Azerbaijani Multiculturalism

The Treasure of Ethnic Diversity

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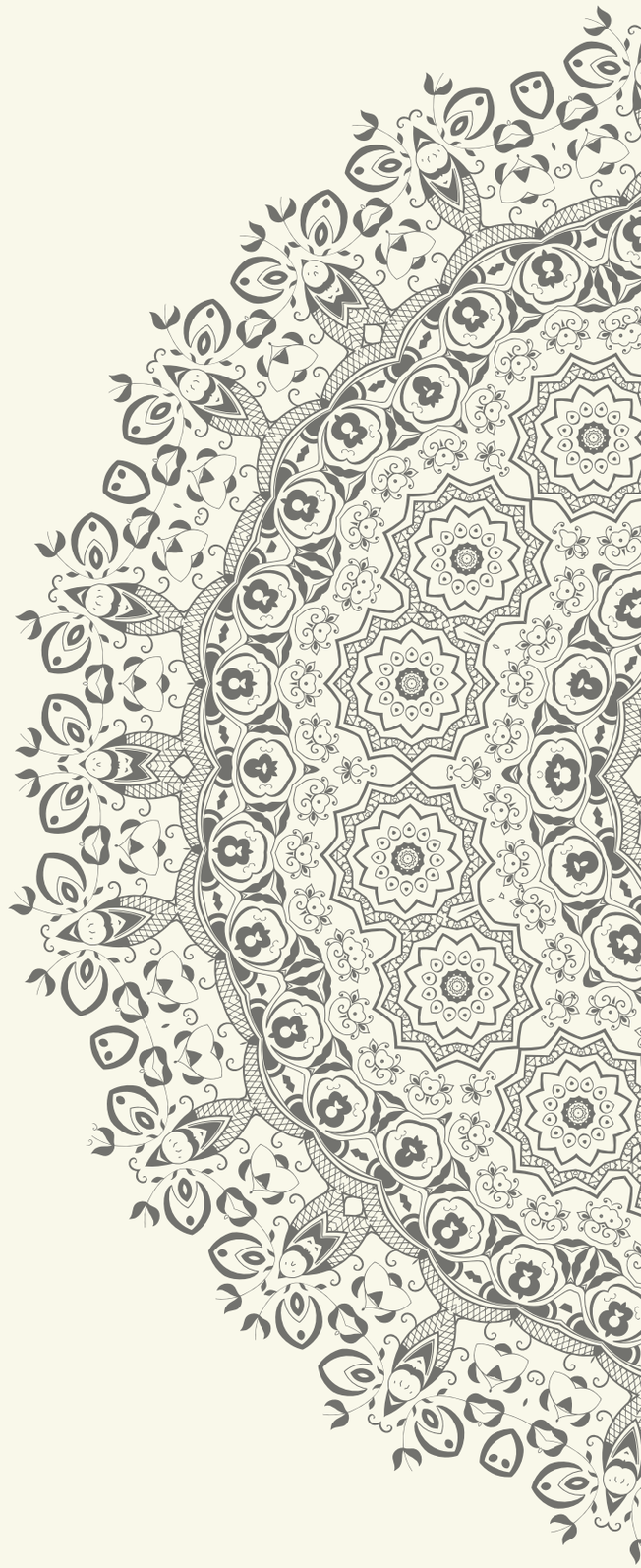

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BAKU INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF MULTICULTURALISM

THE FUND FOR PROPAGATION OF SPIRITUAL VALUES

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The book aims to familiarize foreign readers with the peoples and ethnic groups living in the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan, their everyday life, culture, beliefs, the realities and achievements of Azerbaijan's multiculturalism policy.

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“We show that all nations, the representatives of all religions live as one family and will do so. The Azerbaijani state protects them, their interests, national feelings, dignity. They are our brothers. Our strength is in our unity. Azerbaijan is a multinational, multiconfessional country. This is our asset”.

Ilham Aliyev

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan

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This book is dedicated to the unique and undivided Azerbaijani people who has gone through a thousand years of hardship with honour – the family of brotherhood that unites around it all peoples who live in the lands of Azerbaijan and consider it their Motherland. This family is not small, along with the Azerbaijani Turks, it has numerous offspring like the Tats, Lezgins, Talishes, Udis, Kurds, Mountain Jews, Jeks, Hapits, Ingiloys, Tsakhurs, Avars, Rutuls, Khinalugs, Budugs, Gryzes, Ahiska Turks, Tatars, etc., who have left unerasable traces in Azerbaijani history, Azerbaijani culture and Azerbaijani statehood.

Azerbaijan is one of the rare countries where different peoples, religions have historically co-existed peacefully, under the conditions of mutual respect and trust for centuries. Here the ethnic and religous diversity, which has taken shape for centuries, is rich and colourful. This legacy resembles mysterious Azerbaijani carpets that decorate the museums of the world. Each nation living in Azerbaijan, each traditional faith has added to that unparalleled beauty its own attributes, ornaments manifesting its spiritual values, ethnic memory, past and great wishes and exalted it to the level of perfection. Like the rare harmony of the carpet patterns, the Azerbaijani ethno-cultural diversity, as a whole Azerbaijani multiculturalism, is distinguished by its uniqueness and sustainable development. Whereas the unity of the Azerbaijani peoples and their diverse faiths here has brought forth the ideology of Azerbaijanism which has gone through the tests of history and turned into a traditional lifestyle as time went on. All through history each of these nations who took part in the formation and development of Azerbaijan turned into an indivisible part of common Azerbaijani culture. Thus, a single union called "Azerbaijani" has been founded and all the nations settled in Azerbaijan have joined this union.

Azerbaijan, which is located at the juncture of Western and Eastern civilizations, always attracts the attention of the world with its unique ethnic diversity, kind and hospitable people, ethnic and cultural diversity, and policy of multiculturalism originating from its ideology of Azerbaijanism. Unlike a number of countries, in Azerbaijan this feature is not preconditioned by managed political-ideological factors. This is the logical outcome of the historically shaped lifestyle. This land is the dear Motherland of the peoples who worship different religions, speak different languages, share sometimes diverse, and sometimes common customs and traditions and have chosen Azerbaijan as their eternal home. All through centuries different ethnicities, who chose Azerbaijan as their home, have maintained their ethnic identities, along with acquiring common Azerbaijani material-cultural and spiritual values, have maintained the consistency of this diverse ethno-cultural picture at all stages of history by adding special ethnic characteristics to Azerbaijan's cultural-spiritual legacy, statehood history.

Baku. Maiden Tower, a relic of centuries

AZERBAIJANI TURKS

The Azerbaijani Turks, whose general number is about 50 million people on the world, are the ancient indigenous people of the northern and western provinces of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Russian Republic of Dagestan, the East Anatolian region of Turkey, and Georgia along with the Republic of Azerbaijan. According to the Turkmanchai Treaty signed in 1828, following the division of the Azerbaijani territory between two empires, the northern part of the country was annexed to Russia and the southern areas to Iran. Thus, like the Azerbaijani land, the Azerbaijani Turks were divided into two parts. After the Turkmanchai Treaty was signed, the Russian Empire pursued a policy of forcibly relocating indigenous people from the territory of their forefathers; consequently, part of them were exiled forcibly from their historical lands – the territories of Western Azerbaijan (the present territory of the Republic of Armenia). On that area, where the Armenians from Turkey and Iran had been massively deported – on the western territories of Northern Azerbaijan, "an Armenian province" was formed in 1828 which was followed by the establishment of the first Armenian state in history – "The Republic of Armenia" in 1918. The Azerbaijani Turks, who constituted the dominant ethnic majority in the former historical areas of Azerbaijan, in the areas presently called "The Republic of Armenia", were massacred and executed in stages, were deported as a result of the ethnic cleansing policy pursued in 1905, 1918–1920, 1948–1956, 1987–1988.

The formation process of the Azerbaijani Turks took place in the historical Azerbaijani territory stretching out from the Greater Caucasus in the north to the area of Sultaniyya-Zanjan-Hamadan to the south, covering the Alaghoz Mountains including Eastern Anatolia and the basin of Lake Goycha to the west and the Caspian to the east. The people formed in the territory, where various civilizations, cultures and religions merge, is the heir to a rich historical memory and particular cultural legacy. As mentioned by the Early Medieval Arab authors, Azerbaijan is the home of the Turks since antiquity. İn the works of such Arab and Percian historians as Ubeyd Ibn Sharuya, At-Tabari, Balamini one can find numerous interesting facts on Azerbaijan and its Turkish population.

The ethnic history of the Azerbaijani Turks is characterized by the Turkic tribes' frequent mass migration here and their merging with the indigenous Turkic ethnicities in Azerbaijan's territory since the earliest milleniums. Since the ancient periods various tribes have mixed with the indigenous compatriots having flown to these rich areas, and taken a special part in the formation of a single ethnicity. The earliest greatest inflow of the Turkic tribes settled in Azerbaijan started with the arrival of Kimmer-Scythians-Saks. After the Scythian-Sak tribes, since the first centuries of our era the Huns, Bulgars, Sabirs and Khazars became a second great wave of Turkic tribes settling in Azerbaijan. İn the formation of the ethnic history of the Azerbaijani Turks the Oghuz Turks have had an especially decisive role.

The Azerbaijani Turks have maintained in their historical territory their traditions of statehood along with their rich culture since the ancient periods. The earliest state institutions and ethnic-political unions in the territory of Azerbaijan had been formed between the end of the 4th millenium and the early 3rd millenium B.C. Here from the 4th century B.C. to the 8th century A.D. the ancient Azerbaijani state – Caucasian Albania had an exceptional place in Azerbaijan's ethnic-political picture, in the formation process of a poli-cultural scene in the territory of the country, as a whole in the Early Medieval history of the Caucasian region. İt should be noted that the population of Caucasian Albania consisted of tribes speaking Turkic, Percian and Caucasian languages. The states governed by the Azerbaijani-Turkic dynasties such as the Sajis, Shirvanshahs, Salarids, Garagoyunlu, Aghgoyunlu, Safavids who continued the national statehood traditions in the Middle Ages played an important part in the formation of a single language and common culture here.

The Modern Azerbaijani language has been formed in this long historical development process as a result of the mutual integration of the Turkic tribes who were the bearers of the common ethnic culture in the territory of the present Azerbaijan since the beginning of the 1st millenium B.C. Azerbaijani belongs to the Oghuz group of the Turkic language family. This language constitutes the south-western areal of the Turkic languages together with the Turkish, Turkman, Gagauz languages. At present about 91.6% of the population of the Republic of Azerbaijan consists of the Azerbaijani Turks. As the Azerbaijani Turks are the titular ethnicity in the entire territory of Azerbaijan their language is the means of communication among other nations. The state language of the Republic of Azerbaijan is the Azerbaijani language. The Azerbaijani language, has his-

Momine Khatun Mausoleum, a masterpiece of famous Azerbaijani architect Ajami Nakhchivani. XII century

Shaki. Ancient art of hat making

torically been the common means of interaction in the Caucasus, Middle East. The religion of the Azerbaijani Turks is Islam.

The Azerbaijani Turks enjoy an ancient and rich culture, customs and traditions. These values are being promoted with care today as well. Actually, a common Turkic culture and the legacy of Islamic civilization constitute the basics of the Azerbaijani Turks' culture and the elements pertinent to the nations of the region and other religions are also reflected here.

The Azerbaijani people is distinguished by its tolerance. This feature is manifested in its national statehood traditions, lifestyle, world-outlook, culture, and art. Stamped in the memory of the Azerbaijani Turks, the system of ancient and diverse beliefs have taken deep roots in their moral world and preserved its elements within Islam. The ancient and medieval chroniclers had underlined the peaceful co-existence of the peoples worshipping diverse faiths in this area. According to historical sources, back in the 1st century A.D. the first Christian missionaries disseminated Jesus Christ's teachings here. The archeological excavations carried out in the area of the Shabran region in the late 20th century discovered a Jewish quarter and the remnants of a synagogue built there in the 7th century A.D. Even after the Azerbaijani people adopted Islam, the traditions of tolerance have been maintained and developed here. A rich and unique Azerbaijani cultural heritage has been shaped here as a result of the integration of different beliefs and cultures.

The period of Azerbaijan's ancient state, Caucasian Albania reflecting the rich antique and early medieval culture is the richest stage of the Azerbaijani population's pre-Islamic beliefs. The ancient authors write that the Albanian tribes worshipped the Sun, Earth and Sky Tengri, the Moon, and different natural phenomena. The Ancient Azerbaijani population's worshipping of cosmic beliefs and various natural phenomena is also confirmed by archeological and ethnographic studies. The archeological studies in Azerbaijani regions such as Dashkasan, Shamkir, Nakhchivan and Shaki have revealed some materials related to astral cults such as crescent and sun-shaped covers for tombs, a ring with the description of a goddess, the Moon, a star, etc. dating back to the 3rd millenium B.C. İn the Azerbaijani regions of Guba and Gabala ancient tomb monuments with a description of the Moon and Sun characterizing the Azerbaijanis' pre-Islamic ideology have been discovered.

Tengrism was one the beliefs of the ancient Azerbaijani people. The Albanian author M.Kalankatli records about "the cult of Tengri, the owner of the skies", the rituals

The ancient art of tekelduz (chain stitch) still has followers in Azerbaijan

Shirvan carpet

Mafrash, Karabakh

Saddle-cloth. Guba

Heybe and Khurdjun. Gazakh

Master of shabaka (net)

held in Tengri Khan's honour in Albania. The tradition of hanging the skin of the animal slaughtered as an offering beneath the sacred trees still survives in the region of Gabala which was the capital of Caucasian Albania. The Azerbaijani Turks, who are the successors of the ancient Albans, did not forget their earliest beliefs even after adopting Christianity and Islam. Stamped in the Azerbaijanis' memory, this system of beliefs has taken deep roots in their spiritual world.

The Novruz holiday holds a special place in the system of rich cultural values of the Azerbaijani Turks. İt is not a coincidence that in Nizami Ganjavi's work "Isgandar-nameh" the ruler Nushaba hosted Isgandar on the Novruz holiday. The Azerbaijani people's national leader Heydar Aliyev considered the Novruz Holiday, one of our most ancient and key festivities, as a tradition historically unifying our people, nourishing its existance with the power of unity.

Novruz is associated with natural phenomena, the four elements constituting the core of creation and life – earth, air, water and fire. İn

Shabaka (net)

Nowruz holiday is a symbol of abundance and prosperity

these festivities rich in expressions of attributive nature, ritual songs, a fire is made, the first furrow is made on the soil, divination with water is performed, etc. By making a fire and jumping over it on holiday evenings the rituals of purifying the internal realm of a human being from sorrows, resentment, malice, etc. are carried out. On Novruz evenings the tables are decorated with *samani* (rye-grass), *shakarbura, bakhlava, samani halvasi* (malted wheat halva), *sheker choreyi* (sweet bread) and other sweets, nuts, dyed eggs, the royal national and holiday asset – pilaf – is cooked, a candle is burnt in homes in honour of each family member. On these holidays charity activities are carried out, such as visiting the people deprived of their relatives' care, vulnerable people, the old, giving them a helping hand, delighting them with holiday presents. On the day of Novruz the tables are laid with various sweets and dishes, fruits such as *samani* representing Nature – the arrival of Spring, the sun-shaped *goghal, shakarbura* representing the crescent and *bakhlava* symbolizing the Earth. The people, who wishes an abundant, prosperous year, would lay on the table some water, a mirror, even gold jewellery items. According to customs and traditions, on holiday everyone should be in their homes, those, who do not speak to each other, reconcile, and people are supposed to exchange kind words and nice wishes.

Khalida Safarova. "Nowruz holiday"

Examples of national kitchen of Azerbaijani Turks

The Azerbaijani Turks, who are among the ancient nations of the region have made significant contributions to the world civilization with their material-spiritual legacy – their rich history, culture, art, learned men of scientific, artistic and philosophical thought – Nizami, Fuzuli, Bahmanyar, Abdulgadir Maraghayi, Nasraddin Tusi, Yahya Bakuvi, Khatai, Nadir Shah and others. The rock inscriptions in Gobustan, Gamigaya, Kalbajar, also Davaboynu and Goycha in Western Azerbaijan are world famous. The artistic ceramic and metalware of Caucasian Albania, the works of miniature, carpetweaving, pottery, jewellery of the medieval world-famous Tabriz, Nakhchivan, Ganja, Gazakh, Guba, Baku, Shaki, Shamakhi and Garabagh schools of art are featured in the most respectable museums. İn medieval Azerbaijan the miniature arts entered a stage of high development. The indelible traces of this unique art have survived up to present in the interior design of Khan Sarayi, the palace in Shaki, and in the wall descriptions decorating the houses of Shusha, Ganja, Guba.

