

WAR AGAINST AZERBAIJANI

Azerbaijan is among the areas of earliest human settlement, with a rich historical past and diverse cultural legacy. Archeological excavations have unearthed a great number of artefacts testifying to its distant past, as do different rock drawings, architectural monuments and examples of arts and crafts. The country also has ancient traditions of statehood. The predecessors of the modern Republic of Azerbaijan established by the ancestors of the Azerbaijani people each has its own share in this culture.

The first state in the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Caucasian Albania, was home to different religious traditions, including forms of Idol- and Fireworship, Zoroastrianism and Christianity, which

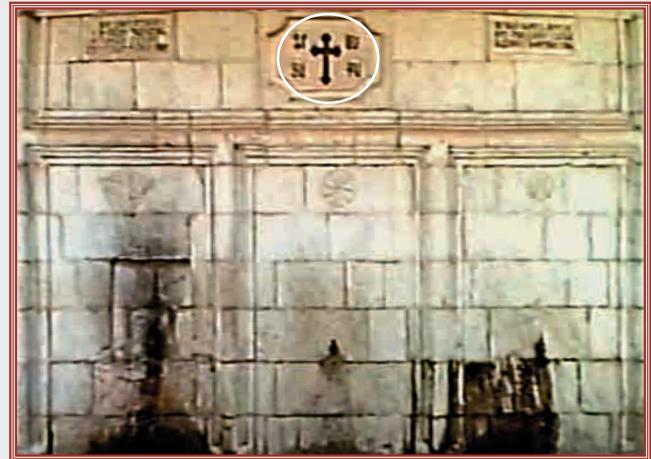
enriched the Azerbaijani cultural treasure with a great number of monuments created by the followers of these religions.

The conquest of Albania by Arabs put an end to its existence in the early 8th century and resulted in the adoption of Islam by most of the Albanian population, while some in the mountainous places continued to adhere to Christianity. Different Azerbaijani Muslim state entities emerged in the territory of Albania, like the Sajids, Salarids, Shaddadids, Atabays, Hulakids (Elkhanids), Garagoyunlu, Aghgoyunlu and Safavids, who also made a great contribution to the development of Azerbaijani culture.

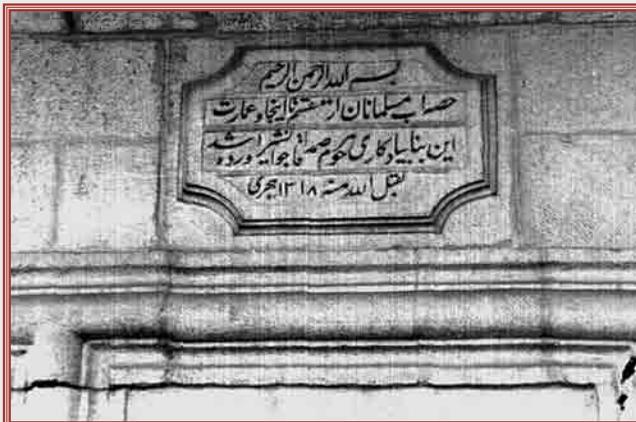
The collapse of the Azerbaijani Safavid state in



Mamayi spring, Shusha town (before occupation)



Mamayi spring, Shusha town (after occupation)



CULTURAL HERITAGE

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the first half of the 18th century was accompanied by the emergence of independent and semi-independent entities, the khanates and sultanates, in the middle of the 18th century. The occupation of these entities by Russia under the treaties of Gulustan (1813) and Turkmanchay (1828) suspended the centuries-old independent Azerbaijani statehood for about 100 years.

This period was remarkable for events which would have a significant impact on the future fate of the Azerbaijani people. Thus, following the occupation, Russia achieved a considerable demographic change by resettling a great number of Armenians in the Azerbaijani territories. The occupation also affected the Albanians adhering to Christianity. Their fate was sealed by the liquidation of the independent Albanian Catholicosate, the subsequent annexation of its dioceses to the Armenian Echmiadzin Catholicosate and Armenianization.

