

## Research Article

# A look at the history and musical culture of the peoples living in the territory of Azerbaijan

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### Abstract

Azerbaijan where different cultures and regions formed from the very old time, has a specific, various, and rich cultural heritage. The times of Caucasian Albany have a special role in the history of our country and are of great importance in finding out the pre-Islamic faiths, traditions, and ceremonies in the cultural heritage of Azerbaijan. Though the Alban culture and ethnos being the spiritual heritage of Azerbaijan exposed to a certain transformation in history, the traces of this culture have been protected in the rich and old traditions, religious ceremonies, and historical monuments of the Azerbaijanis, and symbols living in such monuments up to date.

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## Introduction

Besides the Turkic-speaking Azerbaijanis, a number of minor nations and ethnic groups with their own ethnic names live in Azerbaijan. As they inhabited the territory of Azerbaijan, they are also called Azerbaijanis. They are equal citizens of Azerbaijan state. These minor nations and ethnic groups have a specific place with an equal and leading role in the formation of the material and spiritual culture and moral face of Azerbaijan together with the Turkic-speaking people of Azerbaijan in all historic times. Reciprocal-comparative study of the historical ethnography, culture, and music culture of these ethnic groups living in Azerbaijan for centuries is of great importance in finding out of national properties of real richness and deep historical roots of the spiritual culture of Azerbaijan totally. Learning this nation, Azerbaijan's being the living place of Turkish ethnic groups and minor nations can be proved by ascribing not only historical but also ethnographic and music patterns.

From ancient times Azerbaijan where different cultures and religions were formed has special various and rich cultural heritage. Even if Alban culture and ethnos which form the spiritual heritage of Azerbaijanis were transformed through history, the tracks of this culture have been protected in Azerbaijan's rich and ancient traditions, religious rituals, historical monuments, and historical monuments in symbols living on these monuments up to now.

Besides Turkish people, minorities and ethnic groups settled in this area and had their own names – Udis, Avars, Lezgin, Sakhurs, Rutuls, Khinaligs, Budugs, Grizs, Harputs, and other people live in Azerbaijan. (According to

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Strabon, 26 generations and people were living in Caucasian Albania, they – Albanians, Massagets, Gargars, Sacks, Kangars, Chuls, Bechenegs (Oghuzs), Kumans, Kegils, Suvars, Bulgarians, Huns, Khazars, Dondars, Labans (Lbins), Gaytags being Turkish generations and peoples cover most of the country.) In the formation of Azerbaijan’s material and spiritual culture and appearance besides Turkish-talking people in Azerbaijan, these minorities and ethnic groups had their own place at all times. Generally, during centuries the research on the historical ethnography, the culture, and the music culture of the ethnic groups living in Azerbaijan (comparatively) assume importance in emerging the national peculiarities, real wealth, and deep historical roots of Azerbaijan culture. Adding “Caucasian” toponomy to the historical Albanian name (Arran), according to some researchers, was related to the importance of comparing it to modern Albania situated in the Balkan Peninsula (surrounded by the Mediterranean, Greece, and Yugoslavia). However, according to other sources, its location area is called for covering the Caucasian area.

**Historical Digression**

It’s known that the history of Caucasian Albania is calculated before Christ, approximately from the III century. However, it doesn’t mean that Albania didn’t exist before the III century B.C. On the contrary, it's being a steady tribe formed a long time ago is doubtless. So, the geographical sources of Greece and Rome of the last centuries B.C. and the first ones A.C. gives valuable information about it. Strabon, Theophanes the Greek, Poseidon, Eratosthenes, Titus Libyan, Ptolemy, and others mentioned valuable notes about Albanians’ (Caucasian) lifestyle, its social structure, and religious economy, the country’s geographical situation, and partially its people’s culture in their works. (According to antique culture, the state system in Albania was founded in the I century B.C., according to the archeological research of the last ten years in the IV-III centuries B.C. and according to local ethic roots, it was founded by a local tribe.)

