

AZERBAIJAN’S POLICY OF FORCED CULTURAL APPROPRIATION AFTER THE SECOND ARTSAKH WAR. CASE OF DADIVANK

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Abstract

The article presents the methods of the continuing forced appropriation of Armenian cultural monuments in Artsakh by the Republic of Azerbaijan’s functionaries after the Second Artsakh War.¹ The “Albanisation” of Armenian cultural monuments in Mountainous Karabakh in the scientific field began in the 1950s, when it was imperative to reinforce the Azerbaijani people’s cultural identity, based on the foundations laid between 1920 and 1930 and to try to make all the peoples living in the southern Caucasus equally indigenous to the region. One of the “victims” of the “Albanisation” of the cultural heritage of the Armenians of Mountainous Karabakh is the monastic complex of Dadivank, located in the Karvachar area of the Shahumyan region. Passing under Azerbaijani jurisdiction in November 2020, it was presented to the international community as part of the historic-cultural heritage of the descendants of the Caucasian Albanians, which should be under the jurisdiction of Udis and Azerbaijanis. With this aim in view, the Azerbaijani leadership instituted the policy of forced appropriation and alienation of Armenian heritage from the Armenian culture through various means, which will be shown in detail below.

This article will also demonstrate how the theory of “Albanisation” began and developed in Azerbaijan SSR historiography and what “scientific bases” were – and are - being brought forward during the soviet and post-soviet eras by historians to present Dadivank as Albanian. It will also reveal the directions Azerbaijan is following for the appropriation of Armenian cultural legacy, rebranding it as Albanian, and foisting this theory on the international public.

Keywords: Artsakh², Dadivank, cultural heritage, Albanisation, Azerbaijan

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¹ Also called the “44 Day War.”

² The original, Armenian name for Nagorno-Karabakh is “Artsakh”.

Introduction

Raphael Lemkin, who coined the term Genocide and participated in the formation of the UN “Convention on the Preventing and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide,” (1948) initially used, in the 1933 Madrid conference, the term “an act of vandalism” to describe the crime against humanity that is “cultural genocide,” before that term was utilised. He noted that by that act, the perpetrator showed his destructive spirit, the opposite face of human culture and progress.³ According to Lemkin “...*The ban on cultural genocide must only be directed against the policies designed to assimilate a group into a larger society, but only drastic methods used to aid in the rapid and complete disappearance of the cultural, moral and religious life of a group of human beings.*”⁴

Researchers, working in this direction in the following decades, brought forward different approaches to the term “cultural genocide.” Two approaches may be determined: the first, to use cultural genocide as a means or method of eliminating a group and, second, to use cultural genocide as a process of making a group disappear.

According to Dr. Sylvia Maus, former scientific coordinator of the UNESCO Chair in International Relations at Technical University of Dresden, although the elimination of cultural sites, churches and cross stones in Mountainous Karabakh may be regarded as part of the means of realising genocide, there is not, at present, any special intent for the elimination of the group by Azerbaijan. In the wider context, if the destruction of Armenian heritage does take place, it is possible that there will be a long, durable process, the aim of which would be to eradicate the Armenian people’s identity in Mountainous Karabakh and minimize its historical roots and cultural diversity. From that point of view, the destruction of the Armenian cultural heritage that has taken place in Nakhichevan⁵ has an important role in understanding the wider picture. Therefore, future wide-scale destruction will, in itself, be cultural genocide. In this sense, the Nakhichevan example is a cautionary tool and reminds the international community to focus its attention on Mountainous Karabakh.⁶

³ Raphael Lemkin, “Acts Constituting a General (Transnational) Danger Considered as Offences Against the Law of Nations,” *Additional explications to the Special Report presented to the 5th Conference for the Unification of Penal Law in Madrid (14-20 October 1933)*, at <http://www.preventgenocide.org/lemkin/madrid1933-english.htm>.

⁴ Barry Sautman, *Cultural Genocide and Asian State Peripheries* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006): 5-6.

⁵ Simon Maghakyan and Sarah Pickman, “A Regime Conceals Its Erasure of Indigenous Armenian Culture,” *Hyperallergic*, 18.02.2019, <https://hyperallergic.com/482353/a-regime-conceals-its-erasure-of-indigenous-armenian-culture/>, accessed 01.03.2021.

⁶ Sylvia Maus, “A Violent Effort to Rewrite History? Destruction of Religious Sites in Nagorno-Karabakh and the Concept of Cultural Genocide,” *Völkerrechtsblog*, 19 April 2021, https://intr2dok.vifa-recht.de/receive/mir_mods_00010644.

The Republic of Azerbaijan, perhaps even from the soviet era, adopted two approaches toward the Christian monuments in Mountainous Karabakh: their destruction or the forced appropriation. There are several interpretations of the latter. Forced appropriation may be used for various things that form parts of cultural heritage: starting with the kinds of dishes, dress and music, to holy places and historic-cultural monuments. Generally speaking, forced cultural appropriation is used when the subject culture is that of a minority or is, in any way, inferior to that of the appropriating culture in its social, political, economic or military state, or when a more powerful culture “attacks” that of a weak neighbour or when there are other problems, such as ethnic or racial enmity between the two groups.⁷ Forced appropriation is directed at creating or strengthening an identity. One of the ways of establishing identity is to take other peoples’ history as one’s own.⁸ The motivation for forced cultural appropriation is, in the first instance, to gain predominance or governance. Robert Nelson, professor of art history, notes that *“In every cultural appropriation there are those who act and those who are acted upon, and for those whose memories and cultural identities are manipulated by academic, economic or political appropriations, the consequences can be disquieting or painful.”*⁹

The historian and geographer David Lowenthal, referring to the reasons for choosing specific aspects of the past, insists that the public changes or alters the past because it often needs or wants more than it has. Lowenthal is certain that most people exaggerate their cultural ancientness or hide its relative recentness. They therefore create new, more apposite histories.¹⁰ The British historian John Tosh notes that while social groups need records of past experiences, it is also imperative for them that they have a history of the past which either explains or justifies their present, often for historical accuracy. He observes that *“Memories are modified to suit particular situations or circumstances and do not always correlate with historical truths. These histories can become distorted and permeated (often deliberately) with inaccuracies and myths during the selection process.”*¹¹

⁷ Mahmoud Hawari, “The Citadel of Jerusalem: A Case Study in the Cultural Appropriation of Archaeology in Palestine,” *Present Pasts* 2, no. 1 (2010): 89, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/pp.25>.

⁸ Kathleen Ashley and Veronique Plesch, “The Cultural Processes of ‘Appropriation,’” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 32, no. 1 (2002): 6.

⁹ Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff, eds., *Critical Terms for Art History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 127, quoted in Ashley and Plesch, “The Cultural Processes of ‘Appropriation,’” 3.

¹⁰ David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), quoted in Sara McDowell, “Heritage, Memory and Identity,” in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity*, eds. Brian Graham and Peter Howard (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2008), 42.

¹¹ John Tosh, *In Pursuit of History* (London: Longman Press, 1991), quoted in McDowell, “Heritage, Memory and Identity,” 42-43.

And cultural geographer Donald Mitchell notes that “*Societies justify current attitudes and future aspirations by linking them to past traditions which helps bond and unify factionalism.*”¹²

The medieval Albanian Christian state¹³ is known as being an area within the present Republic of Azerbaijan, before the nomadic Turkish-speaking people appeared. In any event, some Azerbaijani researchers accept an extreme, materialistic version of Azerbaijan culture, according to which they either reject the presence of non-Turkish culture in their country or consider the whole of it to be Turkish speaking. The others consider present-day Azerbaijanis to be an amalgamation of the Albanians and their Turkish forefathers.¹⁴ The launch of the Azerbaijan’s policy of forced cultural appropriation began during soviet times, when the first problem put before Azerbaijani historians was to formulate national self-awareness for the ethnic Azerbaijani group, which would inculcate a “feeling of historicalness into the understanding of the word ‘motherland’.”¹⁵

According to the USSR constitution of 5th December 1936, Azerbaijan became a fully-fledged soviet socialist republic, its people being named “Azerbaijanis.” It was imperative that the latter had its own history, allowing it to be “separate” from the Turks, so as not to be considered to be a base for pan-Turkism and from Shia Iran to escape the accusation of being pan-Islamist. At the same time, the Azerbaijanis needed to receive the status of an indigenous people in accordance with the soviet concept, which required proof to finally free itself from being labelled as people that have arrived from elsewhere.

One of the first steps taken was the teaching of Azerbaijan history at the Azerbaijan State University (now Baku State University) in the faculty of History during 1940-1941. Until then, the first version of Azerbaijani history was published in 1939 in the form of a textbook

¹² Donald Mitchell, *Cultural Geography: A Critical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), quoted in McDowell, "Heritage, Memory and Identity," 43.

¹³ The Albanian tribes (according to Strabo, 26) lived north of Kur River, reaching as far as the River Alazan, on the shores of the Caspian Sea between the Caucasus Mountains and the Derbend Pass. The Albanians were, to the west, neighbours of Iberia (Georgia); to the north the Sarmatia; to the south with Armenian Major and, on various occasions, to the south-east with Marastan Minor (Atrpatakan). For details see, for example, Aleksan Hakobyan, *Албания-Алуанк в греко-латинских и древнеармянских источниках* [Albania-Aluank in the Greek-Latin and Old-Armenian Sources] (Yerevan, ASSR Academy of Sciences, 1987), 20-36. Enaetollah Reza, *Ազրբայջանի և Առան (Մովկասեան Արշակիս)* [Azerbaijan and Arran (Caucasian Albania)], trans. Yervand Papazyan (Yerevan, Pyunik, 1994), 86. The geographer Strabo praised, in the first century BC, the beauty of the 26 tribes living in Caucasian Albania; he describes their simple and patriarchal way of living, noting that they couldn't count to more than one hundred, “but that they comprised both light and armoured infantry and cavalry in time of war, like the Armenians” See Strabo, *Օտար աղբյուրներ հայերի մասին*, [Foreign Sources about Armenians], N 1, trans. Hrachya Acharyan, (Yerevan: YSU, 1940): 33.

¹⁴ *Nationalism, Politics, and the Practice of Archaeology*, eds. Philip L. Kohl and Clare P. Fawcett (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 153.

¹⁵ Victor Shnirelman, *Войны памяти: мифы, идентичность и политика в Закавказье* [Wars of Memory: Myths, Identity and Politics in Transcaucasia] (Moscow: Akademkniga, 2003), 38.

envisaged for the school pupils of the 8th and 9th grades in the Azerbaijan SSR. In the book, there was no “proper” place given to the Medes in the development of the statehood of Azerbaijanis, while the theory of Albanians was almost ignored. Speaking about the local people, however, only the name “Azerbaijani” was used for them for all historical eras.¹⁶ The second attempt at writing a history of Azerbaijan was made in 1945-1946 when, apart from representing the Medes as ancestors of the Azerbaijanis, the Caucasian Albanians were also added.¹⁷ There was no mention, however, of their language and literature.¹⁸

Azerbaijani scholars gradually included Mountainous Karabakh in the Caucasian Albanian polity to reinforce their territorial claims to the former. Articles and books were published¹⁹ which attempted to construct Azerbaijani cultural identity using that of the Caucasian Albanians, in other words through the appropriation of that of the Armenians. The notion of being the heirs of the Albanians solved several questions. Firstly, the Azerbaijanis thus gained an acceptable status as an indigenous people; secondly, they secured their pretensions, through forgery, to the Mountainous Karabakh territory they coveted, as well as becoming the owners of Armenian Christian culture.

One of the Armenian historical-cultural treasures is Dadivank which was a target for forged Azerbaijani historiography and the subject of the policy of forced appropriation, about which is presented below.

