

THE RUSSIAN INFLUENCE ON THE FORMATION OF BAKU'S URBAN IDENTITY*

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Abstract

In recent times, the identities of cities have been a topic of debate. The distinct features of the places we inhabit help define, differentiate, and shape their identities. In a globalizing world, unique traits that leave lasting impressions and contribute to collective memory play a vital role in defining cities. Elements like language, history, culture, architecture, religion, and gastronomy shape urban identity in specific proportions for each city. These characteristics also strengthen the bond between cities and their communities. Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, stands out with its unique identity. Shaped by its geographical location, natural resources, architecture, language, religion, and social structure, Baku's identity has been passed down through generations. However, its identity has also transformed over time due to occupations and changes in administration. The most notable influence came from the Russians. In the early 19th century, the Russian Empire seized control of Baku and took swift steps to consolidate its power. Under Russian rule, Western European architectural and cultural influences appeared in the city, alongside significant social and economic changes. Baku's transformation continued during the Soviet era. The USSR, as an ideological state, sought to create socialist spaces to unify society. During this time, Baku became a representation of socialist ideology, with its architecture, language, and culture reshaped under Soviet influence. Over successive periods, Baku's urban identity increasingly reflected Russian influence, altering its language, architecture, religion, and culture. This study will first discuss the concepts of identity and urban identity, focusing on the dynamics shaping Baku's character. It will then examine the Russian occupation to establish a historical framework. Lastly, it will explore the Russian influence on Baku's urban identity, using specific examples.

Keywords: Russia, Azerbaijan, Baku, urban identity, architecture, Russian influence.



BAKÜ KENT KİMLİĞİNİN OLUŞUMUNDA RUS ETKİSİ

Öz

Son zamanlarda şehirlerin sahip olduğu kimlikler tartışıla gelmektedir. Hususen yaşadığımız mekanların sahip olduğu özellikler bizler için tanımlama, ayırt etme, imgeleme hatta kimlikleme vasıtası olmaktadır. Bu nedenle küreselleşen dünyada ayırt edici özelliklere

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sahip, akıllarda yer eden, kolektif belleğe katkı sağlayan dinamiklerin varlığı şehirlerin tanımlanmasında, kimlik sahibi olmasında aktif rol oynamaktadır. Dil, tarih, kültür, mimari, din, gastronomi gibi unsurlardan oluşan kimlik dinamikleri her şehirde özel dozda bulunmaktadır. Bulunduğu şehri farklı kılan, diğer şehirlerden ayırt eden bu hususiyetler şehir ve toplum arasındaki bağın da güçlenmesine katkı sağlar. Azerbaycan'ın başkenti Bakü de kendine özgü kimliğiyle dikkat çeken bir şehir olarak bu bağlamda öne çıkar. Bakü'nün kimliği; coğrafi konumu, yer altı kaynakları, mimarisi, dili, dini ve toplumsal yapısıyla şekillenmiş, nesilden nesile aktarılmıştır. Ancak tarihsel süreçte şehrin kimliği, yaşanan işgaller ve yönetim değişiklikleriyle dönüşüme uğramıştır. Şehrin değişimine etki eden güçlerin başında ise Ruslar gelmektedir. 19. Yüzyılın başlarında Bakü'de hakimiyeti ele geçiren Rus İmparatorluğu, bölgedeki gücünü pekiştirmek için hızlı adımlar atmaya başlamıştır. Ruslarla birlikte Bakü kent kimliği yeni imgelerle zenginleşmiştir. Batı Avrupa'ya özgü mimari ve kültürel akımlar şehirde görünür hale gelirken, sosyal ve ekonomik yapıda da köklü değişimler yaşanmıştır. Bakü'nün gelişimi/değişimi Sovyetler Birliği döneminde de devam etmiştir. İdeolojik bir devlet olan SSCB, sosyalist şehirler/mekanlar inşa ederek toplumu bu çatı altında toplamayı hedeflemektedir. Bu dönemde Bakü, sosyalist ideolojinin mekânsal bir temsiline dönüşmüş, şehirde mimari, dil ve kültür Sovyet mantalitesinin etkisiyle yeniden şekillenmiştir. Birbirini takip eden bu süreçler boyunca Bakü kent kimliği Rus etkisine açık hale gelmiş, şehrin dili, mimarisi, dini, kültürü Rus mantalitesinin tesiri altında değişim göstermiştir. Bu çalışmada öncelikle kimlik ve kent kimliği kavramları ele alınacaktır ve Bakü kentliğini oluşturan dinamikler tartışılacaktır. Daha sonra Bakü'nün Ruslar tarafından işgali anlatılarak tarihsel bağlantı oluşturulacaktır. Son bölümde ise Bakü kent kimliğinin oluşumunda Rus tesiri incelenerek örneklerle izah edilecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Rusya, Azerbaycan, Bakü, kent kimliği, mimari, Rusya etkisi.



ВЛИЯНИЕ РОССИИ НА ФОРМИРОВАНИЕ ГОРОДСКОЙ ИДЕНТИЧНОСТИ БАКУ

Аннотация

В последнее время всё чаще обсуждается идентичность городов. Характеристики места жительства служат для нас, в частности, инструментами определения, различения, воображения и даже отождествления себя с этими местами. Поэтому в глобализирующемся мире их отличительные черты в развитии оставляют глубокие впечатления, способствуют определению коллективной памяти, играют активную роль в становлении городов и формировании их идентичности. Столица Азербайджана, Баку, является примером таких городов. Если обратить внимание на богатую историю города, становится ясно, что Баку неоднократно захватывался различными политическими силами и претерпевал трансформации в ходе этих процессов. Русские были одной из таких сил, наиболее значительно повлиявших на изменение города. В начале XIX века, захватив контроль над Баку, царская Россия быстро начала предпринимать шаги для укрепления своего влияния в регионе. Город сохранял свое значение и на протяжении почти семидесяти лет под российским господством, при Советской власти. В этот период городская идентичность Баку претерпевала изменения под влиянием России. Язык, архитектура, религия и культура города находились под воздействием русской ментальности. Таким образом, влияние России на формирование идентичности Баку неоспоримо. В данной работе сначала будут

рассмотрены понятия идентичности и городской идентичности. Затем описанием нахождения Баку в составе России будет установлена историческая связь. В заключительной части будет исследовано русское влияние на формирование городской идентичности Баку и проиллюстрировано примерами.

Ключевые слова: Россия, Азербайджан, Баку, городская идентичность, архитектура, Российское влияние.



Introduction

In an era where globalization has become prominent, the spread of the cultural elements of global powers across the world can be observed. George Ritzer explains this phenomenon with the concept of the “McDonaldization of Society” indicating that the American way of life has reached global dimensions.¹ The areas most affected by globalization are cities. The creation of cities that resemble each other through both globalization and modernization harms the identity and civilization of culturally enriched cities. Therefore, studying urban identity is a crucial issue in understanding the cultural dynamics of cities. Like other cities, Baku is also under the threat of globalization and modernization.

Baku, with its rich historical background, is not only the capital of Azerbaijan but also the center of the Caucasus region. Despite being a political, economic, and cultural hub, the city cannot be shielded from external influences, forcing its leaders to take precautions against globalization. Carefully analyzing the city’s historical evolution and understanding its responses under the control of foreign powers will assist leaders in determining the city’s identity.

Baku was under Russian influence for nearly two centuries. During this period, the Russian administration used urban spaces to influence the people and facilitate the ideological transformation of society. Cities are not only places where people live but also spaces where social thought is shaped, cultural norms are transmitted, and national sentiments are evoked. In light of this, the Russian administration used Baku as a tool to influence the people and instill Russian mentality into society.

This study explores the Russian influence on the urban identity of Baku. After the introduction to the topic, the concepts of identity and urban identity are explained and the dynamics that form the Urban identity of Baku are exemplified. Then, the history of the Baku under Russian occupation is given. In the final section, the areas where the Russian influence is strongly felt in the urban identity of Baku are highlighted.

1) City Identity

The topic of identity has long been a field of intellectual exploration for social scientists. Scholars working in disciplines such as political science, history, sociology, and cultural studies pose various questions about the definition of identity and its variability. Questions beginning with “Who are you?” often transform into inquiries of personal belonging such as “Who am I?” and “Who are we?” But what exactly is identity, a concept

¹ George Ritzer, *Toplumun Mcdonaldlaşması*, çev. Akin Emre Pilgir (İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2019), 55-56.

that provokes so many questions, stimulates students' thinking, and underpins policy development?

The concept of identity originates from the Latin term "idem" which encompasses notions of sameness and continuity. In Turkish, the term is derived from the root of the question "who" and conveys the ideas of individual existence and belonging.² At its core, identity research investigates how individuals and groups respond to the question "Who are you?".³ Therefore, identity itself aligns closely with the answers to this question.

Fearon (1999) categorizes identity into social and personal dimensions. According to him, social identity refers to a societal category, a group of individuals marked by a label and distinguished by rules determining membership and characteristic features. Personal identity, on the other hand, encompasses distinguishing traits that an individual takes special pride in or views as socially significant but largely unchangeable.⁴

According to social psychologist Nuri Bilgin, identity is the self-identification of a person or group and their positioning among other individuals or groups.⁵ Furthermore, the responses that groups and communities provide to the question of "who we are" also constitute identity.⁶ The acquisition of identity, which commences at birth and persists throughout an individual's life, can sometimes become indistinct, while at other times it reveals dominant characteristics. The variability of these traits across different societies, and even among siblings within the same family, prompts researchers to delve deeper into the phenomenon of identity.