Carpet-weaving is one of the most ancient and wide-spread types of art of Azerbaijan. The Azerbaijani carpet, which enjoys its own place and peculiarities in world culture, is distinguished by its unique style, colour shades, and ornaments that confirm Azerbaijan's ancient ethnic identity and attest to its cre-

Victuals of Nowruz holiday

Shaki khan palace. XVIII century

ativity. According to archeological materials and written sources, carpet- weaving in this area spread during the Bronze Age. Herodotus, Claudius Elian, Xenophon and others chronicled the Azerbaijani carpet-weaving art. The art of silk production developed over the course of history. The high quality silk fabrics woven here were also exported to European countries.

Azerbaijani Turks' traditional cuisine and table manners have earned great fame today beyond the boundaries of Azerbaijan too. İn ancient sources, including the epic "The Book of Dede Korkut", tales and stories, and foreign travellers' travel notes, there is precious data about examples of the Azerbaijani people's cuisine, table manners, customs of laying the table, and receiving a guest. A great part of them are being maintained with care in this nation's everyday life today as well. At present in Azerbaijani cuisine, the samples of ethnic cuisine such as *khangal, khamirashi, arishta, umaj, gurza, dushbara, gutab, kata, chudu, firni, siyig, dovgha, kabab* are especially popular. Here pilaf is one of the most wide-spread meals. In Azerbaijan, pilaf has over 40 varieties such as *govurma pilaf, sabzi-govurma pilaf, chilo pilaf, fisinjan pilaf, doshama pilaf, shirin pilaf, sudlu pilaf* and others. At present among the sweet types of ethnic cuisine *shakarbura, bakhlava, shakarchorak, Baku gorabiyasi, Azerbaijan nani, Garabagh katasi, Guba tikhmasi, Lankaran kulchasi, Shamakhi mutakkasi, Nakhchivan pakhlavasi* and others are wide spread beyond the boundaries of the country too.

Shaki confectioner and Shaki baklava

The Old City of Baku

Yalli folk dance in ancient rock drawings of Gobustan

Fire temple near Surakhani village of Baku

Heydar Aliyev Center in Baku is a unique architectural work and platform for research and international dialogue

Ahiska girl

AHISKA TURKS

The Ahiska Turks are one of the peoples of the world who were ousted from their Motherland. Being condemned to suffer as refugees and exiles, a great part of them were forced to move to the remote areas of the Soviet Union and haven't been able to return to their Motherland – the Ahiska region of Georgia – up to present. In the period of World War II – in 1944 declaring the Ahiska Turks as "untrustworthy people" the Soviet government committed ruthless ethnic cleansing against them under the pretence of "providing border security" and exiled them in mass from the region of Ahiska to the areas of Kazakhistan, Kyrgistan and Uzbekistan. Over 17 million Ahiska Turks lost their lives on their way to excile. Although all the deported peoples in the Soviet Union were enabled to return to their native lands after the collapse of the Stalinist regime – in the 1950s, the Ahiska Turks were not allowed to return to their historical homeland. İn that period the Georgian govenment required from them to give up their ethnic names, surnames, identities as well as their religion in order to return to their land. Although a part of the Ahiskas who could not endure the nostalgia for the Motherland – 186 families, returned to their Ahiska areas adopting the severe terms, they were obliged to leave their land in the early 1990s and had to find refuge in Azerbaijan being exposed to violences and assimilation by the local government.

The Ahiska Turks' fisrt mass deportation to Azerbaijan took place in the 1950s. İn that period the Ahiskas were given permission to live anywhere in the USSR but Georgia. The greater part of them turned to Azerbaijan to be closer to Ahiska. The Ahiska Turks' preference for settling in Azerbaijan was also associated with these two peoples' possession of many common traditions like historically traditional lifestyle and daily routines, language, and religion. The first inflow of the Ahiska Turks from Uzbekistan in 1958 were placed in the village of Varkhan of the district of Saatli. Following one another new settlements were built for the Ahiskas in the districts of Khachmaz, Guba, Saatli, Sabirabad and Beylagan. The second inflow of the Ahiska Turks in Azerbaijan took place in connection with the Fergana events in 1989. Following the massacres committed against the Ahiska Turks in 1989, 74 thousand Ahiskas deserted Uzbek-

Prominent enlightening Azerbaijani journalist Omar Faig Nemanzade with a group of Ahiska Turks

Mosque in the Nesimikend residential area, Saatli district

Imam of the village mosque

Ahiska people have preserved their way of life

Young Ahiska Turks in traditional dress

istan, a part of them found a refuge in Kazakhistan and Russia and over 40 thousand people in Azerbaijan. Despite the difficult situation of Azerbaijan in this period, when Azerbaijan had to resettle its own refugees who were forced out of Armenia, Azerbaijan also accepted the Ahiska Turks who were forced to move from Georgia and Fergana (Uzbekistan) in 1989–1990.

Since the most ancient times there have been socio-political, economic-cultural relations between the Ahiskas and Azerbaijanis. Back in the early 20th century, Azerbaijani schools were opened for the Azerbaijani Turks and Ahiskas in Ahiska. The Ahiska Turks' settlement in Azerbaijan became a new stage of the maintenance of their historical-cultural and ethnic values. Within the past years the Ahiska Turks have managed to protect further their culture under the conditions of brotherhood and friendship. Despite the repeated deportations and tortures, the Ahiska Turks have remained loyal to their farming traditions, along with adapting to the farming characteristics of their new dwelling place, and have gotten involved in their own traditionsal farming fields such as plowermanship, cattle-breeding, especially nomadic form of cattle-breeding (yaylag-gishlag – moving between winter and summer pastures). The Ahiska Turks, who have an ancient farming culture, have special calen-

Ahiska girls in traditional dress

New generation of Ahiska Turks does not forget old traditions

dar traditions. Between them the Ahiska Turks have the names of the months in the form not encountered in other Turkic peoples, for instance, *zahmari* (January), *gujuk* (February), *kiraz* (June), *bichin* (July), *orag* (August), *kharman* (September), *shira* (October), *goch* (November), *garagish* (December).

The Ahiska jewellery and embroidery are famous for their craftsmenship and were known back in the 19th century throughout the entire Caucasus. The Ahiskas' traditions of craftsmanship are especially reflected in their specific head decorations like *giraglik* (arakchin), *gatkha, tafshal, ehram, chambara* decorated with gold coins in accordance with the historically traditional Turkic-Caucasian clothing typology and various female costumes like *peshtamal* (apron), *kaftan*, also specific clothes and decorations like *dolama, gavalag* (a cap woven of wool), *fas* with white, red or green turbans. The Ahiska Turks' ethnic cuisine features the general types of dishes of Turkic cuisine such as *basdirma, gavurma, bekmez, afandi khinkali, atmak ashi, kata, furun, jadi, ifka, bazlama, lokhum* which have maintained their names up to present.

Although today the ethnic problems of the Ahiska Turks, who were deported from their native land, have not been solved, the Azerbaijani people always renders support and care for their return to Ahiska. İn Azerbaijan there are associations like the "Vatan" Association and "The Ahiska Cultural Centre" that are involved in the advocacy for the Ahiska Turks' ethnic-cultural values. At present the Ahiska Turks maintain their characteristic uniqueness, language, folklore, and everyday life traditions. The folklore group in the village of Adigun of the Saatli district maintains these traditions in the pieces of folklore they perform.

The "Adigun" folk band at the Nesimikend culture house

AVARS

Moving from the present Republic of Dagestan (Russia), due to challenges for survival, the Avars, who hold a special place on the colourful ethnic map of Azerbaijan, have settled since the early 16th century in Azerbaijan's northern-east – in the regions of Balakan and Zagatala with favourable climatic conditions, arable soils, and wide pastures. The Avars, who mixed with the regions' indigenous people, gradually acquired the local plowing traditions, started to grow wheat, barley, millet, flax, got involved in gardening, tobacco-growing and apiculture and on meadows in nut-growing and silkworm breeding. The Avars did not forget their own old trade, and have maintained the traditions of gunsmithing, coppersmithing, saddle-making and carpetweaving crafts with care. At present, the major part of the Avars live in Russia and in the south-western part of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The Avars living in Azerbaijan have maintained their language and customs and traditions up to the present. The Avar language, which is ascribed to the Nakh-Dagestan group of the Caucasian languages, is subdivided into a great number of dialects and sub-

Avars Kedaba holiday

dialects. The Avars living in Azerbaijan speak the Zagatala dialect.

In the ethnic name of the Avars, the word "maarulal" means "the mountain people", "the mountaineous" and "a man of mountains". Whereas, being of the ancient Turkic origin the wide-spread ethnonym "avar" implies the notions "turbulent", "militant", "courageous". The suppositions about the association of this ethnonym with the Avar Khanate existing in the early Middle Ages *(562–823)* are finding approval in the scientific world. After this tribal unit invaded the Northern Caucasus, part of them settled here and as time passed, they mixed with the indigenous people.

The Avar people has centuries-old rich customs and traditions. They have unparalleled folklore, music, and decorative crafts. And this uniquness is displayed more vividly in public festivities. Shortly before spring arrives, they perform various public ceremonies like *Kedaba, Yikhbi, Otsbay* to awaken the soil from its winter sleep, for it to become productive and abundant. In these festivities based on ancient beliefs, especially the tilling the soil on the first day of ploughing, they would bake round breads out of the wheat flour to symbolize the Sun. That ceremony's bread would be called "ig" or "yikh" (bread) and would herald the new productive year. This kind of bread is baked more in the festivities of *Yikhbi*, one

Avars. 19th century

Wedding dance of Avars

of the fun-making ceremonies held on the eve of the arrival of spring, the awakening of Nature. And on the first days of spring, the Avars celebrate *Otsbay* (towing the ox to the plough), the holiday associated with husbandry. This holiday marks the beginning of the field work. On the Avars' holidays called *"Halma"*, *"Rukivak"* a meal would be prepared out of 7 types of corns, meat and dried fruits – *"rukivak"* which would be given to families as alms. In April, when mountain flowers blossom, they all would participate in the *Halma* festivities. During the festivities they would hang and swing from tall chestnut or walnut trees.

The common Caucasian features of the national costume are characteristic to the Avars too. The Avar women's headgear is large, they would wear a silver bow, also head decorations with silver and gold coins hanging from them. Whereas, men would walk with *charkazi* Caucasian coat on and wear weapons with delicate inscriptions on them. The traditional male constume of the Avars used to consist of a shirt with a high colar, trousers, Caucasian coat, headgear, fur coat, conus-shaped or semi-secular cap of sheep skin, in winter – high boots of leather or pelt, and in summer – a soft pair of bast shoes or sandals. Up to the 1930s, the Avar women's clothes consisted of long, straightly cut shirt-like *kunta* (dress), *khabat* (tight, straight and long trousers), *garakhuni* (apron) and vest. On their clothes, the Avar women would wear a patterned belt made of fabric, leather or metal, and have on their

“Caucasus” dance group

feet a pair of colourful woolen socks and leather slippers with an upward end. Girls would wear a red belt on their dresses.

The tradition of breaking bread, which symbolizes abundance, friendship, fraternity in common Azerbaijani customs and traditions, holds an important place in all stages of the Avar weddings from the matchmaking stage to taking the bride to the bridegroom's home. Especially in the region of Shaki-Zagatala, breaking bread during matchmaking is the common custom of the Avars, Azerbaijani Turks and Sakhurs. According to the Avars' ancient wedding customs, when the bride is moving to her husband's home, she is accompanied with bread. And the bride's mother will give her daughter bread under her arm so that the groom's party does not "take away stealthily" something else from her home with them while taking away the bride. That means one cannot steal anything from the house where one breaks bread. As a rule, the bride is accompanied to the groom's home with torches which they throw into the fire in the groom's home so that the hearth of the new family burns well, the hearths of both the bride and groom's families merge. According to the Avars' custom, when the bride makes her first step through the groom's threshold, her mother-in-law meets her with a bowl of honey. This tradition exists in many Turkic peoples as well as the Talishes, Ingiloys. At the wedding, each quarter would bring their own wrestlers and hold wrestling competitions. Merry

Avar table is difficult to imagine without makhara

Secrets of Avar cuisine are passed on from generation to generation

dancing music requiring fast movements like *Avari, Saribash, Gendadur*, *Lezgi hangi* would be played, they would dance under the melody "Arkhush" more characteristic for the Shumbul village of the district of Balakan. During the wedding one could hear the sounds of *tambour, chaghana, gaval* and *tutak* (pipe). There used to be songs accompanied by tambour.

Today favourable conditions have been created to maintain and develop the ethnic identity of the Avars, like any other peoples in Azerbaijan. Since independence, the maintenance and development of the Avar people's culture, language, traditions have been provided for. The Avar language is taught at schools in predominantly Avar settlements and villages. To maintain the Avar traditions and pass them to the next generations there are folklore collectives, including the boys' dance groups *Gafgaz* and *Jahan*in Balakan, and the Gryzis' dance groups *Alazan* and *Hudulki* in Zagatala. İn respect to the Avar people's heroes, outstanding personalities one of the central streets of Baku is named after Sheikh Shamil.

Avar khinkal

Young dancers

Youths learn ancient dances from adults

GEORGIANS

The Georgians are one of the oldest indigenous peoples of the South Caucasus. They call themselves “kartvelebi”, and their homeland “Sakartvélo”. The Georgian nation was formed as a result of the ethnic unity of three tribes – carts, megrel-chans and svans. The Iberian state, formed in the western part of present-day Georgia in the 1st-2nd centuries AD, the adoption of Christianity and the Georgian alphabet accelerated the process of emergence of their common ethnic identity, language and culture. The Georgian language belongs to the south Kartveli branch of the Kartveli language family.

The majority of the Georgians are Christian. They accepted the doctrine of Jesus Christ in the 4th century. The Georgian Orthodox Church is currently considered one of the oldest Christian churches in the world. The Georgians living in Azerbaijan also worshipped the Georgian Autocephalous Apostolic Church. The Georgians settled in Azerbaijan co-exist peacefully and

Georgian church of the 19th century in Gakh

The Georgian language is taught at the densely Georgian-populated areas

Wine-making is a traditional craft of Georgians

Georgians also traditionally bake bread in tandir

in friendly relations with the local population and are closely integrated into the Azerbaijani society. Despite the differences in belief, the Georgians have been able to maintain their ethnic lifestyle, customs and Christian beliefs thanks to the ambience of tolerance in the country. During her visit to Gakh in 2019 the Georgian President Salome Zurabishvili stated that the Georgians living here have maintained their ethnic and religious identities. However, in accordance with the traditions of the Christianization policy of the Tsarist Russia, the Ingiloys (the successors of the Gel tribes of Caucasian Albania) living in the northwest of Azerbaijan are sometimes presented as "ethnic Georgians" and "ethnographic group of Georgians".

At present there are 6 secondary schools, 6 preschools and cultural facilities providing education in the Georgian language in the territory of the Gakh district. The Christian churches, including the Holy Nino Temple, are still operating here. With the support of the State Committee for Work with Religious Organizations of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Pope Basil Church has been overhauled and presented to Christian believers. There is also the Georgian Cultural Center, the Georgian State Drama Theater and the monument to Georgian writer Ilya Chavchavadze in the district of Gakh.

Prayer time at the Georgian church

Ingiloy people. Gakh region, a photograph taken in 1883

INGILOYS

The Ingiloys – the successors of the ancient Gells, one of the tribes of Caucasian Albania, live in small communities in settlements and villages such as Ititala, Aliabad, Yengiyan, Verkhiyan, Mosul, Gakhbash, Gakhingiloy in the districts of Gakh, Zagatala, Balakan of Azerbaijan. The greater part of them are Moslems and part of them are Orthodox Christians. The ethnonym "Ingiloys" or "Yengiloys" means "new Gells". The Greek authors of antiquity recorded about the Gell tribes, the ancient forefathers of the Ingiloys as well the areas dwelt by them, even the toponym "Gelda". This toponym has survived among the population of the Shaki-Zagatala region as "Goloda" today.