The History of Dadivank

The monastic complex of Dadivank (Pic. 1) is located in the Shahumyan region of the Republic of Artsakh (after the signature of the declaration of 9th November 2020, it was redesignated as being in the Kelbajar region of the Republic of Azerbaijan), about half a

¹⁶ Ibid., 133-134.

¹⁷ The descendants of the Albanians are considered to be the Udis, Lezgis and about ten minor peoples speaking the Lezgi language (the Tsakhurs, Tabasarantsis, Rutuls, Aguls etc.).

¹⁸ Shnirelman, *Wars of Memory*, 138.

¹⁹ The Azerbaijani scholar Zia Buniatov noted, in his 1959 article titled “New Material on the Location of the Fortress Sheki” that Sheki mentioned in the Arab and Armenian sources is the Shaki, located in the Sisian province of Armenia, not the one near the town of Sheki (now Nukhi) in the Republic of Azerbaijan. Buniatov’s conclusion is that in the 9th century, the Arran border (including Shaki in the province of Syunik) extended as far as Sevan, thus not only Karabakh, but also the region to the west – in other words Soviet Armenia – was included in it. His second article about Shaki had already prepared the soil to present Azerbaijan as being the heir of the ancient Albania, which included Mountainous Karabakh. The author periodically published articles concerning Caucasian Albania, creating a new field of study for Azerbaijani scholars. The soviet authorities did not intervene in any way to all this, as Buniatov never talked about pan-Islamic or pan-Turkic ideals and didn’t base his work on Islamic or Turkic ethnicity. His works were really about Caucasian Albania, so accorded with soviet standards, providing him with the opportunity to probe deeper and maneuver into this subject. For details, see, for example, Sara Crombach, “Ziia Buniatov and the Invention of an Azerbaijani Past” (PhD Thesis - Amsterdam School for Regional, Transnational and European Studies (ARTES), 2019.

kilometre north of the left bank of the Tartar River. According to history, it was named after one of Thaddeus' disciples, Dad, who was murdered for preaching Christianity in the first century, and the monastery was built around his tomb.²⁰

According to various sources, it was also occasionally known as the Monastery of the Apostles, while Mkhitar Gosh called it "Arakeladir." It is possible that the first church built on the supposed location of the tomb was constructed after the acceptance of Christianity in the 4th century.²¹ The monastery initially appears in bibliographical sources in the 9th century, such as Movses Dashkhurantsi's (Kaghankatvatsi) work "The history of Albania."²² The feudal lords of the monastery and the surrounding area at that time were the indigenous Aranshahik dynasty, in the person of Aternerseh, his father Sahl and their forefathers and descendants. The monastery suffered great calamities during literate medieval times due to the Seljuk incursions, as did other cultural centres. Mkhitar Gosh, in his "Chronicle," recalls the Chol's ferocious military leader, who repeatedly ravaged the Khachen region and once burned down all the defenceless villages in the province, as well as Dadivank monastery, in 1143.²³

There was a probable increase in activity in the rebuilding of the monastery in the second half of the 12th century. Many cross stones have reached us from that time, the majority of which were set up in the name of representatives of the descendants of the Aranshahiks, the Haterk branch of the family of the lords of Khachen, proving that Dadivank was their region's prelaty. In 1182, Prince of Princes and Curopalate Hassan the Great, son of Vakhtang, erected one cross stone (Pic. 2), which recounted the wars he waged against the Seljuks, the castles under his control, his sons and the spiritual life he led in the monastery.²⁴

The construction of Dadivank's main church was completed in 1214 by the widowed Lady Arzu (Arzu Khatun), daughter of Prince of Princes Kurt and wife of the deceased Vakhtang, Lord of Haterk, son of Hassan the Great. The researcher Mesrop Magistros noted that Dadivank surpassed the later catholicossal seat of Gandzasar, as it had several churches,

²⁰ Samvel Ayyvazian, *Դատի վանքի վերականգնումը 1997-2011 թթ.* [The Restoration of the Monastery of Dad, 1997-2011] (Yerevan: RAA, 2015), 6.

²¹ Samvel Karapetyan, *Հայ վշակույթի հուշարձանների Խորհրդային Ադրբեջանին բռնակցված շրջաններում* [The Armenian Cultural Monuments in the Regions Annexed to Soviet Azerbaijan] (Yerevan: Gitutyun, 1999), 82.

²² Movses Kaghankatvatsi, *Պատմություն Աղվանից աշխարհի* [History of Albania], trans. V. D. Arakelyan, ed. A. A. Abrahamyan, (Yerevan, 1969), 266.

²³ Bagrat Ulubabyan, «Դատի կամ Խուտա վանք» [Dadi or Khuta Monastery] *Echmiadzin* 28, nos. 6-7, (1971): 63-64.

²⁴ Ayyvazian, *The Restoration of the Monastery of Dad*, 8.

chapels and many secondary monastic buildings (Pic 3,4). It is therefore possible to infer that the monastery was a very popular holy site with many pilgrimages taking place there.²⁵

The monastery bell tower, built in 1260, was presented with a new bell in 1314 by Sarkis, son of Prince Vahram Dopyants. The abbot of the monastery Rev. Atanas erected two magnificent cross stones in 1283 (Pic. 5) which were, later, moved inside the bell tower.²⁶ Construction activities gained impetus during that time and secular buildings were also built.

The monastery gained significant landholdings during the following centuries which included areas now in the Karvachar, Vardenis and Martakert regions. There were no monks or functionaries, however, in the monastery from the end of the 18th to the beginning of the 19th centuries. The villages belonging to the monastery were completely denuded of inhabitants at the end of the 18th century as a result of Agha Mahmed's incursion and the plague and famine that followed it. This was followed by the settlement in the area of Kurds of the Qolani tribe that arrived from the khanate of Yerevan. Other Kurdish tribes also settled in the region during the following decades, as well as ayums.²⁷ Metropolitan (Bishop) Baghdasar Hasan-Jalalyan made attempts, after the khanate of Karabakh became part of Russia in 1813, to recover lands owned by the monastery. During his prelacy, at his suggestion and with the intercession of the Catholicos of All Armenians Nerses V,²⁸ viceroy of the Caucasus M. Vorontsov arranged to have an investigation carried out and land with an area of 196,438 dessiatins (214,118 hectares) was returned to the monastery. However, over time, some of it became disputed, and the monastery's ownership of some areas shrank²⁹.

One of the problems was that it was difficult to get the tribes that had settled on the land to pay the 10% tithe for utilizing the monastery's land; the monastery's income therefore declined. According to a report dated 15th August 1909, the prelate of the diocese of Karabakh noted that:

The Armenian Diocese of Karabakh includes the whole of the Shushi, Jevanshir, Caryagino (Fizuli), Nukhi and Aresh districts, parts of those of Gandzak and Zangezur, the town of Lankaran (Lenkoran) and the northern part of Zakatala. There are, in the

²⁵ Mesrop Magistros, *Հայկական երեք մեծ վանքերի Տաթևի, Հաղարծնի և Դադի եկեղեցիները և վանական շինությունները* [The Churches and Monastic Buildings of the Three Great Armenian Monasteries of Tatev, Haghartsni and Dad] (Jerusalem: Srbots Hakobeants, 1938), 84.

²⁶ Ayvazyan, *The Restoration of the Monastery of Dad*, 11.

²⁷ Karapetyan, *The Armenian Cultural Monuments*, 83.

²⁸ Nerses V of Ashdarak, (1770-February 13, 1857). Catholicos of All Armenians 1843-1857. He served as prelate of the diocese of Georgia 1811-1830, then of the diocese of Bessarabia and Nor Nakhichevan from 1830 until his election as Catholicos in 1843. He was buried in Echmiadzin.

²⁹ Karapetyan, *The Armenian Cultural Monuments*, 84.

whole of the diocese, 26,364 families, including 101,143 males and 88,857 females, a total of 190,000 people ...The diocese of Karabakh has 221 churches and 9 monasteries, six of which are in use and three abandoned. The churches are generally bereft of any capital, while their yearly income is so little that they cannot even take care of the smallest expenses.

As for the land:

...the monastery of Khota owns 45,997 dessiatins (50,137 hectares) of land... This remained in the hands of the government for three years but, when it was handed back in September 1906, the Turkish-Armenian clashes had already started and no one was able to enter the lands inhabited by the Turks and Kurds, which remained without land factors being in charge.³⁰

A letter was sent to the department of the printing house of the Mother See of Echmiadzin, dated 23rd October 1912 and addressed to Catholicos Gevorg V,³¹ requesting that he orders copies of the necessary church books to be sent to the Armenian population of the land belonging to the monastery of Khota which was under Echmiadzin's jurisdiction.³²

Around 1910, Levon Mikayel Ter-Avetisyan was appointed as a land factor of the monastery-owned land, which improved the situation. In 1917, despite the animosity of the Turks and Kurds, he was able to recapture numerous summer pastures and other lands belonging to it. However, with the establishment of soviet rule, the monastery's lands were confiscated.³³ The monastery complex, having been forcibly annexed to Soviet Azerbaijan from 1920 until 1990, fell into a dilapidated state and gradually became ruined.

It had, until just before the first Artsakh war, been turned into a house and barn and used as such by a large Kurdish family. They had lit fires in the church itself to keep warm and, as a result, the walls were covered in soot. When rebuilding and restoration work began and the soot was cleaned off, marvelous frescos were revealed.³⁴

³⁰ National Archives of Armenia (NAA), box 57, folder 2, file 1851, 2.

³¹ Gevorg V Surenyants (1847-1930), Catholicos of All Armenians December 1911-1930. Bishop of Artsakh and assistant prelate in Aleksandropol (now Gyumri) in 1878 and in Yerevan in 1881. Appointed prelate and bishop of Astrakhan, Russia in 1886 and of Georgia in 1894. He was buried in Echmiadzin.

³² NAA, box 57, folder 2, file 1911, 5.

³³ Karapetyan, *The Armenian Cultural Monuments*, 83-85.

³⁴ One of the frescoes depicts Jesus, who delivers the Gospel to Nicholas the Wonderworker. The Mother of God and Archangel Michael are also depicted. And the martyrdom of Stepanos by stoning is depicted on the northern facade, IBID, 124.

Rev. Hovhannes Hovhannisyan, spiritual leader of the Karvachar region and abbot of Dadivank notes:

This was the reason why the Azerbaijanis didn't notice the frescos and, in the 1990s, during the Karabakh war for independence, didn't destroy them. When the Karvachar region and Dadivank were liberated on 3rd April 1993 and I was still abbot of Gandzasar, I was among the first to set foot inside the monastery. Entering it, I saw there was excreta everywhere, the walls were covered in soot and only about 8-10% of the frescos could be seen.³⁵

Rebuilding work began in 1997, alongside comprehensive research, which included historical, architectural and archaeological studies and cleaning activities.³⁶

Directions of Forced Appropriation (“Albanisation”) of Dadivank

The Origin of its Name

Forgeries concerning Dadivank monastery begin with the origin of its name. For example, the Azerbaijan SSR historian Davud Akhundov, in his Russian-language book titled “Azerbaijan’s ancient and medieval architecture,” presents the name Dadivank as actually being Khashavank-Khotavank, explaining the origin of its name in the following way:

There were, living in the Artsakh-Khachen region, Caucasian Albanians, among whom were Udi people, whose language included the word “khash” which had two meanings. One was moon and light, the other brightness.

