtoran), Nazan, Khanum, Nazli, Oghlangarak, Anagiz, Aytoran, Katan, and others. The name Oghlangarak can be interpreted as a two-word sentence. This female name has Turkmen origins. Considering this, it can be presumed that the Christian Kilvars also spoke the Azerbaijani language.

The initial archaeological investigations into Christian monuments in the area of Kilvar village were conducted by R.B.Goyushov during the Soviet era. Goyushov excavated a group of Christian earth graves and studied them, and documented notable characteristics of the Kilvar church [Гейшев, 1984, с.106, 117].

The Christian graves discovered in the forest north of the village revealed skeletons positioned facing the southeast, lying on their backs with their hands crossed over their abdomen. In grave No. 11, an iron knife was found. This knife exhibits a slight curve and elongated shape, tapering towards both the handle and the tip of the blade. The blade measures 17 cm in length and 1.5-1.7 cm in width. Comparing it with similar artifacts, the knife is estimated to date back to the 8th–10th centuries [Гейшев, 1984, с.117]. This discovery suggests the possibility of a church's existence in the area during that time period.

The engraved stone on the eastern wall of the Kilvar church, documented by R.B.Goyushov, generated significant interest [Гейшев, 1984, с.106]. Considering the stone is no longer extant, we feel it is important to discuss it thoroughly. This local gray tuff stone measured 1.6 m in length, 0.7 m in width, and 0.2 m in thickness. The upper portion of the composition, framed by a masonry-shaped geometric pattern, featured a cross at the top. To the left of the cross was a depiction of the sun, while to the right was a representation of a crescent. Below the cross, there was an equestrian figure facing to the right, and in front of it, a pedestrian figure also facing to the right. The mounted warrior was depicted sitting in a saddle, gripping the

horse's reins with his left hand while holding a long spear in his right hand, which was folded. The length of the spear image measured 0.56 m. Positioned at the waist on the left side, there was an illustration of a sword handle. The cavalryman wore a triangular helmet on his head, culminating in a pointed protrusion. The bearded man depicted in front of the cavalryman measured 0.21 m in height and was wearing long garments. The man had a cone-shaped helmet on his head, and both of his hands were positioned behind his back. R.B.Goyushov suggests that the depicted individuals represent a horseback warrior and his captive [Гейшев, 1984, с.106]. It can be assumed that the Kilvar church might have been constructed at the order of the late equestrian warrior. However, it is noteworthy that during the Partav (Barda) church council in 704/5, led by the Albanian Catholicos Simeon I, paragraphs 4 and 5 of the law explicitly forbade horsemen and other warriors from possessing churches and monasteries [Xəlilov, 2009, s.240].

The church can be accessed through three doors situated on the north, south, and west walls. Each door is positioned in the middle of the respective wall (Plan 1, 4; Fig. 1, 2). These doors were constructed in an oblong rectangular shape, with the upper part featuring a semicircular design reminiscent of a horseshoe. The northern door stands at a height of 2.90 m and has a width of 1.65 m, with its wall measuring 1.13 m in thickness. The western door has a width of 1.65 m, with its wall measuring 1 m in thickness. Lastly, the southern door has a width of 1.60 m, with its wall measuring 1.30 m in thickness.

The interior of the hall is illuminated by windows (Plan 2, 3). Positioned above each door is a circular window opening. Additionally, each door is accompanied by two adjacent rectangular window openings, one on the right side and one on the left side. The upper semicircular portion of these windows aligns with the circular window, while their rectangular sections extend downward to the level of the horseshoe-shaped part of the door. The width of the window on the right side of the southern door measures 0.98 m, while the window on the left side measures 0.95 m. Each window opening measures 1.20 m in depth. Opposite to the oblong window openings in the north and south walls, there are imitation window openings with brickwork at the same level and shape as the actual windows. These imitations serve as decorative architectural elements. All window openings, including the imitations, are adorned with rectangular brick frames that feature distinctive embossing. The lower horizontal section of the circular window frames is relatively wide and extends outward from the frame on both sides.

