

# AZERBAIJAN'S POLICY OF FORCED CULTURAL APPROPRIATION AFTER THE SECOND ARTSAKH WAR: THE CASE OF DADIVANK MONASTERY

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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.<sup>1</sup> The "Albanisation" of Armenian cultural monuments in Mountainous Karabagh 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 Karabagh 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 Azerbaijani 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:** Artsakh<sup>2</sup>, Dadivank Monastery, cultural heritage, Albanisation, Azerbaijan.

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<sup>1</sup> Also called the 44 Day War.

<sup>2</sup> The original, Armenian name for Mountainous (Nagorno)-Karabagh 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” before the term “cultural genocide” was used. He noted that by that act, the perpetrator showed his destructive spirit, the opposite face of human culture and progress.<sup>3</sup> 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.”<sup>4</sup>

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, the elimination of cultural sites, churches and cross-stones may be regarded as part of the means of realising genocide, if there is a special intent for the elimination of the group. 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 Karabagh 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 Nakhijevan<sup>5</sup> has an important role in understanding the wider picture. Therefore, future wide-scale destruction will, in itself, be cultural genocide. In this sense, the Nakhijevan example is a cautionary tool and reminds the international community to focus its attention on Mountainous Karabagh.<sup>6</sup>

The Republic of Azerbaijan, perhaps even from the Soviet era, adopted two approaches toward the Christian monuments in Mountainous Karabagh: 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

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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>, accessed 05.03.2022.

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 11.12.2021.

6 Sylvia Maus, “A Violent Effort to Rewrite History? Destruction of Religious Sites in Nagorno-Karabagh and the Concept of Cultural Genocide,” *Völkerrechtsblog*, 19 April 2021, [https://intr2dok.vifa-recht.de/receive/mir\\_mods\\_00010644](https://intr2dok.vifa-recht.de/receive/mir_mods_00010644), accessed 05.03.2022.

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.<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup> 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.”<sup>9</sup>

The heritage studies scholar 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.<sup>10</sup> 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.”<sup>11</sup>

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.”<sup>12</sup>

The medieval Albanian Christian state<sup>13</sup> is known as being an area within the present

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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 *Critical Terms for Art History*, eds. Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff (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), cited 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.

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

13 The Albanian tribes (according to Strabo – 26) lived north of Kura 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 Sarmatia; to the south with Armenia Maior 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: AN Armianskoï SSR, 1987), 20-36; Enaetollah Reza, *Ազիրաշխուն և Առուն (Վաղարշապատի Արաքսի գետը)* [Azerbaijan and Arran (Caucasian Albania)], trans. Yervand Papazyan (Yerevan:

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.<sup>14</sup> 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'".<sup>15</sup>

According to the USSR constitution of 5 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 labeled 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 envisaged for the school pupils of the 8th and 9th grades in the Azerbaijani 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.<sup>16</sup> 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.<sup>17</sup> There was no mention, however, of their language and literature.<sup>18</sup>

Azerbaijani scholars gradually included Mountainous Karabagh in the Caucasian Albanian polity to reinforce their territorial claims to the former. Articles and books were

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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, *Օրիսը աղբյուրները հայերի մասին* [Foreign Sources about Armenians], trans. Hrachya Acharyan (Yerevan: YSU, 1940), 33.

14 Philip Kohl, Gocha Tsetschladze, *Nationalism, Politics, and the Practice of Archaeology in the Caucasus*, 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.

16 Ibid., 133-134.

17 The descendants of the Caucasian Albanian tribes 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.

published<sup>19</sup> 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 Karabagh territory they coveted, as well as becoming the owners of Armenian Christian culture.

This article presents about one of the Armenian historical-cultural treasures – Dadivank monastery – which was a target for forged Azerbaijani historiography and the subject of the policy of forced appropriation.

## The History of Dadivank

The monastic complex of Dadivank (Fig. 1, 2) is located in the Shahumyan region of the Republic of Artsakh (Fig. 3, 4) (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 kilometer north of the left bank of the Tartar River. According to medieval Armenian sources, 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.<sup>20</sup>

According to various sources, it was also occasionally known as the Monastery of the Apostles, while Armenian author of the 12th-13th century Mkhitar Gosh called it “Arakeladir”.<sup>21</sup> 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.<sup>22</sup> The monastery initially appears in bibliographical sources in the 9th century, such as Movses Dashkhurantsi's (Kaghankatvatsi) work “History of Albania”.<sup>23</sup> The feudal lords of the

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19 The Azerbaijani scholar Ziya 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 Karabagh, 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 Karabagh. 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).

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

21 Arakeladir, an Armenian word, meaning – established by the apostle.

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

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





*Figure 1. Dadivank Monastery in Artsakh (Source: Personal Archive of the Author, 13 Nov. 2020)*



*Figure 2. Dadivank Monastery in Artsakh (Source: Research On Armenian Architecture Archive)*

monastery and the surrounding area at that time were the indigenous Aranshahik dynasty,<sup>24</sup> 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<sup>25</sup> to establish Seljuks’<sup>26</sup> power and once burned down all the defenceless villages in the province, as well as Dadivank monastery, in 1143.<sup>27</sup>

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 prelacy. In 1182, Prince of Princes and Curopalate Hassan the Great, son of Vakhtang, erected one cross-stone (Fig. 5), 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.<sup>28</sup>

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,<sup>29</sup> as it had several churches, chapels and many secondary monastic buildings with inscriptions in Armenian (Fig. 6, 7). It is therefore possible to infer that the monastery was a very popular holy site with many pilgrimages taking place there.<sup>30</sup>

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 (Fig. 8) which were, later, moved inside the bell tower.<sup>31</sup> Construction activities gained impetus during that time and secular buildings were also built.