The author noted that, according to Strabo, there were devotees of Helios, Zeus and Selene in Caucasian Albania. It apparently then followed that the most ancient site of worship was linked to that of unlimited light, in other words to the deities of Mithras and the moon. So, the place was called Khashavank, based on the Udi word “khash.” This name, over a long period of time changed, becoming Khoshavank, Khotavank, Khatavank etc.³⁷ Another “esteemed” name was suggested by Doctor of Architecture, Professor Gyulchokhra Mamedova who noted that there is a simpler explanation: “Khuda” meaning God and “vanik” meaning place, thus making Khudavank to mean “God’s house”.³⁸

³⁵ «Գաղիվանք. ինչպես աղբբեջանաբնակ քուրդը «փրկեց» Արցախի վանքի որմնանկարները» [Dadivank: How a Kurd Living in Azerbaijan "Saved" the Murals of the Artsakh Monastery], Armenian Sputnik, 19. 09. 2017, <https://armeniasputnik.am/karabah/20170918/8700975/arcax-dadivanq-ter-hovhannes-vormnankar.html>.

³⁶ Ayvazyan, *The Restoration of the Monastery of Dad*, 18.

³⁷ Davud Akhundov, *Архитектура древнего и ранне-средневекового Азербайджана* [Architecture of Ancient and Early-Medieval Azerbaijan] (Baku: Azerneshr, 1986): 195-196.

³⁸ Gyulchokhra Mamedova, “Албанские памятники Тертерского ущелья” [Albanian Monuments of Terter Gorge], *Zodchestvo* 4-5, nos. 28-29 (2007): 60.

Azerbaijani scholars thus even falsified the monastery's name attempting, in every way, to "Albanise" the Armenian monastic complex, hiding the name's real origin which was the preacher Dadi's name.

Christianity and Armenisation

According to Azerbaijani historiography, it must be completely accepted that Christianity was firmly entrenched within the borders of the "Albanian-Azerbaijani" state. According to Azerbaijani side, the "Albanian-Azerbaijani" Christian church existed for a very long time (until 1836) as one of the most ancient churches, not only in that region, but in the whole of the Christian world. In the words of Azerbaijani historians, Christian evangelists and their students spread from Jerusalem and Assyria from the 1st to the 2nd centuries to Albania-Azerbaijan and created the first Christian communities there. It was noted that, within the Republic of Azerbaijan's territories, Christian churches built during the 18th and 19th centuries were constructed on the foundations of ancient Albanian-Azerbaijani ones. Thus, from the middle of the 7th century, as a result of the Arab invasions, the people living on the plains of the region accepted Islam, while those living in the mountains preserved their Christian faith.³⁹

According to Azerbaijani historiography, the population of Mountainous Karabakh was Albanians and their transition to Armenian Apostolic Church's creed and Armenisation was a long process, which is displayed as follows.

- The indigenous people of Karabakh, like those of northern Azerbaijan (Albania) apparently were Albanian tribes;
- Christianity spread, at the beginning of the 4th century, through certain areas of Albania, including Mountainous Karabakh;
- During the Arab occupation in 7th to 9th centuries, Islam spread, but the Albanians who lived in the mountainous regions of Karabakh remained Christian;
- Armenian Apostolic Church missionaries, emigrating to the southern Caucasus, began to convert the indigenous population to the Armenian Church then to make them into Armenians;

³⁹ Yunis Hüseyinov, *Qarabağ* [Karabakh], (Baku: Afpoliqraf, 2018), 144.

- The Christian population of the Karabakh highlands called themselves Albanians in a letter sent to Peter the Great, proving that they didn't think of themselves as Armenians until the beginning of the 18th century.⁴⁰

This is how Azerbaijani scholars now present the people of Artsakh as having Caucasian Albanian origins, something that bears no relation to the truth. The truth is that at the beginning of the 5th century, in 428, the Persian state created a satrapy of which the real Caucasian Albania, Armenian Utik and Artsakh regions were a part, with the catch-all name of Albania. This name, in the following centuries, was used in different sources for the above-mentioned Armenian regions, while the real Caucasian Albania, which was a divided area made up of different tribes, was denied from a unified government and had various names: Lpnik, Baghasakan and Land of Masktats. As the various satrapies were divided from each other and the Catholicossate in central Armenia wasn't able to completely oversee the religious dioceses of Artsakh and Utik, the Armenian Church's Catholicossate of Caucasian Albania became firmly established (the diocese had been established as a bishopric by St. Gregory the Illuminator at the beginning of the 4th century) and preserved the spiritual life of the Armenian people of the region.

The centre of the Albanian Catholicossate moved, in 551 or 552, from the left bank of Kur River to the right, the newly constructed seat of the satrapy Partav and Abas, the bishop of the province of Metsarank (Metsirank), was ordained as its spiritual leader. The clerics that followed him were consecrated by the Armenian church's Mother See.⁴¹ Thus the Christian people of the satrapy of Caucasian Albania or Arran were subject to the Albanian church, which was under the jurisdiction of the Armenian Catholicossate and social and cultural development progressed in a united way. But in the 6th century, when Albania's spiritual and administrative centres moved to Partav, ethnically Armenian area on the Kur River, the region's Christian population's development mainly continued based on Armenian written culture, while the Caucasian Albanian alphabet created by Mesrop Mashtots and the Albanian archimandrite Benyamin only enjoyed limited development.

During the period of Arab rule, in the century when Islam was being spread, the part of the Albanian people that remained Christian coalesced into a single ethnos, the self-named

⁴⁰ Yagub Mahmudov, Karim Shukurov, *Qarabağ: Real tarix, faktlar, sənədlər* [Garabagh: Real History, Facts, Documents], (Baku: Tehsil, 2005): 34.

⁴¹ See, for example, Bagrat Ulubabyan, *Արցախի պատմությունը սկզբից մինչև մեր օրերը* [The History of Artsakh from the Beginning to the Present Days], (Yerevan: M. Varandean, 1994): 36-37.

“Udi” people. The majority that had converted to Islam became a people that called themselves “Lezgis.”⁴² At that time, however, the Azerbaijani ethnic group didn’t really exist.

The “Catholicosate of Caucasian Albania” was, at various periods of the Middle Ages, subject to the Catholicos of All Armenians of Echmiadzin and received confirmation of its pastoral letters from him. Despite retaining the historic name “Albania” as a traditionally acceptable name, the Catholicosate and the whole diocese never ascribed an ethnic content to it and retained it solely to delineate the diocese’s area. As for the population of the region, various Georgian, Perso-Turkish, Russian, and western European sources note that during the 17th-18th centuries the population of Karabakh was a homogeneous ethnically Armenian people. Changes to the ethnic composition of the population of Karabakh began in the middle of the 16th century, when certain Turkish and Kurdish tribes were resettled in the area by the Safavids and for who “the patriotism of Iranians or Azerbaijanis” were foreign (I. Petrushevski), thus, they didn’t form one ethnic group or polity.⁴³

Cross Stones and Inscriptions

Armenian cross stones are also targets for Azerbaijani forgery. This is especially true of the abovementioned D. Akhundov, who has created a new term “khachdash” (stone-cross) and then added differences with the Albanian khachdash (stone-khach), the Islamic tombstone (bash-khach) and the Armenian khachkar (cross stone), noting that although they were different from one another externally, they were the same in terms of content with their universal models (the celestial, earth and underground spheres). He wrote, “...*But if there is a tree of life shown on the khachdash (stone-khach), the picture of the cross disappears in the decorative forms, often splitting up into several small crosses, which differentiates them from those that are Armenian.*”⁴⁴ He then adds that “...*There are two interesting Albanian cross stones in “Khashavank” on which, as godly symbols of Ahura-Mithras, are entwined with Christian symbols, which may only be seen in Caucasian Albanian architecture.*”⁴⁵

The Azerbaijani authors Davud and Murad Akhundovs, at the beginning presented their “new entries” at the 4th international symposium of Georgian art held in Tbilisi in 1983. Their

⁴² Aleksan Hakobyan, *Արքայատոհմերն ու իշխանատոհմերը Բուն Աղվանքում և Հայոց Արևելից Կողմանքում անտիկից մինչև ԺԳ դար* [The Royal and Princery Houses of Proper Albania and Eastern Regions of Armenia from Antiquity to the 13th Century], (Yerevan: Gitutyun, 2020): 5-6.

⁴³ Artashes Shahnazaryan, «Գիտական նստաշրջան՝ նվիրված Կովկասյան Աղվանքի պատմության և մշակույթի խնդիրներին» [Scientific Session Dedicated to the Problems of the History and Culture of the Caucasian Albania], *Lraber hasarakakan gitutyunneri*, N 7(1988): 100-101.

⁴⁴ Akhundov, *Architecture of Ancient and Early-Medieval Azerbaijan*, 203-204.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 207.

paper was titled “The cultural symbols and the image of the world reflected on the temples and shrines of Caucasian Albania”. This was subjected to a critical appraisal by Dr of Sciences A. L. Yakobson, who pointed out the incorrect depictions made by the Akhundovs concerning Albanian history, their false, manufactured Mithras-devotion symbolism which, however, seemed to have no effect on the Azerbaijani historians and on those who continued their “work”.⁴⁶

Two years later, in an all-Union archaeology congress held in Baku in 1985, Akhundov, in his paper,⁴⁷ tried to demonstrate that carved stone crosses apparently found in Azerbaijan were Albanian and were the cultural heritage of a pre-Islamic Christian state located in eastern Transcaucasia. The paper presented by an apparently innocent young Azerbaijani was actually a political insinuation, with all the known cross stones throughout Azerbaijan, including those in Mountainous Karabakh and Nakhichevan, being seen as Albanian and the latter as the Azerbaijanis’ ancestors. The Armenian archaeologists, despairing, threatened to leave the congress, protests were even made by Russian scholars from Leningrad (St. Petersburg), who protested at the manifestly political nature of this attempt at cultural appropriation.⁴⁸ In reply to the Akhundovs’ falsehoods, Armenian scholars noted that, in the general cultural study, it had long been established that, in many human cultures, beginning with our earliest farming ancestors, a universal model had appeared, comprising three parts, of which the most widespread and expressed was the universal tree. “The three-part edifice, thus, is not a national phenomenon, but a phenomenon of human thinking in general.”⁴⁹

In the scientific session with the theme of “Issues of Caucasian Albanian history and culture” held on June 30th, 1988, cultural studies scholar H. Petrosyan, in his paper titled “Artsakh’s medieval monuments,” referring to the question of ethno-cultural belonging of the khachkars of Artsakh, noted, “*At the time when cross stones were being developed, there was a particular denationalising and pro-Islamic movement in Artsakh, which could not lead to the appearance of khachkars, nor to the appearance of even their distant counterparts.*”⁵⁰

The architect M. Hasratyan also noted that R. Geyushev, D. Akhundov and those who continued their work, contrary to historical facts, lithographic information and architectural

⁴⁶ Babken Arakelyan, Artsruni Sahakyan, «Խաչքարերը հսկազիտական խեղաթյուրումների ամարկա» [Cross Stones as Object of Unscientific Distortions], *Lraber hasarakakan gitutyunneri* 7(1986): 41.

⁴⁷ Davud Akhundov, “Отличительные черты и символические особенности стел Кавказской Албании,” *Всесоюзная археологическая конференция «Достижения советской археологии в XI пятилетке»* [Distinctive Features and Symbolic Features of the Steles of Caucasian Albania, *All-Union Archaeological Conference “Achievements of Soviet Archeology in the XI Five-Year Plan”*], (Baku, 1985): 77-78.

⁴⁸ Kohl and Tsetskhladze, “Nationalism, politics,” 154.

⁴⁹ Arakelyan, Sahakyan, “Cross Stones as Object of Unscientific Distortions,” 41.