The exteriors of the walls where the temple entrances are located showcase distinct elements. On the north wall, the window imitations exhibit a rhombic pattern formed by three brick elements arranged in different configurations within the frame. In contrast, the south wall lacks this particular pattern. Moreover, on the north wall, at the level of the upper horseshoe-shaped section of the door opening, a cornice separates the area containing the windows and their imitations from the lower part of the wall, which is almost the same height. The cornice, adorned with embossed bricks, remains intact along the north wall except for where the northern temple south door stands (Plan 2, 3). Below the cornice, a rectangular area is present on the surface of the north wall beneath each window and window imitation. This area is outlined by recessed lines and serves as architectural decoration. The rectangular area below the window imitations is longer horizontally compared to the corresponding area below the actual windows, despite having the same height. The cornice gracefully extends from the north wall to the west wall at the same level, only interrupted by the presence of the door. From there, it seamlessly traverses along the south wall. The west wall stands apart from the north and south walls due to the absence of window imitations. Instead, it has oblong windows. This variation is due to the relatively shorter length of the west wall compared to the others.

Research findings reveal that during various stages of construction and restoration, some reconstruction efforts were carried out on the east wall of the church. Notably, the lower section of the circular window within the apse, positioned between two oblong windows (one in the prothesis and another in the diaconicon), underwent subsequent dismantling. The plastering observed on the sides of the extended downward portion of the window suggests that the bottom of the window was intentionally shaped this way by the builder, rather than being a result of deterioration or crumbling. The reconstruction

work on the east wall could have served two purposes: 1) to enhance the illumination of the apse, and 2) to create an additional entrance for direct access to the apse from the outside. Similar to the west wall, there are no window imitations on the east wall for the same reason. However, due to the collapse of the lower sections of the east and south walls of the church, with a portion remaining underground, it becomes challenging to identify specific elements of the building accurately.

The construction of the Kilvar church incorporated rectangular baked bricks of various dimensions, such as 27x12x5 cm and 25x12x5 cm, among others [Xəlilov, Cəfərova, 2017, s.296]. Similar-sized baked bricks have been found in other historical sites, including the early medieval Mingachevir (27.5x17.5x6.5 cm) [Xəlilov, 2009, s.48] and the medieval Sandigtepe I (25x14x6 cm, 23x15x6.5 cm). Inside the church, the walls were smoothly plastered and whitewashed with lime. However, unlike the inner side, the outer side of the walls was left unplastered.

The Kilvar church features a semicircular apse in its eastern section, as in other Christian churches. The apse remains within the rectangular boundaries of the structure. Adjacent to the apse, to the north, is the prothesis, while the diaconicon is situated on the south side. Both these pastophoria are constructed in rectangular shapes. The rectangular stone slabs placed above the door openings from the prothesis and diaconicon to the hall bear two inscriptions [Xəlilov, Cəfərova, 2017, s.295]. The seven-line inscription on the entrance of the prothesis has worn away over time, rendering it illegible. On the other hand, the nine-line Armenian inscription above the door of the diaconicon remains well-preserved. Above both the prothesis and diaconicon entrances, there are niches above the inscriptions. The upper portion of these niches adopts a semicircular shape, while the lower part is rectangular in form.

The diaconicon measures 3.65 m in length and 1.60 m in width. Its door opens towards the west, while the oblong window faces eastward. The entrance to the diaconicon stands at a height of 2.10 m, with the door itself measuring 1.75 m in height, 1.07 m in width, and 0.55 m in depth. The window opening spans a width of 0.97 m and has a depth of 1.10 m.

The prothesis has dimensions of 3 m in length and 1.65 m in width. The oblong window in the room opens to the east, while the door opens to the west. The overall height of the entrance, including the inscribed stone, is 2.30 m. The door itself has a height of 1.95 m, a width of 1.20 m, and a depth of 0.55 m. The window opening measures 0.97 m in width and 1.10 m in depth.

The apse of the altar has a length of 3.60 m and a width of 2.70 m. The window in the apse, opening to the east, measures 1 m in width and 1.10 m in depth. There is one niche in each of the north and south walls of the apse, facing each other. The southern niche is 1.20 m wide, 1.10 m high, and 0.25 m deep, while the northern niche measures 1 m in width, 1.20 m in height, and 0.25 m in depth.

The distance from the western door to the apse in the church measures 10.75 m. The total length of the interior, including the apse, spans 14.35 m, and the width is 7 m.