<p><b>Albaniya, Ἀλβανία, Ἄσδο, Աղվանք, اران</b>                  Kingdom, Vassal Kingdom, Sassanid satrapy                  BC IV century — B.C. 705  <b>The Capital:</b> Kabalaka Partav  <b>Languages:</b> Albanian  <b>Religion:</b> Polytheism, Christianity, Paganism  <b>Form of Government:</b> Monarchy  <b>Dynasty:</b> Aranis, Albanian Arshakis, Mehranis  <b>Inheritance:</b> Mussels Sajis Shirvanshahs</p>	
<p>Military flag of Javanshire</p>	

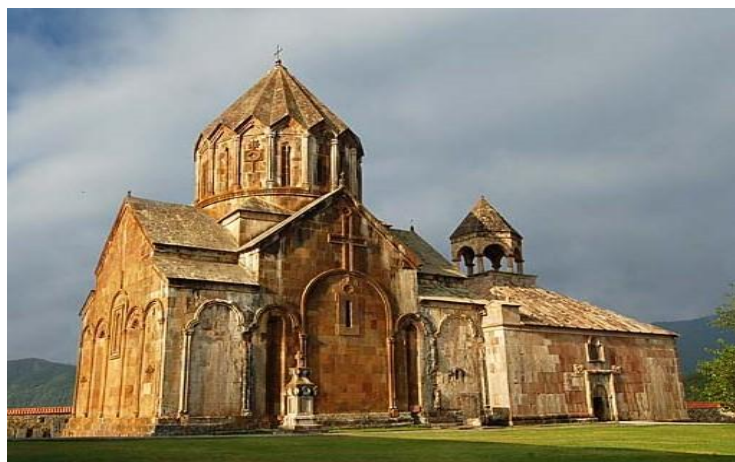
Figure 1. Information about Qafqaz Albaniya (Web 1)



**Picture 1.** Albania and neighboring countries (6<sup>th</sup> century - beginning of the 8<sup>th</sup> century) - Compiled by: I.S. Suleymanov (Web 1)



**Photo 1.** Kish Church, the oldest church in the Caucasus and Azerbaijan, founded by St. Eliseus (Web 2)



**Photo 2.** Ganjasar<sup>2</sup> Monastery, which was the residence of Albanian Catholicos from 1511 to 1836 (Web 3)

On the other hand, we have to search fragmentary information on our people’s life style, political position, and economical opportunities from the notes written on the works in Latin and Greek language on the basis of Rome invaders’ imagination having come for the purpose of military march. However, taking into consideration the objective

<sup>2</sup> Ganjasar (eng. Gandzasar) is a 13<sup>th</sup> century Christian Albanian monastery located on the left bank of Khachinchay, in the village of Vangli of the former Aghdara region (now Kalbajar). In the Middle Ages, the monastery was the central residence of the Albanian Apostolic Church. As a result of the first Karabakh war of 1991-1994, the territory where this historical monument is located is under the occupation of the Armed Forces of Armenia.

situation, we must state that the coincidence of the information on Caucasian Albania in the works of Latin and Greek languages is the exponent of this country's certain penetration and position at that time. Meanwhile, the Albanian sources having the opportunities to be emerged in the next centuries couldn't come to our times (in full form) and it establishes a lot of obstacles in the investigation of this country's history. Even in the middle centuries the Armenian sources confess that the Albanian alphabet and written language was founded on the basis of this language and alphabet. But unfortunately, not taking into consideration some little materials, a weighty monument on Albanian writing culture wasn't discovered. The three-volume book "The History of Albania" written by Moisey Kalankatly in Albanian at that period and "Chronicle of Albania" by Mchitar Gosh express the history of middle-aged Albania but they came to our century in Armenian because of some reasons. This situation naturally emerges a lot of difficulties and obstacles.

### Arguments

In scientific literature Albanian official language, the language of the ethnic groups living here, the matters of language group, their ethnic areal and most problems were the targets of the local and foreign investigators and scientists. Let's look through the directions of these arguments.

First; around the alphabet named "Albanian", the alphabet consisting of 52 letters, so the attempts of reading these epigraphic materials, searching the reading keys in different languages.

Second; around the problem of some oriental tribes being the Persian or Turkish which were named "skiff tribes" by the old Greece scientists; specially according to the sources these tribes were crossing through Albania at the time of a large migration in the VII-V centuries B.C. and established their empery here in a certain time and influenced the ethnic and language properties of this area.

Third; around the problem of the Albanians' speaking in 26 languages or 26 accents or dialect, according to Strabon's notes in his "Geography".

Fourth; around the problem of the Albanian language being in the Caucasian or Turkish language group, according to the views based on the objective or subjective explanation of the researchers' historical information, Azerbaijan's modern language map, ethnotoponymic or toponymic etymology.