24 Aranshahik dynasty – local Armenian dynasty who ruled in Artsakh and Utik regions of Armenia Maior from 428 and had spread their power on Caucasian Albania as well.

25 Khachen region was one of the regions of Artsakh. Khachen principality was founded in 9th century, which included the northern and western parts of Artsakh. Due to its leader Sahl Smbatyan, Khachen’s borders extended to Lake Sevan (Republic of Armenia, Gegharkunik region). For details, see, for example, Vahram Balayan, *Արցախի պատմությունը, հնադարից մինչև մեր օրերը* [History of Artsakh from Antiquity to the Present Day] (Yerevan: Amaras, 2002), 106-109.

26 Turkic tribes, who invaded southeastern Asia in the 11th century and founded their empire.

27 Bagrat Ulubabyan, «Դադի կամ Խութա վանք» [Dadi or Khuta Monastery] *Echmiadzin* 6-7 (1971): 63-64.

28 Ayvazyan, *The Restoration of the Monastery of Dad*, 8.

29 The spiritual authority of the Gandzasar Catholicate (called also “Albanian/Aghvanits Catholicate) extended over Proper Albania (*Bun Aghvanq* in Armenian), Artsakh and Utik regions of Armenia Maior, and was a diocese subordinate to the Armenian Catholicate. The center of Gandzasar Catholicate was Partav city, then Kapaghak, etc. and from the 4th century the Gandzasar monastery.

30 Mesrop Magistros, *Հայկական երեք մեծ վանքերի Տաթևի, Հաղարծնի և Դադի եկեղեցիները և վանաստան շինությունները* [The Churches and Monastic Buildings of the Three Great Armenian Monasteries of Tatev, Haghartsin and Dad] (Jerusalem: Srbot Hakobants, 1938), 84.

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





Figure 3. Historical Religious Monuments of Artsakh (Source: Research On Armenian Architecture Archive)



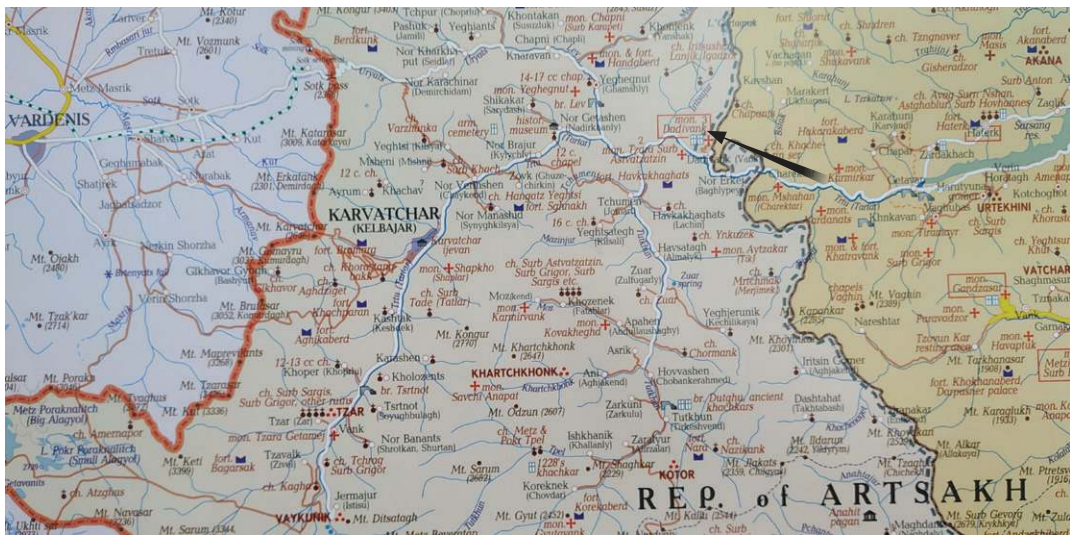


Figure 4. Dadivank Monastery, Artsakh (Source: Collage LLC, 2021. Author: Grigor Beglaryan)

The monastery gained significant landholdings during the following centuries which included areas now in the Karvachar (presently under occupation of the Republic of Azerbaijan), Vardenis (Republic of Armenia) and Martakert regions (Artsakh). 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<sup>32</sup> 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.<sup>33</sup> Other Kurdish tribes also settled in the region during the following decades, as well as ayrum [tribe in the Caucasus].<sup>34</sup> Metropolitan (Bishop) Baghdasar Hasan-Jalalyan<sup>35</sup> made attempts, after the khanate of Karabagh 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,<sup>36</sup> viceroy of the Caucasus Mikhail Vorontsov

32 Agha Mohammad Khan Qajar, founder of Qajar dynasty of Iran, ruling from 1789-1797.

33 As a result of Turkish-Persian wars in 16-18th centuries, Eastern Armenia was passed to Iran. Yerevan khanate was established in Afsharid Iran in the 18th century, covered approximately 7,500 square miles, consisted of 15 mahals and was governed by various khans. The khanate existed until 1828 when it passed to Russian Empire, as a result of Russo-Persian war.

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

35 Baghdasar Hasan-Jalalyan (1775-1854), Reverend at Gandzak's St. Hovhannes Church in 1798. In 1808 Reverend Baghdasar goes to Karabagh, Gandzasar, on the instructions of Sargis, the Catholicos of Aghvanq/Gandzasar. On November 13, 1830, Catholicos of All Armenians Ephraim grants Baghdasar the rank of Metropolitan, after which Baghdasar Hasan-Jalalyan takes over the leadership of Gandzasar Diocese.