Close to the south wall of the hall, there is a rectangular baked-brick column. This column, designed to support the drum, measures 0.65 m in width and 0.85 m in height. The top of the column is connected to a double arch [Xəlilov, Cəfərova, 2017, s.296]. The distance between the column and the west door measures 2.65 m, while the distance from the north wall to the column is 4.30 m. The width of the passage between the column and the south wall is 1.30 m, while the wider passage between the column and the north wall is 4.30 m wide.

Only the externally octahedral drum with a circular inner surface remains intact from the roof of the church. Each section of the octahedral drum has one window opening [Xəlilov, Cəfərova, 2017, s.296]. The windows are surrounded by convex frames made from bricks. Similarly, the drum sections are bordered by convex frames, which are wider in comparison. The upper part of the windows takes on a semicircular shape, while the lower part maintains a rectangular form (Fig. 2)

Considering that the group of Christian graves unearthed near the Kilvar church is ascribed to the late 15th to early 16th centuries in the scientific literature [Dostiyev, 2001, s.234-235], it can be tentatively concluded that the lower limit of the church's chronological framework aligns with this period. However,

it is also plausible to extend the chronological framework of the church up to the 18th century. These Christian monuments in Kilvar are believed to belong to the Kilvar ethnic group, who embraced Christianity during the Albanian period and subsequently became integrated into the Albanian tribal community.

The Kilvars were involved in various military campaigns as part of the army led by Sanesan, the ruler of the Maskuts. This army comprised nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes. There is speculation that the Kilvars eventually transitioned into the Tat ethnic group [Гейбуллаев, 1991, с.186]. The Kilvar tribe is first mentioned in historical written sources in relation to events that occurred in 337 and later in 450–451 [Тревер, 1959, с.191, 211]. There is a belief that the ethnonym "Kilvar" is reflected in the name of the village of Kilvar in Shabran district [Гейбуллаев, 1991, с.71]. As early as 985/6, the Arab author Al-Maqdisi noted that the city of Shabran had a predominantly Christian population [Минорский, 1963, с.111]. In the work "Tarikh al-Bab" compiled in 1106, while discussing the events of 1067, it is described that during that time, villages near the city of Shabran were subject to looting, and the captured villagers, who were referred to as allies of Muslims in the historical source, had their homes burned and were subjected to crucifixion [Минорский, 1963, с.59, с.111]. V.F.Minorsky concluded that these people residing near Shabran were Christians [Минорский, 1963, с.111].

A monument bearing a remarkable resemblance to the Kilvar church was uncovered in Azad village of the Goygol district. Of particular interest is the fact that, similarly, this church was raised in an area where Christian graves are widespread [Xəlilov, 2009, s.131-132]. The materials recovered from these graves date back to the periods of the 3rd–7th and 13th–15th centuries [Xəlilov, 2009, s.132]. Moreover, the interior layout of the renowned Aghoghlan church bears a striking resemblance to the interior structure of the church situated in Azad village. The internal configuration of the Kilvar church closely mirrors that of the Azad village church (plan 5). Notably, since the Aghoghlan church's name is documented in a historical written source from 844, it's plausible to consider that the church in Azad village might have also been in existence during the 9th century, akin to the Aghoghlan church.

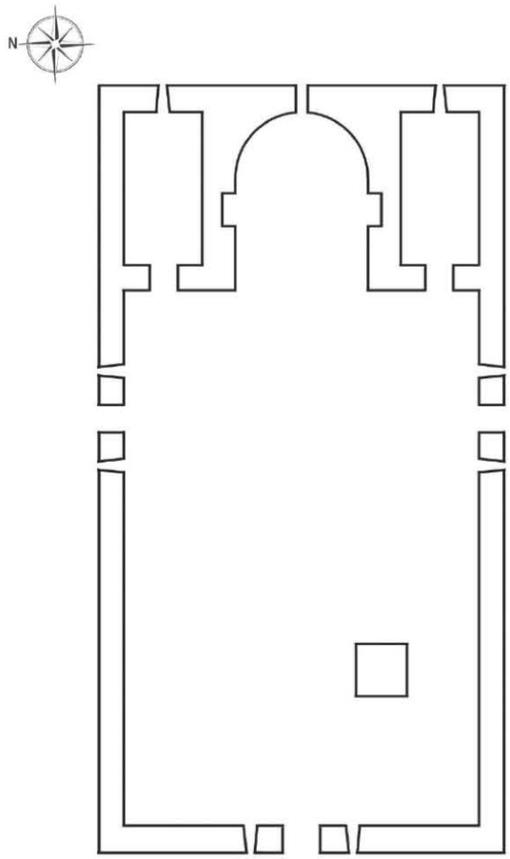
Based on the information provided, it can be confirmed that a Christian population had established itself in the region as early as the 4th to 11th centuries. The authors of the study conducted thorough research on a late medieval Christian church located in the Kilvar village of the Shabran district. This endeavor yielded a groundbreaking outcome – a detailed description of the monument was documented, accompanied by meticulously drawn plans based on precise measurements. Crafted from rectangular fired bricks of different sizes, the studied temple adheres to the architectural style of rectangular, single-nave Christian churches. Albanian churches such as the Aghoglan church and the church in Azad village of the Goygol district share similar features with the Kilvar church. It's worth highlighting that the village of Azad was inhabited by Christian Tats until the end of the 20th century.