Similar to human beings, cities also undergo a process of identity acquisition. Cities, which display various characteristics through their dynamics and manifest themselves in different areas depending on their surroundings, develop a distinct identity. Urban identity, influenced by diverse domains such as geography, history, literature, culture, folklore, architecture, gastronomy, language, religion, politics, and economy, varies from one city to another. In other words, the dominant characteristic of one city does not necessarily exist in another. Therefore, any definition of a city's identity must consider its unique socio-economic structure.⁷

The concept of urban identity, as developed by Lalli,⁸ is defined as an integral component of an individual's broader self-identity, emerging from the intricate interplay between the self and the urban environment. City identity can be described as "affecting the image of the city, each city having its characteristics with different scales and interpretations; shaped by physical, cultural, socio-economic, historical, and formal factors; it is a meaning-laden integrity created by a process that extends from the past to

² Hüseyin Aydoğdu, "Modern Kimlikte Öznenin Ölümü," *Kazım Karabekir Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi* 10 (2004): 117.

³ V. L. Vignoles, S. J. Schwartz & K. Luyckx, "Introduction: Toward and integrative view of identity," in *Handbook of identity theory and research*, ed. S. J. Schwartz & K. Luyckx (New York: 2011).

⁴ James D. Fearon, *What is Identity? (As we now use the Word)* (California: Stanford University, Department of Political Science, Draft, 1999), 2

⁵ Nuri Bilgin, *Kimlik İnşası* (Ankara: Aşına Kitaplar, 2007), 11.

⁶ M. Naci Bostancı, "Etnisite, Modernizm ve Milliyetçilik," *Türkiye Günlüğü* 75 (2003): 39.

⁷ Oğuz Kağan Bayrakdar, "Bir Flaneur olarak Covid-19 Sonrası Mekansal Değişimin İzlerini Sürmek: Bakü Fevvalerler Meydanı Örneği," *Hacettepe Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 38/2 (2021): 48-49.

⁸ Marco Lalli, "Urban-related identity: Theory, measurement, and empirical findings," *Journal of environmental psychology* 12/4 (1992): 285-303.

the future, which is formed by the urbanites and their lifestyles, keeping the concept of a constantly developing and sustainable city alive".⁹ Urban identity encompasses various dimensions including place identity, placeness, sense of place, a place's character, its image, its spirituality, and ethos.¹⁰

Urban identity is defined by the socio-cultural characteristics of a city or environment that are integrated with society. The prominent or dominant features among these characteristics help define and explain the city's identity and facilitate comparisons with other cities. Urban identity is a phenomenon that adds value to a city by distinguishing it from others, and it is formed by elements inherent to that city. Due to their unique geographical, historical, economic, and political characteristics, cities can be distinguished from others and attract attention from external observers.¹¹

Urban identity evolves, transforms, and develops over extended periods. The geographical features, cultural sophistication, architectural style, traditions, and way of life of a city collectively shape its identity, setting it apart from others.¹² Renewed cities, having undergone historical transformations, offer novel attributes alongside elements inherited from the past, thereby engaging in a dynamic process of identity formation.¹³

Cities serve as loci of entrenched thought patterns, where specific attributes gradually permeate the collective consciousness and become emblematic of the city as a whole.¹⁴ For instance, Paris evokes notions of romance, while Texas is associated with gun culture, and Zurich is renowned for its banking sector. Certain cities become inseparable from iconic figures such as writers or filmmakers; just as Fatih Sultan Mehmet is synonymous with Istanbul, Kafka with Prague. Moreover, particular cities are distinguished by unique dynamics; for example, Samarkand boasts historical edifices, Jerusalem is globally recognized as a religious epicenter, and Venice is renowned for its canals, while New York is synonymous with skyscrapers. These descriptors appended to cities serve as symbols of identity, evoking associations that characterize the city when considered globally.

Goethe's assertion, "There is nothing outside of us that is not at the same time in us" encapsulates the profound impact of the physical environment and geography on individuals, society, and urban settings.¹⁵ Similarly, the 14th-century Islamic scholar Ibn Khaldun posited various ideas on this matter, asserting that geography determines destiny and shapes the social and urban.¹⁶

⁹ Şölen Çöl, "Kentlerimizde Kimlik Sorunu ve Günümüz Kentlerinin Kimlik Derecesini Ölçmek İçin Bir Yöntem Denemesi," (Yayınlanmamış Doktora Tezi, Mimar Sinan Üniversitesi, 1998), 14.

¹⁰ Daniel Bell & Avner Shalit, "Introduction: cities and identities," *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 25/5 (2021): 639.

¹¹ İdris Oğurlu, "Çevre-Kent İmajı-Kent Kimliği-Kent Kültürü Etkileşimlerine Bir Bakış," *İstanbul Ticaret Üniversitesi Fen Bilimleri Dergisi* 26 (2014): 280.

¹² Evren İlgar, "Kent Kimliği ve Kentsel Değişimin Kent Kimliği Boyutu: Eskişehir Örneği," (Yayınlanmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Anadolu Üniversitesi, 2008), 9.

¹³ Alaattin Dolu, *Osmanlı Kudüs'ü; Kent Kimliği, Nüfus ve Meşruiyet 1703-1789* (İstanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2020), 38.

¹⁴ Nuri Bilgin, "Sosyal Düşünce Kent Kimliği," *İdeal Kent* 3 (2011): 23.

¹⁵ M. Yavuz Alptekin, "Max Weber'in Batı-Bağımlı Evrensel Şehir Anlayışı ve İslam Şehirleriyle İlgili Değerlendirmelerinin Kritiği," *Muhafazakâr Düşünce Dergisi* 6/23 (2010): 58.

¹⁶ İ. Erol Kozak, "İbn Haldun", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, C. 20 (İstanbul: TDV Yay.,1999), 1-8.

Building upon these interpretations, geography, climate, topography, and vegetation play pivotal roles in the transformation of cities. The climatic conditions of regions in Turkey, for instance, profoundly influence the perception of cities; the mention of the Black Sea conjures images of verdant, green cities, whereas the Marmara region evokes bustling urban centers shaped by industrialization and capitalism. Moreover, geological features are noteworthy; New York City's skyline, dominated by skyscrapers, owes its existence to the city's rocky terrain. Generalizing from these examples, it can be asserted that geography initially molds individuals, who in turn shape their cities. Furthermore, cities that are integrated with or conceived as extensions of nature imbue this connection with nature into their identities. Cities endowed with natural wonders such as forests, rivers, seas, lakes, deserts, and waterfalls serve as exemplars of "Natural Identities".

Underground resources constitute a significant determinant contributing to a city's identity, with oil, in particular, emerging as a crucial underground asset. Oil, encompassing economic, sociological, psychological, and political dimensions, plays a pivotal role in demarcating and distinguishing regions by conferring upon them a distinct identity. Economically, oil extraction yields substantial revenue for its proprietors, fostering wealth accumulation that can satisfy various needs. Consequently, certain cities have garnered respect and international recognition by virtue of their association with major oil companies, becoming synonymous with oil production. Dubai serves as a prime example;¹⁷ the oil industry has long been a driving force behind its development, with intense competition among global firms shaping its economic landscape.¹⁸

Moreover, a city's architectural landscape significantly contributes to its identity. Architectural structures serve as tangible expressions of the visual aesthetics, lifestyle preferences, and societal values of their inhabitants. Urban architecture also serves as a medium through which the ideological, political, and economic dimensions of society can be elucidated. Consequently, architecture assumes a dual role, both as a means of expressing identity and as a tool for shaping public perception and societal norms. While certain architectural landmarks serve to preserve collective memory within public spaces, others exert a psychological influence, symbolizing authority and control.¹⁹ Administrations seeking to influence public opinion often dictate city planning and architectural design, thereby shaping the urban landscape in alignment with their ideological agendas. In contemporary urban settings, architecture has emerged as a prominent factor distinguishing cities from one another.²⁰

¹⁷ There are certain cities around the world that are synonymous with oil. As the "Black Pearl," oil not only develops the city in which it is found but also creates divisions within it. Economically, it causes stratification within the city and integrates oil into the city's identity. As mentioned above, Dubai is a prime example of such a city. When comparing photographs of Dubai before and after the oil boom, the transformation of the city is strikingly evident. In addition to Dubai, cities such as Texas, Baku, Cairo, and Calgary are also known for their association with oil and natural gas, and their identities are significantly shaped by these resources.

¹⁸ John Duke Anthony, *The Middle East: Oil, Politics and Development* (Washington: AEI Press, 1975), 83.

¹⁹ Enis Kortan, "Mimarlıkta Kimlik Sorunu," *Türkiye Mimarlığı Sempozyumu II* (1996): 97.