36 Nerses V of Ashtarak (1770 – 13 February 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 Nakhijevan from 1830 until his election as Catholicos in 1843.



*Figure 5. The two deliberately cut parts of Dadivank's khachkar (1182), which were established by Hasan Vakh tangyan (Source: Personal Archive of the Author; 13 Nov. 2020)*

arranged to have an investigation carried out and land with an area of 196,438 dessiatins [a dessiatin is equal to 1.09 hectare] was returned to the monastery. However, over time, some of it became disputed, and the monastery's ownership of some areas shrank.<sup>37</sup>

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 Karabagh noted that:

The Armenian Diocese of Karabagh includes the whole of the Shushi, Jevanshir, Caryagino (Jebrayil), 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 whole of the diocese, 26,364 families, including 101,143 males and 88,857 females, a total of 190,000 people... The diocese of Karabagh 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 [Dadivank] owns 45,997 dessiatins of land... This remained in the hands of the government for three years, then, when it was handed back in September 1906, the Turkish-Armenian clashes<sup>38</sup> had already started and no one was able to enter the lands inhabited by the Turks and Kurds, remained without governor being in charge.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Karapetyan, *The Armenian Cultural Monuments*, 84.

<sup>38</sup> Armenian-Tatar (at that time present Azerbaijanis did not have an ethnonym and were called Caucasian Tatars, Turks and so on) clashes occurred in 1905-1906 during the first Russian revolution. The clashes erupted in Baku, then spread in Yerevan, Nakhijevan, Yelizavetpol and Tiflis. Both sides experienced losses.

<sup>39</sup> National Archives of Armenia (NAA), collection 57, list 2, document 1851, page 2.





Figure 6. The Armenian inscription of 1224 on the western facade of the [Katoghike] Church of Dadivank Monastery (Source: Personal Archive of the Author, 13 Nov. 2020)



Figure 7. Armenian inscriptions (13th century) of the [Katoghike] Church of Dadivank Monastery (Source: Personal Archive of the Author, 13 Nov. 2020)

A letter was sent to the department of the printing house of the Mother See of Echmiadzin, dated 23 October 1912 and addressed to Catholicos Gevorg V,<sup>40</sup> 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 Echmiatsin's jurisdiction.<sup>41</sup>

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 Dadivank monastery. However, with the establishment of Soviet rule in 1920, the monastery's lands were confiscated.<sup>42</sup> The monastery complex, having been

40 Gevorg V Surenyants (1847-1930), Catholicos of All Armenians 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.

41 NAA, col. 57, l. 2, doc. 1911, p. 5.

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





*Figure 8. The two khachkars (1283) of the Bell Tower of Dadivank (Source: Research On Armenian Architecture Archive)*



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.<sup>43</sup>

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 Karabagh 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<sup>44</sup> could be seen.<sup>45</sup>

Rebuilding work began in 1997, alongside comprehensive research, which included historical, architectural and archaeological studies and cleaning activities.<sup>46</sup>

## 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 Soviet Azerbaijani 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.”<sup>47</sup>

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

43 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 façade. See Karapetyan, *The Armenian Cultural Monuments*, 124.

44 Dadivank's frescoes were restored thanks to specialists Ara Zaryan and Christine Lamoureux from Italy.

45 «Դադիվանք. ինչպես ադրբեջանաբնակ բուրդը «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-vorm-nankar.html>, accessed 25.02.2022.

46 Avvazyan, *The Restoration of the Monastery of Dad*, 18.

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

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.<sup>48</sup> 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".<sup>49</sup>

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)<sup>50</sup> 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.<sup>51</sup>

According to Azerbaijani historiography, the population of Mountainous Karabagh 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 Karabagh, 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 Karabagh;
- During the Arab occupation in the 7th to 9th centuries, Islam spread, but the Albanians who lived in the mountainous regions of Karabagh 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;

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48 Ibid.

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

50 Indeed, in 1836, Tsarist Russia dissolved the Albanian/Gandzasar Catholicate, but even before that, the name of the Catholicate "Albanian/Aghvanits" had an abstract character, and only ethnic Armenians carried out spiritual activities in the Catholicate.

51 Yunis Hüseyinov, *Qarabağ* [Karabagh] (Baku: Afpoliqraf, 2018), 144.



Figure 9. Caucasian Albania and Armenian Artsakh and Utik regions (Source: Personal Archive of Dr. Aleksan Hakobyan)

- \* Albanian Kingdom I BC- III AD
- \*\* Albanian Kingdom III AD-V AD
- \*\*\* Kura River

- The Christian population of the Karabagh highlands called themselves Albanians in a letter sent to Peter the Great, proving that they did not think of themselves as Armenians until the beginning of the 18th century.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> of which the Proper Albania,<sup>54</sup> Armenian Utik<sup>55</sup> and Artsakh regions were a part, with the catch-all name of Albania (Fig. 9). 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

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

53 A province governed by a satrap, who had considerable autonomy.

54 Caucasian or Proper Albania was located in the left bank of the Kur River, while Armenian Utik and Artsakh provinces were located of the right bank of the river.

55 Utik, 12th province of Armenia Maior. Presently is a part of Armenia and Azerbaijan.

government and had various names: Lpnik, Baghasakan and Land of Mazquts. As the various satrapies were divided from each other and the Catholicossate in central Armenia was not 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 Kura 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.<sup>56</sup> 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, an ethnically Armenian area of the Kura 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 "Udi" people. The majority that had converted to Islam became a people that called themselves "Lezgis".<sup>57</sup> At that time, however, the Azerbaijani ethnic group did not really exist.