The Azerbaijani people could achieve its independence, which lasted for almost 2 years, with the Azerbaijani Democratic Republic in 1918. Various factors, including the aggression waged by Dashnak-ruled Armenia against Azerbaijan in Garabagh, Zangazur and Nakhchyvan at that time, combined to bring about a weakening of the Republic and led to its occupation by Soviet Russia in 1920. Notwithstanding all the hardships, the consistent movement for independence by the Azerbaijani people culminated in the restoration of the international legal personality of Azerbaijan, after an interval of more than 70 years, in 1991.

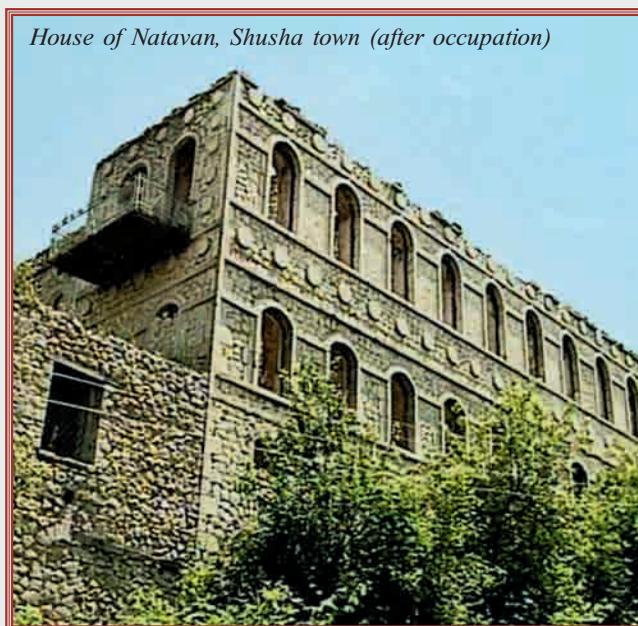
The independence coincided with the aggression of Armenia against Azerbaijan. Starting with a period of open territorial claims in 1988, it resulted in the occupation of a great portion of Azerbaijani territory and made approximately one out of every eight people in the country an internally displaced person or refugee. The war against Azerbaijan has also had catastrophic consequences for its cultural heritage both in the occupied territories and in Armenia.