²⁰ It should be noted that one of the dynamics that constitute urban identity is "urban spaces". Any structure existing within a city can be referred to as an urban space. Urban planners such as Ebenezer Howard and Le Corbusier began to design and conceptualize the appearance of cities with a focus on societal benefits. Every symbol incorporated into

The concept of creating an ideologically charged national city gained prominence with the emergence of nation-states. In order to disseminate national ideology among the populace, various symbols were incorporated into urban spaces, leading to radical transformations over time. Language, as a potent cultural conduit, emerged as one of the most effective tools in fostering national identity.²¹ Language not only regulates social behavior and cultural transmission but also shapes individuals' thoughts and expressions. With the rise of nation-states, the significance of language has heightened, serving as a vehicle for disseminating national ideology among the populace. Moreover, language, with its emphasis on distinct cultural elements and national differences, plays an indispensable role in constructing national identity and perpetuating socio-economic and cultural continuity. The language employed as a tool by governments influences the appearance and ideological orientation of cities. Streets, avenues, signage, and public transportation facilities, such as buses and subways, are adorned with national language and symbols reflective of the prevailing national culture. Cities adorned with such nationalistic motifs exert a profound influence on the formation of societal identity.²²

Gastronomy stands as a significant determinant of urban identity, often overlooked in studies of urbanism. Food culture, deeply intertwined with community, region, and city, emerges as a defining feature of urban identity over time. Iconic dishes such as piti in Sheki, künefe in Hatay, mihlama in Trabzon, traditional goose dish in Ardahan and Kars and boyoz in Izmir serve as quintessential examples of this phenomenon.²³ Similarly, global cities are characterized by distinct culinary traditions; for instance, falafel is synonymous with Beirut, while San Sebastian Cheesecake is emblematic of San Sebastian. These examples underscore the role of gastronomy as an integral component of urban civilization and identity, perpetuated across generations. It is worth noting that gastronomy not only shapes a city's cultural landscape but also enhances its recognition

urban spaces functions to trigger social impulses. The impact of urban space on individuals is linked to the readability of the representative images it possesses. Indeed, every society needs areas that will manifest its worldview and represent its existence, and in these areas, images that display its uniqueness. These spaces, together with the symbols they contain, ensure a harmonious integration of society and space. Thus, a channel is obtained to reach the social sphere through images. "Architecture," which can be considered as the language, aesthetics, or tone of spaces, is one of the essential links in this chain. It is beneficial to elaborate on architecture. In terms of the relationship between city and architecture, Henry Cobb's statement is significant: "Architecture is, after all, a representational art – an art of portraiture, if you will – and what is portrayed in it is precisely the multiform structure of desired relationships between human beings, their institutions, and their natural world". Architecture is a nonverbal form of communication, a mute record of the culture that produced it, and constitutes a memory form, allowing us to re-interpret the past into the future. Architecture may illuminate different historically and spatially situated layers of city identity; it offers a portrait through time that enables inhabitants and visitors to "read" the city. The identity constructed and communicated through a city's architecture consists of three interacting sign systems (material, visual, and rhetorical) that define how a city can differ in various aspects and how its meanings evolve over time. To gain a more detailed understanding of the relationship between architecture and identity, refer to C. Jones and S. Svejenova's article "The Architecture of City Identities: A Multimodal Study of Barcelona and Boston". For urban space, Köksal Alver's article "Kent İmgesi" (City Image) will be enlightening.

²¹ E. Sertaç Ayaz, "Milli Kimliğin Kurucusu Olarak Dil," *Uluslararası Orta Asya Sempozyumu Bildiriler Kitabı* (Bişkek: 2018): 615.

²² Here is the text translated into academic English: David Uzzell states, "Places speak to us" (David Uzzell, "Affordances in the Construction of the City's Languages"). In this regard, three questions that concern social scientists or urban researchers come to the fore: How do cities speak to us? With what language do cities speak to us? Do we understand the language of the city? These questions are crucial for understanding the city and comprehending the relationship between the city and language.

²³ Sevil Sargın & Şule Demir, "İnsan Mekân İlişkisi Ölçeğinde Kent Kimliği ve Gümüşhane Örneği," *The Journal of International Scientific Researches* 3/4 (2019): 237.

on a global scale.

In pre-industrial cities, characterized by their political, religious, and cultural activities, religion emerges as a pivotal force shaping urban identity. Sacred spaces have historically served as focal points for communal gatherings, with religion playing a central role in the city's development.²⁴ The influence of religion is evident in the distinct identities of cities, with Islam predominating in the East and Christianity in the West. Religious imagery imbues cities with a religious identity, with symbols of worship adding to their distinctive character. Jerusalem, in particular, occupies a unique position owing to its significance to three major religions, exemplified by landmarks such as the Masjid-i Aksa, Wailing Wall, and Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

Another salient factor in the construction of urban identity is history. Cities with rich historical legacies and symbolic artifacts are often hailed as "cities with identity" by both their inhabitants and administrators.²⁵ Historical continuity serves as a bridge between the past and present in industrialized cities, countering the homogenizing effects of modernity.²⁶ Historical cities and landmarks distinguish themselves in an era of standardization and urban anonymity, underscoring the importance of preserving historical architecture. Cities such as Istanbul, Paris, Rome, Bukhara, and London stand out for their rich historical tapestries, setting them apart from other urban centers. Urban identity delineates the distinctiveness and continuity of cities vis-à-vis their counterparts. However, globalization has engendered a trend towards uniformity in contemporary metropolitan cities, resulting in similar urban landscapes. This homogenization, driven by fashion and modern trends, risks erasing the unique identities of cities, leading to a proliferation of cities devoid of distinct character. Nevertheless, certain cities, such as Paris, Berlin, Boston, Montreal, Istanbul, and Prague, maintain their individual identities rooted in their historical legacies rather than contemporary trends.²⁷

As explained in the section, every city has a unique and distinctive identity. The characteristics that form this identity and distinguish it from other cities have either developed or been established over time. It has been observed that factors such as history, geography, culture, architecture, gastronomy, language, religion, natural resources, politics, climate, and vegetation are the primary elements that distinguish cities from one another and contribute to their identity formation. One of the cities characterized by these identity markers is Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan. In this context, when we consider Baku, its urban identity can be defined as follows. The concepts of "History" and "Historicity", which bring many cities into prominence, are also noticeable in Baku. As an ancient settlement, there are many traces in the region that support the "historical" narrative. The historical process, which has continued from the 3rd century BC to the present day, has been integrated into the city's identity. Undoubtedly, geography also distinguishes cities. Baku's natural harbor, being surrounded by the Caspian Sea, the winds that blow

²⁴ Dolu, *Osmanlı Kudüs'ü*, 40.

²⁵ İlhan Tekeli, "Bir Kentin Kimliği Üzerine Düşünceler," *Marmara Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi* 7 (1990): 255.

²⁶ Graeme Shankland, "Tarihi Değeri Olan Kentlere Neden El Atmalıyız?", *Cogito* 8 (1996): 24.

²⁷ Bilgin, "Sosyal Düşünce Kent Kimliği," 38-39.

throughout the year and have influenced the naming of the city, have created defining codes in the minds of the city's inhabitants. These images have become symbols that define the city externally. Culture and all cultural images are the outward expression of originality. As mentioned above, spaces designed "copy-paste" often face identity issues. In this regard, spaces that represent culture add identity to both the nation and the city. When viewed in this context, Baku is a city that represents culture with names, museums, architectural forms, cultural centers, sculptures, and similar urban accessories that reflect the traditional Azerbaijani identity. Specifically, the city presents a mosaic appearance, where Western European, Russian, and traditional Azerbaijani cultures are balanced. It is evident that foods are also associated with cities. Today, for Baku and the people of Baku, foods such as "White and Black Grapes, Baku Fig, Bilgeh Saffron, Baku Dushbere, Black Caviar, Corat Kebab, Shekerbura, and Baklava" are distinctive. Additionally, in recent years, global food brands have also been seen in the city. The famous architect Shaukland once said, "A city without historic buildings is like a person without memories". This statement, emphasizing the importance of both history and architecture, is also valuable for Baku. Baku is a metropolis with various architectural styles. The traditional architecture in the "Inner City" is a prime example of old Baku houses. Moreover, outside the inner city, buildings with Baroque-Rococo and Gothic architectural styles, brought to the country through Tsarist Russia, are visible. Particularly during the Soviet era, buildings called "mikrorayon", which were designed primarily to meet practical needs and found in many union cities, have been added to the urban image. In Baku, it is possible to observe these structures as well. After independence, these buildings were restored, and modern skyscrapers that form the modern face of the city were added. Today, Baku's architecture presents a combination of Western and Russian forms, along with the traditional style. After independence, Baku, seeking to make its name known internationally, has increasingly moved towards a "modern" and "global" architectural understanding. One of the most distinctive features of Baku's identity is oil. Its economic yield, its proximity to the city, and its long-term presence in the region make it a powerful identity marker for the city. Along with its economic return, oil has also become a dynamic that has embedded itself in people's memories through its smell. The influence of language and religion are also undeniable markers of identity. For Baku, this situation is primarily assessed under the heading of "Russian influence". The arrival of the Russians in the region and the assimilation policies led to transformations in both religion and language, with the city's language, particularly during the period of Russian dominance, being changed to Russian. The names reflecting Russian culture have been added to the city's spaces. The Soviet religious policy suppressed religion in the city. After independence, the administration, which aimed to form a national urban identity, quickly changed the city's language to the national language, while also addressing religious transformations. Today, Baku is a city that has undergone transformation and change with numerous dynamics, and it is one of the leading socio-economic centers in the region. The discussion in the course of this article will focus on which of these dynamics have been more significantly influenced by Russian impact.