The "Catholicossate 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 Catholicossate 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 Karabagh was a homogeneous ethnically Armenian people. Some changes to the ethnic composition of the population of Karabagh began in the middle of the 16th century, when certain Turkish and Kurdish tribes were resettled in the area by the Safavids and for whom "the patriotism of Iranians or Azerbaijanis" were foreign (Ilia Petrushevski), thus, they didn't form one ethnic group or polity.<sup>58</sup>

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

57 Aleksan Hakobyan, *Արքայատոհմերն ու իշխանատոհմերը Բուն Աղվանքում և Հայոց Արևելից Կողմանքում սնտրիկից 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.

58 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* 7 (1988): 100-101.



### *Cross-stones and Inscriptions*

Armenian cross-stones are also targets for Azerbaijani forgery. This is especially true of the abovementioned Davud Akhundov, who has created a new term “khachdash”<sup>59</sup> (stone-cross) and then added differences with the Albanian khachdash (stone-khach), the Islamic “bashdash”<sup>60</sup> (bash-stone) and the Armenian “khachkar”<sup>61</sup> (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.”<sup>62</sup> 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.”<sup>63</sup>

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 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. Anatoly 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”.<sup>64</sup>

Two years later, in an All-Union archaeology congress held in Baku in 1985, Akhundov, in his paper,<sup>65</sup> 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 Karabagh and Nakhijevan, 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

59 “Khach” is in Armenian – cross, while “dash” is in Azerbaijani – stone.

60 “Bash” is in Azerbaijani – head, while “dash” is in Azerbaijani – stone.

61 “Khach” is in Armenian – cross, and “kar” is in Armenian – stone.

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

63 Ibid., 207.

64 Babken Arakelyan, Artsruni Sahakyan, «Խաչքարերը հակագիտական խեղաթյուրումների առարկա» [Cross-stones as Object of Unscientific Distortions], *Lraber hasarakakan gitutyunneri* 7 (1986): 41.

65 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,” in *All-Union Archaeological Conference “Achievements of Soviet Archeology in the XI Five-Year Plan”*], eds. V. Shilov, J. Khalilov (Baku: Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of the AzSSR (1985): 77-78.

nature of this attempt of cultural appropriation.<sup>66</sup> 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."<sup>67</sup>

In the scientific session with the theme of "Issues of Caucasian Albanian history and culture" held on 30 June 1988, cultural studies scholar Hamlet 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."<sup>68</sup>

The architect Murad Hasratyan also noted that Rashid Geyushev, Davud Akhundov and those who continued their work, contrary to historical facts, lithographic information and architectural features, declared the monasteries and churches of Artsakh and their depictive carvings and frescos, to be Albanian, trying intentionally alienate from Armenian culture.<sup>69</sup>

Azerbaijani scholars are, presently, adding that no Armenian cross-stones or inscriptions had been found in Karabagh 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.<sup>70</sup>

These new "discoveries" made by Azerbaijani scholars produce real amazement as, in the Karabagh 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.<sup>71</sup> Nothing was ever mentioned about them being Albanian before the Soviet era, when Azerbaijani scholars decided to appropriate Mountainous Karabagh and its culture. Azerbaijani researchers also blame Armenians that manuscripts found in Caucasian Albanian churches had been translated by

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66 Kohl and Tsetskhladze, "Nationalism, politics," 154.

67 Arakelyan, Sahakyan, "Cross-stones as Object of Unscientific Distortions," 41.

68 Shahnazaryan, "Scientific Session," 99-100.

69 Ibid., 99.

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

71 See, for example, Anatoly Yakobson, "Из истории армянского средневекового зодчества (Гандзасарский монастырь XIII в.)" [From the History of Armenian Medieval Architecture (Gandzasar Monastery of the 13th century)], *Lraber hasarakakan gitutyunneri* 12 (1977): 59-76; Lidia Durnovo, *Очерки изобразительного искусства средневековой Армении* [Essays on the Fine Arts of Medieval Armenia] (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1979); Jean-Michel Thierry, Murad Hasratyan, "Dadivank' en Arc'ax," *Revue des Etudes Arméniennes* 16 (1982): 259-287; Murad Hasratyan, Jean-Michel Thierry, "Le Couvent de Ganjasar," *Revue des Etudes Arméniennes* 15 (1981): 289-316.

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 – H.M.] in Talish<sup>72</sup>, Amaras<sup>73</sup> etc."<sup>74</sup>

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 (Fig. 10),<sup>75</sup> which really was Albanian, its Armenian inscriptions were erased (Fig. 11, 12), 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] (Fig. 13, 14) 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.<sup>76</sup>

The Azerbaijanis also insist that several names inscribed 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 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 wrote.<sup>77</sup> 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.<sup>78</sup> 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.

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72 Talish is a village in Martakert province of Artsakh, presently under the occupation of Azerbaijan.

73 Amaras monastery is located in Martuni province of Artsakh, was founded in the 4th century by Gregory the Illuminator. In the 5th century Mesrop Mashtots, the founder of the Armenian alphabet, opened the first school of Artsakh in Amaras.

74 Ismayilov, *Historical and Cultural Monuments*, 13.

75 Gabala region, Republic of Azerbaijan.

76 Thomas de Vaal, "Perspectives, Now Comes a Karabagh War Over Cultural Heritage," *Eurasianet*, 16.11.2020, <https://eurasianet.org/perspectives-now-comes-a-Karabagh-war-over-cultural-heritage>, accessed 15.11.2021.