⁵⁰ Shahnazaryan, “Scientific Session,” 99-100.

features, declared the monasteries and churches of Artsakh and their depictive carvings and frescos, to be Albanian trying, intentionally alienate from Armenian culture.⁵¹

Azerbaijani scholars are, presently, adding that no Armenian cross stones or inscriptions had been found in Karabakh until 1992, that there was no evidence that there have been any Armenian churches in the region and that Armenian churches had only begun to be constructed in the 1970s.⁵²

These new “discoveries” made by Azerbaijani scholars have produced real amazement as, in the Karabakh region, hundreds of Armenian churches and monasteries exist, noted and documented not just by Armenian researchers, but also by foreign scholars, who presented, clearly, their ancient history and that they are Armenian. Nothing was ever mentioned about them being Albanian before the Soviet era, when Azerbaijani scholars decided to appropriate Mountainous Karabakh and its culture. Azerbaijani researchers have also noted that manuscripts found in Caucasian Albanian churches had been translated by Armenians into Armenian, and then burnt the originals and changed the inscriptions of the churches too. Such churches are, apparently those of “...the architectural complex of the monastery of Khudavank built in the 13th century in Kelbajar, the Urek temple [actually Horeka – HM] in Talish, Amaras etc.⁵³

Thus, Azerbaijani researchers reproach the Armenians with the very thing they are doing with government patronage. It is important to recall that in the church at Nizh,⁵⁴ which really was Albanian, its Armenian inscriptions were erased (Pic. 6, 7), using the pretence of rebuilding it, leading to the foreign ambassadors to Azerbaijan refusing to attend its reopening in 2004. The Norwegian ambassador of the time, Steinar Gil, basing his words on the previous attempt [the destruction of the cross stones in Julfa/Jugha – HM] (Pic. 8, 9) said “I am worried because Azerbaijan has a sad reputation related to Armenian religious monuments,” testifying that all the Armenian monasteries and churches are being completely Albanised, without considering their construction dates.⁵⁵

The Azerbaijanis also insist that several names written on the walls of Dadivank monastery, such as Arzu Khatun, Tursun, Seyti, Hasan, Avag, Shams, Altun, Aghbuh, Garagoz etc., should be considered to be one of the most accurate evidence of their ethnic

⁵¹ Ibid., 99.

⁵² Faig Ismayilov, *Historical and Cultural Monuments in the Occupied Territories of Azerbaijan: Damage and Loss* (Baku: Elm ve tehsil 2016): 63-64.

⁵³ Ibid., 13.

⁵⁴ Gabala region, Republic of Azerbaijan.

⁵⁵ Thomas de Vaal, “Perspectives, Now Comes a Karabakh War Over Cultural Heritage,” Eurasianet, 16.11.2020, <https://eurasianet.org/perspectives-now-comes-a-karabakh-war-over-cultural-heritage>.

origins-Turkic identity. “Direct relations to Azerbaijan’s Muslim architecture are clearly felt as well in numerous stone-carving decorations of the site,” an Azerbaijani author said.⁵⁶ But the answer to this question is very clear. The non-Armenian and non-Christian names that were used throughout Artsakh and the other regions of Armenia were “imported” from outside – from Iran and, later, via the Arab khalifate – through the influence of foreign cultural environments. Practically all the lay individuals who were active in those times have been so named, but it must be stressed that those same rulers’ (for example the ruling family of Upper Khachen) spiritual brothers never ever forsook their Armenian names, and succeeded each other, such as Hovhannes and Krikor.⁵⁷ The history of Artsakh clearly shows that the princes who were christened with foreign names were actually very patriotic and increasingly defended the Armenians of the region against foreign conquerors and were the founders of many churches and monasteries, preserving the Christian faith in Artsakh.

The Appropriation of Armenian Historians and Literature

The author F. Mamedova, in her book titled “Caucasian Albania and the Albanians” published in 2005 states, in the very first paragraph:

The Azerbaijani people were formed from three powerful ethno-cultural groups: Caucasian (Albanian), Persian (Medes, Kurds, Talish and Tats) and Turkish. The Azerbaijani and Daghestani peoples are the descendants of the Albanians, being the heirs of three powerful ethno-cultural groups, with a rich Albanian culture, which is reflected in material and spiritual culture, from the earliest days to the most recent times. The creation of the sovereign Republic of Azerbaijan provided the opportunity to return to one of its roots – its Albanian origin – and the Albanian studies to be passed to its real heirs and owners.⁵⁸

Azerbaijani historians, in this way, leaving aside their own history and taking that of other nations, present themselves as the heirs of one of the most ancient people, the Caucasian Albanians. It is necessary, once more, to remind Azerbaijani historians that the Azerbaijani identity was created during the soviet years, within the Azerbaijan SSR,

⁵⁶ Qarabağ- İrsimizin Əbədi Yaddaşı [Karabakh - The Eternal Memory of our Heritage], Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan (Baku, 2008), 162.

⁵⁷ Ulubabyan, *The History of Artsakh*, 70-71.

⁵⁸ Farida Mamedova, *Кавказская Албания и Албаны* [Caucasian Albania and Albanians], (Baku: Centr Issledovaniï Kavkazskoi Albanii, 2005), 3-4.

legitimizing it at the expense of Media, Atropatene, Caucasian Albania and historic regions of Armenia – Utik, Artsakh and Nakhichevan, falsifying or appropriating their history and culture.⁵⁹

The Turkish speaking Muslim people that lived in the Eastern Caucasus until the 1930s, were known as Muslims, Caucasian Tatars, Caucasian Turks and other similar names and it was only in the 1939 census that the ethnic name “Azerbaijani” began to be used.⁶⁰ Concerning the name “The Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan,” created in 1918, the name was taken from the Iranian province of Atropatene⁶¹, in future to demand territory from Iran as well. The famous Russian eastern scholar Vasili Bartold, in one of his lectures delivered in November-December 1924 in the Faculty of Oriental Studies of the Azerbaijan State University noted, “*To the territory that is now known as the Republic of Azerbaijan, previously known as Arran (Caucasian Albania) – was given the name Azerbaijan, thinking that, when the new state is created, Persian [territory Atropatene] and the new Azerbaijan would become one state.*”⁶²

Therefore, he notes, when talking about Azerbaijan, confusion arises and the question emerges as to which Azerbaijan we mean.

F. Mamedova’s second falsehood is that she presents the Armenian historian Movses Kaghankatvatsi (Dashkhurantsi) as being Caucasian Albanian. She states that the Armenian church apparently appropriated the manuscript of his “History of Albania” and subjected it to major changes, translating it into classical Armenian, aiming to take ownership of Albania’s history, literature and culture, then to spread this version and copies of it. The same accusation is levelled at the Armenian poet Davtak Qertogh, with regard to his elegy on the death of Javanshir, prince of Albania, which was, apparently, written in the Albanian

⁵⁹ Hamlet Petrosyan, “Ethnocide in Artsakh: The Mechanisms of Azerbaijan’s Usurpation of Indigenous Armenian Cultural Heritage,” *Proceedings of The Rochemp Center International Conference* (Yerevan, 23-24 January 2020): 79.

⁶⁰ Tamara Vardanyan, «Աղբրեջանցիներ.ինքնուրոյան փնտրտուքը հետխորհրդային շրջանում» [Azerbaijanis: The Search for Identity in The Post-Soviet Period], «21-րդ Ժամանակ», N 3 (49) (2013): 75.

⁶¹ Russian Encyclopaedic Dictionary, published between the years of 1890 to 1907, Vol. 1, page 212 of the encyclopaedia published by Brockhaus & Efron in Saint Petersburg in 1890, with its English translation. Azerbaijan – or Adherbaijan – land of fire; (in Pahlavi Aturpatkan, in Armenian Aderpadekan), the most north western province and the richest trading and manufacturing province of Persia, bordering to the south by Persian Kurdistan (Ardalan) and Irak-Adjemi (Media), in the west by Turkish Kurdistan and Turkish Armenia, in the north by Russian Armenia (South Caucasus) from which it is separated by the [River] Arax and to the east by the Russian region of Talish and the Persian Province of Gilan by the Caspian Sea. Quoted in Rouben Galichian, *Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey: Addressing Paradoxes of Culture Geography and History* (Yerevan: Zangak, 2019), 22-23.

⁶² Vasiliy Bartold, *Сочинения. Общие работы по истории Средней Азии, Работы по истории Кавказа и Восточной Европы* [Writings. General Works on the History of Central Asia, Works on the History of the Caucasus and Eastern Europe], Vol. 2, Part 1 (Moscow: Izdatelstvo vostochnoy literature, 1963), 703.

alphabet of 19 letters but, through false translation had become Armenian, with its 36 letters.⁶³ There is no logic in this as, if it had been written as an acrostic text, why did Daftak chose only 19 characters of the Albanian alphabet, rather than the full 52? Even Azerbaijani scholars don't have a common opinion on this issue, as, before F. Mamedova's statement, Z. Buniatov had presented Datak's elegy as being written on the basis of using all 52 letters of the Albanian alphabet and had accused the Armenians of changing it to suit the Armenian 36 letter alphabet. Armenian scholars have, long since, provided a definitive answer to this.⁶⁴

The works of the medieval Armenian historians Mkhitar Gosh, Hetum and Kirakos Gandzaketsi have been treated in the same way. On this occasion, concerning so-called "Albanian literature" of the 12th-13th centuries, Dr. of Historical Sciences P. Muradyan noted that this is an obvious sham, as the Albanian people had ceased to be an ethnic entity a very long time before, while Artsakh had never been populated by ethnic tribes collectively known as "Albanians." Mkhitar Gosh, Kirakos Gandzaketsi and the other Armenian historians had only ever created works in the Armenian language and for the benefit of Armenians and have written about their ethnic origins and the culture they belonged to in their own works.⁶⁵

Under the guaranty of the editing-publishing council of the Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan, perhaps in 1986, the "ELM" publishing house in Baku published Farida Mamedova's monograph "Политическая история и историческая география Кавказской Албании (III в. до н. э.—VIII в. н. э.)"/ Political history and historical geography of Caucasian Albania (III century AD-VIII century AD), which was defended as a doctoral dissertation. The book's editor was Academician Zia Buniatov from the Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan. The book contained completely distorted facts and anti-scientific analysis, which provoked protests from scientific circles. In the six maps of the monograph, F. Mamedova extended the Caucasian Albanian borders from Derbend to the Araxes valley and as far as half of Lake Sevan. This was, according to Albert Musheghyan, a senior researcher of the Institute of Literature of the Armenian SSR Academy of Sciences, nothing more than a copy of the map of "United Azerbaijan" published in the second volume of

⁶³ Mamedova, *Caucasian Albania and Albanians*, 738.

⁶⁴ If Daftak was an Albanian poet and his acrostic poem had been written in Albanian, then why was it composed on the basis of the 36 letters of the Armenian alphabet and not using the 52 letters of Albanian, when the letters of the latter were arranged in a different order? Again, if it had been written in Albanian, then the order of the letters would have been in accordance with that alphabet, not in that of the Armenian. Is it also possible to accurately translate an acrostic poem from one language to the other, retaining the same letter order? For more details see Asatur Mnatsakanyan, Paruyr Sevak, "По поводу книги З. Буниятова «Азербайджан в VII-IX вв.» [About the book of Z. Buniatova "Azerbaijan in VII-IX centuries], *Patmabanasirakan handes* 1 (1967):183.

⁶⁵ Shahnazaryan, "Scientific Session," 99.