Fifth; around the problem of the concept of "Albanian" language's including into one or some tribe languages one by one – with turn of their coming to power, or including into different tribes' languages gaining power in different times. It's possible to get acquainted closely with the views based on such discussions in Dyakonov M.M., Gumilyov L.N., Minorsky V.F. Melikişvili Q.A., Marr N.Y., Krımsky A.B., Trever K.V., Yampolsky Z.İ., Bunyadov Z.M., Mammadova F.C., Hajiyev T., Aliyev K., Yusifov Y. Vorosil Q and other's works. According to the scientists' views on the language problem, some of them - Trever K.V., Aliyev İ.H., Dyakonov İ.M. and others including the concept of Albanian language into only one language, justifying its being in Caucasian group consider it necessary to search the remainders of this language in modern *Udin*, *Khinalig*, *Griz* and the languages of minorities (in Caucasian language group). At the same time the opposite side - Geybullayev G.A., Hajiyev T.İ., Valiyev K.N., Seyidov M and others who include this language into Turkish group, justifying their views, mention that if Albanian people had assimilated and died its these or other elements could have remained in our modern language. Because the assimilating language always saves some elements of assimilated language in its system. Besides, those investigators (Geybullayev G.A. 1991: 58-76) try to justify these country's historical toponymy, "Alban" toponymy, the etymology of the Albanian special names seen in the sources in Turkish – Oguz-Gipchag languages.

Not being professional on history and not knowing the deepness of the historical facts we can't say which side is on the true position. We can only have a certain opinion on which of them is believable or unbelievable. However these ideas don't show an exact conclusion. Changing the direction of the research we tried to comparatively approach to the conclusion somehow by analyzing the musical achievements of the cultural aerals covering Albany. For this it's important to differ Albania's powerful southern neighbor – Persian culture which always tried to affect it from military-political, religious, cultural, finally economical points of view and the cultures of the states of Manna,

Atropatena, Midia covered the older period of time and their development levels. To comparatively analyze Armenian and Georgian culture to the south-west and north-west, Caucasian people to the north, skiff and Sarmat culture having the same border with them, and finally according to the sources, the Turkish and Hun culture being their neighbor from roughly III-IV A.C. and their sphere of influence to Albanian culture. Coming to the conclusion due to these attempts and generally being or not being able to approach the truth can be known only at the end of the research. At any time, due to lacking of the necessary materials, not to talk about music culture of Caucasian Albania having a special place in our country's, people's history and our allowing the minor written and a lot of archeological sources giving opportunity to gain a certain information to hide the truth from us would be the worst mistake. At this time the ones who try to appropriate our lands, generally our identity legally or illegally are ready to have our history, at the same time music history which isn't discovered yet with great pleasure. As it is seen the musical culture of Caucasian Albania which forms 1000-year level of our musical culture waits for its strict and detailed investigation.

The researchers investigating the Albanian history confess that the first and detailed information about Albania is given in Strabon's "Geography". Certainly, the explanations in the work are based on the results from the scientific-public sources by travellers, historians who live before his times or his contemporaries. Besides his contemporaries, we search the information about middle-aged Albanian history in the Albanian, Persian, Byzantine and Syrian sources translated into Armenian, Georgian languages. It must be mentioned that it's possible to get know wider explanations and views about them in Z.Bunyadov, F.Mammadova, T.Mammadov and other scientists, researchers' works who were Albanian specialist.

### **About Musical Culture of Caucasian Albanian**

Having the intention to approach all these matters as a musicologist, we intend to be away from all these problematic historical issues. We must mention that as a state the history of Caucasian Albania was discovered as a result of scientific researches, comparative investigations of archeological sources and investigators' scientific-theoretical analyzes only from the XX century. Although there are articles, researches about the historical, political, social-economical and somehow cultural life of Caucasian Albania, finally the monographies expressing its certain periods one by one, the lacking of the scientific literature on its musical culture is the main reason which makes us appeal this problem. About this problem a short and non-concrete is given in Prof. Nigar Alakbarova's book named "Azerbaijan music culture in ancient and early-middle centuries", in the part about Albanian music. The development of political-social relationships and economy in Caucasian Albania in the second half of the I millennium B.C., doubtless, affected the improvement of the music culture. But in historical sources there is no information about Albanian music and generally cultural life of it. We can put forward the idea on the information expressing Albanian life style, the archeological findings pointing its musical culture. An instrument found among things which belongs to the antique period and reminds the woodwind makes imagination on the instrument used in different ceremonies and beliefs at that time. It must be mentioned that according to the most sources, researchers consider the area of Caucasian Albania unchangeable not only in antique period, but also in early-middle centuries. So, the area of the northern Caucasian Albania covers till Darband in the north, till the Araz river in the south, till Iberia in the west and till the Caspian Sea in the east. Due to epigraphic sources of VII-VIII centuries (according to Albanian author Moisey Kalankatly, Armenian historian Moves Khorenatsy) its southern borders covered through the Araz river in the I century A.C. As Albanian historian mentioned, the borders of Albania weren't changed till the VII-VIII centuries. In the IV-V centuries because of the foreign political changes and northern tribes (Huns, Barsils) moving here the political-cultural centre of Caucasian Albania changed to the right bank of the Kur from its left bank. The center and church centre moved to Gabala from Partava. That's why the importance of the right side of Albania increases compared with its left side (Mammadova, 1986:116).