77 Qarabağ- İrsimizin Əbədi Yaddaşı [Karabagh – The Eternal Memory of our Heritage] (Baku: Rəqəmli dövr, 2008), 162.

78 Ulubabayan, *The History of Artsakh*, 70-71.



Steinar Gil

21 November 2020 at 19:19 · 🌐

Azerbaijan's First Deputy Minister of Culture Anar Karimov has produced a video of the St. Elisaeus 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](https://twitter.com/Anar_Karim/status/1329484059400089603?s=20)



Figure 10

Figure 10. The reaction of the Ambassador of Norway in Azerbaijan (2002-2006) Steinar Gil, regarding Armenian inscriptions of St. Elyseus Church in Nij [Nizh], Gabala (Azerbaijan)

Figure 11. St. Elysaesus Church in Nij, Gabala (Azerbaijan), Armenian Inscriptions were erased after "Restoration" by Azerbaijan in 2004 (Source: Armenian National Commission for UNESCO)

Figure 12. St. Elysaesus Church in Nij, Gabala (Azerbaijan), Armenian inscriptions were erased after "Restoration" by Azerbaijan in 2004 (Source: Armenian National Commission for UNESCO)



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

Figure 11



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.

Figure 12



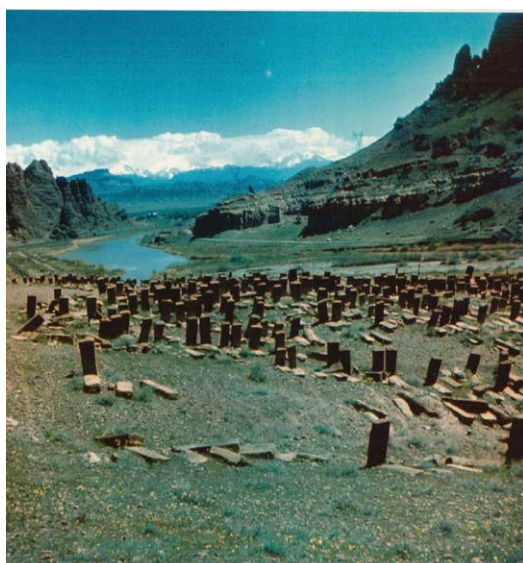


Figure 13. Armenian Medieval Gravestones in Jugha, Nakhijevan (Azerbaijan) (Source: Argam Ayvazyan Digital Archive)



Figure 14. Azerbaijani Soldiers Destroying Armenian Gravestones in Jugha, Nakhijevan in 2005 (Source: Argam Ayvazyan Digital Archive)

### *The Appropriation of Armenian Historians and Literature*

An Azerbaijani author Farida 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.<sup>79</sup>

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 ancient peoples, the Caucasian Albanians. It is necessary, once more, to remind Azerbaijani historians that the Azerbaijani identity was created during the Soviet years, within the Azerbaijani SSR, legitimizing it at the expense of Media, Atropatene, Caucasian Albania and historic

<sup>79</sup> Farida Mamedova, *Кавказская Албания и Албаны* [Caucasian Albania and Albanians] (Baku: Tsentr Issledovaniy Kavkazskoi Albanii, 2005), 3-4.

regions of Armenia – Utik, Artsakh and Nakhichevan, falsifying or appropriating their history and culture.<sup>80</sup>

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 “Azerbaijanian” began to be used.<sup>81</sup> Concerning the name “The Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan,” created in 1918, the name was taken from the Iranian province of Atropatene<sup>82</sup>, in future to demand territory from Iran as well. The famous Russian oriental scholar Vasily Bartol’d, 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.”<sup>83</sup>

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

Farida Mamedova’s second falsehood is that she presents the 9th-10th century 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 7th century Armenian poet Davtak Qertogh, with regard to his elegy on the death of Javanshir, prince of Albania, which was, apparently, written in the Albanian alphabet of 19 letters [19 letters of 52] but, through false translation had become Armenian, with its 36 letters.<sup>84</sup> There is no logic in this as, if it had been written as an acrostic text, why did Davtak chose only

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80 Hamlet Petrosyan, “Ethnocide in Artsakh: The Mechanisms of Azerbaijan’s Usurpation of Indigenous Armenian Cultural Heritage,” in *Cultural Heritage: Experience & Perspectives in International Context. ROCHEMP 1st Annual International Conference. 23-24, January, 2020*, ed. Ani Avagyan (Yerevan: National Gallery of Armenia, 2020), 79.

81 Tamara Vardanyan, «Աղբրեջանցիներ. ինքնության փնտրությունը հետխորհրդային շրջանում» [Azerbaijanis: The Search for Identity in The Post-Soviet Period], *21-rd Dar* 3 (2013): 75.

82 “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.” *Russian Encyclopaedic Dictionary* (Saint Petersburg: Brockhaus & Efron, 1890), Vol. 1, 212, cited in Rouben Galichian, *Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey: Addressing Paradoxes of Culture Geography and History* (Yerevan: Zangak, 2019), 22-23.

83 Vasily Bartol’d, *Сочинения. Том 2. Часть 1. Общие работы по истории Средней Азии, Работы по истории Кавказа и Восточной Европы* [Writings. Vol. 2, Part 1. General Works on the History of Central Asia, Works on the History of the Caucasus and Eastern Europe] (Moscow: Izdatelstvo vostochnoj literature, 1963), 703.

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

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 Farida Mamedova's statement, Ziya Buniatov had presented Davtak'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.<sup>85</sup>

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. Prof. Paruyr 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 medieval 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.<sup>86</sup>

Under the guaranty of the editing-publishing council of the Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan 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 BC – VIII century AD)], which was defended as a second PhD. The book's editor was Member of Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan Ziya Buniatov. The book contained completely distorted facts and anti-scientific analysis, which provoked protests from scientific circles of Armenia. In the six maps of the monograph, Farida 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 National Academy of Sciences of Armenia, nothing more than a copy of the map of "United Azerbaijan" published in the second volume of "Encyclopedia of Islam" (between pages 112 and 113) in Istanbul in 1944. This was followed by the official reply sent to Dr. Musheghyan by Andrey Nikolayevich Sakharov, deputy director of the Institute of History of the USSR of the Academy of Sciences of USSR. Its content is so informative that I considered presenting it here:

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85 If Davtak 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. Буниатова 'Азербайджан в VII-IX вв.'" [About the Book of Ziya Buniatova "Azerbaijan in VII-IX centuries"], *Patmabanasirakan handes* 1 (1967): 183.