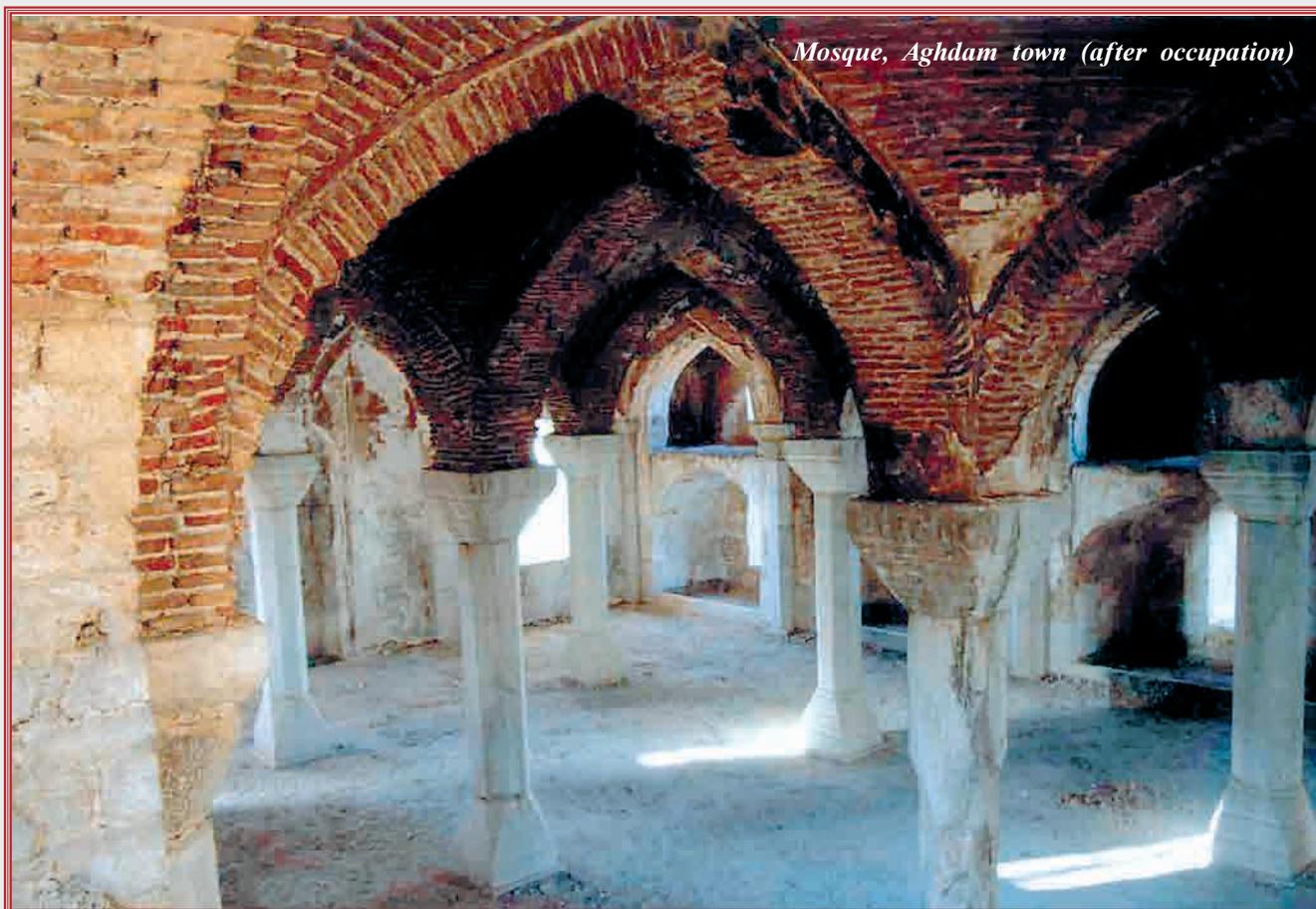
The occupation of a considerable part of Garabagh (the districts of Shusha, Kalbajar, Lachyn, Gubadly, Zangilan, Jabrayil, Fuzuli, Khojavand, Khojaly, Aghdam and Tartar), as well as 7 villages in the district of Gazakh and the village of Karki in

the district of Sadarak with 1.891 cultural resources, comprising 738 monuments, 28 museums with more than 83.500 exhibits, 4 picture galleries, 14 memorial complexes and 1.107 cultural establishments was a great cultural loss for Azerbaijan.

Among these monuments one could find architectural monuments of national importance like the 6th century Albanian Aghoghlan cloister and the 14th century Malik Ajdar tomb in Lachyn, the 4th century Albanian Amaras cloister and a considerable number of Albanian temples in Khojavand, the 18th century Asgaran castle, the 14th century tombs and a number of Albanian temples from the Middle Ages in Khojaly, the 6th century Albanian Saint Jacob and 13th century Albanian Khatiravang cloisters and the 13th-14th century Lekh castle in Kalbajar, the Albanian cloister of the 5th-8th centuries in Gazakh, the 13th-14th century Mirali tomb and the 17th century caravanserai in Fuzuli, the 14th century tomb in Zangilan, the 17th century mosque complex in Jabrayil, the 18th-19th century Yuhary and Ashaghy Govharagha and Saatly mosques, caravanserais and houses in Shusha, the 19th century mosque in Aghdam, and archeological sites like Garakopaktapa, Khantapa, Gunashtapa, Uzuntapa, Meynatapa and Zargartapa residential areas of the Neolithic and Bronze Ages in Fuzuli, residential

House of Natavan, Shusha town (after occupation)





Mosque, Aghdam town (after occupation)

areas of Chyragtapa and Garaghajy of the Bronze Age, and that of Gavurgala of the Middle Ages in Aghdam, Imangazantapa and Gyshlag mounds of the Bronze Age in Jabrayil, rock drawings of the Bronze Age in Kalbajar, the stone box necropoli of the Bronze and Iron Ages in Khojaly, residential area and necropolis of the Bronze Age in Sadarak, mounds of the Bronze and Iron Ages in Lachyn, a cave of the Stone Age, a mound and stone box graves of the Bronze and Iron Ages in Shusha, and Shahri-Sharifan residential area of the 13th -14th centuries in Zangilan.