Pursuing a policy targeted at re-Christianization of a part of the Ingiloys, tsarist Russia had divided them into two on a religious basis since the mid 19th century. This process gathered more acceptance in 1850. İn order to erase the ethnonym "ingiloy" from the memory of the people, the officials of the Russian Empire registered the Moslem part of the Ingiloys as "the Moslem Ingiloys" and those who converted to Christianity as "the Georgian" during the 1897 census. Almost in all Ingiloy villages they started constructing churches. As a result of this policy, to strengthen the advocacy of Orthodox-Christianity in the region since the late 19th century the Kurmuk

Ancient folk art is still preserved in Ititala village of Balakan district

Mosque in the Aliabad village, Zaqatala

Old stone manuscript preserved at the mosque

Albanian temple had been destroyed and an Orthodox church was built in its place. At present both the Christian and Moslem populations visit the Kurmuk temple together and hold there ancient ceremonies of Kurmukoba. The Ingiloys have maintained their belief in the Sun, Moon, Sky up to today. In the Temple "Pari Gala" in the settlement of Aliabad one can observe the traces of the Albans' worshipping the lunar deity.

Like in the case of all the Azerbaijanis, the main holidays of the Ingiloys, who have historically been involved in husbandry and cattle-breeding, are associated with the arrival of spring. Yet, the Ingiloys' spring ceremonies – Gorgod Holiday has special characteristics. This holiday has been shaped on the same motive with the Azerbaijani Novruz festivities – the arrival of spring, awakening of Nature, the victory of good over evil. The Ingiloys' holiday celebrations continue for forty days – from 21-22 March to the end of April. As a rule, until recently the holiday cele-

Imam of the mosque

Baking bread in tandir

Weaving of Ingiloy carpets starts with making of wool yarn

brations had been organized near bodies of water. Here sport competitions are held, rope-walkers and wrestlers demonstrate their competence.

The ashyg music holds an important place in the Ingiloys' cultural life. Once the Ingiloy master poets and saz musicians such as Ashyg Mahammad, Ashyg Darchin, Ashyg Huseyn, Ashyg Jalaladdin were known beyond the boundaries of the region as well.

At present there is a folklore ensamble "Ingiloy" in the village of Aliabad. Ashyg Huseyn Aliabadli, who is from this village, has written in Azerbaijani, Ingiloy and Georgian. And Ashyg Jamal is one of the Ingiloy Ashygs who play and sing both in the Azerbaijani and Ingiloy languages. The Ingiloy community operating in Baku is playing an important role in the maintenance and development of ethnic culture.

Old popular songs performed by Ingiloy bard Abbas are well-known in the entire region

Tanbur artist

Children's folk band of the Aliabad village

A scenery of Girmizi Gasaba settlement

JEWS

The Jews are one of the peoples that has lived in the territory of Azerbaijan for many centuries. They are divided into three groups according to both their periods of settlement and ethnolinguistic features – the Juhurs so-called "mountain Jews", the Ashkenazis (European Jews) and Georgian Jews. The Karaimis (karas, Turkish Jews) also lived here. As a result of archaeological excavations in the area of Shabran in the early 90s of the last century, the remains of the synagogue and the Jewish quarter dating back to the 7th century AD were revealed. The mass migration of the Ashkenazis to Azerbaijan dates back to the middle of the 19th century – the industrialization of Baku.

The Red settlement in the Guba district of Azerbaijan was considered the largest Jewish settlement in the Caucasus in the 18th and 19th centuries. The Azerbaijani Turks and Lezghis also live here as a family, though the majority of the residents of the 280-year-old settlement called "The Jerusalem of the Caucasus" – about 4,000 people are mountain Jews. The mountain Jews consider themselves as descendants of the lost tribes of Israel and claim that they settled in the southeast of the Caucasus after the destruction

Prayer time at the synagogue of European Jews in Baku

Interior of the synagogue of mountain Jews in Guba

of Beit-al-mugaddas in Jerusalem in 722 BC. According to official historiography, their first migration to the territory of Azerbaijan coincides with the prehistoric Achaemenid period. Another phase of the Jewish migration occurred in the late 5th century and early 6th century. After suppressing the Mazdaki movement by force, the Sasanid state deported the Jews who supported the movement and exiled them to Northern Azerbaijan.

The last mass migration of the mountain Jews to the South Caucasus - the Azerbaijani khanates was headed from Gilan – the territory of Iran in the 18th century. The settlers in Guba were later called the "gilaki" and those who moved to Shamakhi were called "shirvoni." In the middle of the 18th century, the majority of the Gilakis settled in Kulgat – the present Red settlement, and in the 19th century, a group of Shirvonis moved to the territories of the Shaki, Darband and Baku khanates. The mountain Jews in Azerbaijan have settled in Baku and Ganja, Guba, as well the districts of Oghuz, Shamakhi, Ismayilli and Goychay. Today, their number exceeds approximately 15,000 people in Azerbaijan. They call themselves "juhur", and their languages "zuhun juhuri". According to some scholars who study the ethnogenesis of the Jewish people, the

A suitable environment has been created for Jews in Azerbaijan to practice their religious rituals

An old residential house in Girmizi Gasaba settlement

expression “mountain Jews” was introduced in the 19th century to distinguish this ethnographic group from the Ashkenazis.

The ethnic culture of the Juhuris is rich. As a result of their close contact with the Azerbaijani people for centuries, the elements of Turkic, Caucasian and Iranian-speaking peoples are clearly seen in their spiritual-cultural and family life. The process was mutual, and examples of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, which were typical of the Juhurs, were also widespread among the neighboring nations.

Their ancient costumes for women and men did not absolutely differ from the clothes of the Azerbaijani Turks, Tats in the northern regions. There was no sharp difference between their apartments, household and agricultural equipment, their music and folklore, and even some of the festivities and customs. Sometimes elements of ancient beliefs were added to Jewish holidays. For example, the Shagmei vesal (Spring fire) festivities, held two weeks before Peysakh holiday in the Mountain Jews, are devoted to the arrival of spring and the awakening of nature. On these days, the Juhurs would visit their relatives, those who were at odds would make up the quarrel, have fun, jump over the fire to be purified from troubles, evil.

According to historians, the majority of the Juhurs lived in the southern part of the present Republic of Dagestan, but were forced to abandon these places because of persecution and pillages, took refuge in Huseynali Khan (1722–1758) of Guba. The mountain Jews settled here by the decree of the Khan later began to call themselves “guboi” (Gubanian) to distinguish themselves from the other Jews. The foundation of the Kulgat – Red Settlement dates back to that period. In 1722, by the decree of Huseynali Khan, a territory was allocated to the Jews for their settlement in the area called “Gala duzu” on the bank of the Gudyalchay, and since 1731 their mass migration had begun. During the rule of Huseynali Khan’s son Fatali Khan (1758–1789), this process was further expanded, the Juhuri families from Dagestan, Baku, Iran and Turkey settled there. They still remember Fatali Khan as a just ruler protecting the Jews.

The establishment of the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan in 1918 became a turning point in the lives of the Jews, like all the nations freed from the Tsarist regime. Extensive guarantees have been given to the protection of their rights and freedoms, as well as the development of national cultures. Back in 1919, the Jewish

Tea house is a favorite leisure place for Mountain Jews

Elders of the Red Settlement are sharing their thoughts about the future

People's University was established in Baku, the publication of books, newspapers and magazines in the Juhuri language began. It should also be mentioned that the presence of Yevsey Gindes, the Health Minister of Jewish descent in the first government of the ADR, is a clear example of tolerance and attitude of the Azerbaijani people to the Jewish people. However, the fall of the ADR also dramatically changed the situation in terms of attitude towards mountain Jews. Immediately after the establishment of the Soviet government in Azerbaijan in 1920, 300 the Juhurs, who had lived here, emigrated to the Middle East to escape the anticipated persecution of the Bolshevik regime. They built their ishuvs – "the Caucasus quarters" in Tel Aviv, Haifa, Akshelon and other cities. They took with them a piece of Azerbaijani culture – music, traditions, cuisine and so on to their historical homeland. It is no coincidence that today wedding and family festivities, cuisines of the mountain Jews living in Israel do not differ from the Azerbaijani gatherings, there are also examples of common national cuisine, along with Azerbaijani music and dances.

After the Azerbaijani people regained their independence in 1991, favorable conditions were created for the maintenance and development of traditions, beliefs, native languages and cultures of the Juhurs like all the ethnic groups living here. Today, along with taking an active part in the socio-political and cultural life of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Jews are also actively involved in presenting the truth about our country to the world community, promoting Azerbaijan and protecting its interests. Famous Jewish scientists and medical personnel, composers and writers, art figures, servicemen such as the Nobel laureate Lev Landau, the Honorary Doctor of Azerbaijan Solomon Gusman, the National Hero of Azerbaijan Albert Agarunov are among the Jews who lived in Azerbaijan. At present, there are synagogues of the mountain, European and Georgian Jews, the Coynt and Vaal-l-Khetoza Committees for the Protection of the Jewish Cultural Heritage in Azerbaijan, the Sokhnut Agency, Jewish religious schools, Jewish Cultural Center, "Eva" Women's Society, "Khesed-Khershon" Charitable Society, "Alef" Youth Club, "Gilel" Youth Society, "Mishkhapa" club, mass media, including 5 Jewish schools in Baku and Guba.

Six-dome synagogue in Girmizi Gasaba settlement

A Kurdish woman. A photograph taken at the beginning of the 20th century

KURDS

Both in the historical Azerbaijani territories, which are now a part of the Republic of Armenia, and in Garabagh, the Kurds have shared similar fates and witnessed similar deprivations and losses. Along with 400 thousand Azerbaijani Turks, 15 thousand Kurds living in Zangazur and Garabagh were murdered with special ruthlessness in the crimes of genocide committed in 1918-1920 by Armenian and Bolshevik military units. Kurds were among those forcibly deported from the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic and found refuge in Azerbaijan in 1948-1953 and in 1988 there were thousands of Kurds too. The Kurds had mainly lived in the Azerbaijani districts of Lachin, Kalbajar, Gubadli, Zangilan prior to the Armenian-Azerbaijani Nagorni Garabagh conflict. Today those territories are under the occupation of the Republic of Armenia. Coming mainly from the territories of Iran and Turkey within the Gizilbash tribes in the 16th-17th centuries, the Kurds had historically dwelt in the territory of Azerbaijan.

The Safavids-Ottoman war between Shah Abbas I and Soltan Murad III in 1578-1590 resulted in the Istanbul Peace Treaty. İn accordance with the terms of the treaty, the Kartli, Kakhetiya, Meskhetya, , Garabagh, and Chukhursaad territories were annexed to the Ottoman state. The first mass inflow of the Kurds living in the Ottoman and Safavid territories to the West Azerbaijani territory presently called “the Republic of Azerbaijan” occurred shortly before that very treaty.

The Kurds’ migration to the territory of Azerbaijan acquired an intensive nature in the early 19th century as well. Their subsequent great inflow to Azerbaijan took place in 1807, 600 Kurdish families headed by Soltan Mehmet Safi settled in the territory of the Garabagh Khanate, crossing the River Araz. Furthermore, follow-

Kurdish family in traditional dress

View of the Lachin region

ing the Turkmanchai Treaty between Russia and Iran, addressing the tsarist government the Chalabi Kurdish tribe of thousand families living in the province of Garadagh of Southern Azerbaijan, stated their desire to become citizens of Russia and live in the territory of Azerbaijan. The elders of the villages of Shotlanli and Zilanli of the district of Gubadli well remember their forefathers' movement from Iran to Armenia and from there to Azerbaijan. In the late 19th century quite a number of Kurdish families from Armenia arrived in the western regions of Azerbaijan. For instance, the Shahsuvarovs, who migrated from Sharur-Daralayaz, founded the settlement of Minkand in the district of Lachin. In the 1920s the Kurdish brothers of Daralayaz – Khodo and Abbas – laid foundations for the village of Karakeshish and three more brothers founded the villages of Zar and Zaylik of the district of Kalbajar. Furthermore, the village of Orujlu was named after a man called Oruj and Aghjakand was called in honour of the Kurdish woman Aghja. Whereas, the village of Ashaghi Sultanli was built by the brothers Hut and Naghi. In the 1920s, a group of the residents of that village turned to the districts of Yevlakh and Tartar and settled there.

The traditional Kurdish houses of the nomadic or semi-nomadic Kurds in the 16th–19th centuries consisted of mud-huts called "mal", "khani". Whereas, cattle-breeding Kurds used the tents called "garakecha" (black leather)

Azerbaijani Kurd and Azerbaijani Turk. A 19th century picture

Kurdish villager. 1950s.

Kurdish girls weaving carpet

Kurdish women

during their season of summer pastures. The name originated from the thick felt of the black colour covering the tents. Sometimes in the summer pastures, a family used to have several tents of this kind. The Kurds' summer season tents were distinguished by their simple and practical nature.

Along with being distinguished by their practical nature and ethnic decorative elements, the Kurdish national costumes have completely been adapted to the sharp, extreme climatic conditions, lifestyle and everyday life of the territories where this nation has historically lived. Thus, there are no useless elements in these clothes. In everyday male clothes light brown, white and black colours are usually used, whereas bright colours and ethnic ornaments rich in symbols are prefered in female clothes. Yet, their national costumes reflect the impact of the Azerbaijani Kurds' close interaction with indigenous peoples, new living conditions, mutual cultural exchange, and the formation of the shared values.

The 19th century authors underlined that the Azerbaijani Turks and Kurds had no serious distinctions not only between their customs and traditions and everyday life, but also among their clothing. This resemblance was on the one hand, due to the proximity to the lifestyle, activities and everyday life of the Azerbaijani Turks living in the same territories and on the other, it was the result of the Kurds' adaptation to the local conditions. Although both the national Kurdish and Ottoman traditions prevailed in the clothing of the

Kurdish family

Kurds from the territory of Turkey who settled in Western Azerbaijan and further in the areas of Garabagh in the earliest periods – after Gulustan and Turkmanchai Treaties had been signed, in the later periods owing to the close interactions with the Azerbaijani population those items of clothing were relatively adapted to the indigenous people's clothing style – the style of the Azerbaijani sedentary population.

The Kurdish people's folklore is rich and colourful. In their oral folk literature, the popular epics of love and heroism called "bayt-sarhati" hold an important place. The folk performers known as "Dangbezh" in Kurdish narrate with special artistism in public ceremonies and wedding parties this kind of epics glorifying delicate feelings, devotion, bravery such as "Me and Zin", "Ali, the Cousin", "Rustam and Zal", "Zanbilfrosh" (Basket-seller), "Gar and Kolig", "Khaje and Siyaband", "Dimdim", "Seva aji", "Mame and Ayshe". Their peculiar national traditions are reflected in

A typical residential house of Kurds in Azerbaijan

Some newspapers and books published in the Kurdish language in Azerbaijan

Kurdish family: grandmothers and a grandson

their wedding songs such as “Kalasho-nobadaro”, “Mayrame”, “Romani”. Along with these songs, they perform merry collective dances resembling Azerbaijani yallis such as “Sakma”, “Jangula”, “Shoror”, “Nari”, “Oynare”, “Adle” and “Govand” accompanied by *blur* (pipe), *dihol* (drum), *fig* (pipe) as well as *tanbour, ud, zourna, balaban* and *percussion* instruments in wedding and holiday celebrations.

We had to use the archieve photo materials in order to provide illustrative information on the Kurdish culture and their heritage since the Azerbaijani territory which was used to be densely populated by them, has been occupied by Armenia.