86 Shahnazaryan, "Scientific Session," 99.

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 [of the River Kura] part of the population was Armenized 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 Kura 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 428 AD) was, obviously, for one of the Albanian tribes. Nevertheless, no written Albanian monument has reached us.<sup>87</sup> As for the cultural environment of the right bank – [it] was Armenian, and the works produced there were written in Armenian. The term “Albania” is historical-geographic one.

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 Armenian and those bearing it were Armenians living on the right bank of the Kura 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 Nakhchavan<sup>88</sup> and Goghthn from

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<sup>87</sup> 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>, accessed 12.03.2022.

<sup>88</sup> Nakhchavan is the name used by Azeris for Nakhijevan.



Vaspurakan<sup>89</sup> 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.<sup>90</sup>

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 Karabagh 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.<sup>91</sup>

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

The Azerbaijani historiography gained new traction after the Second Artsakh War (September-November 2020), to the theory of "Albanisation" of Nagorno-Karabagh'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 implemented by the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The Azerbaijani government, after the end of the war, quickly announced 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.<sup>92</sup> 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.<sup>93</sup>

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89 Vaspurakan was the 8th province of Armenia Maior, which included Nakhijevan and Goghtn provinces as well. Presently it is divided between Turkey, Iran and Azerbaijan.

90 «Պաշտոնական պատասխան» [Official Response], *Գրական թերթ* [Grakan t'ert'], N 88 (2849), 14 August 1987, 4.

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

92 Javid Agha, "Perspectives. Who were the Caucasian Albanians?" *Eurasianet*, 07.06.2021, <https://eurasianet.org/perspectives-who-were-the-caucasian-albanians>, accessed 05.03.2022.

93 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>, accessed 15.03.2022. Qədim Alban məbədinə saxta tarix [A Fake History in an Ancient Albanian Temple], 16.03.2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R4nsAN1yOoc>, accessed 07.05.2022.

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 social media, making Azerbaijan’s Udi minority a part of Azerbaijan’s frauds, scientific activities and cultural events.

### *Propaganda in 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 11 November 2020, shortly after the Armenia-Azerbaijan-Russia statement<sup>94</sup>, that, “Khudavang monastery is one of the best testimonies of ancient Caucasian Albania civilization. Built in 9-13th century by wife of Albanian prince Vakhtang in Kalbajar region of Azerbaijan, this complex is composed of Church of Arzu Khatun, Church of Hasan, basilica and 2 chapels.”<sup>95</sup>

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 17 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 Karabagh.<sup>96</sup> It soon became obvious that the cross-stones shown were those at the Sevan monastery,<sup>97</sup> which had simply “become” victims of false Azerbaijani news. All this proves that Azerbaijani officials and ordinary social media users have inserted their historians’ forgeries into 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](http://heritage.gov.az)), which apparently presents to the international public “Armenian vandalism” toward Azerbaijani monuments of Karabagh. Books about the “Azerbaijani cultural heritage” in Mountainous Karabagh are published periodically, while Azerbaijan’s Minister of Culture states that all this is done for information warfare in order to present the “truth” to the public.<sup>98</sup>

94 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 10.04.2022.

95 Azerbaijan’s Minister of Culture Anar Karimov’s Official Twitter Account, 11 November 2020, [https://twitter.com/Anar\\_Karim/status/1326437397270310912](https://twitter.com/Anar_Karim/status/1326437397270310912), accessed 15.05.2022.

96 Twitter Account of Gulmammad Mammadov, 17 November 2020, <https://mobile.twitter.com/gulmammad/status/1328735592428023810>, accessed 12.03.2022.

97 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>, accessed 05.03.2022.

98 Hayastan Martirosyan, «Էթնոցիդ. Արցախի մշակութային ժառանգությունը՝ աղբրեշանական վան-

### *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 Jourlu, 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 years, begun 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 to accept that they are part of the Azerbaijani ethnos.<sup>99</sup>

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.”<sup>100</sup> The Azerbaijani authorities, under the guise of presenting themselves as a multi-cultural and tolerant country,<sup>101</sup> 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 10 April 2003, when the Albanian-Udi Christian community was registered at the State Committee for Work with Religious Organizations.<sup>102</sup> 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 Karabagh.

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

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ղալիզմի 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=I-wAR0vM8rmni7lNxDp16bK9Jb1JKtQdqNtTgyR5A6VA7QBAYqumYBRqHPeMeE>, accessed 30.08.2022.

99 Hranush Kharatyan, «Ուդիների ողիսականը 18-20 դդ. (Պատմություն, էթնիկ գոյատևում, ինքնահաստատում)», *Հայոց Մեծ եղեռն 90, հորվածների 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), 119.

100 Албано-Удинская Христианская Община [Albanian-Udin Christian Community], 13.11.2013, <https://udi.az/articles/0200.html>, accessed 10.11.2021.

101 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 is published by the Baku Research Institute, 06.07.2021, <https://bakuresearchinstitute.org/en/multiculturalism-in-azerbaijan/>, accessed 05.04.2022.