Fig. 1. Front view of Kilwar church



Fig. 2. Fragment of the interior of Kilvar church

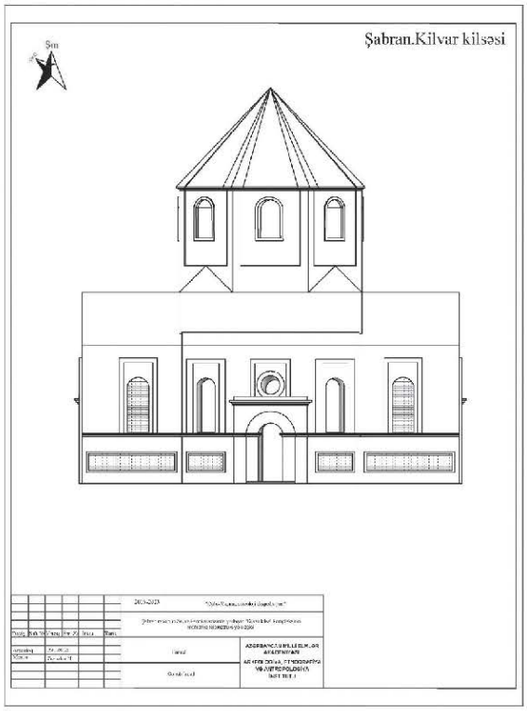


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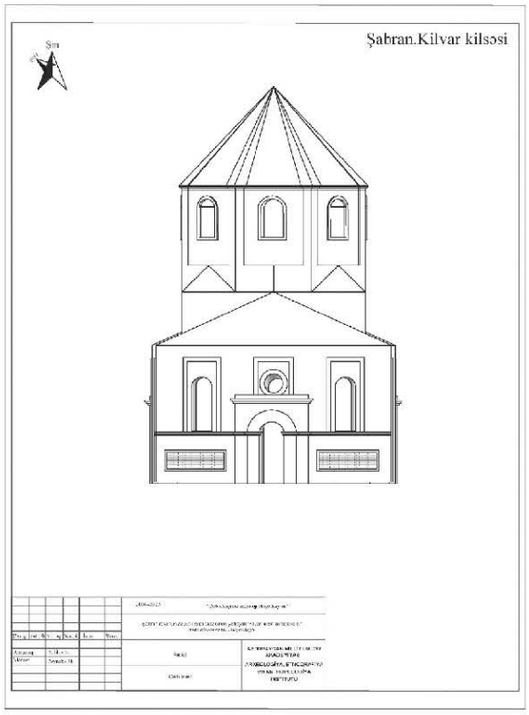
Plan 1. Kilvar church (M.C.Khalilov, E.B.Jafarova)