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Kurdish girl in traditional dress

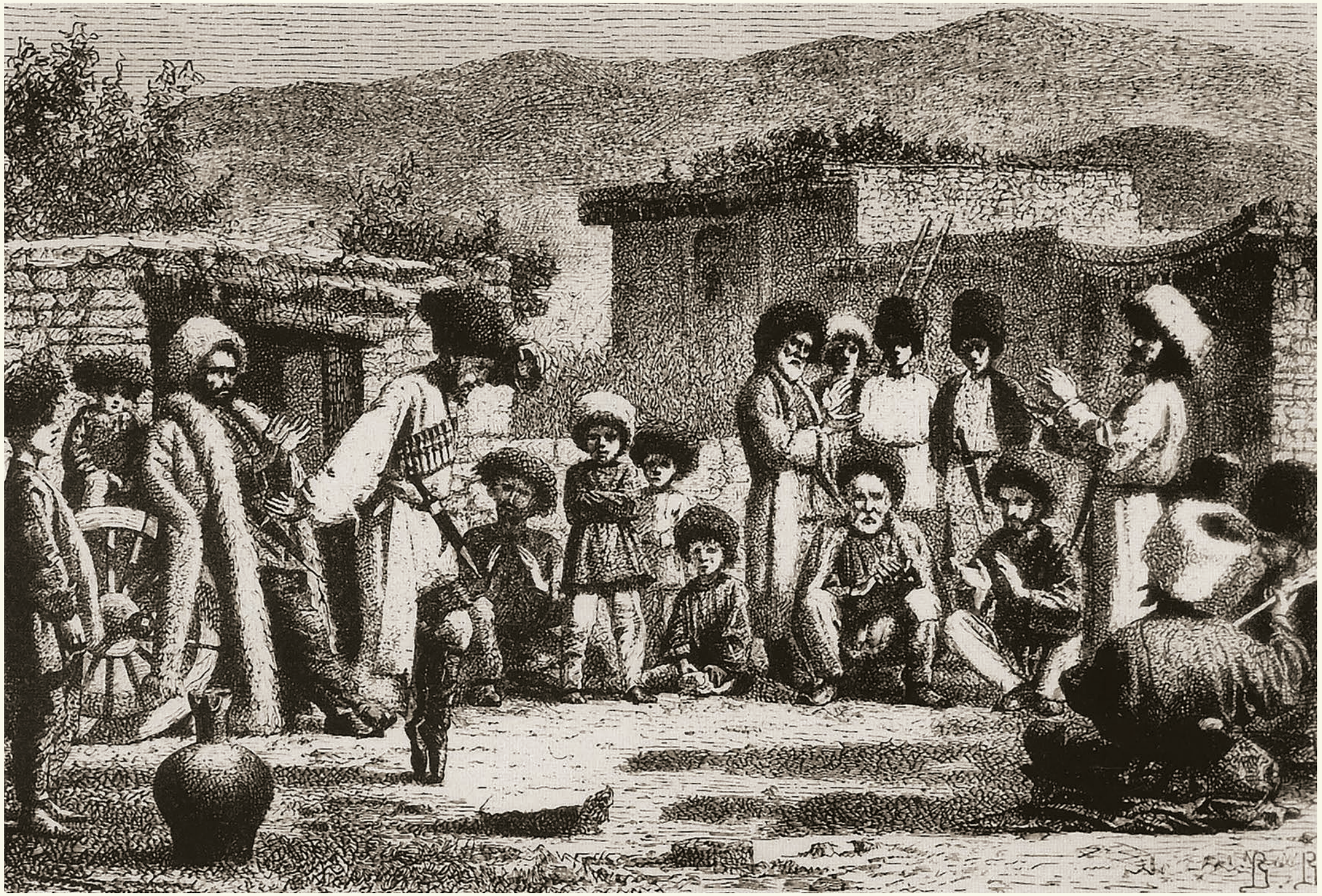
LEZGINS

The Lezgins in Azerbaijan hold a special place among the ethnicities speaking the Caucasian languages. At present they are concentrated in the district of Gussar. The districts of Guba, Khachmaz, Ismayilli, Gabala, Oghuz, Shaki and Gakh have villages dwelt by the Lezgins. The Legs, who are considered the ancient ancestors of the Lezgins, were the tribes dwelling in the territory of the ancient Caucasian state of Albania. According to the historical sources, the Legs used to live in the northern part of Caucasian Albania – the southern part of the present Dagestan.

The Lezgins call themselves "Lazgi" in the singular and "Lazgiyar" in the plural. In the early 20th century they were sometimes called "the Kures". The word "Lazgi" had been the general expression in reference to all the mountain peoples of Dagestan till the mid 20th century. Only in the late 19th century and early 20th century the term "Lazgi" began to be used in reference to the present people.

The Lezgin language belongs to the Lezgin group of the Nakh-Dagestan branch of the Caucasian language family. In the Russian sources the Lezgin language had also been called "the language of the Kures" until the 1920s. The Lezgins in the Republic of Dagestan speak the dialects of Kure and Akhti, whereas the Lezgins living in

Views of Gusar



Lezgi hengi – Lezginka dance. V.Vereshagin. 1867

Lezgis. Residents of the Laza village, Gusar

Azerbaijan mainly speak the Guba dialect. They were within the Azerbaijani states like Caucasian Albania, the Shirvanshahs, further the Safavids and after the collapse of the Safavid state they existed within the Azerbaijani feudal states such as Guba and Darband khanates beginning from the 2nd half of the 18th century. Until the early 19th century the Lezgins settled in the khanate of Guba had been called "the Guba Lezgins".

The Lezgins, who were historically involved in nomadic cattle-breeding in the region of Samur, in the present area of Southern Dagestan, had been taking their herds mainly to the winter pastures in the territories of Northern Azerbaijani since ancient periods. To make their settlements closer to the winter pastures, the Lezgins gradually moved towards the south, and settled in the foothills of the coastal regions of the Caspian. Consequently, the Lezgin winter pastures were located not only in the Samur region but also in the other regions of Azerbaijan too. The Lezgins' settlement in the territory of Azerbaijan was specially intensified in the second half of the 19th century. Building new settlements in these lands, they most often named those areas after their former villages. The industrialization of the city of Baku and the Apsheron Peninsula in general and the extensive exploitation of the rich old fields in the late 19th-early 20th centuries resulted in the inflow of workers not only from Azerbaijan but also beyond its borders. For instance, hundreds of people from Akhti, Mikrakh, Kurakh, Khuchkur and other mountainous villages of Dagestan came to Baku to earn a living.

The Lezgin people has a rich folklore and literature. A number of outstanding poets and ashygs such as Sadraddin Suleyman al-Lazgi, Musa ibn al-Lazgi, Kura Malik, Migragh Gamar, along with Kuchkhur Said, Yetim Emin (Orphan Emin) have made their contributions to the treasure of Lezgin folk literature. Many of the Lezgin poets and Ashygs including Stal Suleyman, Yetim Emin, Ashyg Lezgin Ahmad, Mushkur Mahammad and Mushkur Ibrahim wrote their poems both in the Lezgin and Azerbaijani languages. Lezgin Saleh, one of the famous 17th century Lezgin poets, wrote in four languages – Lezgin, Azerbaijani, Arabic and Persian.

Cattle-breeding holds one of the main places in the traditional farming life of the Lezgins, like that of other ethnicities of Azerbaijan. Owing to the rich and favourable winter pastures of Azerbaijan, the Lezgins have developed sheep-breeding and the related types of activities extensively. The Lezgins, who have the traditions of nomadic cattle-breeding, have made use of the areas of Mil, Mughan as their winter pastures. In the plains and

Exposition of the Museum of History and Ethnography of Gusar district

Mosque of the 19th century in the Anig village, Gusar

partly foothill areas husbandry and gardening are more common.

The Lezgins have earned fame in the region for their works of folk crafts and craftsmanship including carpetweaving. The Lezgin carpets are characterized by the Azerbaijani ornamental plots with floral and geometric motives, among the Lezgin carpets distinguished by their rich colour shades, weaving techniques, Gimil and Kusnat carpets are especially famous. “Sumaghi” carpet weaving distinguished by its particular features in Azerbaijani carpet-weaving art is more widely spread in Gusar.

Today in Azerbaijan the maintenance and development of the ethnic culture of the Lezgins are also in the focus of the attention of the state. İn the district of Gusar, where the Lezgins are densely populated there is Gusar district museum of history and country studies, Gusar State Lezgin Dram Theatre, the folklore groups “Suvar”, “Mel”, “Parizada”, “Kodu”, “Lazginka”, the Lezgin National Centre “Samur”. Besides, the newspapers “Gusar” and “Samur”, as well as books and journals are published in the Lezgin language. The Lezgin language is taught in over 100 schools in the settlements where the Lezgins are concentrated in Azerbaijan.

Grandmother’s advice

Lazgi folk band in Gusar

Young dancers

Molocan people settled in the region of Mughan in Azerbaijan

RUSSIANS

The biggest Russian community in the region of the Southern Caucasus is in Azerbaijan. There is the Association of Russian Community of Azerbaijan, the Association of Russian Cossacks of Azerbaijan, the Molokan Christian Religious Community in Azerbaijan, Baku and Azerbaijan Eparchy of the Orthodox Church, etc. for the Russians to maintain and develop their ethnic culture and beliefs in our country. Furthermore, the State Russian Drama Theatre named after Samad Vurghun is considered one of the popular cultural centres. A number of newspapers and journals are published in Russian in Baku and regions, the TV and radio channels broadcast programs in Russian. Russian is also taught at secondary schools and universities. Besides, there is Slavic University in Baku.

Despite the historical trade and economic relations between Azerbaijan and Russia, the mass inflow of the Russians to this terrritory can be divided into approximately three stages. The first stage was accompanied by the deportation of the Russians belonging to the Molokan sect to the districts of Shusha, Shamakhi and Lankaran

following the Turkmanchai Treaty signed in 1828. The second inflow, the wide-scale migration of the Orthodox Russians belonging to different social strata was associated with the intensive development of industry including the oil boom in Azerbaijan, especially in Baku in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. That is, the number of the Russian emigres reached 76 thousand people only in Baku in 1913. The third mass deportation coincides with the years of World War II. That time tens of thousands of Russians exposed to the invasion of the German fascists found a refuge for themselves in Azerbaijan.

The village of Ivanovka located in the district of Ismayilli, that is in the north-west of Azerbaijan, has been considered one of the developed dwelling places both in the period of the USSR and now. Today the village of Ivanovka is actually the only place in the South Caucasian Republics where not only the culture and ethnography of the Russian people, but also the Molokan sect of Christianity, the lifestyle, customs and traditions derived from this faith have been maintained with care. Along with the Russians belonging to the Molokan sect of Christianity, the Azerbaijanis, Ukrainians and Lezgins also live here.

Due to the wide spread of the Molokan sect in Russia in the early 19th century, the number of its followers reached approximately half

Molokans women

Archangel Michael Orthodox Church in Baku

a million people, and they became a great social force. Actually, the first exile of the Molokans to the Northern and Southern Caucasus was launched back in the period of Empress Yekaterina II. The second wave of the forced deportation occurred in 1830. Folowing the Russian-Turkish war of 1828-1829, the Turkmanchai Treaty signed in 1828, the invasion of a part of Eastern Anatolia including the region of Kars, a part of historical Azerbaijani territories by the tsarist Russia opened new perspectives for the solution to the "Molokan problem" in the territory of the Empire. That is, Nikolay I signed a Decree to settle the occupied territories with Russians, especially with the representatives of Molokan and Dukhabor sects, and in accordance with that document their mass deportation to the South Caucasus was started. According to some sources, the foundations for the village of Ivanovka were laid by the ethnic Russians of Molokan sect exiled from the Tombov governorate of Russia in the 40s of the 19th century. Although they first settled in the vicinity of the Topchu village in the region of the present Gabala in 1834, due to the failure to adapt to the humid climate, they decided to move to the foot of Ajinohur Mountain. The former name of the village was "Nefteran", which was later re-named "Ivanovka" after Ivan Pershin, who took an initiative to move there. Such villages as Ivano-

Prayer in an Orthodox church

The building of the State Academic Russian Drama Theater named after Samad Vurgun

Performer of Russian popular songs

vka, Saratovka, Privolni, Prishib, Borisovka, Novatroitska, Slavyanka were built for displaced Russian people in Azerbaijan. The Molokans mainly live in the cities of Baku and Sumgayit, regions of Shamakhi, Ismayilli, Gadabay and Guba. At present the Molokan clerical-Christian religious community has been registered in the country and over 10 of their religious representatives are functioning in the territory of the country. Today there is a great demand for the products manufactured by the farm after Nikitin functioning in Ivanovka. İt is not a coincidence that in a number of places in Baku the shops of the farm are operating. The products offered to the customers here are distinguished not only by their quality but also ecological cleanness.

The agression of the occupying Armenian government against the inhabitants of the territories of Azerbaijan in the late 1980s and the early 1990s, the chaos and hopelessness in the country after Azerbaijan

Folk band of the Russian community in Azerbaijan

Ivanovka village and Ivanovka residents

re-gained its state independence did not miss the Ivanovka residents either. They still remember that period with excitement. Due to confusion and disbelief in their future fate, being deceived by sweet promises a part of the village inhabitants left Azerbaijan, which had given their grandfathers a refuge. However, due to the lack of normal favourable living and working conditions in their new settlements, most of them returned to Azerbaijan. Turning to the inhabitants of Ivanovka during those periods of turmoil the Azerbaijani President Heydar Aliyev uttered his historic words which are quoted by all the inhabitants of the village today, "Do not worry, I am your guarantor!" As a sign of gratitude to the national leader today the central street of Ivanovka and the village school built for 780 students at the financial expenses of the Azerbaijani state are named after Heydar Aliyev. Favourable conditions have been established in Ivanovka to develop and protect the ethnic culture. There is a cultural centre and amateur art groups there. The amateur art group "Slavyanka" of the village is famous in Azerbaijan. The repertoire of the ensamble includes Azerbaijani songs along with Russian folk songs and dances.

Future of Ivanovka

RUTULS

The Rutuls are one of the ancient ethnicities living in Azerbaijan and the Republic of Dagestan of the Russian Federation. Their historical Motherland is the village of Rutul in Southern Dagestan. The modern ethnonym "Rutul" is associated with the name of the village, whereas the Rutuls call themselves "mukhadabir", "mikhad", and the village of Rutul, their historical Motherland "Meged", "Mukhad". The word "Mukhadabir" means "the relatives" in the Rutul language and the word "mukhad" "the main village".

The Rutuls live in the northwest of Azerbaijan, in the villages of Shin, Gaynarja, Khirsa Shorsu, Goybulag, Aydinbulag, and partly Kobar-Zayzid, Dashuz and Bash Kungut of the district of Shaki. The first inflow of the Rutuls from Dagestan to Azerbaijan took place in the late 17th century – in the period of Mahammad Hasan Khan of Shaki. And in the years when Jafargulu Khan Dunbili was in power – in the early years of the 18th century the Rutuls, who came from the village of Shinaz of Dagestan, founded the first settlement in the region of Shaki – the village of Shin. Today the village of Shin is the biggest settlement occupied by the

Shin village

Rutul aksakals (elders)

Shin Castle

Traditional winter dress of Rutul men

Ruthuls in Azerbaijan. The village is rich in historical monuments, toponyms in Azerbaijani Turkish and Rutul languages, and the sites of ancient faith. Here the ancient cemetery, the Medieval tower remains, and water mill have been preserved up to present.

They call their language, which belongs to the family of the Caucasian languages, as “mikhade miz”. The Rutuls living in Azerbaijan speak the mukhad dialect of the Rutul language. Although the Rutul

Traditional dress of Rutul women

language has five main dialects like Mukhad, Shinaz, Mukhrak, Ikhrak and Borj-Khnov, the formation of the Rutul Literary Language was based on the Mikhad Dialect.

The Rutuls' ethnic history is associated with Azerbaijan and its ancient state, Caucasian Albania. That is, the areas densely populated by them at present in the Republic of Dagestan used to be the areas of Caucasian Albania. The tribes of Caucasian Albania distinguished by their ethnic variety embody the

Old street of the Shin village

Rutul youth learn old dances

ancestors of the Rutuls. Research indicate that the jigb tribes in Caucasian Albania were the ancestors of the Rutuls. Beginning from the 15th century the names of the Rutul area, Rutul beys and their extended families have been encountered in a number of documents related to the Azerbaijani states of the Garagoyunlu and Safavids.

Some ancient superstitions and ceremony rituals are being performed even today in everyday traditions of the Rutuls who accepted Islam. A little before the spring holiday each extended Rutul family would get together in their own quarter and mark the arrival of spring with various rituals. In the folklore of both the Rutuls and Azerbaijani Turks common features, shared examples are many. For instance, at weddings and on holidays the common Azerbaijani musical pieces like "Lilay", "Jeyranim", "Maralkhanim", ninnis (lullabies) and bayatis are beautifully performed in a peculiar way both in the Azerbaijani and Rutul languages. The melody "Jeyranim", one of the Azerbaijani songs, is known to have a specific Rutul version too. In the Rutuls' moral culture the ashyg poetry also takes a wide place. Since the 13th century ashyg music has been holding an important part in the Rutul folklore. The goshmas of Kor (Blind) Rajab, who lived in that period, have survived up to our time.