2) A Brief History of Baku Before Russian Hegemony

Azerbaijan, with its rich historical past and significant regional geopolitical position, has demonstrated many changes over time, paralleling the political situation in the region. These changes are not only observed in its political life but also in its social, economic, and cultural life.

There are views that the etymology of the word “Azerbaijan” originates from Atropates, a Persian satrap who joined the service of Alexander the Great after the defeat at Gaugamela (331 BC). It is reported that the state of Atropatene was referred to as “Adorbican/Adarbaqan” in Byzantine sources, “Aturpatakan/Adarbadaqan/Azerbaijan” in Persian sources, and “Adirbican/Aderbican/Azerbaijan” in Arabic sources.²⁸ Additionally, some claim that it became the homeland of the as tribe, known as the land of the As people. Furthermore, most of the research suggests that the name aligns with meanings such as “land of fire” or “country of flames.” Looking back at history, this name is rooted in the life of Zoroastrians who considered fire sacred.²⁹

Along with the name of Azerbaijan, there are various opinions about the Baku. Although there is no precise information about Baku’s founding date in literature, archaeological remains on the Absheron Peninsula indicate that settlements existed in the region between the 3rd and 1st millennium BC.³⁰ Throughout its historical process, Baku adapted to its surroundings, utilizing both sea and land advantages; its geographical position allowed it to develop mechanisms that facilitated both defense and direct trade. In fact, Ashurbeyli defines “it as an example of Azerbaijani cities where even ancient settlements, including fortress walls, were surrounded by moats due to frequent raids by nomadic northern tribes passing through the Derbent pass”.³¹ The name of Baku first appears in sources from the 5th-7th centuries as “Baqavan”, “Atli (Atshi) Baqavan”, and “Atshi (Od) Baqan”. Baqavan is derived from the Indo-European word “Baqā”, meaning “god” or “sun”. As mentioned in the previous section, the suffix “van” is seen to have a significant meaning of an important city in Eastern geography.³² Combining these two words, Baqavan for the city of Baku meant “City of the Sun” and “City of God”. Another term, “Atshi Baguan”, translates to “Baguan of Fire”. Given the Zoroastrian past of the area, it is not surprising that Baku is referred to as the “City of Fire” in historical sources. Chronologically, in the 10th century, Baku is mentioned in Arabic sources as “Bakuh”, “Bakuya”, and “Baku”. In Persian sources from the 16th-17th centuries, the city is referred to as “Bad-Kube”, meaning “city beaten by the wind”, though some scholars dispute this view.³³ On the other hand, there are sources that confirm the use of the name Badkube. Traces of this name can be found in period newspapers. In the first Azerbaijani newspaper, *Eşkınci*, published by Hasan bey Zardabi on July 22, 1875, and continuing for

²⁸ Ziya Bünyadov, *Azərbaycan tarixi* (Bakı: Azərbaycan Dövlət Nəşriyyatı, 1994), 30.

²⁹ Mahmud İsmayilov, *İlk çağlardan XX. yüzyıl başlarına kadar Azərbaycan tarihi*, çev. Vefa Kurban (İstanbul: IQ Kültür ve Sanat Yayıncılık, 2014), 17-18.

³⁰ Fuad Şammedov, “Azerbaycan’da kentleşme ve sanayileşme süreci çerçevesinde Bakü örneği,” (Yayınlanmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Mimar Sinan Güzel Sanatlar Üniversitesi, 2006), 130.

³¹ Sara Aşurbeyli, *Bakü Şehrini Tarihi*, çev. Sevinç Üçgül (İstanbul: Teas Press, 2017), 62.

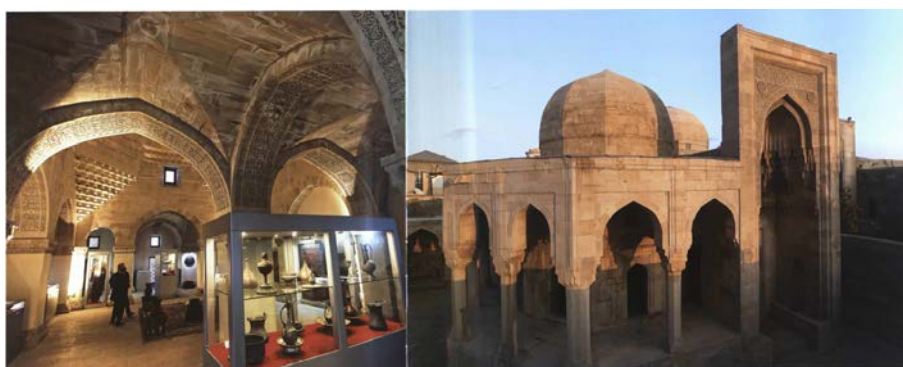
³² Aşurbeyli, *Bakü Şehrini Tarihi*, 68.

³³ Davut Dursun, “Bakü,” *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, C. 4 (İstanbul: TDV Basımevi, 1991): 550.

two years, the name Badkube was used.³⁴ The name Badkube was widely used in the first issue dated July 22, 1875.

From a political perspective, Baku and its surrounding regions have historically been places where various powers clashed. From the 3rd century, Baku and the entire Shirvan region became part of the Sassanid Empire.³⁵ In the 7th century, the Khazars, Sassanians, Byzantines, and Arabs fought for control of the region. After this period, Baku and the rest of the South Caucasus fell under Arab control. The region first came under the rule of the Umayyads and later the Abbasids, eventually falling into the hands of the Seljuks.³⁶ The first political and cultural rise in the city's history occurred in the late 12th century. The Shirvanshahs, a regional political power under the Seljuk Empire, had their administrative center in Shamakhi. In 1192, a strong earthquake struck Shamakhi, causing significant damage to the city. Immediately after this earthquake, Baku became the capital of the Shirvanshahs dynasty.³⁷ Most of the buildings that exist today in Baku's historical center, "Icherisheher," and which play a prominent role in the city's identity, date back to the Shirvanshahs period.³⁸

Picture 1: Icherishehir, Palace of Shirvanlahs³⁹



Again, during this period, the Shirvanshah Palace was built on a hill overlooking the bay in the center of the old city, and the city was surrounded by walls. The city's fortifications increased its significance as a military center, turning it into a battleground for various powers in subsequent years. The political rule of the Shirvanshahs, who controlled Baku and its surroundings, ended in the 16th century. In 1501, Shah Ismail, the head of the Safavid state, captured the city. Initially, he allowed the Shirvanshahs to remain as rulers on the condition of paying tribute. After Shah Ismail's death, Shirvanshah Shahrukh attempted a rebellion, but he was killed by Shah Ismail's son, Tahmasp I, which brought an end to the Shirvanshah dynasty.⁴⁰ One of the most significant outcomes of

³⁴ Turan Hesenzade, *Ekinçi (1875-1877)* (Bakü: Azərneşr, 1979), 35.

³⁵ Marie Louise Chaumont, "Albania," *Encyclopædia Iranica* 1/8 (1985): 806-810.

³⁶ Sara Aşurbeyli, *İstoriya goroda Baku* (Baku: Azərneşr, 1992), 89.

³⁷ Sara Aşurbeyli, "Şirvanşahlar," *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, C. 39 (İstanbul: TDV, 2010): 211.

³⁸ Aşurbeyli, *İstoriya goroda Baku*, 141-153.

³⁹ *Bakı Simfoniyası* (Bakı: IRS Publishing House, 2015), 72-73.

⁴⁰ Aşurbeyli, *İstoriya goroda Baku*, 101-103.

Baku's capture by Shah Ismail was the settlement of Shiism in the city and the region.⁴¹ The Safavid administration, which made Shiism the official ideology, began struggling for regional dominance against the Ottomans during the same period, and Baku became a target for both sides. During this period, Tsarist Russia also became interested in the region. In an attempt to gain support from Russia against the Ottomans, Safavid Sultan Shah Abbas decided to cede Baku and Derbent to Russia in 1590. However, Russia's internal difficulties and Shah Abbas's successful struggle against the Ottomans prevented this agreement from taking effect. Although this attempt failed, in 1722-1723, under the leadership of Peter the Great, Russia captured Baku and Derbent. Russia's interest in the region stemmed from the desire to stop the Ottoman Empire's expansion and gain control over trade routes to India. Peter's death in 1725 led to Russia's decline, and later, with the Treaty of Rasht signed in 1732, Baku and its surroundings were returned to Iran on the condition that they would not be ceded to the Ottomans.⁴² The struggles between the Ottomans and Iran, which began in the 16th century and continued until the 18th century⁴³ periodically changed the control of Azerbaijan and surrounding areas.⁴⁴ After the assassination of Nadir Shah in 1747, who had seized power in Iran in 1736, Iran's control over Azerbaijan weakened, and the era of khanates began in Azerbaijan. While the northern khanates included Karabakh, Sheki, Ganja, Baku, Derbent, Quba, Nakhchivan, Talysh, and Erivan, the southern khanates included Tabriz, Urmia, Ardabil, Khoy, Maku, Marand, and Karadagh.⁴⁵ Since the khanates could not unite in their internal and external policies, they gradually became vulnerable to all forms of threats. The Tsarist administration, active in the Caucasus and aiming to control the Caspian Sea region, believed that the key to this lay in capturing Baku.⁴⁶ In this context, in 1803, the commander-in-chief of the Caucasus, Sisianov, presented a plan to Emperor Alexander I for the occupation of Baku and other Azerbaijani khanates, resulting in the capture of the Ganja, Karabakh, Sheki, and Shamakhi khanates by Russia between 1803 and 1805. In 1806, Hussein Quli Khan and his family, concerned about the assassination of the Russian commander Sisianov, surrendered the city to Russian commander Bulgakov without a defense.⁴⁷

3) Russian Domination in Baku

In 1806, the Baku Khanate was abolished by Russia, and the Baku Commandantcy was established in its place, lasting until 1840. During this period, some developments were carried out by Tsarist Russia, taking into account the conditions of the time. However, the primary objective of the Russian administration was to strengthen its

⁴¹ Audrey L. Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks: Power and Identity Under Russian Rule* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1992), 5.