"Islam Encyclopedia" (between pages 112 and 113) in Istanbul in 1944. This was followed by the official reply sent to A. Musheghyan by Andrey Nikolayevich Sakharov, deputy director of the History Institute of the USSR Academy of Sciences. Its content is so informative that we considered presenting it here:

F. Mamedova, in the abovementioned book, has taken it upon herself to research all aspects of Caucasian Albanian medieval history, but her aim and means resulted in distinct contradictions, as the author has dealt with materials, on which she has only superficial knowledge. This refers to both historic geography and those maps which you invite examination of in your letter. Apart from that, she has ignored sufficiently well-researched facts, by which the overwhelming majority of soviet oriental scholars (K. V. Trever, S. T. Eremyan, A. P. Novoseltsev and others) had the opportunity to confirm that a united Albanian nation did not exist. The right-bank part of the population was Armenianized at least in the 5th century, the other part, as shown by A. P. Novoseltsev, V. T. Pashuto, L. V. Cherepnin in the book "The ways to develop feudalism" (Moscow, 1972), spoke different languages. The name "Albanians" was collective for that ethnic population. The descendants of certain tribes living on the left bank of the river, the Udis, Khinalughs, and others, live in Azerbaijan and Georgia to this day.

It should be noted that, in the book by the three famous soviet historians, the influx of ethnically Turkish tribes was, until the 11th century, insignificant. From the time of the creation of the Albanian satrapy – the 5th century – the term "Albanians" was not an ethnic name, but a political one, meaning the inhabitants of that satrapy subject to the Albanian church's jurisdiction. Ignoring those proofs that are well known to experts, forces F. Mamedova to extend her conclusions concerning the people living on the left bank of Kur River to include those living on the right bank, leading her to make unfortunate errors.

The alphabet created by Mesrop Mashtots for the Albanians (before 428AD) was, obviously, for one of the Albanian tribes. Nevertheless, no written Albanian monument has reached us.⁶⁶ As for the cultural environment of the right bank was Armenian, and the works produced there were written in Armenian. The term "Albania" is historical-geographic one.

⁶⁶ It was only in 1996 that two Georgian palimpsest manuscripts with an Albanian text on their lower layers were found in the monastery of St. Catherine on Mt. Sinai, Zaza Aleksidze, "Preliminary Account on the Identification and Deciphering of the Caucasian Albanian Manuscript Discovered on Mount Sinai," <https://armazi.uni-frankfurt.de/sinai/prelacc.htm>.

Instead of these real proofs, F. Mamedova's book describes a fictitious Caucasian Albania (of the 11th-13th centuries) with its culture. In reality the culture wasn't Albanian but an Armenian and those bearing it were Armenians living on the right bank of the Kur River. It is for that reason that it is so ludicrous that one of the greatest Armenian cultural figures, the writer, theologian, and jurist Mkhitar Gosh, the author of the "Datastanagirk" (Book of Law) as well as, to the same extent, his students, are made out to be "Albanian."

F. Mamedova declares, without any basis whatsoever, that the well-known historian Kirakos Gandzaketsi, author of "The history of the Armenians," as well as other 11th-13th century representatives of Armenian culture to be "Albanians." F. Mamedova's book contains a few errors of other types as well. She detaches Nakhchavan⁶⁷ and Goghtn from Vaspurakan⁶⁸ and attaches those provinces to Syunik, then removes Syunik from Armenia and gives it to Albania. F. Mamedova's efforts to arbitrarily interpret the cultural heritage of the Armenian people and the invention of the non-existent Albanian culture of the 11th-13th centuries force us to be highly critical of her book, which does not contribute to the mutual understanding of the historians and the societies of the two Transcaucasian republics, Armenia and Azerbaijan.⁶⁹

It should also be noted that a map of Azerbaijani architectural monuments was published in 1980 in Moscow, prepared by Azerbaijani experts. Of the 101 monuments on the map, only two were represented as being Christian churches of the early Middle Ages, which, however, were located in north-west of Azerbaijan, close to the border with Georgia. But in Mountainous Karabakh and the areas around it even the monastery of Gandzasar was missing. In other words, historic Azerbaijan was portrayed to tourists as a purely Muslim country, despite the fact that Azerbaijani scholars have spent decades attempting to trace the origins of Azerbaijanis back to Christian Albanians.⁷⁰

The Tools Used by Azerbaijan for the Forced Appropriation of Armenian Dadivank After the Second Artsakh War

⁶⁷ Nakhchavan is the same as Nakhichevan/Nakhijjevan.

⁶⁸ Vaspurakan was the 8th state of the Kingdom of Armenia, which included Nakhijjevan and Goghtn provinces as well. Presently it is divided between Turkey, Iran and Azerbaijan.

⁶⁹ Պաշտոնական պատասխան [Official Response], *Գրական թերթ* [Grakan tert], N 88(2849), 14 August 1987, 4.

⁷⁰ Shnirelman, *Wars of Memory*, 209-210.

The Azerbaijani historiography gained new traction after the Second Artsakh War, to the theory of "Albanisation" of Nagorno-Karabakh's Armenian heritage, when Azerbaijan took control of territories containing a large number of Armenian historical and cultural monuments, bringing Armenians new fears of the cultural genocide already experienced by the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The Azerbaijan government, after the end of the war, quickly described several medieval churches – among them Dadivank – as being Albanian. To reinforce their position, they requested assistance from the Orthodox churches in Turkey, Syria, Egypt, Israel and the Ukraine.⁷¹ The president of Azerbaijan also announced their intention to remove Armenian inscriptions from the churches' walls which, apparently, were bogus and to "reinstate" their former appearance.⁷²

Thus, from November 2020 onwards, the Azerbaijani side began the practical implementation round of "Albanisation" of the Armenian historic-cultural monuments, which today take many forms. Four of these forms will be analysed below: propaganda in the social media, making Azerbaijan's Udi minority a part of Azerbaijan's frauds, scientific activities and cultural events.

Propaganda in the Social Media

During and after the 44-day Artsakh war, Armenian and Azerbaijani social media such as Facebook, Twitter and Telegram were very active, due to which news was swiftly available to many foreign social media users. Anar Karimov, the Minister of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan, tweeted on November 11, 2020, shortly after the Armenian-Azerbaijan-Russia statement⁷³, that, "*Khudaveng is one of the best testimonials to the ancient Caucasian Albanian civilisation. Built during the 9th to 13th centuries by Albanian Prince Vakhtang's*

⁷¹ Javid Agha, "Perspectives. Who were the Caucasian Albanians?" Eurasianet, 07.06.2021, <https://eurasianet.org/perspectives-who-were-the-caucasian-albanians>, accessed 20.02.2022.

⁷² President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev's Address to the Nation, 25.11.2020, <https://mincom.gov.az/en/view/news/1066/president-of-azerbaijan-ilham-aliyev-addressed-the-nation>. Qədim Alban məbədidə saxta tarix [A Fake History in an Ancient Albanian Temple], 16.03.2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R4nsAN1yOoc>, accessed 20.02.2022.

⁷³ Statement of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and the President of the Russian Federation, 10 November 2020, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/64384>, accessed 20.02.2022.

wife in Azerbaijan's Kelbajar region, this complex comprises the Arzu Khatun's church, a basilica and two chapels.”⁷⁴

Thousands of users, ranging from government officials to scholars and radio program producers, shared this and other similar tweets with the hashtag #Xudavəng alongside accusations of “Armenian forgeries”.

After the war, from 17th November 2020, pictures were circulated on social media by Azerbaijani users, which claimed that Azerbaijani soldiers discovered a place where Armenian cross stones were being manufactured and then set up in various places of Karabakh.⁷⁵ It soon became obvious that the cross stones shown were those at the Sevan monastery,⁷⁶ which had simply “became” victims of false Azerbaijani news. All this proves that Azerbaijani officials and ordinary social media users have inserted their historians’ forgeries to the internet, continuing the distortion of history and trying to gain some sort of advantage on different social platforms. Apart from that, the State Service for the Protection, Development and Restoration of Cultural Heritage attached to the Ministry of Culture of Azerbaijan, has created a website (heritage.gov.az), which apparently presents, to the international public “Armenian vandalism” toward Azerbaijani monuments of Karabakh. Books about the “Azerbaijani cultural heritage” in Mountainous Karabakh are published periodically, while the Azerbaijan’s Minister of Culture states that all this is done for the information warfare in order to present the “truth” to the public.⁷⁷

Input by the Udi Minority

The Udi minority living in Azerbaijan is one of the real descendants of the Caucasian Albanian tribes, living mainly in Nizh (Gabala region) and Vardashen (Oghuz region) villages. The Udis population in Azerbaijan has halved in the eighties of the 20th century. Before that, they also lived in Sultan Nukhi and Dzorlu, they were Turkish-speaking, but Christian and Udi ethnic self-consciously. Currently, they have left the last two villages. In Azerbaijan, the Udis have no public institutions to raise their concerns. Udis have, in recent

⁷⁴ Azerbaijan’s Minister of Culture Anar Karimov’s Official Twitter Account, 11 November 2020, https://twitter.com/Anar_Karim/status/1326437397270310912, accessed 11.02.2022.

⁷⁵ Twitter Account of Gulmammad Mammadov, 17 November 2020, <https://mobile.twitter.com/gulmammad/status/1328735592428023810>, accessed 11.02.2022.

⁷⁶ Azerbaijani Social Media Spreads Story of Khachkar Forgeries, The Aragats Foundation, 28 November 2020, <https://www.aragatsfound.org/post/azerbaijani-social-media-spreads-story-of-khachkar-forgeries>.

⁷⁷ Hayastan Martirosyan, «Էթնոցիդ. Արցախի մշակութային ժառանգությունը՝ ադրբեջանական վանդալիզմի թիրախ» [Ethnocide. Cultural Heritage of Artsakh-Target of Azerbaijani Vandalism], Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, 24 August 2022, <http://www.genocide-museum.am/arm/24.08.22.php?fbclid=IwAR0vM8rmni7lNxDP16bK9JbJKtQdqNtTgyR5A6VA7QBAYqumYBRqHPeMeE>, accessed 11.10.2022.

years, began to transform their historic past, which linked them to Armenian culture. All this has happened because the Azerbaijani authorities, from 1988 onwards, have subjected them to harassment to force the Udis accept that they are part of the Azerbaijani ethnos.⁷⁸

For example, the Udi community website stresses that Azerbaijan, since independence, has apparently given the Udis an important place and repaired the Udi churches as the “Udis are one of the roots of Azerbaijan ethnic identity.”⁷⁹ The Azerbaijani authorities, under the guise of presenting themselves as a multi-cultural and tolerant country,⁸⁰ have also begun to “take notice” of national minorities living in the country. It began with the creation of the so-called “Udi church” in 2003-2004, which had to form the basis of the restoration of the “Albanian” church. The first step taken towards the “reconstruction of the Albanian Church of Azerbaijan” took place on 10th April 2003, when the Albanian-Udi Christian community was registered at the State Committee for Work with Religious Organizations.⁸¹ Azerbaijan demonstrated, on the one hand, that it apparently respects its national minorities, their religious rights and, on the other, through the utilisation of the Udi minority, attempts to impose spiritual authority in the occupied areas of Mountainous Karabakh.

It is obvious today how the Azerbaijanis use the Udi people, demanding, in their name, the restoration of Udi rights towards Armenian churches. The leading figures of the Udi community play a major role in the implementation of this policy. It was perhaps during the war, on 16th October 2020 that the leader of the Albanian-Udi Christian community and chairman of the Bible Association in Azerbaijan, Robert Mobili said, in one of his interviews, that they were assisting the Azerbaijan army, that vandalism was policy of Armenians, while churches were being repaired in Azerbaijan.⁸²

⁷⁸ Hranush Kharatyan, «Ուդիների ողբասկանը 18-20 դդ. (Պատմություն, էթնիկ գոյատևում, ինքնահաստատում)», Հայոց Մեծ եղեռնի 90, հոդվածների ժողովածու [“The Odyssey Of The Udis in the 18th-20th Centuries. (History, Ethnic Survival, Self-Assertion?)”, in *Hayots Mets Yeghern 90, Collection of Articles* (Yerevan: YSU, 2005), 2.