102 Grigory Ayvazyan, “Удины и Албанская Церковь Азербайджана” [Udis and the Albanian Church of Azerbaijan], *21-й Век* 3 (2016): 60.



community play a major role in the implementation of this policy. It was perhaps during the war, on 16 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 the policy of Armenians, while churches were being repaired in Azerbaijan.<sup>103</sup>

Representatives of “Azerbaijan’s Albanian-Udi Christian community” visited, on 4 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.”<sup>104</sup>

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.”<sup>105</sup>

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.<sup>106</sup> Armenian pilgrims and clergymen were also allowed to visit the monastery, but their access to monastery were forbidden on 7 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 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2021, titled “The falsification of Albanian temples in Karabagh 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.<sup>107</sup>

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103 Robert Mobili, “Vandalism is Armenian State Strategy,” *Report.az*, 16.10.2020, <https://report.az/en/Karabagh/chairman-of-azerbaijan-s-albanian-udi-christian-community-robert-mobilisaid/>, accessed 11.03.2022.

104 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 December 2020, <http://anl.az/down/meqale/azerbaycan/2020/dekabr/730852.htm>, accessed 10.11.2021.

105 Ibid.

106 “Albanian-Udi Religious Community of Azerbaijan Visits Khudavang Monastery,” *Azernews*, 5 May 2021, <https://www.azernews.az/nation/178639.html>, accessed 10.03.2022.

107 “Azərbaycan Respublikası Alban-Udi-Xristian İcmasının Sədri, BDU-Nun Kompleks Geoloji və Geofiziki

The “Azerbaijan’s Albanian-Udi Christian religious community” declaration of 8 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.<sup>108</sup>

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 charter<sup>109</sup> precludes that possibility. Even the foundation of the Albanian-Udi Church in Mountainous Karabagh 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.<sup>110</sup>

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 [*kondak* in Armenian] from the Catholicos.

Article 1.5 states that the rules laid down in Articles 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4 are not subject to change.<sup>111</sup>

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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 Geological and Geophysical Research Laboratory of BSU, Gave a Report on “The Falsification of Albanian Temples in Karabagh 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>, accessed 05.04.2022.

108 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-erazile-rdeki-alban-mebedleri-ile-bagli-beyanat-yayib>, accessed 10.08.2022.

109 Guide of the Armenian Apostolic Holy Church’s Diocesan Charter, <https://kronadaran.am/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Հայաստանյայց-Առաքելական-Սուրբ-Եկեղեցու-թեմական-կանոնադրություն.pdf>, accessed 12.12.2021.

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

111 Charter, 38.

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 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 25 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."<sup>112</sup> 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.<sup>113</sup>

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 26 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 Caucasian Albania and to provide various assistance in this field.<sup>114</sup>

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 them from Azerbaijani vandalism,<sup>115</sup> Azerbaijani researchers reported, in a paper

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112 Javid Agha, "Perspectives. Who were the Caucasian Albanians?" *Eurasianet*, 07.06.2021, <https://eurasianet.org/perspectives-who-were-the-caucasian-albanians>, accessed 05.03.2022.

113 "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 November 2020, <https://science.gov.az/az/news/open/15174>, accessed 05.03.2022.

114 "Qafqaz Albaniyası: Tarix, Din Və Memarlıq" Adli Beynəlxalq Elmi Konfrans Keçirilib, *Azərbaycan Milli Elmlər Akademiyası, Tarix İnstitutu* ["Caucasus Albania: History, Religion and Architecture" International Scientific Conference Held, National Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan, Institute of History], 27 May 2021, <http://tarixinstitutu.az/news/view/327>, accessed 05.03. 2022.

115 "Տեր Հովհաննեսը Դադիվանքի խաչքարերը, խաչն ու զանգերը Հայաստան է բերում" [Rev.



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.<sup>116</sup> 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.<sup>117</sup> 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,<sup>118</sup> without considering the fact that not only Armenian researchers,<sup>119</sup> but also Soviet Azerbaijani researchers<sup>120</sup> 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 Karabagh," which was presented to the public on 15 November 2021. The set comprised five publications concerning Mountainous Karabagh's literature, music, architecture, art and carpet making. The volume concerning architecture presented Mountainous Karabagh's architectural monuments, with pictures and graphical drawings,<sup>121</sup> 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 Karabagh by Armenians, illegal archaeological excavations as well as the "Armenianisation" of Azerbaijani monuments and their forced appropriation."<sup>122</sup>

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 Artsakh's culture.<sup>123</sup> The journal was produced in 17 languages, which greatly facilitated the swift circulation of Azerbaijan's false theses in international circles.

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Hovhannes Brings Dadivank Khachkars, Crosses and Bells to Armenia], *Artsakh Irtavakan*, 11 November 2020, <https://artsakh.news/am/news/194425>, accessed 28.02.2022.

116 Telman Ibrahimov, "Khachkars of Dadivank Monastery or... "FINITA EST COMOEDIA," [https://www.academia.edu/44744763/KHACHKARS\\_OF\\_DADIVANK\\_MONASTERY\\_or\\_FINITA\\_EST\\_COMOEDIA\\_](https://www.academia.edu/44744763/KHACHKARS_OF_DADIVANK_MONASTERY_or_FINITA_EST_COMOEDIA_), accessed 28.02.2022.

117 Ibid., 3.

118 Ibid..

119 Magistros, *The Churches and Monastic Buildings*, 88-89; Ulubabayan, "Dadi or Khuta Monastery," 69.

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

121 "A Collection of Publications 'Cultural Heritage of Karabagh,'" Heydar Aliyev Foundation, June 2021, <https://heydar-aliyev-foundation.org/en/content/view/96/5069/A-collection-of-publications-%E2%80%9CCultural-heritage-of-Karabagh%E2%80%9D->, accessed 05.04. 2022.