The occupied territories of Azerbaijan were not only rich with monuments classified as being of national importance, of which but a few are listed above, but also with those of world importance, like the 11 and 15 arch Khudafarin bridges of the Middle Ages and Niftaly mounds of the Bronze Age in Jabrayil, Albanian Ganjasar and Khudavang cloisters of the Middle Ages in Kalbajar, the 14th century Gutlu Musa oghlu tomb and Uzarliktapa residential area of the Bronze Age in Aghdam, the Azykh and Taghlar caves of the Paleolithic Age in Khojavand, and mounds of the Bronze and Iron Ages in Khojaly.

Apart from its wealth of architectural and archeological monuments and its spectacularly beautiful nature, Garabagh was home to many talents, among whom Vagif, Natavan, Navvab, Hajybayov

and Bulbul deserve special mention, whose legacy for their great contribution to Azerbaijani and world cultural heritage has been carefully and respectfully preserved by Azerbaijanis.

The ongoing policy of deliberate destruction of this legacy following the occupation has been and continues to be an irreparable blow to Azerbaijani culture. As clearly demonstrated in the deliberate change of the cultural look of Shusha and other towns and settlements of Garabagh by destroying the monuments and changing architectural features, and making "archeological" excavations, this Armenian policy pursues far-reaching targets of removing any sign heralding their Azerbaijani origins.

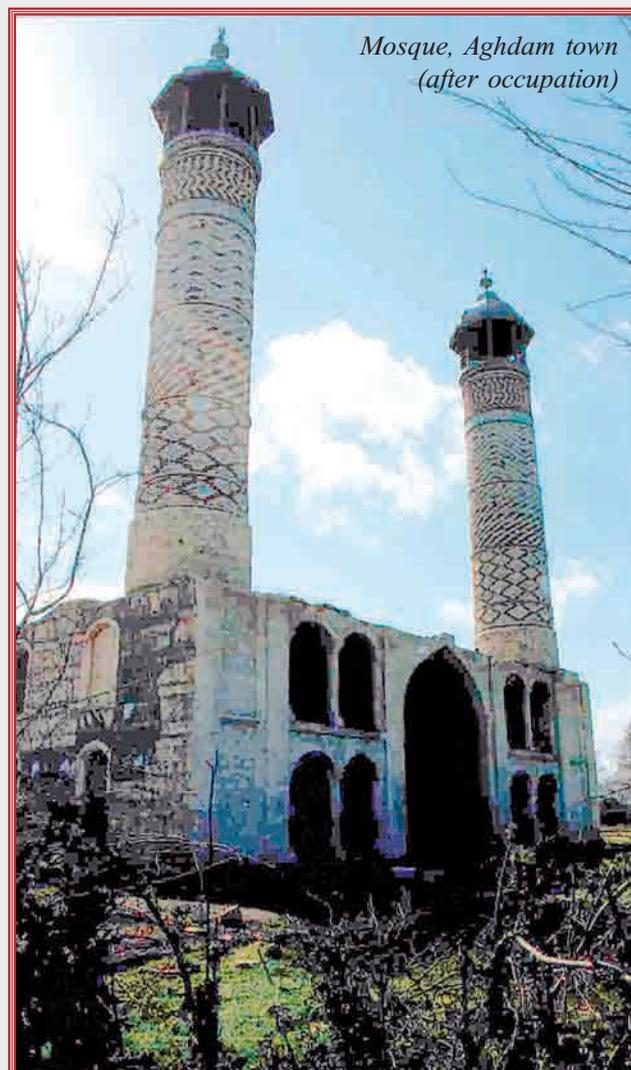
Analysis of the 12 years since the declaration of a cease-fire in 1994 shows that the military phase of the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which lasted for almost 3 years, didn't destroy Azerbaijani monuments to the extent to which this was subsequently done by the Armenian authorities. Thus, if in the years immediately following the military phase of the war, in Shusha town, the architectural monuments like the Yukhary and Ashaghy Govharagha mosques with their madrasahs, the mausoleum of Vagif, and the house of Natavan and caravanserais were destroyed, burnt, plundered and rendered unusable, the house of Aslan Garasharov, hero of the Second World War, was razed to the