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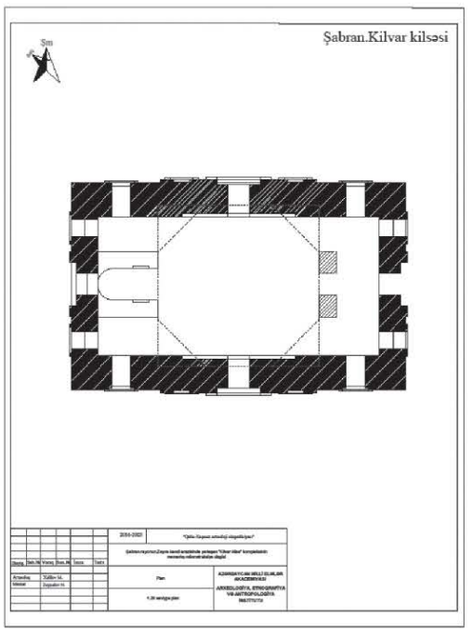
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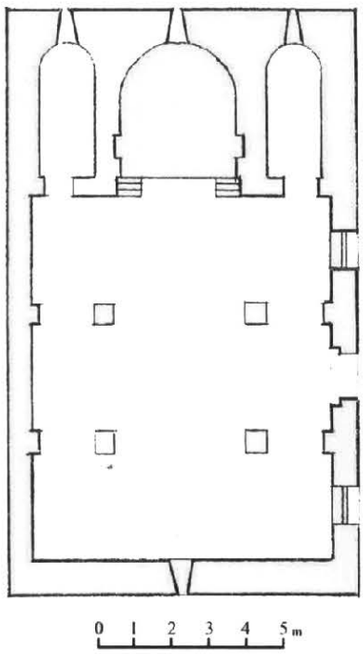
Plan 2. Architect N.Zeynalov



Plan 3. Architect N.Zeynalov



Plan 4. Architect N.Zeynalov



Plan 5. Azad church
(authors – V.G.Kerimov, A.M.Mammadov)

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ANALYTICAL STUDY OF CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS AND MASONRY BINDERS OF ANCIENT ALBANIAN MONUMENTS IN THE TERRITORIES OF KARABAKH LIBERATED FROM OCCUPATION

Abstract. The article explores the issue of dating binding materials, a subject that has recently garnered significant interest from historians, archaeologists, and restorers. Advances in the dating research and analysis of masonry mortars from Albanian monuments have enabled a substantial reduction in the margin of error for dating results.

X-ray diffractograms of lime, gypsum binders, modern cement, and Armenian red tuff–extracted from the walls of ancient Albanian monuments in the Karabakh territories reclaimed from Armenian occupation – demonstrate the potential of utilizing innovative mineralogical, petrographic, and physicochemical methods for studying and restoring the dating and construction technology, and scientifically validating instances of falsification and "Armenization" of Albanian churches as a consequence of Armenian vandalism.

Keywords: Albanian monuments, archaeological mineralogy, methods, falsification, church

The technology of preparing construction and masonry materials for ancient monuments has been widely researched using X-ray diffraction analysis, spectroscopy, electron microscopy, and thermal analysis methods since the beginning of this century. The study of carbonate-containing binders in ancient historical monuments in many countries around the world, using infrared spectroscopy, has yielded a wealth of information about the mineralogical-geochemical composition of the used lime, its genesis, the technology of burning limestone, and the speed and temperature of burning [Археоминералогия и ранняя история минералогии, 2005, s.15]. Building materials of historical monuments, along with their preparation technologies, are extensively studied through various physical research methods, including X-ray diffraction analysis, infrared spectroscopy, electron microscopy, and thermal analysis methods. The examination of ancient Albanian monuments in the liberated territories using innovative mineralogical, petrographic, physico-chemical methods contributes not only to the study of cultural heritage and the restoration and protection of monuments but also to the scientific substantiation of the falsification of monuments as a result of Armenian vandalism.

The liberated lands of Karabakh are rich in ancient historical monuments of the Christian heritage of the Albanian Apostolic Church, and their study is the main goal of this work. The mineral composition of binding mortars and building materials was studied using modern complex physicochemical methods, and the crystallochemical mechanism of the solidification process was revealed, considering structural features. The following results can be obtained from these studies: determining the phase compositions of binding materials and, based on them, formulating recipes for the restoration of ancient monuments; identifying methods for producing binding components used in ancient structures; establishing the crystallochemical mechanism of solidification processes and the manifestation of binding properties; refining the age of ancient monuments with modern physicochemical methods; revealing newly introduced elements and cross-stones in Albanian churches in the liberated lands of Azerbaijan. It should be noted that during the construction of ancient structures in Albanian churches in this region, gaja (a clay-gypsum building material) and lime solutions with the addition of quartz and feldspars were used [Чираков, Алиева и др., 2003, с.92].