⁴² Gökhan Alper Ataşer & L. Sayfutdinova, "Bakü," *Türk Dünyası Başkentleri* içinde, ed. Murat Yılmaz & Ayşe Çolpan Kavuncu, 261-313 (Ankara: Sfn Yayınları, 2014): 267.

⁴³ Niyazi Berkes, *Türkiye'de çağdaşlaşma* (İstanbul: YKY, 2010), 42.

⁴⁴ Tufan Gündüz, "Safeviler", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, C. 35 (İstanbul: TDV Yay., 2008): 453-454.

⁴⁵ Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Müslüman cemaatten ulusal kimliğe Rus Azerbaycanı 1905-1920*, çev. Nuray Mert (İstanbul: Bağlam Yayınları, 1988), 20.

⁴⁶ F. Tagiyev, *İstoriya Goroda Baku v Pervoy Polovine XIX Veka (1806-1859)* (Baku: Elm, 1999), 10.

⁴⁷ Aşurbeyli, *Bakü Şehrinin Tarihi*, 435.

military superiority rather than improve the city or meet the needs of its population.⁴⁸ Despite the occupation of Baku, the Tsarist government, anticipating future problems, took certain initiatives, including punishing those directly involved in the assassination of General Sisianov. Later, they began managing the local nobility.⁴⁹ The 1826-1828 Russo-Persian War, which was the final conflict between Russia and Iran, had significant cultural, economic, and demographic impacts on Baku and its surroundings. After the war, the Treaty of Turkmenchay, signed on February 10, 1828, officially recognized that Baku belonged to Russia.⁵⁰ Consequently, Azerbaijan's lands were divided between Iran and Russia, leaving many Azerbaijanis as strangers on their own land. The Treaty of Turkmenchay had profound and lasting effects on Azerbaijan. The political existence of the Azerbaijani Turks was completely threatened by the agreement.⁵¹

The Russian administration, which took control of the Caucasus, including Baku, established seven provinces to replace the abolished Azerbaijani khanates by 1820, aiming to keep the region under its control.⁵² After the occupation of Northern Azerbaijan by Russia, a new administrative-territorial division was initiated to implement colonial policies. As a result of the administrative-judicial reform on April 10, 1840, the provinces of Baku, Shusha, Nukha (Sheki), Lankaran, and Shamakhi were transformed into districts and incorporated into the newly established Caspian region. The Kuba district was merged into the Dagestan area. These reforms aimed to strengthen the administrative structure of the Russian Empire in the region and maintain tighter control over the territories. With the decree of Tsar Nicholas I on December 14, 1846, new changes were implemented in the administrative-territorial division of the South Caucasus. The region was divided into the governorates of Tiflis, Kutaisi, Shamakhi, and Derbent. The districts that were previously part of the Caspian region were merged into the Shamakhi Governorate, while the Kuba district remained within the Derbent Governorate. After the 1859 earthquake in Shamakhi, which killed 100 people, the provincial center was moved to Baku.⁵³ With this shift, Baku became a political center and began to undergo changes driven by the administration. It was during these years that bureaucracy and its accompanying structures began to emerge in the city. The arrival of administrative buildings in Baku initiated a transformation from the old city (Icherisheher) into a modern urban area, requiring the development of new infrastructure. Various measures were taken in this regard, and Baku began to evolve into a political, economic, social, and cultural center. This transformation also affected the city's population. In particular, when Tsarist Russia captured Baku in 1806, the city's population was approximately 7,000, but by the end of the century, it exceeded 100,000. Parallel to this population growth, the city expanded and modernized.

⁴⁸ K. Odcagova, *Gorodskoe samoupravlenie Baku v kontse XIX - nachale XX vv* (Baku: Nurlan, 2003), 12.

⁴⁹ Tagiyev, *İstoriya Goroda Baku v Pervoy Polovine XIX Veka (1806-1859)*, 12.

⁵⁰ Tagiyev, *İstoriya Goroda Baku v Pervoy Polovine XIX Veka (1806-1859)*, 22.

⁵¹ Savaş Açikkaya, "Çarlık Rusyası Hakimiyetindeki Azerbaycan Türklerinde Ulus Bilincinin Gelişmesinin Temel Dinamikleri," *Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 28 (2010/11): 404.

⁵² Ebulfez Süleymanlı, *Milletleşme sürecinde Azerbaycan Türkleri* (İstanbul: Ötüken Yayınları, 2006), 41.

⁵³ Swietochowski, *Müslüman cemaatten ulusal kimliğe Rus Azerbaycanı 1905-1920*, 33.

Picture 2: General layout of Baku fortress and vorstadt. 1864⁵⁴

There were three main directions of urban development in Baku. The first was the construction of a port in the Bayil district in the south of the city, based on the decision to relocate the Caspian Fleet headquarters from Astrakhan to Baku. As a result of the peace treaty signed between the Tsarist regime and Iran in 1813, about 100 oil wells came under state control.⁵⁵ In 1823, the Dunnin brothers established a factory in Baku to refine crude oil into kerosene.⁵⁶ The first industrial oil well was drilled in 1847, marking the beginning of a new era for Baku.⁵⁷ The drilling of oil wells in 1872 was carried out by decree of the Russian Emperor and is considered the second major breakthrough. By 1917, more than 3,000 wells had been drilled on the Absheron Peninsula, and nearly 2,000 of them were producing oil.⁵⁸ The decree, which aimed to privatize the surrounding oil fields, led to the establishment of independent workshops and factories in oil districts that were no longer under state control. The center of the newly created oil industry was called “Black City”. By 1902, Black City had 20 large factories and 76 different workplaces.⁵⁹ One of the key issues in Baku during the 1880s-1890s was the construction of “oil pipelines”. The Nobel brothers, H. Z. Taghiyev, and the “Baku Oil Society” were particularly involved in this matter. As a result, Russia’s first oil pipeline was built in 1877 between the Sabunchu oil fields and the factories of Black City.⁶⁰

Baku’s third and final stage of development was its phased growth, which began with the historical and administrative structures of the old city becoming the city center.⁶¹ The city’s main axis was built around these three areas, and its development continued

⁵⁴ Şamil Fetullayev, *Bakıda Şehersalma XIX. Esr ve XX. Esrin Evvellerinde* (Bakü: Şerk-Gerb Neşriyyat Evi, 2013), 44.

⁵⁵ Fuad Akhundov, “Legacy of Baku’s Oil Barons,” *Stadt Bauwelt* 36/183 (2013): 52.

⁵⁶ Shammedov, “Azerbaycan’da kentleşme ve sanayileşme süreci çerçevesinde Bakü örneği,” 137.

⁵⁷ Anar Valiyev, “City profile: Baku,” *Cities* 31 (2013): 626.

⁵⁸ Miryusuf Mirbabayev, *Azerbaycan Neftinin Kısa Tarihi* (Bakü: Azərneşr, 2008): 47.

⁵⁹ Şamil Fetullayev, *Bakıda Şehersalma XIX. Esr ve XX. Esrin Evvellerinde* (Bakü: Şerk-Gerb Neşriyyat Evi, 2013): 29-32.

⁶⁰ Mirbabayev, *Azerbaycan Neftinin Kısa Tarihi*, 53.

⁶¹ Ataşer & Sayfutdinova, “Bakü,” 273.

with the interconnection of these regions. These initiatives accelerated the urbanization of Baku, with the city expanding to 1,300 hectares between 1806 and 1881, surpassing its boundaries and outpacing the population growth rates of all major European cities of the time.⁶² Oil production increased 60 times within a decade, and by the end of the Tsarist regime, Baku accounted for 95% of Russia's oil production and nearly 51% of the world's crude oil output.⁶³ In 1879, the world's first oil tanker was produced in Baku by the Nobel brothers. These advances, along with the Tsarist regime's population policies, resulted in Baku becoming an ethnically diverse city. As the region's primary city, with a booming oil industry, and as a market for both national and international businesses, Baku attracted a concentration of people. The city's population, which did not exceed 13,000 with its surrounding villages in 1840, grew to 2,914 by 1859-1873, reached six times that number to 71,506 by 1886, and finally increased to 214,161.⁶⁴

Picture 3: Plan of the Baku fortress, 1796⁶⁵



Picture 4: Baku and Absheron⁶⁶



⁶² Hossein Sadri & Senem Zeynepoğlu Sadri, "(RE/DE) constructions of city and society: Transitions from Soviet to post-soviet era in Baku" *Livenarch IV (RE/DE) Constructions In Architecture Vol. II* (2009): 440.

⁶³ Akhundov, "Legacy of Baku's Oil Barons," 53.