ground and three new Armenian houses were built in its place, the later period shows the intensification of the barbarism, which has left almost no Azerbaijani monument without destruction or damage.

As for other districts, the "Imarat of Panah khan" complex, mosques in Aghdam town, the Abdal and Gulably villages, the tomb of Ughurlu bay and the home museum of Gurban Pirimov in the Aghdam district, the 14th century tombs in the Khojaly district, mosques in the Bashlybel and Otagly villages, ancient cemeteries in the Moz, Keshdak and Yukhary Ayrym villages and Kalbajar town in the Kalbajar district, mosques in the Zangilan, Gyrag Mushlan, Malatkeshin, Babayly and Ikinji Aghaly villages, cemeteries from the Middle Ages in the Jahangirbayli, Babayly and Sharifan villages in the Zangilan district, ancient cemeteries in the Gayaly and Mamar villages, the mosque in Mamar village in the Gubadly district, the mosque in Garygyshlag village and ancient cemetery in Zabukh village in the Lachyn district, the mosque complex in Chalabilar village and ancient cemetery in Khubyarly village in the Jabrayil district, mosques in Fuzuli town and the Gochahmadli, Merdinli and Garghabazar villages in the Fuzuli district, the cemeteries of the Khojavand, Akhullu, Kuropatkin, Dudukchu and Salakatin villages and the old cemetery of Tugh village in the Khojavand district, the ancient hamams in Umudlu village in the Tartar district and the cemetery of Karki village in the Sadarak district were destroyed, burnt down and plundered.

The Museum of History in the Kalbajar district, with its unique collection of ancient coins, gold and silverware, rare and precious stones, carpets and other handicraft wares, the Shusha Museum of History and that of Carpets, the Lachyn Museum of History, the Aghdam Museum of History and the Bread Museum and others have also been destroyed, plundered, and their exhibits put on sale in different places of the world. For example, the bronze statues of the poetess Natavan, of composer Uzeyir Hajybayov, and of singer and musician Bulbul would have been sold as bronze scrap metal in Georgia if the Azerbaijani government had not bought them for \$500,000 and taken these to Baky. Similarly, a silver handbag from the Lachyn Museum of History was sold at a Sotheby's auction in London for \$80,000.

Acts of barbarism are accompanied by different methods of defacing the Azerbaijani cultural image of the occupied territories. Amongst them are large-scale construction works therein, such as, for example, the building of an Armenian church in Lachyn town, the extension of the flight line of the Khojaly airport by destroying the children's music



*Mosque, Aghdam town
(after occupation)*

school, library, social club and infrastructure facilities. Another widespread phenomenon consists of changing the architectural aspects of different monuments like the Saatly mosque and Khanlyg Mukhtar caravanserai in Shusha town, as well as replacing the Azerbaijani-Muslim elements of the monuments with alien ones, such as the Armenian cross and writings, which have been engraved on the Arabic character of the 19th century Mamayi spring in Shusha town.

As for the fate of the Azerbaijani historical and cultural heritage in Armenia, those which could survive until the beginning of the conflict were also liquidated afterwards, such as the Damirbulag and Goy mosques of Yerevan. Thus, the former was razed to the ground, while the latter has been "restored" and presented as a Persian mosque. The mosques and other Azerbaijani monuments in other places of Armenia have also shared the same fate as the above-mentioned two, together with ancient or modern Azerbaijani cemeteries and toponyms of Azerbaijani origin, which have been erased from present-day Armenia. ♦