⁷⁹ Албано-Удинская Христианская Община [Albanian-Udin Christian Community], 13.11.2013, <https://udi.az/articles/0200.html>, accessed 11.02.2022.

⁸⁰ Benoit Filou, in his article titled “Multiculturalism in Azerbaijan” concludes: “The implicit superiority of Azerbaijani ethnicity appears clear and minorities tend to assimilate themselves to this dominant model, mostly for pragmatic reasons. The multicultural policy followed by Azerbaijan paradoxically goes together with a deeper assimilation of minorities. Multiculturalism is highlighted, when necessary, to leave room for Turkic solidarity or even Islamic solidarity when necessary,” Article published by the Baku Research Institute, 06.07.2021,

<https://bakuresearchinstitute.org/en/multiculturalism-in-azerbaijan/>.

⁸¹ Grigory Ayvazyun, “Удины и Албанская Церковь Азербайджана” [Udis and the Albanian Church of Azerbaijan], *21-rd Dar* 3, no. 40 (2016): 60.

⁸² “Robert Mobili, “Vandalism is Armenian State Strategy,” Report.az, 16.10.2020, <https://report.az/en/karabakh/chairman-of-azerbaijan-s-albanian-udi-christian-community-robert-mobilisaid/>.

Representatives of the “Azerbaijan’s Albanian-Udi Christian community” had visited, on 4th December 2020, according to their statement, the Dadivank monastery complex that had been “liberated from the Armenians in the Kelbajar region.”

As the newspaper “Azerbaijan” noted “The Udis, who had become more prosperous in Azerbaijan over the years, impatiently awaited the opportunity to bow in Albanian temples and churches, among which was Khudaveng.”⁸³

After the ceremonies were over, Robert Mobili noted that the temple not only architecturally, but also historically belonged to the Albanian church, while the forgeries perpetrated by the Armenians were obvious.⁸⁴

During the same period, Rafik Danakari, the deputy leader of the Udi community, was appointed as a preacher in the Dadivank monastery. Community leaders periodically visit Dadivank from December onwards, performing ceremonies which are organised or sponsored by various Azerbaijani organisations such as the “Promotion of Moral Values” foundation.⁸⁵ Armenian pilgrims and clergymen were also allowed to visit the monastery, but their access to monastery were forbidden on 7th February 2021.

At present there are six Armenian clergymen in the monastery, but their periodic replacement by others, as well as pilgrimages, have been forbidden by the Azerbaijani side, using various excuses starting with pandemic and including the flooding of the River Tartar. The goal of all of this is, of course, to rid the monastery of Armenian pastors, secure the places of Udi clergymen in the church, and "clear" Dadivank monastery of Armenian traces.

The above-mentioned Udi representatives are also included in anti-Armenian “scientific” propaganda. There was a scientific seminar held in Baku State University on 2nd March 2021, titled “The falsification of Albanian temples in Karabakh by the Armenians according to the mineral-geological composition of the construction materials used.” A paper was presented by Robert Mobili, a senior researcher at Baku State University’s geology and geophysical scientific research laboratory.⁸⁶

⁸³ Vətən Müharibəsi Şəhidlərinin Əziz Xatirəsi Dağlar Qoynunda Yerləşən Monastırda Ehtiramla Yad Olunub,” Azərbaycan [To the Memory of the Martyrs of the Patriotic War was Honored in the Monastery Located in the Heart of the Mountains,” Azerbaijan, 06 dekabr 2020, 5, <http://anl.az/down/meqale/azerbaycan/2020/dekabr/730852.htm>.

⁸⁴ Ibid..

⁸⁵ “Albanian-Udi Religious Community of Azerbaijan Visits Khudavang Monastery,” Azernews, 5 May 2021, <https://www.azernews.az/nation/178639.html>.

⁸⁶ “Azərbaycan Respublikası Alban-Udi-Xristian İcmasının Sədri, BDU-Nun Kompleks Geoloji və Geofiziki Tədqiqatlar Elmi-Tədqiqat Laboratoriyasının Böyük Elmi İşçisi Robert Mobili “Qarabağdakı Alban Məbədlərinin Ermənilər Tərəfindən Saxtalaşdırılmasının Tikinti Materialları və Bağlayıcıların Mineraloji-Geokimyəvi Tərkibinə Görə Əsaslandırılması” Mövzusunda Məruzə Edib” [Chairman Of The Albanian-Udi-Christian Community Of The Republic Of Azerbaijan, Robert Mobili, A Senior Researcher at the Complex

The “Azerbaijan’s Albanian-Udi Christian religious community” declaration of 8th February 2022, in which they called themselves adherents of the “Albanian Apostolic Church,” stated:

We, the successors of the Azerbaijani Albanian-Udi religious community of the Albanian Apostolic Church, appreciate and support the consistent measures taken during the last year in the liberated areas... in the direction of the protection and restoration of the temples of the Albanian heritage... and we also express our willingness to cooperate with the Armenian Apostolic Church ... for peace and humanity.⁸⁷

It is interesting to see what kind of cooperation with the Armenian Apostolic Church they envisage. If it is about becoming one of its dioceses, the Armenian Church’s charter⁸⁸ precludes that possibility. Even the foundation of the Albanian-Udi Church in Mountainous Karabakh cannot be considered to be legal and acceptable, nor can it be possible to perform any spiritual activity in accordance with the rules laid down in the diocesan charter published by the Armenian Apostolic Church in 2009.⁸⁹

Article 1.2 states that a diocese is an inseparable part of the Armenian Apostolic Church, whose centre is the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin.

Article 1.3 states that a diocese is governed in accordance with Armenian Apostolic Church laws and holy tradition, the orders placed by the Catholicos of All Armenians, the given country’s laws and the diocesan constitution.

Article 1.4 states that a diocese is established by a pastoral letter from the Catholicos.⁹⁰

Article 1.5 states that the rules laid down in Articles 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4 are not subject to change.

It is obvious from the articles quoted above that no diocese belonging to the Armenian Apostolic Church may separate itself from it or, moreover, cannot declare itself an individual

Geological and Geophysical Research Laboratory ff BSU, Gave a Report on “The Falsification of Albanian Temples in Karabakh by the Armenians According to the Mineral-Geological Composition of the Construction Materials Used”, Udi.az, 5 March 2021, <https://udi.az/news/0585.html>.

⁸⁷ Azərbaycan Alban-Udi Xristian Dini İcması Azad Olunmuş Ərazilərdəki Alban Məbədləri ilə Bağlı Bəyanat Yayıb[The Albanian-Udi Christian Religious Community of Azerbaijan Issued a Statement Regarding the Albanian Temples in the Liberated Territories], Azərbaycan Respublikası Dini Qurumlarla İş Üzrə Dövlət Komitəsi[State Committee on Work with Religious Organizations of the Republic of Azerbaijan,], 08.02.2022, <https://scwra.gov.az/az/view/news/10383/azerbaycan-alban-udi-xristian-dini-icmasi-azad-olunmush-erazilerdeki-alban-mebedleri-ile-bagli-beyanat-yayib>.

⁸⁸ Guide of the Armenian Apostolic Holy Church’s Diocesan Charter, *Echmiadzin*, Volume 65, N 11, 2009.

⁸⁹ The Diocese of Artsakh Belongs to the Armenian Apostolic Church.

⁹⁰ Guide of the Armenian Apostolic Holy Church’s Diocesan Charter, 38.

diocese, in this case becoming Albanian-Udi, without the confirmation of the Armenian Apostolic Church. Thus, even the de facto Udi community's spiritual activity in Artsakh religious sites is illegal and cannot be accepted by international religious communities.

Scientific Activities

The next tool of forced appropriation by Azerbaijan is the scientific or scholarly method. A meeting of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences took place on 25th November 2020, where a decision was made to found a "Scientific Centre for Albanian Studies." The director of the academy, Ramiz Mehdiyev stated, during the meeting, that the centre's aim was to "reveal those historic proofs that demonstrate that the Albanian monuments, which the Armenians wish to appropriate, belong to us."⁹¹ He also mentioned the opening of the "Artsakh's spiritual and cultural heritage study office" in Echmiadzin, and that the National Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan, the country's major scientific centre, should take serious steps concerning it.⁹²

Furthermore, many international conferences are held in Azerbaijani scientific centres where they try to involve foreign researchers as well. Among these was the international conference held in the International Multicultural Centre in Baku on 26th May 2021 titled "Caucasian Albania: history, religion and architecture," attended by researchers from nine countries – Germany, Norway, France, Italy, Turkey, Russia, Lithuania, Georgia and Azerbaijan. In the plenary session of the conference, the importance of the enlargement of co-operation between foreign and Azerbaijani scientists and researchers was stressed. Foreign and local experts were called upon to assist in the design of events aimed at studying the history of the Caucasian Albania and to provide various assistance in this field.⁹³

Azerbaijani historians, in various conferences "explain" Armenians' activities towards Armenian monuments. For example, when Rev. Hovhannes, the abbot of Dadivank monastery and spiritual leader of the Karvachar region, declared that the church's bells and cross stones (khachkars) were being taken to the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin to save

⁹¹ Javid Agha, "Perspectives. Who were the Caucasian Albanians?" Eurasianet, 07.06.2021, <https://eurasianet.org/perspectives-who-were-the-caucasian-albanians>.

⁹² "Akademiya Ciddi Addımlar Atmalı, Erməni Saxtakarlıqları ilə Dolu "Faktların" Qarşısının Alınması İstiqamətində Tədqiqatları Gücləndirməlidir" – Akademik Ramiz Mehdiyev["Academy Must Take Serious Steps, Strengthen Research in the Direction of Prevention of "Facts" Full of Armenian Forgeries" - Academician Ramiz Mehdiyev], Azərbaycan Milli Elmlər Akademiyası [National Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan], 25 Nov 2020, <https://science.gov.az/az/news/open/15174>.

⁹³ "Qafqaz Albaniyası: Tarix, Din Və Memarlıq" Adlı Beynəlxalq Elmi Konfrans Keçirilib ["Caucasus Albania: History, Religion and Architecture" International Scientific Conference Held], Azərbaycan Milli Elmlər Akademiyası, Tarix İnstitutu [National Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan, Institute of History], 27 May 2021, <http://tarixinstitutu.az/news/view/327>.

them from Azerbaijani vandalism,⁹⁴ Azerbaijani researchers reported, in a paper that following the 44-day war, Armenians relocated Dadivank's fake khachkars and slabs with fake inscriptions solely to prevent the untruth of them from being discovered later.⁹⁵ According to the paper's author, Armenians auctioned off Dadivank's khachkars, after the 44-day war, in order to clear up the traces of their crime, which has nothing to do with reality.⁹⁶ It was noted that Armenian researchers and the clergy had not, previously, made any mention of any of Dadivank's belltower's cross stones and that, in general, no cross stones had ever been discovered there during the soviet era,⁹⁷ without considering the fact that not only Armenian researchers,⁹⁸ but also Soviet Azerbaijani researchers⁹⁹ had, for a long time, confirmed their existence in their works.