Folk bands taking part in Rutul weddings and holidays

Sheki's mountains

Although the Azerbaijani Rutuls do not differ ethnographically from the people living in the north-western region of our country, there have been some special local features in some of their everyday traditions, clothing and decoration ornaments. Especially, the examples of the Shorsu and Goybulag villages of the Rutul musical folklore are distinguished by the genre and folklore variations. There is Shorsu village Folklore House and Goybulag village Folklore Club in these villages to protect the variations and maintain the pieces of the Rutul folklore. At present the boys' dance group "Abay" created in the village of Shorsu performs with great artistry some ethnic and common Azerbaijani and Caucasian dances like "Maharramkand", "Koroghlu qaytarmasi", "Jurni-jurni", "Arzunuqay", "Arkhush". There is also a traditional national musical piece called "Avazkhan" belonging merely to the Rutul folklore. This musical style with free rhythm is partly reminiscent of Azerbaijani Mugham. Some traditional melodies belonging to the Rutul folklore are performed with this very rhythm. In the 19th and 20th century Rutul weddings there were competitions of "Dash vurma" (throwing stones), Gardanvurma", ancient games like "Tatalduyun". "Turai", "Turna-turna", "Shah oyunu" (Royal game), "Ovchu oyunu" (The Hunter's Game). The bride was seen off to the groom's home under the melody of the ancient folk songs such as "Parizadeh", "Zari-Zari".

Like the entire population of the Shaki-Zagatala region, the Rutuls are also involved mainly in cattle-breeding and partly husbandry. This is associated with the natural geographical and economic conditions of the region. Due to the lack of the arable soils the cattle-breeding fields, especially sheep-breeding were much developed. In the past among the Rutuls such fields of craftsmanship as the crafts of coppersmithing, ironsmithing, especially weapon production, as well as pottery, wood-carving and rock-carving were also developed. As the Rutuls were breeding cattle, they have acquired such crafts as wool production, weaving, leather manufacturing. Every family was involved in leather and wool production, and manufactured thick felt and bandages. Out of these fur and leather products they prepared caps, felt cloaks called "kaval" and saddles. As for the items of weaving, shawls, broadcloth, carpets and rugs were woven. In the ornaments of carpets and colourful woolen socks the Rutul women would create high quality pieces of craftsmanship.

One of the villages, where Rutul people live

THE SHAHDAGH PEOPLES

The Khinalug, Budug, Gryz peoples and the Hapit, Chek, Alik peoples, who are the sub-ethnicity of the Gryz ethnic group, live in the Khinalug, Budug, Gryz, Hapit, Chek, Alik villages, built at the foot of Shahdagh, 2000–2300 meters above the sea level, surrounded by high mountains in Guba, one of the most ethnically diverse regions of Azerbaijan. In historiography and ethnography, these peoples are called "the ethnicities belonging to the Shahdagh ethnic group" or "the Shahdagh peoples" according to the areas where they settled. The ethnic history of the Shahdag peoples is associated with Caucasian Albania, the ancient state of Azerbaijan. They are also the descendants of the ancient Alban tribes. As independent ethnic groups, they are known by names of their villages, but each of them has a unique ethnic name and these ethnonyms reveal the traces of the ancient Alban tribes, such as Har, Gat.

Kheni, Bekh, Haranta (Hereti) districts adjacent to one another are mentioned among the numerous Alban provinces devastated during the Khazar, Persian-Byzantine, Arab raids to Caucasian Albania in the early Middle Ages. These toponyms have a lot in common with the toponyms of the Khinalug, Budug, Gryz and Hapit peoples settled at the foot of Shahdagh and presently living in one another's neighborhood. Abandoning their settlements in the valley of the Ginikh and Iori rivers in the northwest of Caucasian Albania, the Har and Gat tribes, who wanted to protect themselves from the invasions in the period when Caucasian Albania had turned into a battlefield, took refuge at the foot of Shahdagh in the northeast of Azerbaijan. Here they tried to preserve ancient Albanian toponyms and ethnonyms such as Har Kheni, Bekh Haband, and maintained their ethnic identities, lifestyles, beliefs and, most importantly, their languages. Linguistic studies uncovered that each of the of the Khinalug, Budug, and Gryz peoples has their independent language, whereas the Hapit, Alik, Chek and Yurguc peoples have dialects of the Gryz language.

Haput girl in traditional clothing

Khinalug People

The people of Khinalug live collectively in the Khinalug village located at the high peak of Shahdagh, 2300 meters above the sea level. Among the Shahdag peoples, only the people of Khinalug live compactly in Khinalug, their ancient village. The people of Khinalug are also among the rare ethnicities on the ethnic map of the world registered only in Azerbaijan. By origin, they are one of the direct successors of the Alban tribes known by the names of Gat, Get, Ket.

Although the people of Khinalug are known by the name of their village as an independent ethnic group, they call themselves “khat” in the singular, “kattid” (ketis) in the plural and the other Shahdagh ethnicities call them “getdi”. The Khinalug village is called Ketish which means the place of Ket or the land of Ket in the Khinalug language. Studies have shown that in fact, the toponym “Khinalug” does not represent the name of this ethnos, but the name of the district of Kheni in the north-west of Caucasian Albania as recorded in early medieval sources. The inhabitants of the Khinalug village say that their ancestors came from the city of Kheno, on the other side of the mountain Tufandagh. They interpret the name of the Khinalug village as “the home of

A scenery of Khinalug village

Khinalug people bracing for a severe winter

A Khinalyg man

A Khinalyg old woman

Khenis". Apparently, these ancient tribes settled in the northeast of Azerbaijan, moving through snowy mountain passes to protect themselves from attacks. The Khinalug language has a special place among the languages of the Shahdagh peoples, because only the inhabitants of that village speak this language. The people of Khinalug calls their language "ketsh" or "ketish metzi". The Khinalug language belongs to the Caucasian-Shahdagh language group.

Thanks to its isolation, the village of Khinalug, which is situated among such peaks of the Caucasus Mountains as the Gizil Gaya, Shahdagh, Tufandagh, Khinalug Mountain, has maintained its ethnic identity and some of its ancient traditions to this day. In their daily life the people of Khinalug has so far maintianed their beliefs in heavenly bodies such as the Sun and the Moon, as well as fire, water, mountains and forces of Nature worshipped by their ancient ancestors – the tribes of Caucasian Albania. In the Khinalug village the architectural and burial monuments have so far preserved the motives related to astral beliefs, typical for the culture of Caucasian Albania as well as symbolic signs related to the outlook on the forces of nature.

The village of Khinalug is rich in numerous ancient sanctuaries such as Jabbar Baba, Pira-Jomard, Abu Muslum Mosque, Sheykh Shalbuz Baba Mosque, Khidir Nabi, Mohuj

Pupils in a Khinalyg secondary school learning their mother tongue

Maral Rahmanzade. The "Khinalug" painting

Exposition of Khinalug Museum of History and Ethnography

Undecipherable ancient scripts are still found in Khinalug

Baba, Shikhshalburuz Baba, Girkh Abdal and Atashgah. Among the Khinalug sanctuaries the Abu Muslum Mosque is the one which evokes most interest. There is a mosque with the identical architectural structure and name in the villages of Gryz and Chek. The solar symbols on the ancient crown-shaped wooden pillars inside these mosques also indicate that these temples were formerly the Sun temples.

The people of Khinalug considers sacred Tufan Daghi, Gibla Daghi, Baba Daghi, especially Komrad Daghi in the Gabala region. Gomrad Daghi, where the 5th century Alban temple was once located, has a special reputation among the people of Khinalug. Traditionally, in order to protect a baby boy from an evil eye, his hair is declared an offering to the mountain of Komrad, and plaited in the middle of his head until he reaches the age of seven, when his hair is cut in a special ritual in the mountain of Gomrad. The Udis and Ingiloys who belong to the ancient Alban tribes as well as the entire region of Gabala also perform this hair ritual against the evil eye. Such children with long hair are believed to be seen and protected by God from the sky, thus they are treated with care and respect, and no one dare offend them. The Central Asian Turks and Iraqi Turkmens also have a similar tradition. The belief in the Baba golu stone (red agate) is common in the Khinalug traditions. According to the popular belief, this stone protects from lightning. The ancient Alban tribes are known to have worshipped the Goddess of Lightning, along with the elements of Nature. The archeological materials also testify to the belief in the magic power of agate in Caucasian Albania since pre-historic times. The local people visit an ancient Atashgah called "Ja yuvr jiga" (the place of fire) as a sacred site in Khinalug. According to historical sources, the fire-worshipping pilgrims coming to Azerbaijan from India would visit not only the Atashgah in Absheron, but also the Atashgah in Khinalug.

Old place of pilgrimage

Budugs

The Budugs are one of the ethnicities attributed to the Shahdagh ethnic group. Their main dwelling place is the village of Budug located on the left bank of the River Garachai, on the high mountainous plain among the mountains of Greater Caucasus in the district of Guba. The 18th century sources including Abbasgulu Agha Bakikhanov's work "Gulustani-Iram" point out that Budug is an area within the Khanate of Guba. From the 18th century to the 30s of the 19th century Budug was considered one of the ten districts of the Guba province. Although the Budugs' native land is the village of Budug, they have settled in such villages of the region as Dali Gaya, Guney Budug, Bash Budughu, Aghyazi, Arabulag.

The Budug extended families, who got separated from the village of Budug due to the life on the farm in the 19th century founded new Budug villages such as Budughu, Aghyazi Budug, Guney Budug (Garabulag) in the districts of Mushkur (the present Khachmaz district) and Shabran of the Guba okrug, also Goychay and Shamakhi okrugs. At present the Budugs live in the territory of the districts of Guba, Khachmaz and partly Shabran.

Budukh village

Budug's livestock-farmers are doing preparation work for the winter season

Cattle of the village returns from pasture

According to the popular legends, their first settlement "was a forest next to the village of Bed (Bad) at the foot of the mountain". This toponym coincides with the name of the Albanian province known as Bed, Bekh, Bies of Azerbaijan's ancient state, the Caucasian Albania. The Budugs call themselves "Budad". The ethnonym "Budad" also features the name of the province Bed of Caucasian Albania and the possessive ending "ad" in the Budug language. In general, the ethnonym "Budad" can be interpreted as "of Bed" or "of Bud". The Budug language is one of the independent languages included in the Shahdagh language group. The Budugs call their language "Budad mez". The Budug language is closer to the Gryz and Udi languages. Like all other Shahdagh peoples, the Budugs are also bilingual. The common language of interaction between the Budugs and other Shahdagh peoples is Azerbaijani.

Although the Budugs' customs and traditions and beliefs are not distinct from the common Azerbaijani customs and traditions, there are some specific features as well. According to an ancient tradition, at the wedding of the Shahdagh peoples the bride and groom's uncles on their mothers' side enjoy more important role than their parents. It would be appropriate that at the wedding

Sheep-breeding is a traditional trade for Budug people

An ancient residential house in Budukh village

Ancient cemetery of the village

ceremonies of the Udis, Sakhurs and Rutuls, the ancient tribes of Caucasian Albania the uncle on mother's side plays a pivatol role.

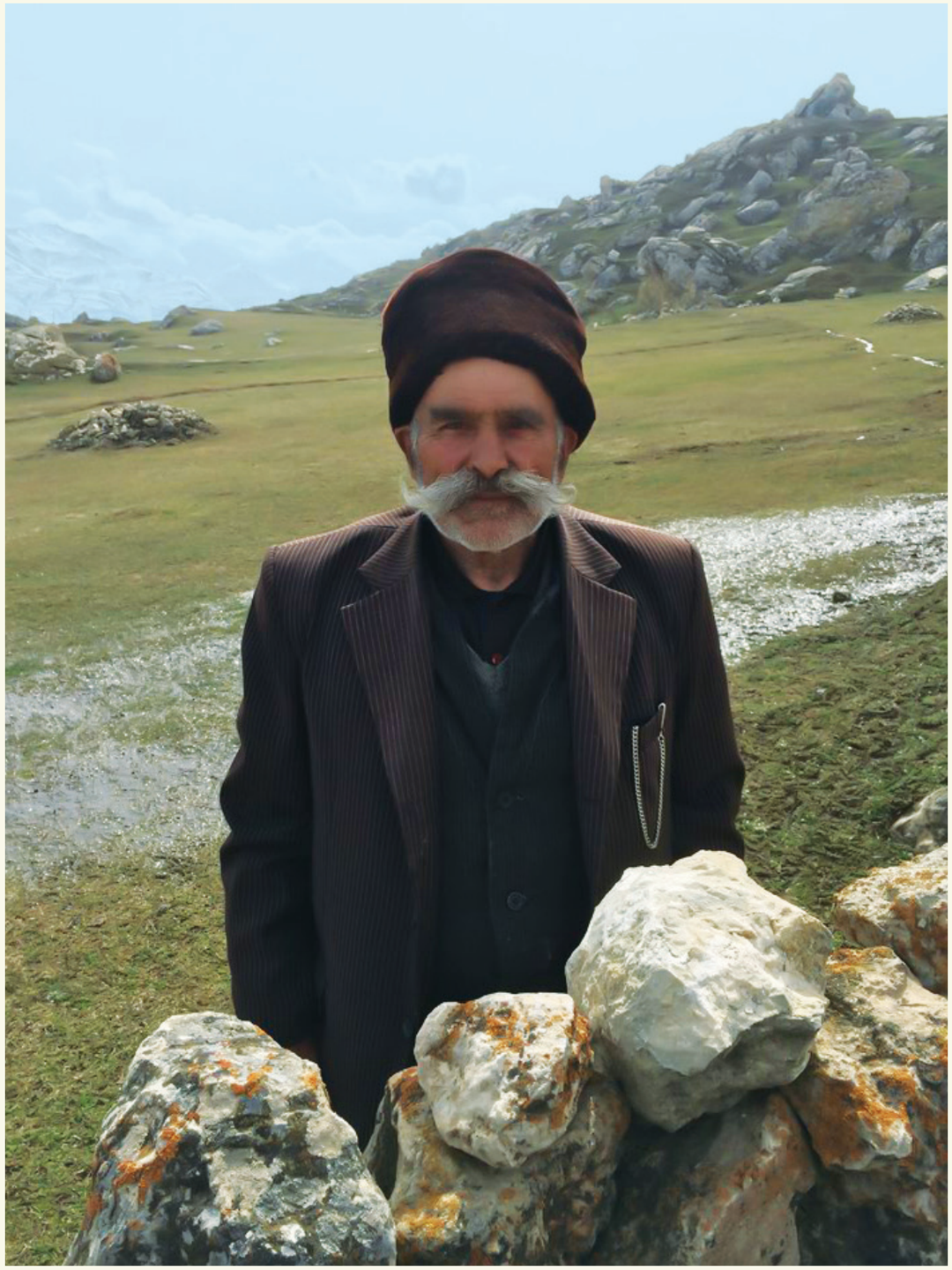
The rich and ancient traditions of the Albanian culture have been preserved in the architectural and burial monuments of the Shahdagh villages, including of the Budug village. This is due to their settlement surrounded by unsurpassible mountains in long seclusion for centuries due to certain historical reasons. In the specific architecture of the Budug houses, also on the tombstones with a horse and Sun descriptions on them the traces of the Solar cult remain obvious so far. The Budug village is rich in several ancient sites of worshipping. The ancient monuments located in unattainable steep rocks that still keep the remnants of the fireworshipping temple such as "The Castle of Silence", "The Sevens" Castle, "The Pirr Violet" are among the sites of belief that evoke great interest. The Budugs have developed extensively the fields of craftsmanship, especially, wool processing, weaving, the manufacturing of cloth-wool, coarse-wool fabrics, carpets, saddles, khourjun (saddle bags), the processing of felt-skin, the manufacturing of weaponry.