⁶⁴ Shammedov, "Azerbaycan'da Kentleşme ve Sanayileşme Süreci Çerçevesinde Bakü Örneği," 142.

⁶⁵ Fetullayev, *Bakıda Şehersalma XIX. Esr ve XX. Esrin Evvellerinde*, 8.

⁶⁶ Voyçex Quretski, *Bakıda Polyak Mekanları* (Bakı: Polşa Respublikasının Bakıdaki Sefirliyi, 2012), 4-5.

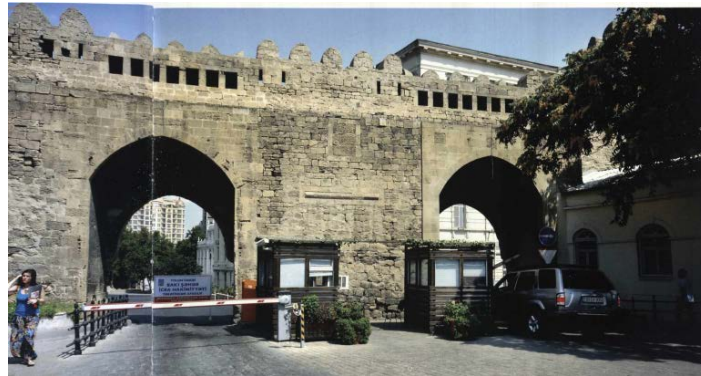
4) Russian Influence on Baku's Urban Identity

Baku's history is marked by the struggle of various ideologies and forces, which has influenced the city's identity through the impact of different ethnic groups. Among these groups, Russians were particularly prominent. The Russian presence played a significant role in shaping, renewing, and developing Baku's culture from the 19th century to the late 20th century.

In the formation of Baku's urban identity, the role of Russians was particularly evident in the city's exposure to Russian culture. The dominance of the Russian language and the widespread adoption of Russian lifestyle significantly shaped the cultural life of the city and contributed to its civilization.⁶⁷ The Russian image became a powerful symbol for the residents of Baku. This image influenced economic, political, cultural, and social spheres, becoming one of the defining factors of Baku's identity. Residents of Baku, who grew up under Russian influence, nostalgically recall the city of the 1970s amidst the confusion following the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, many Azerbaijanis remembered the presence of Russians as foreign, noting their superior opportunities and the ongoing Russification policies.⁶⁸ The administration aimed to integrate Baku into Russian cultural norms, utilizing the city's space to achieve this goal.

One area where Russian influence is evident in Baku's history and identity is architecture. Architecture is a dynamic element that plays a crucial role in city culture, contributing to the uniqueness and originality of cities. Examining Baku's history reveals various architectural styles across different periods. Before the Russian era, Baku was characterized by narrow streets and the use of adobe in construction. The Russian takeover in 1806 introduced architectural changes, influenced by Western ideas through the Russian Empire. Oil wealth was one of the dynamics behind this influence, bringing not only economic prosperity but also cultural diversity. This diversity manifested in architecture through styles like Neo-Renaissance, Neo-Gothic, Baroque, Classicism, and modern architectural forms, which merged with traditional styles to transform Baku's appearance.⁶⁹

Picture 5: Icherisehir, Castle gate⁷⁰



⁶⁷ Bruce Grant, "Cosmopolitan Baku," *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology* 75/2 (2010): 127.

⁶⁸ Grant, "Cosmopolitan Baku," 130.

⁶⁹ Sadri & Sadri, "(RE/DE) constructions of city and society: Transitions from Soviet to post-soviet era in Baku," 44.

⁷⁰ Elkhan Suleymanov, *Bakı Hakkında Etütler* (Bakı: Şerk-Gerb, 2015), 10-11.

Picture 6: Baku Duma (City Parliament)-(built in 1900-1904, designed by Jozef V. Goslavski) ⁷¹



Picture 7: National Museum of the Azerbaijan Literature⁷²



Picture 8: Baku Duma (City Parliament)-(built in 1900-1904, designed by Jozef V. Goslavski) ⁷³



⁷¹ Elçin Eliyev, *Bakı Memarlık Abidelerinde Fasad Heykeltıraşlık Nümuneleri* (Bakı: MEGA, 2010): 132-133.

⁷² Suleymanov, *Bakı Hakkında Etütler*, 48-49.

⁷³ Suleymanov, *Bakı Hakkında Etütler*, 90.

Another cultural extension of oil was the emergence of an aristocratic class in the early 1900s. This elite group, prominent for their wealth, also supported education, art, collaboration, and cultural projects, contributing to social enlightenment. Notable figures in this enlightenment include Haji Zeynalabdin Taghiyev (1823-1924), Agha Musa Naghiyev (1849-1919), and Murtuza Mukhtarov (1855-1920). Taghiyev opened the first secular girls' school in Baku, Naghiyev, together with the Muslim Charitable Organization later known as Ismailiyya, established the city's largest hospital, and Mukhtarov engaged in similar philanthropic activities.⁷⁴

Picture 9: Building of the Presidium of the National Academy of Sciences ("Ismailiyye")⁷⁵



With these innovations, the development of the oil industry in Azerbaijan, especially in Baku, paralleled the rise of capitalism, and the Russian influence introduced architectural diversity. European cultures began constructing theaters, hospitals, schools, and modern residential buildings.⁷⁶

Additionally, Russian rulers emphasized maritime and clean water supply sectors. The relocation of the Caspian Fleet from Astrakhan to Baku necessitated structural adjustments. The construction of port facilities and associated civilian buildings led to Bayil becoming one of the city's central area.⁷⁷ One of the main issues of 19th-century Baku was insufficient water resources. Clean drinking water was scarce, and mobile water vendors supplied the existing water. Thanks to the initiatives of oil magnate Taghiyev, the Shollar water pipeline, which remains operational today, was completed and put into use in 1917.⁷⁸

The prominent architect of Baku during the Tsarist era was Qasim bey Hajibabeyov (Qasimbəy Hacıbabəyov). This renowned Azerbaijani architect played a significant role in planning and constructing Baku's center in the mid-19th century. Furthermore, the widely used "Fountains Square" was designed by this famous

⁷⁴ Akhundov, "Legacy of Baku's Oil Barons," 54-65.

⁷⁵ Suleymanov, *Bakı Hakkında Etütlər*, 91.

⁷⁶ Gumru Mirzaliyeva, "Bakü'de küreselleşmenin etkisi ile 2009 yılı sonrası yapılan binaların mimari ve kent kimliğine etkisi," (Yayınlanmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Kocaeli Üniversitesi, 2018), 67.

⁷⁷ Qılman İlkin, *Bakı və Bakılılar* (Bakı: Nurlar Neşriyyat Poligrafiya Mərkəzi, 2006), 106.

⁷⁸ J. Patterson, "Shollar Water: A Century Later," *Azerbaijan International* 7/3 (1999): 72-73.

architect.⁷⁹ The influence of architectural concepts can be seen in the layout of squares and streets.⁸⁰ The combination of Western styles introduced by Tsarist Russia with traditional elements was prevalent in 19th-century architecture.

During the Soviet era⁸¹, the approach changed. The Soviet architectural movement was based on the concept of “national in form, socialist in content”, where buildings with national designs were utilized and planned to serve socialism. In the 1920s and 1930s, *Constructivism*, which emphasized the use of concrete and offered practical solutions while creating dynamic structures, gained prominence and became popular among the public. In Baku, this movement can be described with terms like economy, utility, and beauty. Constructivism in Baku, adapted to the city's climate, gave the city a distinctive character.⁸²

Picture 10: Fire station in Baku, 1920s.⁸³



After World War II, the architectural concept shifted, and aesthetics and external decorations were considered wasteful. During this process, residential models developed in other Soviet cities were implemented. The “*Microdistricts (Mikrorayon)*” were planned to improve social relations by creating residential areas for 10-15 thousand people, designed to include social needs such as cafeterias, schools, kindergartens, and parks. Unlike previous socialist urban planning, these microdistricts were intended to be separate from industrial zones. The Kruchevki apartment complexes were built based on the principle of equality. By 1991, there were nine microdistricts around Baku.⁸⁴ These

⁷⁹ Şamil Fətullayev, *Bakı Mimarları XIX. Esrin Sonu – XX. Esrin Evvellerinde* (Bakı: Şerk-Gerb Nəşriyyat Evi, 2013): 48-49.

⁸⁰ Bayrakdar, “Bir Flaneur Olarak Covid-19 Sonrası Mekansal Değişimin İzlerini Sürmek: Bakü Fevvarələr Meydanı Örneği,” 604-605.

⁸¹ In 1922, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia united to form the South Caucasian Soviet Socialist Federative Republic. This political entity lasted until 1936, after which the countries were divided into socialist republics. It is known that cities during this period were established based on socialist principle. Cities adorned with socialist principles took on the role of a primary means for shaping public consciousness. During this period, Baku emerged as a key tool used by the authorities.

⁸² Elçim Eliyev, *Konstruktivizm Dövrü: XX Esrin 1920-1930-cu İllərinin Bakü Mimarlığı* (Bakı: Şerk-Gerb Nəşriyyat, 2013), 237.

⁸³ Elçim Eliyev, *Konstruktivizm Dövrü 1920-1930-cu İllərinin Bakı Memarlığı* (Bakı: Şerk-Gerb Nəşriyyat, 2013), 18.