The preliminary X-ray and X-ray spectral examination results of the construction materials of a series of ancient Albanian monuments in this area (the Khudavang monastery complex and its walls, the Agoghlan cruciform temple in the Lachin district, tetragonal churches built in the Tug and Hunarli villages of the Khojavend district, and others) indicate that the mineral composition of the binding materials mainly consists of calcite, quartz, feldspar, and various clays.

Craftsmen of the period used similar lime mortars in the construction of other medieval monuments, as well as Albanian Christian monuments.

Limestone and travertine were used to prepare the masonry mortar for these monuments. During the combustion process, limestone breaks down into carbon dioxide – CO_2 and quicklime (CaO). The latter, when quenched with water, forms $Ca(OH)_2$. When slaked lime dries, it reacts with atmospheric CO_2 to form a $CaCO_3$ solution. Slaked lime, obtained during the decomposition of calcite, combines with carbon dioxide in the air, hardens and again turns into a calcium carbonate masonry mortar. This reaction is very important for determining the age of monuments using the ^{14}C radiocarbon method. All inorganic carbon atoms in the solution formed according to this model are formed due to the absorption of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. If exchange with the atmosphere is interrupted as a result of carbon sequestration and solidification of the solution, then the determination of the age of the carbon in the solution corresponds to the determination of the age of the building. All inorganic carbon thus formed in the air consists of atmospheric CO_2, and after fixation there is no exchange with atmospheric carbon. The construction period of such a building can be determined by the rate of decline as a result of the dynamics of the amount of ^{14}C in the air (error 30-40 years). The spread of the binder mortar through the building material occurs in the form of diffusion. To determine newly formed $CaCO_3$ in solution, you can use TL (thermoluminescence) and ESR (electron spin resonance) methods, which are still rarely used [Вагнер, 2006, с.92]. Historians, archaeologists, theologians and conservators can use the results of research conducted by these methods in assessing sacred religious monuments.

Currently, the study of fastenings and building (masonry) materials is the main indicator in determining the age of historical monuments. The ancient craftsmen used local limestone, travertine, sandstone, as well as sediments and river stones from nearby rivers as building materials. Today, when the Albanian Christian heritage is falsified and attributed to the Armenian Gregorian Church, the repetition of age, mineral composition and technology for producing the mother solution poses difficulties due to a number of problems.

The study of carbonate mortars of ancient monuments of Azerbaijan allows us to take into account many practical issues during their restoration: the hardness of masonry mortars should be lower than the hardness of masonry stones and bricks; the ability of masonry mortars to absorb water and water vapor should be greater than that of masonry elements or close to it. These solutions should collect water and various salts and act as a general protective material for building structures, etc.

"There was no compulsion in studying the history of Albania. Historians from different countries have researched the history of Albania, but one thing is clear: Azerbaijanis must deal with the history and fate of Caucasian Albania more than anyone else. In this field, they bear responsibility before world science, and they owe it to the world science".

Prominent Caucasian scholar, Russian historian Y.I.Krupnov





"...Armenians, by artificially converting the indigenous Albanians to Gregorianism, refer to the Azerbaijani lands where they once sought refuge as the 'Land of Hay.' However, scholars point out that even the monuments of the Christian era do not align with the Armenian religion (Gregorianism) or Armenian culture and origin. In fact, the historical-archaeological and architectural study of the Albanian-Christian monuments in Azerbaijan helps to illuminate many characteristics of Christianity".