An ancient residential house

Budug people

Pastures of the Budug village

Akhchid waterfall



Elderly Gryz

Gryzis (Hapitis, Chekis, Alikis, Yerguc)

Among the ethnicities belonging to the Shahdagh group the Gryzis are also originally one of the successors of the ancient Albanian tribes. The Gryz village of Guba is considered their ancient village and administrative centre. This ancient mountain village, surrounded by such mountains as Tufan Daghi, Agh Dagh, and Baltagaya, resembles an eagle alighting on rocks. It is no coincidence that one of the rocky passes stretching towards the village of Gryz that has dangerous, winding mountain roads difficult to move through even on horseback, has a popular name "Mikhtoken".

Since the 30s-40s of the 19th century migration aptitudes have been typical for the village of Gryz too. Currently, the Gryzis live in the Gryz, Gryz-Dahna Chek, Alik, Hapit villages of Guba, as well as Haji-gazma, Haji-Ahmadoba, Haji Gurbanoba villages of the Khachmaz district. Since the 19th century, although the descendants of the Gryz village have built dozens of new settlements, they have been maintaining contacts with the Gryz village, which they consider their home.

As sub-ethnic groups of the Gryzis, the Hapitis, Chekis, Alikis and Yergucis are also included in Gryz ethnic group. The Hapitis also inhabit the Hapit village of Guba, the Hajihatamli, Hapitli and Mollaisagly villages of Ismayilli district. The Hapitis live together with the Azerbaijani Turks in Khachmaz (the village of Shikhaput), Gabala (the villages of Malikli, Sileyli), Agdash (the villages of Hapitli, Ovchulu). The Chekis, Alikis and Yergucis live in the places bearing the same name - the villages of Chek, Alik and Yerguc in Guba. The first settlement of the population of the Hapit, Chek, Alik and Yerguc was also the village of Gryz. Each of these ethnic groups speaks different dialects of the Gryz language.

The Gryzis call their mother tongue "grazar mez", but themselves *"garaz"* (gkharaz) and *"garazar"*. The Hapitis name themselves "har", whereas the Gryzis call them "habudar". It is also known that the Hapitis sometimes called themselves "hereti" until the 30s of the 20th century. The ethnic names of "har" or "ar" of the Gryzis suggest that they are one of the successors of the ancient "har (ar)" tribes settled in Caucasian Albania. Ancient har (her) tribes lived in the Hereti district – the northwest of Caucasian Albania. This area is known as Haranta and

Jek village

Haput girls

Hornaburj in Arab sources. The Hapitis say that their ancestors settled in impassable areas of the Shahdagh leaving the city of Harna to protect themselves from the Arab invasion.

According to the legend, the Jews who escaped from the religious persecution also found a refuge in the village of Gryz. The Gryzis sheltered them and hid their ancient manuscripts and holy books in caves around the village. The local people say that the Jewish cemetery is also preserved here. Although the Jews, who took a refuge from Fatali Khan of Guba, built their village "Girmizi gasaba (Red settlement)" in the area called "Kaladuzu", they have not forgotten the Gryzis favour to them up to now and therefore welcome them as best friends, dear guests.

The villages of Gryz, Haput and Chek are rich in sacred places and sanctuaries. Especially, there are stories that the village of Hapit was home to some saint people, and that ascetics lived there. It is no coincidence that the Hapitis are often known as Shikh Hapiti (sheikh hapiti). The 10th–11th century Babadilim Tomb in the village functioned as one of the centers of Sufism. In the village of Check there are still traces of approximately over 25 ancient places of worship and religious sites, and also Abu Muslim Mosque and Atashgah which are existing in Khinalig and

Alik aksakals (elders)

Shahdagh people

Gryz too. The construction of Abu Muslim Mosque, one of the oldest Muslim temples in the village, is attributed to the first phase of the dissemination of Islam in Azerbaijan – in the 7th and 8th centuries. This temple differs from traditional mosques by its architecture and design elements and carries the elements of ancient pre-Islamic beliefs too. According to studies, these temples were built on the foundations of the ancient Sun Temples. Abu Muslim mosque is still functioning in the village of Chek today.

Like all the Shahdagh peoples, the traditions of the Gryzis have many features in common with the people living in the northwestern part of Azerbaijan. The uncle of the bride and groom plays an important role in wedding ceremonies. Like the Udis, the Chekis also call the uncle "khalu". The specific traditions such as "cutting the bread", giving the bride honey, hanging the live rooster from the "shakh", the decorated branch during the wedding ceremonies of the Shahdagh peoples, are precisely followed in the Sheki-Zagatala region, especially by the Udis and Ingiloys. This ancient tradition shows the unified ethnocultural roots of the ethnicities of Caucasian Albania. The tombstones with the descriptions of symbolic signs related to the astral beliefs and the forces of Nature that are typical of Albanian culture, are also preserved in Hapit.

Traditional costumes are not so different from the other regions of Azerbaijan. Men's fur coats typical of the Shahdagh villages are called "kawal". Men used to wear woolen socks called "kamachar", or "shatal", along with traditional bast sandals on their feet. Women's clothes consisted of a shirt called "perem" and a dress called "bulasha" and "valchag". Women used to wear "shalmar" (leather shoes) and "kamachar" on their feet.

The village of Chek is famous for its carpets. As a whole, these carpets are ascribed to the mountainous parts of the Guba group of Guba-Shirvan type of Azerbaijani carpet-weaving art. Although the Chek carpets are similar to some extent to the Gryz carpets, their composition is much simpler, long-shaped, well-knit, and the background is navy-blue and red. Like other Shahdagh peoples, the main occupation of the Gryzis, Hapitis, Chekis, and Alikis is still cattle- breeding, especially sheep-breeding as it used to be in the 19th century. Traditionally, the cuisine of the Shahdagh peoples, a part of the common Azerbaijani culinary culture, has its specific features. The main difference is the widespread use of jerk meat for drying

The Alikis family

by hanging over the rope, given the climatic conditions and lifestyle. This tradition is also typical of the Sheki-Zagatala region. Like the Udis, the Ckekis also call gutab “afar”.

Today, the Shahdagh people live in harmony with modernization and antiquity. As they live among inaccessible mountains, almost in isolation, these peoples, who are the unique legacies of the past with their unique ethnographic features and languages, have preserved their ethnic characteristics, languages, specific ways of life, ancient traditions, and economic traditions. İn their lifestyle one can observe a significant impact of their common Azerbaijani ethnocultural traditions.

Examples of ethnic art of Shahdag peoples

An ancient sanctuary of Haput people

Shirali Muslimov lived for 168 years and was one of the world`s oldest people of the 20th century

TALISHIS

Talishis are one of the ancient peoples living in Azerbaijan. The representatives of this people call themselves "tolish", and "tolishon" in the plural, whereas the Azerbaijani Turks call them "Talish". In the ethnographic literature on the 19th and early 20th centuries the ethnonym "talish" is sometimes shown as a toponym and the expression Talishis" is encountered. The regions densely populated by the Talishis are the bordering areas of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Islamic Republic of Iran. That is, the Azerbaijani part of that zone includes the districts of Astara, Lankaran, Lerik and Masalli, whereas in Iran these are a number of settlements of the provinces of Ardabil, Khalkhal and Gilan. The Talishis living in the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Islamic Republic of Iran worship Islam. Their language is ascribed to the north-western subgroup of the Iranian group of the Indio-European family of languages.

According to the existing research, the word "Talish" was used in the Middle Ages first as a toponym like "al-Taylasan" and further as an ethnonym as well. We encounter this expression in the Medieval Arabic sources – in the works of al-Tabari, Yakut ibn Abdullah and others. For instance, in his work "Kitab al-masalik va-al-mamalik" (The book on the roads and countries) written in 846 the famous Arabic traveller Abu-Gasim Ubeydullah ibn Abdullah ibn Khodadbeh recalls the land of at-Taylasan. The word "Talish" was first used as a toponym in Hamdullah Gazvini's (1280–1349) work "Nuzhatulgulub".

According to their everyday life, lifestyle and migration directions the Talishis are divided into ethnographic groups such as Pornaim, Oratli, Zuvandli, Charozhon, Golishon, Kirdon, Derezhon. The Charozhons mainly live in the village of Sarak of the district of Astara. They moved to this area 250 years ago from the region of Talish-Dolab of the Gilan province of Iran. Whereas the Derezhons, who speak a different dialect of the Talish language, are said to have arrived in the territory of the district of Lankaran from the Lisar region of Iran. The Talishis, who are engaged in cattle-breeding and lead a semi-nomadic life, are also divided into two. For instance, those who are involved in cattle-breeding are called "golish" or "galish", and those engaged in sheep-breeding are called "kirdi".

School-children perform Talish popular dances

Folk artists of Astara

“Nanalar” (Grandmothers) folklore ensemble

A corner of Astara Museum of History and Ethnography

The golishis, who live in the villages of Tuli, Joni, Hamarat, Siov, Bradi, Veri, Chayrud, Anzoli, Rvarud, Birsilim, Bilasar, Dashtatuk, Razano, Rvo, Miyanku in the southern region of Azerbaijan are the offspring of the Galeshis who moved here from the territory of Iran.

The Talishis, who live in the southern regions of Azerbaijan, have historically been engaged in paddy-growing, vegetable-growing and husbandry. Yet, among their main activities craftsmanship also holds a special place. İn Lankaran, Astara and Masalli the art of pottery, and in the Mountains of Lerik mainly ironsmith are widespread. Furthermore, among the Talishis' ethnic activities carpet-wieving also holds a special place. İn the Talysh art of carpet-weaving stylized paddy (wheat) descriptions are considered one of the leading ornaments. Besides this, the villages of Musakucha, Osakucha, Veravul and Boladi are specialized in mat-making. The villages of Veravul and Vilvan of Lankaaran and Tulloba, Gaznoba, Mollaoba and Boradigah villages of the district of Masalli are famous for their high quality baskets.

Besides all this, the favourable subtropic climatic conditions of the territories densely populated by the Talishes have opened wide perspectives for the development of paddy growing. The findings of the archeological excavations carried out in these areas also prove the population's involvement in paddy-growing in ancient periods. The demand for the ancient local rice types with aroma such as "hashimi", "sadri", "dastasa", "shaban" and "hasani" of Lankaran and Astara is increasing both in Azerbaijan and beyond its boundaries. At present after a long pause the restoration and development of paddy growing have started in the region. The areas of Lankaran and Astara are famous not only for their rice, but also subtropic fruits, tea.

The examples of the Talish people's national cuisine are known by their names. A number of dishes and sweets, for instance, lavangi, sirdal, larji pilaf have long surpassed the ethnic frames, firmly entered the common Azerbaijani cuisine. Also, today one can encounter the samples of dishes from different regions of Azerbaijan in Talishi ethnic cuisine too. The main peculiarity of the Talishi cuisine is the preference of dairy products, vegetables and greens, poultry and fish in various dishes. As rice is the Talishis' traditional and daily food, it has replaced bread for them for centuries. Therefore, there are tens of variants of pilaf with meat, poultry, fruit, greens and vegetables in the southern regions of Azerbaijan.

The dance "Halay" with a circling and dancing tradition, which is one of the ancient examples of common Azerbaijani cultural heritage, is widely spread not only in the districts of Lankaran, Astara, Masalli

Youths learning the intricacies of an ancient folk art in Astara Museum of History and Ethnography

Tea plantation

Talysh cuisine is famous all over Azerbaijan

densely populated by the Talishis, but also in the Aran (lowland) regions, and Nakhchivan, even beyond the borders of Azerbaijan – in Iran and Turkey. However, one can clearly see the traces of ancient customs, traditions, and imagery typical for the Talishis in the "Halay" songs performed by them. While the theme of love prevails in the "Halay" songs, the "Bijar" songs are devoted to labour, efforts made jointly in the fields, vegetable gardens and their fruits, abundance. The "Halay" songs collected from the Lankaran and Astara regions of Azerbaijan by the accomplished connoisseur of Azerbaijani folk music, composer Bayram Huseynli were first published in 1966 as a collection which included fifteen rare pieces of music.

The numerous local music and folk groups have a great role in the advocacy of the samples of the ethnic culture of the Talishi people, as well as their "Halay" and "Bijar" songs not only in Azerbaijan, but also beyond its borders. One of the music groups protecting the ancient folk songs of the Talishis and Azerbaijani Turks of the region and transmitting this unparallelled treasure from one generation to

Astara carpet-maker

another is the folklore "Nanalar" (Grannies) group created in the village of Separadi of Lankaran in 1970. The repertoire of the group consisting of the elderly inhabitants of the village – the skillful connoisseurs of folklore includes over 100 ancient songs. The folklore group "Nanalar" has repeatedly attended the local and international festivals, been to the art events, and a film was shot about it. Among such folklore groups the group "Halay" consisting of young girls established in 1957 in the cultural centre of the village of Mahmudavar of the district of Masalli enjoys a significant place. The group, which was invited to the music festival of students and youth "Blossom, Our Azerbaijan" held in Baku back in 1959, became a laureate of that Republican event and was awarded diplomas. The folklore group "Halay" has successfully advocated Azerbaijani culture in international events organized in a number of countries of the world. The Talishi language is taught at secondary schools in the settlements densely populated by the Talishis. A number of newspapers and magazines, books including textbooks are published in this language.

Talish carpet

Tatars. 19th century

TATARS

The Tatars are one of the peoples who enjoy a special place in Azerbaijan's socio-political and cultural life. The ethno-cultural proximity between the Azerbaijani Turks and Tatars is due to the historical relations between the two peoples. The Tatars, who are one of the ancient Euro-asian nations, mainly live in the European part of Russia – the Republic of Tatarstan, the territories of the Volga and Urals, Eastern Siberia, Ukraine, the Baltic countries, Central Asia and Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China. The ancestors of the contemporary Tatars used to have the Bulgar and Golden Horde States, the Kazan Khanate in the territory of the present Russian Federation. However, in 1552 as a result of the Russian tsar's policy of an invader the last independent Tatar state – the Kazan Khanate collapsed.

The Tatars, who have spread over a vast geography, are mainly grouped under the titles of Crimean, Kazan, Mishar, Astrakhan, Siberian, and Kreshin Tatars. Although at present the Tatars call themselves "Tatars", until the 19th century they had been known as the Kazans, Bulgars, Turks, and Mishar. The Tatars are a Turkic community, whose eth-

Tatar clergyman in traditional dress

Tatar woman in traditional dress

Tatar Family. 19th century

Azerbaijani Tatars

nic root has more Volga Bulgars, Khazars and Gypchags, and speak the Tatarian language belonging to the Gypchag-Bulgar sub-group of the Gypchag group of the Turkic languages. The Tatar language is divided into Western (Mishar) and Kazan dialects. The Tatar language distinguished by its rich linguistic features is lexically close to Azerbaijani, as is the case with many Turkic languages. İn modern period the Azerbaijani Tatars have not forgotten their language and traditions. By maintaining their vernacular, they fluently speak Azerbaijani and Russian too. The great part of the Tatars are Moslems, who serve the sunni-Hanafi sect of Islam. There are also Orthodox Tatars – Kreshens in the territory of Russia.

The great majority of the Azerbaijani Tatars have migrated from Tatarstan, mainly from the provinces of Russia's Volga region like Penza and Ulyanovsk. Although the Tatars' first inflow to Azerbaijan coincided with the period of the Crimean Khanate in the 16th century, the Tatars settled in Azerbaijan more during the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. According to the demographic indicators, the Tatars' mass settlement in the territory of Azerbaijan, especially in Baku and the Apsheron Peninsula took place in the early 20th century. İn that period a part of the Tatars in Russia were exiled to Azerbaijan because of their political views and participation in the national awakening movement, and another part moved to Baku for a better life in connection with the fast development of oil industry in Apsheron. Since that period the Tatars have displayed a special activity in Azerbaijan's political, economic and cultural life and soon integrated into Azerbaijani society. In the early 20th century closer socio-political and cultural ties were being formed between the two Turkic peoples, who are very close to each other from the ethnic and cultural points of view. In Baku the Tatar Intellectual Society already published newspapers, books in the Tatar language, and public thought was being developed. Owing to the proximity between Azerbaijani and Tatar languages, the books, newspapers and journals disseminated in both the languages functioned as a bridge between the Azerbaijani and Tatarstan Turks. The outstanding representatives of the Azerbaijani and Tatar intellectuals, who possessed a common culture for centuries, are received with the similar love by both the peoples.