⁸⁴ Ataşer, “Bakü,” 292.

rectangularly planned urban spaces, serving the socialist lifestyle with central areas for socialization, cafeterias, and laundry facilities, continue to exist in modern Baku. Their significance lies in preserving the traditional neighborhood concept, and their features like breathing spaces, meeting areas, and playgrounds contribute to social interaction among residents. During the global pandemic of 2020, these areas became places for both children and adults to spend time. Today, these spaces, hosting a dense population, have become a part of Baku’s urban identity.

Picture 11: First Microraion on Moscow Avenue⁸⁵



In the 1960s, Baku’s urban renewal coincided with a new era. The process of de-Stalinization, which began with Stalin’s death, was implemented in Baku as well. Stalin’s political and cultural policies weakened, leading to the construction of simpler, more functional structures instead of the ornate and monumental buildings characteristic of the Stalin era. The use of sandstone, the traditional building material of Baku, gained renewed prominence during this period. The “Aglay” stone extracted from the Absheron Peninsula and widely used in modern Baku has become a cultural and identity symbol of the region.

Picture 12: Buildings in Baku where Aglay stone was used.⁸⁶



⁸⁵ “Soviet Architecture in Baku: Why Baku’s Socialist Modernist Buildings Are Must-Sees,” erişim 10.10.2023, <https://ganinasirov.com/2019/07/10/bakus-soviet-modernism-architecture/>

⁸⁶ *Bakı Simfoniyası* (Bakı: IRS Publishing House,2015), 24-25.

As seen in other socialist cities⁸⁷, Baku also had residential buildings constructed next to industrial zones. Economic functional areas created for the oil industry, such as Sumgayit, Pirallahi, Neft Dashlari, and Garadag, included not only industrial facilities but also structures to meet the needs of the local population. Thus, the foundation of Baku's development was its industry.

Another dynamic of Russian influence in Baku's urban identity is the concept of "language". Language, serving as a daily communication tool and a means of cultural transmission, became a central focus of Russian policy. Manipulations of language led to direct social impacts. During the Russian rule in Azerbaijan, there was a deliberate attempt to change languages to alter future generations' memories, erase cultural values, and lay the foundations for an ideological society. In the 19th century, Tsarist rulers sought to promote the Russian language. Over time, Russian became the official language, while the development and use of the Azerbaijani language declined. This period also saw the emergence of a new Baku dialect in the media and literature.⁸⁸ As a fundamental component of cultural identity, language dynamics can lead to resistance against colonial forces.⁸⁹ Changes in power and the shifting of authority post-war and occupation led to the renaming of streets and squares. Thus, in some countries, cities contributed to the national idea of the state.⁹⁰ Additionally, the naming of streets was closely linked to the legitimization of political regimes. Regimes sought to connect themselves with the nation's past glory through national heroes' commemorations or significant events to gain political legitimacy.⁹¹ Thus, language policy was a priority for both Tsarist and Soviet administrations. Examples of language policy can be observed in various areas of Baku, including its squares.

Table 1: Baku Squares and Name Changes⁹²

| Baku Squares | First Naming | Second Naming | Third Namind | Fourth Naming |
|--------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| 1 | Red Army Square | 20 January Square | - | - |
| 2 | Azerneft Square | - | - | - |
| 3 | Bazaar Square | Quba Square | Dimitrov Square | Fuzuli Square |
| 4 | Biria Square | Freedom Square | 26 Baku Commissars Garden | Freedom Garden |
| 5 | State Flag Square | - | - | - |

⁸⁷ The main characteristics of a socialist city can be described as follows: There is no distinction between workers and upper-class sectors, promoting equality across different social strata. The connection between urban and rural areas is strong, with efforts made to minimize the differences between these regions. A communist society is considered ideal. The system aims to transform women into equal members of society by enabling them to engage in productive activities, thereby also freeing them from the constraints of ordinary domestic life. Additionally, the goal of a socialist city is to plan in a way that supports social relations and production.

⁸⁸ İlkin, *Bakı və Bakılılar* 87.

⁸⁹ Süleymanlı, *Milletleşme Sürecinde Azerbaycan Türkleri*, 157.

⁹⁰ Maoz Azaryahu, "The Purge of Bismarck and Saladin: The Renaming of Streets in East Berlin and Haifa, A Comparative Study in Culture-Planning," *Poetics Today* 13/2 (1992): 351-367.

⁹¹ Mehmet Volkan Kaşıkçı, "The Soviet and the Post-Soviet: Street Names and National Discourse in Almaty," *Europe-Asia Studies* 71/8 (2019): 1347.

⁹² Oğuz Kağan Bayrakdar, Fatma Betül Aydemir Baş & Şeyda Çevikel, "Ulus Kent Kimliğinin Oluşumunda Meydanların Rolü Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme: Bakü Örneği," *Genel Türk Tarihi Araştırmaları Dergisi* 4/8 (Temmuz 2022): 945.

| | | | | |
|----|----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| 6 | Duma Square | Asumov Square | Youth Square | - |
| 7 | South Soviet Square | Nariman Narimanov Square | - | - |
| 8 | Oil Workers' Circle | Dakar Square | - | - |
| 9 | Parapet Garden | Karl Marx Square | Fountain Square | - |
| 10 | Privozalnava Square | Jafar Jabbarli Square | - | - |
| 11 | Stalin Square | Lenin Square | Freedom Square | - |
| 12 | Vorontsov Square | Coal Square | - | - |
| 13 | Yarmarochnaya Square | İlyiç Square | October Square | Samad Vurgun Garden |

When examining the table, it becomes evident that, following independence, efforts were made to highlight representatives of Azerbaijani culture and civilization in the urban realm. The administration's choice of this policy was undoubtedly influenced by the extensive use of these spaces and their significant societal impact.⁹³ Looking at the names given to squares after independence, prominent figures include the famous Azerbaijani playwright Jafar Jabbarli, who addressed social issues in his works; Neriman Nerimanov, who supported the Turkish War of Independence and was involved in political, social, and literary activities; Samad Vurgun, a distinguished figure in Azerbaijani literature; and Fuzuli, a leading author in Turkish literature. Alongside naming, these frequently used spaces play an important role in preserving cultural memory. Besides these urban spaces, the naming of newly established areas or those that evolved over time due to economic development also reflects a national perspective. For instance, Azneft and State Flag Squares, strategically located in Baku, are notable not only as central points for transit, intersection, and socialization but also as areas where national symbols are prominently displayed, reflecting the national identity.

Oil, which has been known in Baku for a long time but only came into the economic market with the arrival of the Russians, is another area where the Russian influence on the city's identity is felt. Dynamics that serve as a bridge between the past, present, and future hold particular importance in shaping identity. The desire of these three temporal periods to form their identity elements independently and extend into the future without historical stability creates problems in public memory, collective consciousness, and social unity.^{94 95} Oil, referenced in sources from the 7th century, serves as a connection to the past, refreshing the social memory of Baku's residents, carrying the city's history into

⁹³ Oğuz Kağan Bayrakdar & Bahar Özsoy, "Kent İçi Ulaşımın Ulus Kent Kimliğine Etkisi: Bakü Örneği," *İdealkent* 13/36 (2022): 701-702.

⁹⁴ Yücel Öztürk, "Tarih ve Kimlik," *Akademik İncelemeler* 2/1 (2007): 16.

⁹⁵ History is a collection of events that play a crucial role in shaping the past, present, and future. Regardless of ethnic background, the traces of history have had, and continue to have, a significant impact on every region of the world. This impact imparts a unique identity to a city within its cultural melting pot. The importance of history for urban identity has been particularly recognized after World War II. In 1964, the "Venice Charter" was published in Europe as a collective statement, acknowledging the necessity to preserve civil architecture that stands out for its appearance, architecture, or historical values. As explained in previous chapters, the purpose of this convention is to protect the historical structures that form the core of cultural heritage in cities. The historical foundations of Baku's oil industry also create this effect.

the present, mediating in the formation of urban civilization, and most importantly, being influential in the creation of national consciousness. Consequently, the history of oil is intertwined with the history of Baku. Oil occupies a position that has existed at every stage of the city's history, facilitating a connection between the city and its past. This connection rejuvenates collective memory, fosters a sense of belonging, and becomes an inseparable part of the city's identity. Thus, oil in Baku is not merely a product extracted for economic reasons and used in trade, but has become a dynamic valued by people in many contexts, gaining multifaceted identities and impacting individuals. Given all these characteristics, Baku's history is nearly synonymous with the history of oil.

Although it led to economic development, oil also caused social stratification. From an economic perspective, the Baku of the period reflected contradictions among workers who moved to the city to find work and the wealthy. "Along both sides of the road and completely overshadowed by the oil rigs were shanty towns with single-story houses, their windows darkened by felt and sometimes covered with wire. This was an image of incessant and hopeless gloom".⁹⁶ The difference based on status and economic wealth was rooted in the power to manage oil. On one side, there were workers contributing to the city's modern appearance, and on the other, oil magnates representing the city's modern face. This duality in the city impacted Maxim Gorki, who remarked: "I have been in Baku twice, in 1892 and 1897. The oil fields here reminded me of a disgusting hell in my mind. The hellish scene here is depicted so skillfully that no other description is needed".⁹⁷

Picture 13: From oil wells in Baku ⁹⁸



Another area where Russians contributed to the city's identity is in urban and interurban transportation. Construction of the railway in Baku began in 1878, with the first line completed in 1880. During this period, the construction of railways between the oil regions and the city center was planned. According to official information from Azerbaijan Railways JSC, this date symbolizes the beginning of oil transportation by rail. In 1883, the railway between Baku, Ganja, and Tbilisi started operations, with Batumi

⁹⁶ Ataşer "Bakü," 278.