Books about Armenian culture continued to be published in Azerbaijan after the 44-day Artsakh war, continuing the chain of forgeries. The Heydar Aliyev Foundation, especially, which had its own unique input in financing of anti-Armenian projects, prepared a series of books titled "Cultural heritage of Karabakh," which was presented to the public on 15th November 2021. The set comprised five publications concerning Mountainous Karabakh's literature, music, architecture, art and carpet making. The volume concerning architecture presented Mountainous Karabakh's architectural monuments, with pictures and graphical drawings,¹⁰⁰ including those well known to us. Reports were also prepared and presented to international organisations. Thus, Center for Analysis of International Relations (AIR) in Azerbaijan prepared a report, in July 2021, titled "The appropriation of Azerbaijan's cultural and historical heritage by Armenia." It presented the apparent looting of museums and cultural places in Karabakh by Armenians, illegal archaeological excavations as well as the "Armenianisation" of Azerbaijani monuments and their forced appropriation.¹⁰¹

The international journal "IRS Heritage" also took an increasingly active part in all this and, after the war, published books and articles concerning the Second Artsakh War and

⁹⁴ "Տեր Հովհաննէսը Դադիվանքի խաչքարերը, խաչն ու զանգերը Հայաստան է բերում" [Rev. Hovhannes Brings Dadivank Khachkars, Crosses and Bells to Armenia], Artsakh Iratvakan, 11 նոյեմբեր 2020, <https://artsakh.news/am/news/194425>.

⁹⁵ Telman Ibrahimov, "Khachkars of Dadivank Monastery or... "FINITA EST COMOEDIA", 2020, 1.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 3.

⁹⁷ Ibid..

⁹⁸ Magistros, *The Churches and Monastic Buildings*, 88-89. Ulubabyan, "Dadi or Khuta Monastery," 69.

⁹⁹ Akhundov, *Architecture of Ancient and Early-Medieval Azerbaijan*, 206-207.

¹⁰⁰ "A Collection of Publications "Cultural Heritage of Karabakh," Heydar Aliyev Foundation, June 2021, <https://heydar-aliyev-foundation.org/en/content/view/96/5069/A-collection-of-publications-%E2%80%9CCultural-heritage-of-Karabakh%E2%80%9D->, accessed 11.02.2022.

¹⁰¹ "Armenia's Appropriation of the Azerbaijani Cultural and Historic Heritage," *Analyses Center of International Relations*, 13 July 2021.

Artsakh's culture.¹⁰² The journal was produced in 17 languages, which greatly facilitated the swift circulation of Azerbaijan's false theses in international circles.

Cultural Methods Used

Two days after the outbreak of the 44-day war, the Ministry of Culture of Azerbaijan began to publish articles about Armenian monuments in Karabakh, seen from its own point of view, with their history and photographs on its official website on 29th September 2020.¹⁰³ Since February 2021, the ministry began monitoring the cultural sites in the occupied areas of Mountainous Karabakh. This was in line with the written order promulgated by the president of Azerbaijan, which stated:

...its aim is to initially find and protect historical-cultural monuments in the liberated areas. Not only have Muslim holy places been vandalised by Armenians but also Christian historical-religious monuments. Many Caucasian Albanian temples, among which is Khudavang and Gyanjasar [Gandzasar-HM] monasteries in the Kelbajar region, have been subjected to barbaric treatment.¹⁰⁴

The Ministry of Culture of Azerbaijan has also realised the program called "Let's get to know our Christian heritage." The newspaper "Azerbaijan" notes "*Within the framework of the program, short videos about the temples, churches and sanctuaries belonging to the Christian faith and protected by the state in the territory of Azerbaijan are presented.*"¹⁰⁵

The global campaign "Peace for Culture" took place in the Mugham International Centre on 23rd March 2021, where Anar Karimov, the Minister of Culture of Azerbaijan said that the goal of the campaign was the preservation of cultural heritage through peace, the strengthening of international peace, as well as the role of peace in the development of culture. Regarding the methods used, Miguel Angel Moratinos, High Representative for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), noted that to this Azerbaijani initiative, which has the goal to find mechanisms and tools to response today's reality and issues, he

¹⁰² IRS Heritage, <https://irs-az.com/journal-archive>.

¹⁰³ Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan, <http://mct.gov.az/en/common-news/>.

¹⁰⁴ "Azerbaijani Culture Ministry Begins Monitoring Monuments in Liberated Lands," Azernews, 19 Feb. 2021, https://www.azernews.az/news.php?news_id=176387&cat=culture.

¹⁰⁵ "Mədəniyyət Nazirliyi "Xristian İrsimizi Tanıyaq Layihəsini Təqdim Edir,"" *Azərbaycan qəzəti [Azerbaijan gazetii]*, 19 Noyabr 2020, 7.

responded immediately.¹⁰⁶ The campaign invited diplomats, media representatives, scholars as well as foreign government and international organisations' political, cultural and public representatives to the "liberated" areas of Azerbaijan raise their voices in the name of peace.¹⁰⁷

It should be noted that this organisation was created in 2005 by Kofi Annan, the former Secretary General of the UN, co-sponsored by the governments of Turkey and Spain. According to Vasif Eyvazzade, the Chief of Staff of the Culture Ministry of Azerbaijan, there was an aim to also present the above-mentioned campaign at the UN headquarters.¹⁰⁸ The Azerbaijani side, to achieve their political aims also utilises Azerbaijani youth, as well as different youth groups and organisations which periodically held meetings with Azerbaijan's government officials. One was "The Eurasian Regional Center of the Islamic Cooperation Youth Forum (ICYF-ERC)"¹⁰⁹ some of whose members – both foreign and Azerbaijani – visited the territories that were apparently "liberated" by Azerbaijan. The above-mentioned forum organised a "Karabakh-the cultural heart of Azerbaijan" international competition, which had 15 contestants from 13 countries: Turkey, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, USA, Estonia, Brazil, Poland, Algeria, Tunisia and so forth. It was noted that the competition was actively circulated on social media by over 20,000 users from more than 30 countries. The project was realised under the title of "Karabakh is Azerbaijan," the aim of which was to inform the international public that "Karabakh is an integral part of Azerbaijani culture and history." Five of the victors were taken on a visit to Karabakh.¹¹⁰ It should be noted that several of the competitors, without regard to the fact that they held other countries' citizenships, were actually ethnic Azerbaijanis, meaning that despite the great propaganda efforts made by Azerbaijan, those efforts were not very successful among foreign youth circles.

The Azerbaijani side on an official level also takes part in the cultural events held abroad. The ambassador of Azerbaijan to Italy, as well as the head of the Cultural Heritage Protection, Development and Restoration Service attached to the Ministry of Culture of

¹⁰⁶ "Presentation of "Peace for Culture" Global Campaign Held," APA News, 23 June 2021, <https://apa.az/en/xeber/culture-policy/presentation-of-peace-for-culture-global-campaign-held-photo-352409>.

¹⁰⁷ "Azerbaijan Sends Appeal to UNESCO," Azernews, 24 June 2021, <https://www.azernews.az/culture/180526.html>, accessed 25.02.2022.

¹⁰⁸ "Peace for Culture Campaign might be Presented at UN Headquarters," Azernews, 6 Aug 2021, <https://www.azernews.az/culture/181967.html>, accessed 25.02.2022.

¹⁰⁹ Young people from the countries that were members of the Islamic Cooperation Youth Forum (ICYF-ERC).

¹¹⁰ Youth from the United States, Estonia, Tunisia, Malaysia and Pakistan will travel to Karabakh, Islamic Cooperation Youth Forum Eurasian Regional Center, <https://icyf-erc.org/press-releases/youth-from-the-united-states-estonia-tunisia-malaysia-and-pakistan-will-travel-to-karabakh/>, accessed 25.02.2022.

Azerbaijan and others have participated in the international event called "Reconstruction Week - 2021" held in different cities of Italy from August 30th to September 4th 2021. At the event, the Azerbaijani side presented the "Armenian vandalism in the liberated territories" with videos, noting that the return of Azerbaijani refugees to those territories will begin with the revival of historical monuments.¹¹¹

The three-day conference entitled "Great Return: Cultural Revival" was organized in November 2021, by the "State Service for the Protection, Development and Restoration of Cultural Heritage" of the Ministry of Culture of Azerbaijan, where foreign ambassadors, diplomats, state figures and leaders of the organizations were also present. At that time US Ambassador to Azerbaijan E.D. Litzenberger announced that they were happy to support Azerbaijan, which was opening a new page in the history of preserving its culture.¹¹²

Apart from that, one of the Azerbaijani news agencies spread the news that a group of experts studying Caucasian Albanian history and architecture had been formed "to remove traces left by Armenians on Albanian religious temples." This was announced in Ganja [Gandzak-HM] by Anar Karimov. The latter noted that representatives of state institutions are also represented in the group. Members of the group have already conducted checks in the territories "liberated" by Azerbaijan.¹¹³ A few days later, the Ministry of Culture of Azerbaijan announced that "Azerbaijan has always respected its historical and cultural heritage, regardless of their religious and ethnic origin." It also included a reference to the 1954 Hague Convention concerning the protection of cultural values.¹¹⁴ It is interesting that Azerbaijan itself presented the fact that it was desecrating and changing Armenian churches, yet referred to the Hague Convention; but it must be reminded that the first thesis of the 3rd point of the 9th article (concerning the protection of cultural values in occupied territories) of the 2nd protocol (March 26th 1999) of that same convention¹¹⁵ forbids "any alteration to, or change of use of, cultural property which is intended to conceal or destroy cultural, historical

¹¹¹ Azerbaijan Ministry of Culture's official website, <http://mct.gov.az/az/umumi-xeberler/13697>, accessed 18.02.2022.

¹¹² "One of the Positive Impressions of Azerbaijan is its Respect For Different Cultures - US Ambassador," Azernews, 25 November 2021, <https://menafn.com/1103248039/One-of-positive-impressions-of-Azerbaijan-is-its-respect-for-different-cultures-US-ambassador&source=138>, accessed 18.03.2022.

¹¹³ "Ermənilərin Saxtalaşdırdıqları Alban Dini Məbədlərinin Bərpası Üçün İşçi Qrup Yaradılıb"[A Working Group was Created for the Restoration of Albanian Religious Temples, which were Falsified by Armenians], Report İnformasiya Agentliyi [Report Information Agency], Report.az, 03.02.2022, <https://report.az/medeniyyet-siyaseti/alban-dini-mebedlerinin-berpasi-ucun-iscu-grup-yaradilib/>, accessed 11.02.2022.

¹¹⁴ Statement by the Ministry for Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan, <http://www.mct.gov.az/en/common-news/14102>, accessed 11.03.2022.

¹¹⁵ Second Protocol to the Hague Convention of 1954 for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict The Hague, 26 March 1999.

or scientific evidence.” Meanwhile, the Azerbaijani side is moving in the path of breaking the same Convention's provisions. Targeting the symbols of the Christian heritage of Artsakh-Armenians and disrupting Christian ritual's actual traditions, Azerbaijan, despite being a member, went against the protocols of the conventions on the “Preservation of cultural diversity”(2001) ¹¹⁶ and the “Protection and the Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions” (2005).¹¹⁷ Such a policy is a discriminatory attitude, which also violates the freedom of thought, conscience, religion, and the right to value the heritage created as a result of this freedom in the way one wants, as stipulated in the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights".¹¹⁸ It should be noted that all this is happening when UN International Court of Justice on December 7th 2021 within the framework of the Armenia v. Azerbaijan and Azerbaijan v. Armenia court cases under the International Convention "On the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination", published decisions on applying emergency measures presented by Armenia and Azerbaijan, one of which referred to the Armenian cultural heritage.¹¹⁹ The decision obliged Azerbaijan to “take all necessary measures to prevent and punish acts of vandalism and desecration directed against Armenian cultural heritage, including churches and other places of worship, monuments, landmarks, cemeteries and artifacts.” It is therefore obvious that despite the efforts made by international organisations and the UN International Court of Justice, Azerbaijan not only is not carrying out its obligations, but also develops new plans for the alienation and appropriation of Armenian monuments from Artsakh-Armenians.