Despite the common Turkic roots, the Azerbaijani Tatars' traditional culture has several characteristic features. Among the

A group of Tatar community in Azerbaijan

A Tatar family in Baku

Tatar national holidays, the "Sabantuy" (in the Tatar language "saban" means "grass", "tuy" means "wedding", "holiday") festivities based on ancient pre-Islamic beliefs hold a special place. Back in 921 the Arabic traveler Ibn Fadlan mentioned this holiday in his travel-book. The Sabantuy festivities are held with great solemnity in Baku too. The "Sabantuy" and Novruz have similarities. Like on the Novruz holiday, on the Sabantuy holiday held as a rule between May and June various ancient sport contests, including horse-racing and wrestling are arranged, there are songs and dances, the holiday participants and guests are served pilaf called "Botkasi", traditional Tatar dishes and sweets – balish, uchbuchmaq, paramacha, chak-chak; moreover, bakhlava, goghal, shakarbura are baked, and eggs are dyed. Especially, the sweets called chak-chak holds an important place in the Tatar festive traditions. The chak-chak, which is combined in the shape of a pyramid with the help of honey, symbolizes the ties of the Tatar people, who are spread to all parts of the world, with one another through honey. Even the Tatar brides take chak-chak with

Members of Tatar community in ethnic clothing

Traditional head wears of Tatars

them to their new homes as a symbol of union. The Tatars meet the bride first with the sweet called "balish" that symbolizes the abundance and prosperity expected to appear with her arrival.

In Azerbaijan favourable conditions have been created to profoundly maintain and develop the Tatar national culture. At present this process is more vividly manifested in the activity of the Tatar community in Azerbaijan. In Baku the Tatars' "Tatarstan" NGO, "Tugan Tel" and "Yashlek" societies, amateur art groups function extensively, and take an active part in the country's socio-cultural life, as well as in expanding the relations between Azerbaijan and the Republic of Tatarstan. Today the Tatars, who have a special place and activity in the public and cultural life of the Republic, and occupy their place in the rich ethno-cultural palette of our country by merging with the Azerbaijani society.

Young Tatar girl

Views of Ismayilli

TATS

The Tats, who are one of the ancient peoples of the Middle East are also known in Azerbaijan as "daghli", "lohijihon", "pars". The Tat language, which belongs to the Iranian group of the Indio-European language family (*zuun Atati, zuhun Tati, zuban Tati*) is much closer to the Persian, Tajik, Dari languages. However, there are also scientific assumptions that the Tat language is more ancient than these languages and that it has maintained some elements peculiar to Parthian. In Azerbaijan the Tat language is divided into three dialects – northern, central and southern dialects. That is, the Tat population of the Guba and Shabran regions speak the northern dialect, those living in the district of Khizi use the central and the Tat inhabitants of the Apsheron Peninsula, Ismayilli and Shamakhi speak the southern dialect. For centuries the Tat language has interacted with the Azerbaijani Turkish language and in Dagestan with the Kumik language, and these relations have left deep traces in the vocabulary and ethnic culture of each of them.

The studies on the Tat tribes' migration from the territories of Iran to the South Caucasus claim that their first arrival from Iran to the South Caucasus coincides with the periods when the Ahamanids' dynasty was in power in 558-330 B.C. However, there are also some views about the Tats' mass deportation here by the Sasanid rulers in the 3rd-7th centuries.

The name of the village of Lahij, one of the Tats' ancient settlements of 1500 years old, was pointed out in the Medieval records as "Al-Akhbaz", "Al-Ayjan", "Lahijan". The foundations for the first quarters of the village were laid in the 3rd-4th centuries. The residence of the ruler of Caucasian Albania Javanshir and Niyal Galasi, the castle associated with his name were also located here. Whereas, Fit Galasi, the castle in the territory of Lahij, was the summer residence of the last ruler of the Shirvan Khanate Mustafa Khan. It is also curious that over one thousand and five hundred year old water and sewage systems are still operating in the town. The settlement of Lahij has earned a fame for its unique masters and art pieces not only in the South Caucasus, but also in the Middle East. Even the statistical data from the 1960s and indicated that almost a thousand people out of 6915 Lahij inhabitants were directly involved in coppersmith

Lahij youth in traditional Tat dresses

craft. As a whole, in that period there were 127 kinds of crafts and over 200 craftsmanship workshops here. In the 19th and early 20th centuries the pieces of art prepared by Azerbaijani coppersmiths were displayed on different exhibitions and were awarded high prizes. The copperware prepared by the Lahij masters – a jug, satil, sarnij (milk container), tray, sarpuj, guyum, sieve, ladle, bowl, small bowl, saucepan, lamp were famous in Central Asia, Dagestan, Georgia, Iran, Turkey and other places. It is not a coincidence that the Lahij coppersmith craft is included in the UNESCO list of intangible cultural heritage.

Lahij is rich in specific customs and traditions, craftsmen, rare architectural monuments. In the 18th-19th centuries this settlement was considered one of the leading centres to produce weapons, copperware, items of jewelry. In Lahij the craft of a coppersmith is maintained with care today as well. Especially, the visitors from foreign countries show great interest in craftsmen's handicrafts.

The word "tat" ascribed to the ancient Turkic vocabulary means "alien", "the one speaking another language", "sedentary". Except for a part of the population of the ancient Khizi-Barmak region – daghlilar (the mountain people), the Tats mainly had a sedentary lifestyle. Among the geographical names of

Farrier

Azerbaijan there are toponyms with the word “tat” in their stem: Tatlar (Kalbajar, Aghdash), Tatli (Aghstafa, Samukh), Tatoba (Lankaran) and so on. While the names of the villages in the districts of Kalbajar and Aghdash are interpreted as “The Tat extended family migrating from Iran”, the toponym “Tatli” in the region of Gazakh has no connections with the Tat ethnic group and means “the one who has a sedentary lifestyle”.

The close contacts of the Azerbaijani Tats, who have a great role in the formation and development of a united Azerbaijani culture, common customs and traditions, in the survival and maintenance of cultural heritage, with other nations, their mutual cultural exchange, establishment of ties of kinship have resulted in the formation of a number of similar customs and traditions, lifestyle. For instance, Ashyg Khaltanli Taghi, the 19th century folk artist was famous not only in Guba, Shamakhi, Baku, Goychay but also in Dagestan. The garaylis and goshmas, gifilbands, the work “Nasihatnameh” (Teaching) created in the Tat and Azerbaijani Turkish languages by the ustad ashyg, who is one of the outstanding representatives of the Shirvan ashyg school, are recited by heart.

There are many common features in the Tat people’s clothes and even names. For instance, the Tats’ traditional male clothes also include

Craftsman hammering designs and patterns on copper

Tat people have preserved their ancient clothing style and folk art

A corner of the Lahij ethnography museum

"koynek" (shirt), *"arkhalig"* (vest), *"qurshag"* (waist belt). On them men would wear *a chukha* (Caucasian coat) with wooden sticks ending in bone or silver lids on his breasts, *kurk* (coat of sheep skin) or *yapinji* (felt cloak), put on their feet a pair of woolen socks, slippers, boots or shoes and on their heads an *arakhchin* and caps, whereas the Tat women's clothes used to be richer and varied: *jaan koynek, at koynek, ust koynek, arkhalig, dress, juttuman, jutbalaq* (trousers with broad legs), socks, slippers, boots, belt with buckle, *jutgu* (headgear), *charsho* (charshab, kerchief) and so on. They would wear items of jewellery and belts made of gold, silver and copper.

Although the traditional activities of the Tats in Azerbaijan are farming, gardening, vegetable-growing, husbandry, apiculture, they have achieved great success in coppersmith craft and carpet-weaving. The pieces of fine art woven by the Tat women – the carpets can be seen in the leading museums of the world, private collections today. Among them the carpets of Gonagkand, Khizi, Siyazan, Chichi, Lahij, Find-

Examples of Tats' old dresses

Handcrafts made by Tat masters

ighan, Surakhani and so on are distinguished by their unrepeatable compositions, ornaments and colour shades. The carpets of Khizi, Siyazan belong to the Baku group of Azerbaijani carpet-weaving art. The carpets with and without piles in Gadi, Gilazi, Bakhishli, Yanig Alas, Tikhli, Divazar, Findighan and other villages are pleasant to look owing to their artistic composition, they are distinguished by the intensive nature of the colours, originality and tenderness of their artistic elements. The geometrically shaped flowers, the curvy floral elements prevail in the decorations of carpets. The Gadi carpets woven in Khyzy are associated with the village by the same name. As in the Tat language the word "Gadi" means "a village situated in the pasture". Most probably it is due to this that the Gadi carpets remind of the flowers in the pasture and sometimes they are also called "the mountain carpets". The carpets woven in the village of Findighan are also known under the name "Chayli carpets". As a branch of the Guba group of the Guba-Shirvan carpet-weaving Centre, the carpets of Gonagkand, Gumur, Chichi are distinguished by their extensive pattern variety. A great part of the ornaments on them are the stylized descriptions of geometric figures and different plants.

Coppersmith

Domestic copper items

An ancient street in Lahij

TSAKHURS

The Tsakhurs, historically settled in the upstream of the Samur River, are one of the ancient ethnic groups in the Caucasus, including Azerbaijan. Currently, they live in the Rutul district of Dagestan, as well as in the villages of Mukhakh, Suvagil (Yeni Suvagil), Karkay, Kalal, Alibayramli, Mamrukh, Sabunchu, Gum, Gozbarakh of the Zagatala and Gakh districts of Azerbaijan.

The ethnic history of the Tsakhurs is related to the Silv and Jigb tribes in the Albanian Tribal Union of Caucasian Albania, the ancient state of Azerbaijan. Researchers also associate the Tsakhur ethnonym with ancient Sak tribes. The Tsakhurs call themselves "yikhbi". The Tsakhur ethnonym is associated with the name of the Tsakhur village in Dagestan, the main settlement of the Tsakhurs. The Tsakhur village, where the Tsakhurs historically settled and the territories extending to the Samur valley were known as the "Daghlig mahal" or "Tsakhur mulku" in medieval sources, and had long been the economic, political and cultural center of the Tsakhurs. Since the 15th century, the Tsakhur communities had been led by the Tsakhur sultan. His residence was located in the Tsakhur estate, known as the "Daghlig mahal" in the territory of South Dagestan. The Tsakhur estate, which had been the economic, political and cultural center of the Tsakhurs for many years, covered mainly the Tsakhur village in Dagestan and the territo-

Young Sakhur in traditional dress. 19th century

Mosque in the Suvagil village, Zaqatala

Small Sakhur

ries extending to the Samur valley. By the decree of the Safavid rulers in the 16th century, the Ilisu Sultanate, which also included the Sakhur estate, was established, and after a while, the mass migration of the Tsakhurs to the northwestern region of Azerbaijan, which was more suitable for living, began. In the 17th century, the residence of the Tsakhurs was moved to the village of Ilisu.

As a result of the colonial policy pursued by the Russian Empire in the Caucasus since the beginning of the 19th century, the Ilisu Sultanate, which was located in the historical lands of Azerbaijan, was abolished in 1844, the territory of the Ilisu Sultanate was split and its part, called the "Daghlig mahal" was annexed to the Samur district of the Dagestan province created by the empire. Thus, a part of the ancestral lands of the Tsakhurs remained beyond the borders of Azerbaijan, and the historical sites in which they lived were split into two. It is also clear from the map of the Ilisu Sultanate that the Tsakhur villages such as Tsakhur, Sogud, Gurdul, Khiyar, Muslakh, Mikik of the Present-day Dagestan were part of the Ilisu sultanate until the 19th century.

Since 1852, a new migration of the Tsakhurs had begun from Dagestan to Azerbaijan. The Tsarist government sent a large part of the Tsakhurs – about 1,500 families – to Ashaghi Mukhakh, Sabunchu, Tala, Gulluk, Gozbarakh and other villages in the north-west of Azerbaijan to suppress the Tsakhurs who supported the Shamil movement. One of such villages, where the Dagestan Tsakhurs migrated, was the village of Saribash, located on the road from Dagestan to Ilisu, upstream of the Kurmuk River. Adolf Dirr (1867–1930), a scholar in Caucasian studies and linguist of the 19th century wrote that the Tsakhurs living in the villages of Ilisu and Saribash considered themselves from the village of Tsakhur, Dagestan.

The Tsakhur language belongs to the southeast group of the Dagestan branch of the Caucasian language family. As the Tsakhur villages, surrounded by high mountain ranges, had very poor interconnection, several dialects of the Tsakhur language such as Tsakhur-Gelmes, Tsakhur-Gum, Mishlesh, Cinikh, Mukhakh-Sabunchu, Suvagil, were formed. These dialects are also divided into several branches, such as Tsakhur-Suvagil, Gelmes-Kurdul, Sabunchu. The proximity between this and the udi language indicates that the Tsakhurs were associated with ancient Albanian tribes. The Tsakhurs living in Azerbaijan speak the Tsakhur and Azerbaijani languages. Many examples of the Tsakhur folklore are preserved only in the Azerbaijani language. The Tsakhur ashygs created in the Azerbai-

The "Jeyranim" (My Gazelle) folk band of the Suvagil village

Sakhur ethnic clothing

jani language. For example, Ashig Nazir from Suvagil village of Zagatala district, created his poetry both in the Tsakhur and Azerbaijani languages.

The signs of the Moon, the Sun and the cults of fire - the traces of the ancient Albanian beliefs are still preserved among the Tsakhurs who are one of the successors of Caucasian Albania. The Tsakhurs swear to the Sun, the Moon, the fire, like all the population of the northwestern part of Azerbaijan. Like all the Caucasian peoples, the Tsakhurs also feel particularly drawn to the art of dancing. The zurna groups play a key role in the Tsakhur lilts. The Tongay Malik (Togay Malik) dance, that is played at wedding ceremonies of the population of the region, is one of the indispensable dances of Tsakhur weddings. "Togay Malik", as well as the "Salamaleykum" dance, similar to the "Halay" were performed in the village of Saribash, Gakh district.

The areas of cattle-breeding, farming and handicraft are widespread in the economic traditions of the Tsakhurs.

Although large grasslands, fertile slopes both in the northern and southern parts of the Greater Caucasus range, where the Tsakhurs settled, generate conditions for the development of both agriculture and cattle-breeding, yet sheep-breeding and horse-breeding are more widespread among the Tsakhurs who deal with cattle-breeding. Agriculture has always been a secondary area in the everyday lives of the Tsakhurs. The Tsakhurs living in the mountainous district were busy with dryland farming in spring-summer and were planting wheat, rye, barley, millet.

One of the traditional occupations of the Tsakhurs is handicraft. The rich woolen and leather ware of the Tsakhurs have led to an extensive development of handicraft, especially weaving, carpet-weaving, cloth wool production, leather processing. The Tsakhur women often wove napless carpets and rugs. Various occupations such as jeweller's art, profession of a blacksmith and munitions manufacturing, woodworking, shoemaking, carpentry, stone processing were also widespread in the Tsakhur handicraft. The Tsakhur craftsmen met the needs of the people, as well as fulfilled orders of the people from other regions.

Evening conversations of the Sakhur elders

Caucasus mountains

Since independence, the government of Azerbaijan has paid special attention to the Tsakhurs, like all the ethnicities living in the territory of the country. Some work has been done to promote and preserve the ethnic characteristics, historical traditions, as well as ethnographic life – everyday life, household and holiday traditions, wedding ceremonies, national cuisine, culture, folklore of the Tsakhurs. At present there is the Tsakhur Cultural Center which serves the socio-cultural development of the Tsakhur people living in the Gakh, Zagatala and Balakan districts, and represents the traditions, language, and culture of this ancient ethnic group. There is "Lilay" music and dance group, consisting of girls, under the Tsakhur Cultural Center, as well as "Gismet" group performing in the Azerbaijani and Tsakhur languages in the Suvagil village. Since 1996, an alphabet with Latin script has been printed in the Tsakhur language. The Tsakhur language is taught in several Tsakhur villages of Azerbaijan.

Members of an amateur art group of Sakhur people

Udi woman. 1883

UDIS

The Udis are the successors of one of the 26 tribes within Caucasian Albania that played an important part in the history of Azerbaijan. Although the Udis have historically had to go through very hard periods, they have protected their language, culture, customs and traditions, beliefs until now, and preserved the moral legacy, rich and ancient traditions of Caucasian Albania in their ethnic identities and beliefs. Back in the early 18th century, in their letter addressed to the Russian Tsar Peter I the Alban maliks called themselves "the Albans from the Udi tribe".