Different ceremonies were celebrated on different beliefs till Christianity if we talk about the antique musical culture in Caucasian Albania. Moisey Kalankatly mentions about ceremonies celebrated by Vachagan III who fought

against heathenism which spread here deeply in 25<sup>th</sup> part of his second book: “The ones who were singing elegy were killed by the order of the tsar” (Kalankatly, 1993: 272). This information shows that in spite of prosecutions and taken measures there were professional elegy-singers in antique age. In the author’s another work it was talked about the elegy dedicated to the murdered prince Javanshir by the poet Devdak. This elegy affirms that in such a period when the Albanian state was getting stronger and flourishing in the VII century the traditions of elegy-singing wasn’t forgotten. M.Kalankatly writes about the woodwind used in military invasions and its influences to human psychology in the 22<sup>nd</sup> part of his book (In bishop Gif’s letter to holy Vache who refused to be tsar for his religious views.): “At that time wild animals, different symbols, musical instruments, horns, heathen tribes with long spears like a wood attacked you. And your ecstasy’s voice was like the ecstasy of God’s angel Jabrail which will appear out of the sky in the Judgment Day” (Kalankatly, 1993: 200). From this descriptions it’s shown that the usage of the musical voices and instruments was a deep tradition.

### **About Musical Instruments the Caucasian Albanian**

The main difference between early-middle-aged Albania and its antecessors is its accepting Christianity as an official religion by Tzar Urnayr in the IV century A.C. Specially this fact was a new level in the development of Albanian culture, and mainly the musical culture of it. In this period, as a result of the increasing migration of Turkish Hun and Khazar tribes here, Albanian culture, mainly its musical culture enriched. According to researchers (the researcher A.Mammadov who investigates the national musical instruments admits it.), the roots of gobuz and tambur are related to the history of Hun and Khazar directly. (Mammadov, 2001:25). Taking into consideration the migration of Turkish tribes, mainly Huns to Albania from the IV century, it can be supposed that these instruments had been taken here by them. The scientist who investigates the history of musical instruments, orangologist S.Abdullayeva mentions that: “In Zagatala, Balakan regions, mainly in Tala, Jar, Goyam, Tulu villages the sources of the instruments called “tambur”, “dambur” which were different from our widespread instruments with their voice and appearance are related with Huns.” The author who describes this two-stringed instrument looking like gobuz mentions that tambur-player is accompanied by balaban player. Sometimes a drum-player joins them. Under the sound of tambur bayatis which were called a song by the local people were sung (Abdullayeva, 2000:20).



**Picture 2.** Gopuz: Ancient Azerbaijan musical instrument (Web 3)



**Picture 3.** Tambur: musical instrument (Web 4)



**Picture 4.** Balaban: Ancient Azerbaijan musical instrument (Web 5)

As M.Kalankatly admitted, besides the development of musical instruments, there were a lot of old beliefs. As a result of fights against these old beliefs at state level, the music related with these beliefs was persecuted. At this time the music of Christianity turns into a part of Albanian music culture. It's interesting that one of the main properties of antique Albania was the free activity of other beliefs and expressing it in their language in their area. Besides religious music, the certain information about folk, royal and military music can be got. The sayings of Byzantine emperor Lev IV: "If the number of your soldiers is less than your enemy's try to increase the number of butsin-players (a strong-voiced woodwind reminding horn and zourna) in order that the enemy could think your predominance. On the contrary, if you want to attack the enemy with your numerous army, decrease the butsin-players in order to puzzle the enemy." (Byzantine, 1989: 568). The presence of the horn-players in the Albanian army was approved by M.Kalankatly. (Kalankatly, 1993: 44). In early ages the information about Albanian folk music can be found in the written sources. Only in one source M.Kalankatly approved that prince Javanshir wanted to spend the holidays in the mountainous area among professional folk music players (Kalankatly, 1994: 144).