Georgian Historian A.Chavchavadze





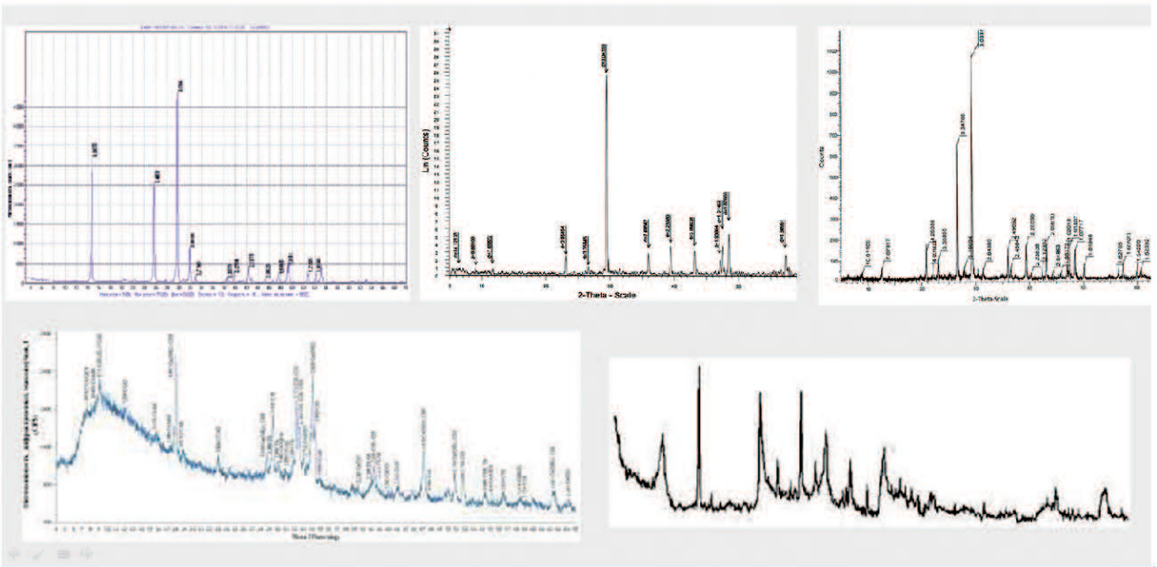


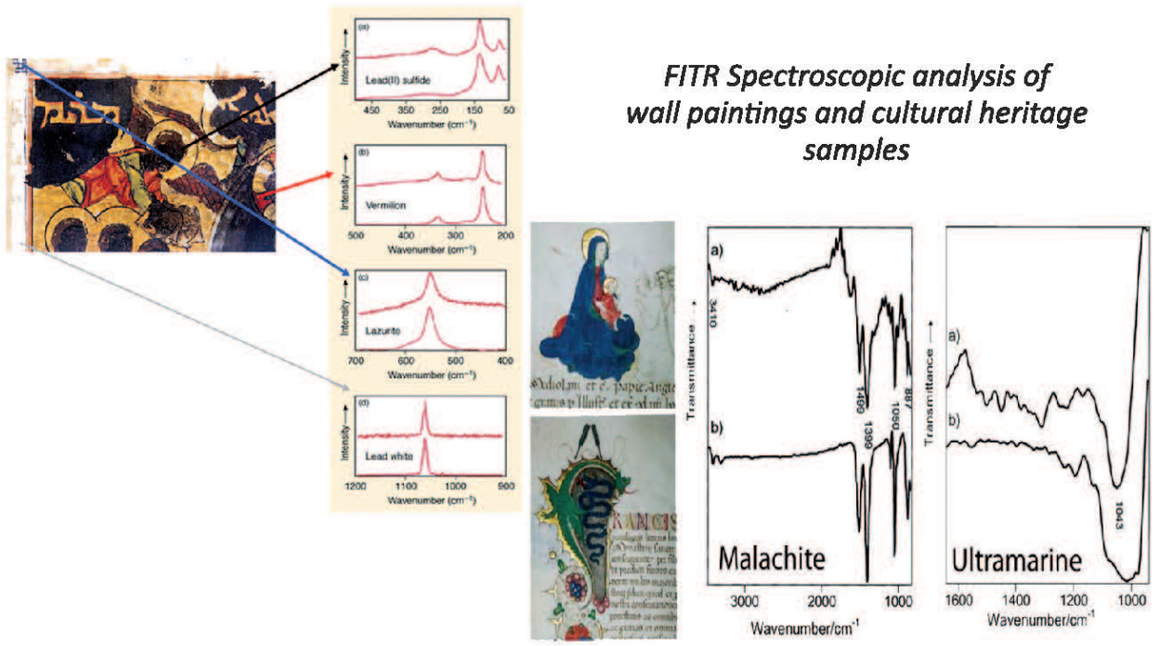




Kalbajar District. Shikahvand Village. Temple Complex

X-ray diffractograms of lime, gypsum binders, modern cement and Armenian red tuff taken from the walls of various monuments





FITR Spectroscopic analysis of wall paintings and cultural heritage samples

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