At present, the Udis are concentrated the village of Nizh of the district of Gabala and partly in the district of Oghuz. They refer to themselves as "Udi" like in the period of Caucasian Albania. The 20th century scholar in the Caucasian studies G.Voroshil, himself of Udi origin, underlined in his work "Caucasian Albania", "We, the Udis were born in Azerbaijan among the Azerbaijani Turks. The ancient Albans are our grandfathers".

Although the greater part of the tribes of Caucasian Albania accepted Islam in the Middle Ages, the Udis had managed to preserve the Albanian Apostolic church and the Albanian Christian traditions until the early 19th century, as a result of the invasion of Azerbaijan by the Russian Empire beginning from the early 19th century the deportation of the Armenians of Iran and Turkey to the territories of Garabagh made the Udis living here desert their native land. Following the policy of ideological assimilation pursued by the Russian tsarism in the Caucasus, in 1836 with the submission of the Albanian Apostolic Church to the administration of the Armenian Gregorian Church the process of the Udis' Gregorianization and Armenization was started through being exposed to forced transformation. The great majority of the Udis, who protested against their assimilation by the tsarist Russia, moved to the okrug of Zagatala of the Nukha uyezd of Yelizavetpol governorate (the present Oghuz and Gabala areas) to maintain their ethnic identity. Especially, the village of Nij of the district of Gabala turned into the Udis' ethnic and religious centre. At present the population of Nij narrate that part of the Udis had gone there from different areas such as Garabagh and Tovuz.

The Udi language belongs to the Nakh-Dagestan group of the İberi-

An Albanian church (Jotari) in Nij village

Udi family

A corner of "Udi Ojagi" Museum of Ethnography

Wine-making has been a traditional occupation of Udi people

an-Caucasian language family and is divided into the dialects of Nij, Oghuz and Oktomberi. The Nij dialect itself is subdivided into several subgroups. These dialects belonged to the Udis who had once moved from the areas of Garabagh and Tovuz (the Seysulan village of the district of Tartar and the village of Kirzan of the district of Tovuz) and gradually merged with the Nij dialect.

Despite their tragic fate, the great majority of the Udis did not forget their ancient roots and managed to maintain their beliefs and ethnic cultures. The Udis, who refused to worship at the Armenian Gregorian Church referred to perform the religious rituals at home, and remaining loyal to the historical traditions, continued their pilgrimages to the ancient Albanian churches such as the Saint Elishe Temple (the Azerbaijanis called this place of pilgrimage "Gala Piri" – sacred castle) which they called Kala Gergets (in the Udi means a big church) as well as Komrad Temple. Despite being Christian, on almost all religious holidays the Udis slaughter a black ram as a sacrifice; for example, on the first day of the Easter which they call "Kala Akhsibay" (a great holiday) in their temple called Saint Elishe and sacred place Komrad.

The Udi people's material-spiritual legacy is rich folklore. The Nij inhabitants, who maintain their ancient Albanian beliefs in their traditions such as the cults of the Moon and the Sun, pray to the Moon, and swear by her and make offerings to her and use the expression "May God make him the Moon" in reference to the deceased. Along with the Udis, in many regions of Azerbaijan the tradition of asking the new Moon for longevity has survived and at present has incorporated Islamic thought. The scholar in the Caucasian studies G.Voroshil, who touched upon the similarities between the Udis and Azerbaijani Turks' lifestyle and ethnic cultures, wrote that the Udis borrowed from the Azerbaijani Turks not only words. The Udis' tales and fables, proverbs and sayings have also been borrowed from the Azerbaijani language. Moreover, they differ only slightly from the Azerbaijanis in clothing, customs and traditions.

The Udis' cuisine does not differ from that of the Azerbaijani Turks that much either. The ancient Azerbaijani dishes such as *shilakhup* (shila, siyig-plov), *yakhni* (bughlama), *siyokh* (siyig), *harisa*, *chilov*, *khashil* are characteristic for the Udis' national cuisine too. The ancient

Udis' Sunday prayers are always crowded

"A barbershop" in ethnographic museum "Udi Ojagi"

meals for rituals such as yakhni, harisa, which are mentioned in the Turkic epics such as "The Book of Dede Korkut", "Dastani-Ahmad Harami", are the main dishes of the wedding and funeral rituals of the Udis too.

Today the village of Nij is one of the bright examples of historical formation of the norms of co-existance of the people serving different religions and speaking diverse languages in Azerbaijan. Today the co-existance of the Moslems and Christians in the village of Nij, the parallel operation of the church and mosque, and teaching the Udi language along with the Azerbaijani language are the bright example of tolerance in Azerbaijan. As a result of the successful policy pursued by the Azerbaijani state, the Udi ethnicity's national and cultural rights have been completely restored. The Republic of Azerbaijan is taking important actions to restore the Albanian Apostolic Church and protect the ethnic-cultural legacy of the Udis, who have been loyal to this Church through centuries and are part of it. At present there is the Albanian-Udi Christian religious community and the Udi Orain (spring) national cultural society in Azerbaijan.

The interior of an Udi apartment. Ethnographic museum "Udi Ojagi"

Armenian-Gregorian Church in Baku

ARMENIANS

The territories of Azerbaijan are not the historical homeland of the Armenians. Both the historical-ethnographic facts and the 17th-19th century documents confirm that they are outlanders in the South Caucasus. The Armenian scientist, Professor Aghasi Yesayan also stated, "Until 1917, in international politics, Armenia meant only Armenia of Turkey". And the researcher V.Ishkhanyan wrote in his work "The Caucasian Peoples" (1916) that the Armenians settled in the South Caucasus under the auspices of the Tsarist Russia only since the early 19th century. Today, 120,3 thousand Armenians live in the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan, including the Nagorno-Karabakh region, which is under the occupation of the Republic of Armenia. The number of the Azerbaijani citizens of Armenian origin mostly living in Baku exceeds 30 thousand people. They did not leave Azerbaijan and preferred to live, work and raise children here in complete security.

The word "Armenian" indicated a geographical origin before Christ. After the formation of the Gregorian Church, which had been the polyethnic denomination until the Middle Ages, regardless of ethnicity, it expressed religious identity and has become a common ethnonym of the Hays only since the 19th century. From this point of view, the ethnic-religious group conditionally called "the Armenians of Karabakh" has historically not been uniform. Abolishing the Albanian Apostolic Church in 1836, the Tsarist Russia subordinated it to the Armenian-Gregorian Church, thus ended its millennial activity, and in the early 19th century that polyethnic group was Armenianized after adopting the Gregorian denomination by force. But the group conventionally called "Armenians of Karabakh" has maintained the dominance of the common Albanian ethnoculture peculiar to the Azerbaijani people. They even pretended to be "Albanian" in their letter addressed to the Russian Tsar Peter I in the first half of the 18th century. Sergey Zelentsev, the 19th century historian-ethnographer of Armenian origin also stated that the local Christian population in Karabakh and the Armenians who were later relocated here differed greatly in many features. Another Armenian author A.Khan-Agov wrote that Armenians who had been displaced from Iran to Karabakh and

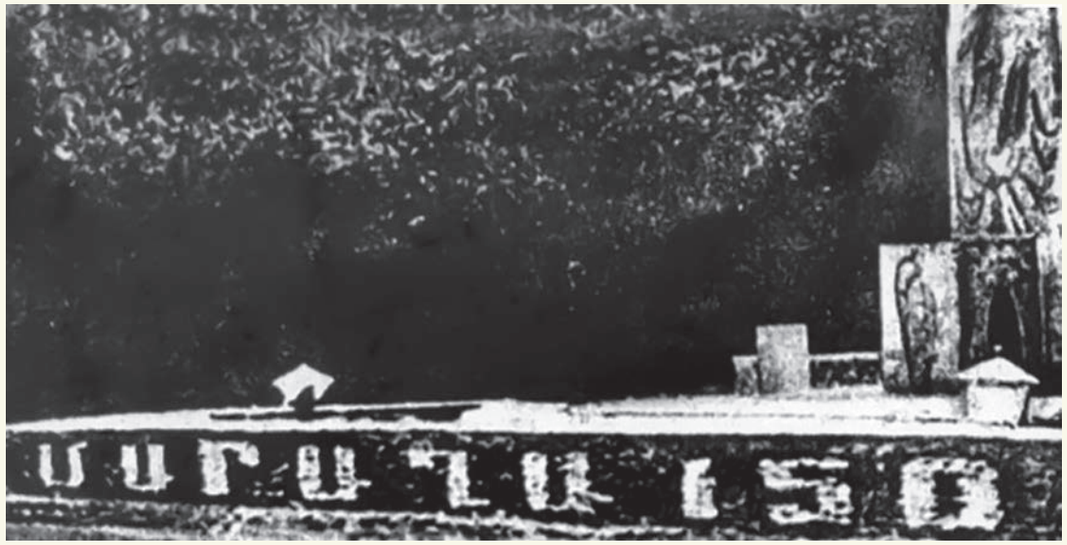
local Christians spoke in different languages and did not understand each other.

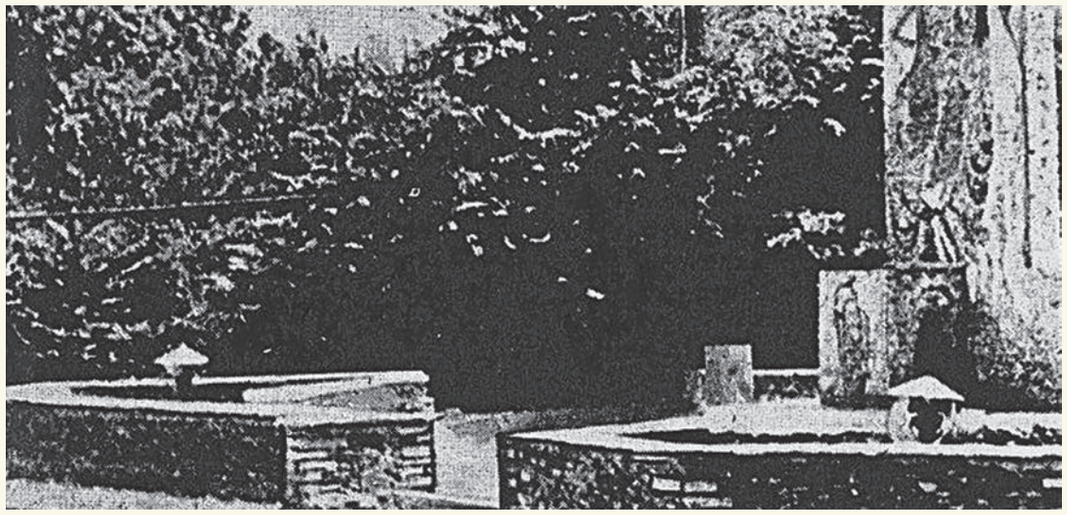
The war, which started between Russia and Iran in 1826 anew, was accomplished with the Turkmanchai Treaty signed on 10 February 1828. Consequently, a wide-scale stage of the Armenians' mass deportation to the areas of Northern Azerbaijan was launched. The number of the Armenians deported from different regions of Iran to the historical territories of Azerbaijan reached some 40 thousand people. Describing the geography and ethnic picture of these territories, the Russian scholar Nikolai Shavrov wrote the following, "Over one million of the 300 thousand Armenians living presently in Transcaucasia (Southern Caucasus) are not the indigenous people of this land and have been deported by us." It should be reminded that in 1978 at the initiative of the Armenian community of Nagorni Karabagh the Maragha village of the district of Aghdara hosted the opening ceremony of the monument dedicated to the 150th anniversary of the resettlement of the Armenians to the mentioned village. The very monument with an inscription "Maragha – 150" in Armenian alphabit on it was erected in an honour of the anniversary of the Armenians' mass deportation from the cognominal province of Iran to Nagorni Karabagh, including that village. Later the chauvinist-separatist groups demolished that monument.

The culture of the ethnographic group named "The Karabagh Armenians" differs from the common Armenian culture. Since the 19th-20th centuries their organic ties with the common Azerbaijani ethno-cultural space resulted in the transfer of the pieces of Azerbaijani culture to the outlandish Armenians – Hays. Many of the pieces of ancient traditions, tangible and intangible cultural heritage extensively described in the Armenian Professor Stepan Lisitsyan's book "The Armenians of Nagorni Karabagh. An Ethnographic Essay" can be encountered not only in most of the regions of Azerbaijan, but also among the ethnic customs and traditions of the Turkic peoples living in Central Asia, the Volga region, Northern Caucasus, Crimea – Kazakhs and Kyrgyzes, Tatars and Bashgirds, Crimean Tatars and Karachays.

As a whole, the lifestyles of the "Armenians of Karabagh", even their national costumes differ from the "classical Armenian" style and have been shaped rather on Azerbaijani ethno-cultural space. Their wedding customs are not distinguished from the Azerbaijani Turks' analogical festivities. Like the Turkic peoples of Azerbaijan, Anatolia, the Northern Caucasus and Central Asia, "the Armenians of Karabagh" also had an ancient custom called

Traditional dresses of Karabakh Armenians. 19th century





"Maragha-150" – monument erected in honour of the 150th anniversary of resettlement of Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan from Iran and Turkey. Before and now

"gobakkasma" when the families of a male and female children declare at their cradles the newly-born babies engaged to consolidate ties of relationship and friendship. When the wedding day approached, the "gizir" (an ensign) selected from among the youth of the village would herald walking from door to door and invite the guests to the party. Furthermore, on the eve of the wedding the groom would be accompanied by his friends on his right and left to the bathhouse and send to the bride's home a young ram with his horns and forehead dyed with henna. "Zurna" (pipe), "dumbul" (drum) wedding festivities would last three days and three nights, and the party would be managed by the "toybashi" (a toastmaster). While in the bride's home her friends would get together, fruit, sweets and nuts were served to the table on large "trays" and "saucepans" and a decorated tray of pilaf with raisins and chicken would be sent to the groom's family. Furthermore, in the ceremony of taking the bride to the groom's home "the Armenians of Karabagh" would carry a branch decorated with apples, pomegranates, sweets hanging on it in accordance with the common Turkic wedding customs. And when the bride was taken home, in one of the corners of the room a bed with curtains around it was made for the newly married couple.

The tables of the Armenians of Karabagh were also laid with dishes peculiar to the Azerbaijani Turks such as "govurma", "lavash", "pilaf", "khash", "gurut", "khashlama", "khashil", "bozbash", "dolma", "kufta", "arishta", "khangal", "pakhlava", "sujug", "chighirtma". Their vocabularies include hundreds of common words and expressions. Further, like the Azerbaijani Turks, Tats, Talishes, Udis, etc., the Armenians of Karabagh also believed in the sacred hearths and places of pilgrim, and sometimes made no difference between the Moslem and Christian sanctuaries. Today Armenia, which fails to establish normal relations not only with its neighbours, even with "the Armenians of Karabagh" whom they keep under occupation, refrain to accept them as "ethnic Armenians", not only from historical-political points of view, but also at the level of collective memory, and call them "the Albans", "the converted" relying on the realities hidden in subconscious. Now one more disdaining and discriminating question addressed only to "the Armenians of Karabagh" has been added to the expression "Hayes, turkes?" (Are you Armenian or Turk?) originating from the hatred towards the Turks. (Hayes? Te karabakhchi?) (Are you an Armenian or from Karabagh?). The Armenian author Robert Arakelov wrote that in the eye of the chauvinist Armeni-

ans, the Armenians of Karabagh are "the compatriots of lower kind". Since, they know it very well that the great part of the Armenians of Karabagh are the offspring of the Albans once accepting the Gregorian faith.

As for the fate of the Armenian people in Karabagh after the aggressive forces of Armenia are withdrawn from Azerbaijan, the position of the Republic of Azerbaijan is certain: it provides complete guarantee to their security. The President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev explained our state's position towards Nagorni Karabagh and the Armenians living there, "As a multinational state, Azerbaijan is sure to create conditions also for the Armenians living there, will help them and they will enjoy all the rights as the citizens of the state of Azerbaijan… We do not claim even an inch of Armenia's land… If Armenia retreats from this position, then we'll be able to achieve the solution to the issue soon. Then, it will be possible for the Armenians to live in Nagorni Karabagh, that is, live a normal life, live under the conditions of security.

Khankendi before being occupied by the armed forces of the Republic of Armenia

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