122 "Armenia's Appropriation of the Azerbaijani Cultural and Historic Heritage," *Analyses Center of International Relations*, 13 July 2021, <https://aircenter.az/uploads/files/Cultural%20Appropriation.pdf>.

123 IRS Heritage, <https://irs-az.com/journal-archive>, accessed 05.04.2022.

### *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 Karabagh, seen from its own point of view, with their history and photographs on its official website on 29th September 2020.<sup>124</sup> Since February 2021, the Ministry began monitoring the cultural sites in the occupied areas of Mountainous Karabagh. 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] monasteries in the Kelbajar region, have been subjected to barbaric treatment."<sup>125</sup>

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."<sup>126</sup>

The global campaign "Peace for Culture" took place in the Mugham International Centre on 23 June 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 respond to today's reality and issues, he responded immediately.<sup>127</sup> 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 to raise their voices in the name of peace.<sup>128</sup>

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 Ministry of Culture of Azerbaijan,

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124 Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan, <http://mct.gov.az/en/common-news/>, accessed 23.02.2022.

125 "Azerbaijani Culture Ministry Begins Monitoring Monuments in Liberated Lands," *Azernews*, 19 February 2021, [https://www.azernews.az/news.php?news\\_id=176387&cat=culture](https://www.azernews.az/news.php?news_id=176387&cat=culture), accessed 25.02.2022.

126 "Mədəniyyət Nazirliyi 'Xristian İrsimizi Tanıyaq Layihəsini Təqdim Edir,'" [Ministry of Culture "Introducing the Let's Get to Know Our Christian Heritage Project"] *Azərbaycan qəzeti* [Azerbaijan Newspaper], 19 November 2020, 7.

127 "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>, accessed 01.05.2022.

128 "Azerbaijan Sends Appeal to UNESCO," *Azernews*, 24 June 2021, <https://www.azernews.az/culture/180526.html>, accessed 15.02.2022.

there was an aim to also present the above-mentioned campaign at the UN headquarters.<sup>129</sup> 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)"<sup>130</sup> some of whose members – both foreign and Azerbaijani – visited the territories that were apparently "liberated" by Azerbaijan. The above-mentioned forum organised a "Karabagh – 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 "Karabagh is Azerbaijan," the aim of which was to inform the international public that "Karabagh is an integral part of Azerbaijani culture and history." Five of the victors were taken on a visit to Karabagh.<sup>131</sup> 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 Azerbaijan and others have participated in the international event called "Reconstruction Week – 2021" held in different cities of Italy from 30 August to 4 September 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.<sup>132</sup>

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 Earle Litzenberger announced that they were happy to support Azerbaijan, which was opening a new page in the history of preserving its culture.<sup>133</sup>

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129 "Peace for Culture Campaign might be Presented at UN Headquarters," *Azernews*, 6 Aug 2021, <https://www.azernews.az/culture/181967.html>, accessed 07.04.2022.

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

131 Youth from the United States, Estonia, Tunisia, Malaysia and Pakistan will travel to Karabagh, 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-Karabagh/>, accessed 10.08.2022.

132 Azerbaijan Ministry of Culture's official website, <http://mct.gov.az/az/umumi-xeberler/13697>, accessed 10.08.2022.

133 "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 01.04.2022.



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] 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.<sup>134</sup> 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.<sup>135</sup> 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 article 9 (concerning the protection of cultural values in occupied territories) of the Second Protocol (26 March 1999) of that same Convention forbids “any alteration to, or change of use of, cultural property which is intended to conceal or destroy cultural, historical or scientific evidence.”<sup>136</sup> 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)<sup>137</sup> and the Protection and the Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005).<sup>138</sup> 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.”<sup>139</sup> It should be noted that all this is happening when UN International Court of Justice on 7 December 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

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134 “Ermənilərin Saxtalaşdırdıqları Alban Dini Məbədlərinin Bərpası Üçün İşçi Qrup Yaradılıb”, Report İnformasiya Agentliyi [“A Working Group was Created for the Restoration of Albanian Religious Temples, which were Falsified by Armenians,” Report Information Agency], *Report.az*, 03.02.2022, <https://report.az/medeniyyet-siyaseti/alban-dini-mebedlerinin-berpasi-ucun-isci-grup-yaradilib/>, accessed 05.03.2022.

135 Statement by the Ministry for Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan, <http://www.mct.gov.az/en/common-news/14102>, accessed 05.03.2022.

136 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, accessed 07.02.2022.

137 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 07.02.2022.

138 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 07.02.2022.

139 «Ուղիական քարոզչություն Մատաղիսի Սուրբ Եղիշե եկեղեցում» [Religious Preaching in St. Yeghishe Church of Mataghis], Monument Watch, 17.07.2022, <https://bit.ly/3CBzWVK>, accessed 20.08.2022.

referred to the Armenian cultural heritage.<sup>140</sup> 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 has demonstrated the process of the forced appropriation (Albanisation) of the Armenian monastic complex of Dadivank in Mountainous Karabagh carried out by Azerbaijan through different methods. Starting from the previous century and “Albanising” Armenian names, cross-stones and inscriptions, medieval Armenian historians and literature, after the Second Artsakh war, the practical phase of their appropriation began. For the latter, it can be 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.

Regarding “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

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140 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 07.02.2022.

historical distortions and efforts to establish the Albanian-Udi Church in Nagorno-Karabagh, 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, 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 7 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 the Azerbaijani misrepresentation of the history of Armenian monuments was carried out solely through propaganda during 1991-2020, then practical measures began after November 2020, discreetly witnessed by the international community.

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