⁹⁷ Shammedov, "Azerbaycan'da Kentleşme ve Sanayileşme Süreci Çerçevesinde Bakü Örneği," 143.

⁹⁸ *Bakü Simfoniyası*, 56.

later becoming part of this network. By the early 20th century, Azerbaijani territories were integrated into the Russian Empire’s railway network, leading to the construction of the Baku-Derbend route and an increase in the amount of oil transported from Baku to the north. During the Soviet era, railway development continued, with the first electric railway work beginning in 1926. The electrified railway line in Baku was the first of its kind in the entire USSR. As such, Russian efforts in constructing railways contributed significantly to the city’s economy. Few cities in the world have railways, and those that do add this characteristic to their urban identity. Baku, by incorporating railways into its urban civilization and identity, has gained a unique feature.

Picture 14: Azerbaijan Railway map⁹⁹



Another innovation under Soviet administration was the Metro system. The Baku Metro, the first metro system among Turkic republics, was inaugurated on November 6, 1967. Initially consisting of five stations: Baku Soviet, 26 Baku Commissars, 28 April, Ganja, and Neriman Nerimanov, the names of the stations were later nationalized and modified after independence. Today, names such as Nesimi, Memar Ajami, Jafar Jabbarli, Khatai, 28 May, Koroglu, Gara Garayev, and Hazi Aslanov are visible in the Baku Metro. In line with the nationalization ideology, names of prominent Azerbaijani scholars are featured in various parts of the city, especially in high-traffic areas. Baku, which had the first metro under the influence of the Russians, was seen to be named ideologically while adding this feature to its identity. After independence, it was transformed with names representing Azerbaijani culture and civilization.

Examining Baku’s history reveals that certain processes have a special place in the city’s identity. World War II had such an impact. The involvement in the war under Russian control had significant effects and outcomes on the city’s identity. During the war, Baku emerged as a crucial center for both sides, with 90% of Soviet tanks and planes

⁹⁹ “Azərbaycan Dəmir Yolu Xəritəsi,” erişim 10.10.2023, <https://az.rayhaber.com/2019/07/azerbeycan-d%C9%99mir-yolu-x%C9%99rit%C9%99si/>

operating on fuel from Baku. In 1942, a cake with “Baku” written on it was gifted to Hitler.¹⁰⁰ As these examples show, Baku, while being a center supplying fuel to the Soviets, was also a strategic location planned to be captured by Germany. May 9, marking the end of the war, is celebrated as “Victory Day over Fascism”. Buildings constructed in Baku during the war continued to serve their functions after the war. A statue of Hazi Aslanov, who earned two medals for his achievements during the war, stands in the Dagustu Park, a significant tourist site in Baku. Additionally, his name has been given to a metro station. The struggle of Azerbaijanis against fascism during World War II is represented in various forms in Baku.

Various dynamics have been used to make many cities legible. These mediators contribute to the direction in which the city will be read/understood by those living in or visiting the city. Statues can be given as an example of factors that have contributed to the comprehensibility of Baku and have increased in density in the city with the Russian influence. Statues that are a manifestation of the Russian or Azerbaijani policy parallel to the official ideology have been added to many parts of the city. When we look at the statues and busts in the city, we see that they were mostly placed during the Soviet and independence periods. During the Soviet period, ideological and political figures such as Sergey Kirov, Lenin, 26 Baku commissars, Shaumyan, Karl Marx, as well as representatives of Azerbaijani culture such as Sabir, Nizami Ganjavi, Natevan, Akhundov, Hezi Aslanov, Uzeyir Hajibeyov were also statued in the city. After independence, it is seen that the figures who were repressed during the Stalin period and who had important duties on the path to independence were mostly placed in the city center.

Despite contributing positively to the city's development, the nearly two-century-long Russian rule also laid the groundwork for the emergence of national sentiments. Azerbaijanis, who were long subjected to Russian cultural impositions, began to react over time. Examples of this reaction are evident in the process. The presence of Russians as “foreigners” in society led Azerbaijanis to define their own identities. Despite Soviet pressures, Azerbaijanis maintained their roots and pioneered national ideals, with figures such as Cahid Hilaloglu and Chingiz Abdullayev exemplifying this. On April 28, 1957, with the raising of the tricolor Azerbaijani flag at the Maiden Tower on the 39th anniversary of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, this sentiment was concretely expressed. Additionally, in 1967, due to the efforts of Shikhali Gurbanov, Novruz Bayram was celebrated in Baku. Although the celebration of Novruz as a national holiday was banned, it was recognized as a traditional festival of the region. Soviet leadership banned many ceremonies that could spark national sentiment to separate Azerbaijanis from their roots. The first celebration of Novruz in Baku after a long time changed the city's atmosphere and triggered a surge in national feelings.¹⁰¹ All these activities contributed to the nationalization of Baku and the transformation of its culture/identity along national lines. Another nationalist movement in Baku occurred in 1988. The Azadliq Square in Baku hosted the first mass rally in 1988, where Baku residents began protest actions against

¹⁰⁰ Farid Alakbarov, “Baku: City That Oil Built,” *Azerbaijan International* 10/2 (2002): 32-33.

¹⁰¹ Elçin Kabiloğlu, “Şikeli Kurbanovun Nevruzla bağlı hidmetleri,” *Bakü Halk Cebhesi* (19 Mart 2010): 14.

the Karabakh events on November 17, which lasted approximately two weeks. The key event that identified the square was the bloody actions on January 20, 1990, which became a symbol of the path to independence for the square. For a long time, there was resistance against the Russians in the society, leading to the establishment of the independent Republic of Azerbaijan on October 18, 1991. After gaining independence, Lenin Square was renamed Azadliq Square (Freedom Square), and the government aimed to imbue the square with national identity. In this context, the government removed Lenin's statue from the square and replaced it with the Azerbaijani flag.¹⁰² Thus, the Russian image emerged as a dynamic that stimulated national feelings among the city's residents.

Conclusion

Baku, under Russian influence for nearly two centuries, has undergone significant changes during this period. Beginning with Tsarist Russia and continuing under Soviet rule, the Russian administration renewed Baku, imbuing it with ideological imagery. As the city expanded, traditional elements were partially preserved, with a preference for spaces that aligned more closely with Russian mentalities.

Over time, Baku evolved into a political, economic, and cultural center. Research conducted under Russian hegemony revealed changes particularly in areas such as language, architecture, and urbanization. Additionally, various symbols that can be described as urban accessories also became integrated into Baku's urban identity, reflecting Russian thought patterns. Following independence, Baku rapidly embarked on a path of de-Sovietization and de-Russification.

In parallel with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Azerbaijani researchers began to address their national sentiments and illuminate their cultural past through new studies. With the achievement of independence, Azerbaijan took steps consistent with its ideology, redesigning the capital, Baku, accordingly. The new administration made linguistic changes to reconnect the city with its past, aiming to create a national ideology and rectify long-standing identity issues. One of the areas where these changes were evident was in architecture.

After gaining independence, Baku returned to national architecture. Alongside modern buildings that define the city's contemporary appearance, structures symbolizing Azerbaijani culture were preserved, and new buildings were designed to represent this culture. Overall, Baku has seen various architectural styles emerge in accordance with its different political periods, contributing to the formation and development of the city's civilization. Today, a unique civilization exists, resulting from the fusion of many architectural forms.

With independence, another focus in the city's national identity has been the "repression" period. Accordingly, efforts have been made to bring to light intellectuals and community leaders who had significant impacts on the political and social arenas between 1920 and 1940 and who were exiled, imprisoned, or executed. Legal regulations have also

¹⁰² Ataşer, "Bakü," 304.

been implemented in this context. The independent Republic of Azerbaijan initially passed a law on the release of victims of political repression and restored their rights. In this regard, the law approved by President Heydar Aliyev on March 15, 1996, established a legal basis for the rehabilitation of individuals who had suffered political oppression in the Republic of Azerbaijan and aimed to improve their political, social, and civil status. Alongside legal processes, it is also crucial for these names to appear in the social arena. Therefore, Baku, in parallel with the formation of national identity, has taken steps towards becoming a national city where past experiences are exhibited or represented. This law not only provided a legal foundation for preserving the past but also increased the visibility of representatives of Azerbaijani civilization in the city. Examples of such figures include Hussein Javid, Mikayil Mushfig, Ahmad Javad, Ayna Sultanova, Jafar Jabbarli, and Neriman Nerimanov.

In contemporary Baku, the influence of Russia remains evident. Urban spaces from the Tsarist and Soviet periods are particularly prominent in reflecting this influence. It should be noted that although the Azerbaijani government has strived to reconnect with its roots after independence, it has simultaneously sought to establish its presence on the international stage. In its efforts to modernize Baku as a capital, the administration has introduced numerous modern elements into the city's identity. Infrastructure catering to tourists, such as luxury accommodations, museums, entertainment and dining venues, and sports facilities, has been developed to meet the needs of international visitors. As a result, Baku's urban identity resembles a mosaic, blending various elements.



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