**Picture 5.** Zourna: musical instrument (Web 5)

When speaking about Albanian music culture, the discovery of these tribes' residences is one of the main factors that these people were autochthone. One of the main and discovered factor is the problem of their residences. According to the most sources, the researchers mentioned that the area of Albania was unchangeable not only in antique period, but also in early-middle ages. (depending on its developing or squeezing from time to time) The area of the northern Caucasian Albania covers till Darband in the north, till the Araz river in the south, till Iberia in the west and till the Caspian Sea in the east. Due to epigraphic sources of VII-VIII centuries (according to albanian author Moisey Kalankatly, armenian historian Moves Khorenatsy) its southern borders covered through the Araz river in the I century A.C.. As albanian historian mentioned, the borders of Albania weren't changed till the VII-VIII centuries. In the IV-V centuries because of the foreign political changes and northern tribes (huns, barsils) moving here the political-cultural centre of Caucasian Albania changed to the right bank of the Kur from its left bank. The center and church centre moved to Gabala from Partava. That's why the importance of the right side of Albania increases compared with its left side (Mammadova, 1986, 116).



**Picture 6.** Tar: musical instrument (Web 6, 7)

In order to get the close models to Albanian music we can gain the general real view and consonance by deep investigation the development principles of all music cultures having opportunity to affect Albanian music somehow and discovering their effects on it. Certainly, we consider it purposeful to do this interesting and difficult investigation in a certain period.

Speaking about the antique music culture in the area of Caucasian Albanian some ceremonies were taken place here relating to different beliefs pre-Christianity (like in other cultures). Moisey Kalankatly mentions about ceremonies celebrated by Vachagan III who fought against heathenism which spread here deeply in 25<sup>th</sup> part of his second book: "The ones who were singing elegy were killed by the order of the tsar" (Kalankatly, 1993:272). This information shows that in spite of prosecutions and taken measures there were professional elegy-singers in antique age.

### **Conclusion**

Speaking about the situation of music culture and its role in Caucasian Albania covering a millennium in our people's history, culture, and historical music culture, we must take into consideration that the monotonous development of the Albanian music culture was impossible in this area where different cultures crossed with each other. The elements coming outside affect its development too. Albania in relation to Turkish, Persian, and Caucasian languages differs in the colorfulness of its traditions. It was proved by discovered graves covering the same period and very different burial customs. The multicolored composition of laden-intonation specific to Azerbaijan music culture being the heir of Albanian music history takes its start from this music in the broad sense. And that's why paying attention to the laden-intonation properties of Modern Azerbaijan music we witness widespread Arabian lads, on the one hand diatonic, on the other hand, pentagon, triangle, and their enrichment together. Only in comparing Azerbaijan mughams with similar genres – Mukam, Makom, etc. of other peoples, we can feel the serious difference between their intonation structures. With the concreteness of the views, Azerbaijan music coming from the traditions of music culture with different roots is the result of synthetic music formed from Albanian music. In this area, the tribes integrated firstly in one union and then around a state with a steady system that has different ethnic-language-culture areas has formed synthetic nationwide culture from various private ethnic cultures. The root and the reason of the multiteity in the sphere of the laden-intonation of our national music must be found out just here. The researcher and composer Z.Koday approved the views about Hungarian music: "The Hungarians have changed through years. Besides, like in the language the Hungarians saved the main forms in old music being general with relative nations." (Z.Kod.1961:33). The research based on Azerbaijani ideology serves the national politics of Azerbaijan Republic from the point of view of the historical-ethnographic, national-cultural values, related to minorities and ethnic groups coming from Caucasian Albania up to now. In studying these peoples we can prove Azerbaijan lands be the residences of Turkish ethnic groups and minorities according to historical, ethnographic, and musical samples. The investigation of the music culture of Caucasian Albanian which creates the bridge between past and present days of Azerbaijan people affirms having indestructible ties between the deep roots of Azerbaijan culture and at the same time and old shumer-turkish-azerbaijan cultures.

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