Conclusion

The article showed the process of the forced appropriation (Albanisation) of the Armenian monastic complex of Dadivank in Mountainous Karabakh carried out by Azerbaijan through different methods. Starting from the previous century and “Albanising” Armenian names, cross stones and inscriptions, Armenian historians and literature, after the second Artsakh

¹¹⁶ UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, adopted by the 31st session of the General Conference of UNESCO, Paris, 02.11.2001, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000127160>, accessed 01.02.2022.

¹¹⁷ Basic texts of the 2005 Convention on the Protection and the Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, 2013 edition, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000225383>, accessed 02.02.2022.

¹¹⁸ «Ուղիական քարոզչություն Մատաղիսի Սուրբ Եղիշե եկեղեցում» [Religious preaching in St. Yeghishe Church of Mataghis], Monument Watch, 17.07.2022, <https://bit.ly/3CBzWVK>, accessed 01.02.2022.

¹¹⁹ International Court of Justice, Application of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Armenia v. Azerbaijan), 07.12.2021, <https://www.icj-cij.org/en/case/180>, accessed 26.08.2022.

war, the practical phase of their appropriation began. For the latter, we identified four directions: propaganda in social media, the inclusion of the Udi minority in the process, scientific activities and cultural events. Propaganda on social media in Azerbaijan at present is carried out at the state level: websites are created to spread theses of the Azerbaijani side and promote false information about Armenian churches and monuments. All this does not leave aside the Azerbaijani youth, who are provided with state financial resources in order to carry out activities in this direction, perhaps also for the dissemination of Azerbaijani theses to foreign youth. In spite of the fact that Azerbaijan makes great efforts in this direction, it should be stressed that despite active propaganda carried out by Azerbaijani social media users, results cannot be considered to be very good, considering that those materials are basically being shared by ethnic Azerbaijanis. As for the Azerbaijani cultural competitions, the participants from different states are mostly ethnic Azerbaijanis, who have citizenship of foreign countries, thus the impact of these competitions on foreigners cannot be overestimated.

As for the “utilisation” of the leadership of the Udi minority by the authorities of Azerbaijan, the community, in general, has no other option than to subject itself to the authorities, taking into account the authoritarian regime operating in Azerbaijan. The leaders of the Udi community are just a tool for the Azerbaijani authorities, by which the national minority of Azerbaijan is served to their interests under the name of minority integration. The Udi leaders are pushed forward in every direction to spread anti-Armenian propaganda, and considering the fact that the Udis are one of the descendants of the Caucasian Albanians, most of whom are Christians, it is easier to carry out the "Albanisation" of Armenian cultural monuments through the latter. Regardless of historical distortions and efforts to establish the Albanian-Udi Church in Nagorno-Karabakh, it will never be legal without the approval of the Armenian Apostolic Church, because the ancient Albanian Church has always been subordinate to the Armenian Apostolic Church and cannot function independently of it.

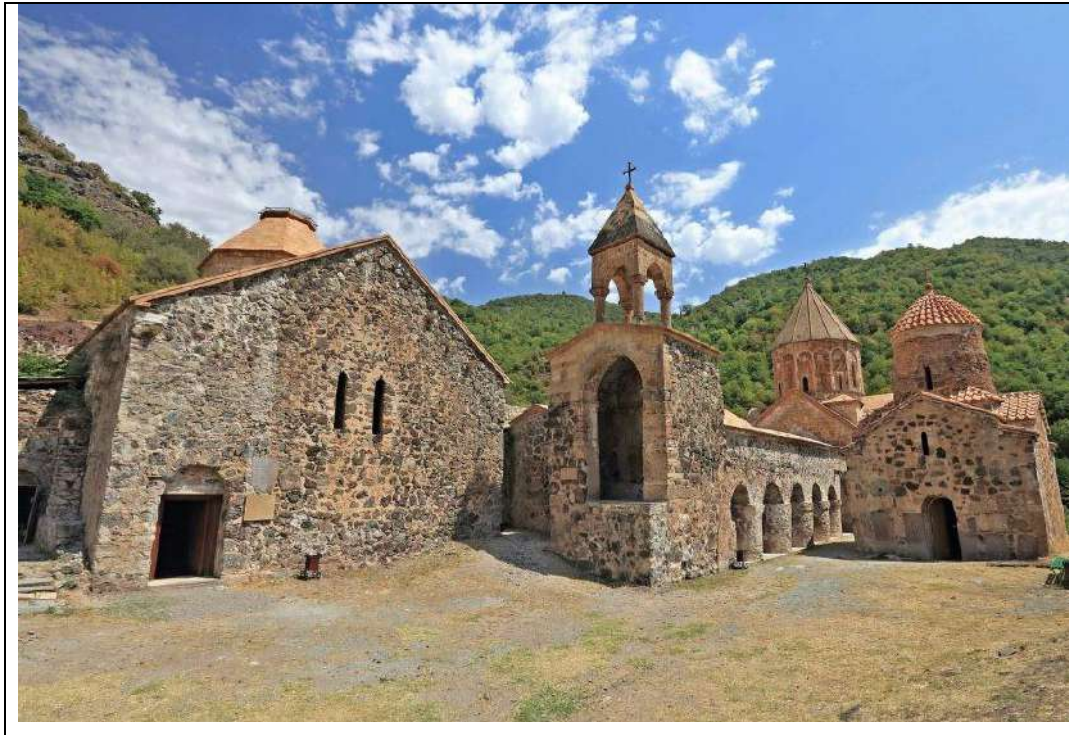
The conferences and events organised by Azerbaijani researchers concerning the “Albanisation” of Armenian monuments gained fresh impetus after the second Artsakh war. Scientific conferences on this topic are regularly organized, where foreign scientists are invited and urged to join the advancement of the theory of “Albanisation”. In Azerbaijan, after the war, books, articles, and series are published with even greater frequency and enthusiasm, presenting the entire cultural heritage of Artsakh as Azerbaijani.

Within the framework of cultural policy, after the second Artsakh war, the Azerbaijani side does not miss the opportunity to invite diplomatic representations and provide false

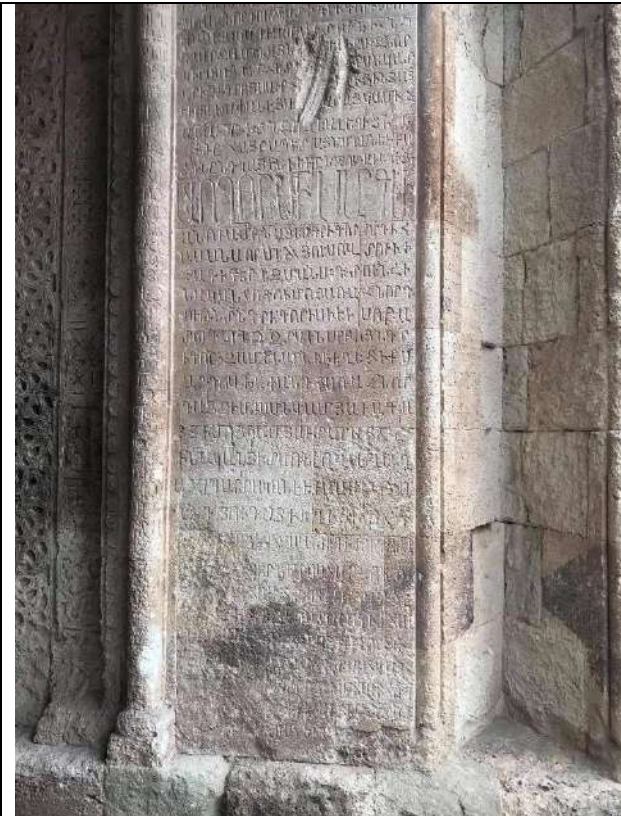
information at cultural state events held in Azerbaijan and the occupied territories of Artsakh. During the events, naturally, “Armenian vandalism” is demonstrated, while Azerbaijan is presented as the restorer and recreator of cultural monuments.

Despite the fact that various international structures are examining the situation created around the Armenian monuments of Artsakh, however, there is no positive movement on the part of Azerbaijan to not defile, destroy or usurp the Armenian historical and cultural legacy. Azerbaijan continues to violate its obligations stipulated by international conventions, in particular, the provisions of the 1954 Hague Convention concerning the protection of cultural property in the event of war conflict and its second protocol, the 2001 “Convention on the Preservation of Cultural Diversity” and the 2005 “Convention on the Protection and the Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions,” as well as the verdicts handed down by UN International Court of Justice within the framework of the “On the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination” on 7th December 2021 regarding Armenia vs. Azerbaijan and Azerbaijan vs. Armenia court cases, by which Azerbaijan assumed a number of obligations related to the protection of Armenian cultural heritage.

Thus, if Azerbaijan attempted to misrepresent the history of Armenian monuments solely through propaganda from 1991 to 2020, then practical measures began after November 2020, discreetly witnessed by the international community.



Picture 1. Dadivank Monastery in Artsakh (Source: The Last Two Pictures-Personal Archive of the Author, 13 Nov. 2020)



Picture 3. The Inscription of 1224 on the Western Facade of the [Katoghike] Church of Davivank Monastery (Source: Personal Archive of the Author)



Picture 4. Armenian Inscriptions (13th century) of the [Katoghike] Church of Davivank Monastery (Source: Personal Archive of the Author)



Picture 2. The Two Deliberately Cut Parts of Dadivank's Khachkar (1182), which were Established by Hasan Vakhtangyan (Source: Personal Archive of the Author)



Picture 5. The Two Khachkars (1283) of the Bell Tower of Dadivank (Source: Artsakh Monuments.com)



Anar Karimov  
@Anar_Karim

In the framework of our project "Let's get to know our Christian heritage" we present 19th century Albanian-Udi Church of Saint Elyseus in Nij, Gabala. Renovated in 2004 the church is used by local small Udi community

[Traduire le Tweet](#)



3633 vues

21:57 · 19.11.20 · [Twitter for iPhone](#)



Nij village, Qabala (Kutkashe) region, Azerbaijan. St. Yeghishe (Elisha) Church and two inscriptions carved on its southern entrance tympanum in commemoration of its thorough restoration carried out by the efforts of Priest Astvatzatur Jodanians in the 1840s (Photo of 1985). The inscriptions were completely scraped away during restoration work in the early 2000s.

Picture 6. St. Elysaeus Church in Nij [Nizh], Gabala (Azerbaijan), Armenian Inscriptions were Erased after "Restoration" by Azerbaijan in 2004 (Source: Armenian National Commission for UNESCO)



Steinar Gil

21 November 2020 at 19:19 · 🌐

Azerbaijan's First Deputy Minister of Culture Anar Karimov has produced a video of the St. Eliseus church in Nij (see link below). This church was built in 1823 and belonged to the Albanian Eparchy of the Armenian Apostolic Church. The church was restored in the beginning of this century with the financial assistance of the Norwegian Humanitarian Enterprise. In December 2004, before the restoration was finished, Armenian inscriptions on the tympanum and on tombstones outside the church were erased. The third picture below was taken by me after the erasure. At a later stage a cross was placed on the tympanum. The authorities were informed about the erasure of the inscriptions, but nobody has been brought to account for this vandalism. https://twitter.com/Anar_Karim/status/1329484059400089603?s=20



Picture 7. The Reaction of the Ambassador Steinar Gil, who was the Ambassador of Norway in Azerbaijan from 2002-2006, regarding Armenian Inscriptions of St. Elyseus Church in Nij, Gabala (Azerbaijan).



Picture 8. Armenian Medieval Gravestones in Jugha, Nakhijevan (Azerbaijan) (Source: Argam Ayvazyan Digital Archive)



Picture 9. Azerbaijani Soldiers Destroying Armenian Gravestones in Jugha, Nakhijevan in 2005 (Source: Argam Ayvazyan Digital Archive)

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