

# Cultural Relations of Azerbaijan

## Azerbaycan'ın Kültürel İlişkileri

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### ABSTRACT

Azerbaijan is one of the ancient sources of human civilization. The facts about the ancient and medieval cultural relations of Azerbaijan are reflected in this scientific article. Historians' information on various fields of Azerbaijani culture, as well as architecture, literature, and fine and musical arts, is summarized here. The researches of Azerbaijani art historians, historians, ethnographers, and archeologists contain enough valuable information to restore the process of mutual cultural exchange and mutual artistic relationships at the required level. In our opinion, these prove thoroughly the great role of historical interrelationships in the cultural development of Azerbaijan. It is known that the higher the culture of a nation, the more actively its art interacts with other nations. The points that are closely related to the mentality of the Azerbaijani people are noted in the article. The study of Azerbaijani art in the context of interaction with regional cultural systems is both a topical and important issue in modern times. The study of interrelationships allows us to study different layers of Azerbaijani art and culture, helps to understand the results of the culture of different periods during the development history of the Azerbaijani people, and, most importantly, to appreciate the contribution of the Azerbaijani people to Oriental culture. In this article, the author presented chronologically the stages of development of medieval Azerbaijani music culture. In the article, the renaissance stage of the 12th-century Azerbaijani culture is systematically indicated.

**Keywords:** Art, culture, fine arts, history, music

### ÖZ

Azerbaycan, insan uygarlığının en eski kaynaklarından biridir. Azerbaycan'ın eski ve ortaçağ kültür ilişkileri hakkındaki gerçekler bu bilimsel makalede yansıtılmaktadır. Tarihçilerin Azerbaycan kültürünün çeşitli alanları ile mimari, edebiyat, güzel ve müzik sanatları hakkındaki bilgileri burada özetlenmiştir. Azerbaycanlı sanat tarihçileri, tarihçileri, etnograflar ve arkeologların araştırmaları, karşılıklı kültür alışverişi ve karşılıklı sanatsal ilişkiler sürecini gerekli düzeyde yeniden tesis etmek için yeterli değerli bilgileri içermektedir. Kanaatimizce bunlar, Azerbaycan'ın kültürel gelişmesinde tarihsel ilişkilerin büyük rolünü tamamen kanıtlamaktadır. Bir milletin kültürü ne kadar yükselse, sanatının diğer milletlerle o kadar aktif bir şekilde etkileşime girdiği bilinmektedir. Makalede Azerbaycan halkının zihniyetini yakından ilgilendiren noktalara dikkat çekilmiştir. Azerbaycan sanatının bölgesel kültürel sistemlerle etkileşim bağlamında incelenmesi, modern zamanlarda hem güncel hem de önemli bir konudur. Karşılıklı ilişkilerin incelenmesi, Azerbaycan sanatının ve kültürünün farklı katmanlarını incelememize, Azerbaycan halkının gelişme tarihi boyunca farklı dönemlerin kültürünün sonuçlarını anlamamıza ve en önemlisi Azerbaycan halkının Doğu kültürüne katkısını takdir etmemize yardımcı olur. Bu makalede yazar, ortaçağ Azerbaycan müzik kültürünün gelişim aşamalarını kronolojik olarak sunmuştur. Makalede, XII yüzyıl Azerbaycan kültürünün rönesans aşaması sistematik olarak belirtilmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Sanat, kültür, müzik, Güzel sanatlar, tarih

### Introduction

The development of Azerbaijani society in economic, political, and especially cultural spheres on all parameters of world civilization is of great importance in the context of interrelationships. The study of the interrelationships of Azerbaijani folk art explores specific ways of forming Azerbaijani culture because Azerbaijani art is formed in close connection with the culture of other nations. It is known that the higher the culture of a nation, the more active its art interacts with other nations.

Let us note another point that is closely related to the mentality of the Azerbaijani people. The Azerbaijani people's main features are humanity, tolerance toward other peoples and representatives of

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other religions, respect for the culture and traditions of peoples belonging to other religions since the beginning of their history. It is this aspect that has led to the openness of Azerbaijani culture, its understanding of the Persian, Arabic, Turkish, and Slavic creative civilizations with which it has been in a relationship for many centuries and its assimilation with them.

The study of Azerbaijani art in the context of interaction with regional cultural systems is both a topical and an important issue in modern times. Well-known Azerbaijani culturologist, Doctor of Historical Sciences, Professor Fuad Mammadov emphasizes the cultural exchange of natural-geographical conditions, biological codes, genetic traits, and social and historical environment among the important factors of development while studying the processes of culture formation. He writes: "The main factor of the development of any original national culture is cultural exchange, a sense of innovation, the ability to work creatively with the national cultural achievements of other peoples and to apply it organically to national culture. This depends on the development of the historical process of the internal content of culture, antiquity and innovation, reactionary, outdated ideas and traditions, advanced innovations of world culture and universal humanistic values. So, cultural exchange creates conditions for the development of national culture at a higher level" (Mamedov, 2002, p. 534).

The concrete development of Azerbaijani art is based on the investigation of art relationships, as well as the implementation of comparative analysis. The relevance of this view is also explained by the fact that national cultures became possible in the 16th–19th centuries, especially as a result of the expansion of national exchanges. As a result, a "whole planetary system" of culture has been determined today, in the 21st century. The future of civilization and, at the same time, the development of Azerbaijan depend on the rise of cultural level and spiritual progress. So, the study of cultural experience and the study of the historical regularities of creativity are very relevant. Azerbaijan is one of the ancient sources of human civilization. Archeological excavations have discovered material cultural artifacts from the Paleolithic period. Azerbaijani culture has felt the influence of world civilization—Sumerian-Mesopotamian, Anatolia, and Elamite cultures. The process of "cultural universalization" has taken place in the history of Azerbaijan for many centuries (F. Mammadov). In other words, the interrelationships of cultures were so active and important that they often determined the style of art.

Later, cultural and historical interrelationships were established with the people of the Caucasus, Anatolia, Syria, Mesopotamia, Iran, and the Scythians. The ancient states in the territory of Azerbaijan—Media, Atropatena, and Albania gave their place to the history of cultural evolution of the Middle Ages, which passed three main stages. The processes of mutual cultural relationship, citation, cultural interchange, and assimilation have played a decisive role in the consolidation of the Azerbaijani people and their culture. The 12th century is rightly considered the period of the Azerbaijani Renaissance. Azerbaijani cities such as Baku, Ganja, Shamakhi, Nakhchivan, and Tabriz developed exactly during this period. Astrology, mathematics, natural science, philosophy, medicine, and other fields of science flourished. Of course, this progress would not be possible without the factor of cultural interrelationship. Relationships with Iran, Syria, Egypt, Iraq, and other countries were active. So, besides Azerbaijani scientists, scientists from Iran, Syria, India, and China also conducted

research in the library with 20,000 books, in the observatory built by Nasreddin Tusi in Shamakhi (at that time Maragha) in the 12th century. Besides various sciences and humanities, religion, logic, mathematics, as well as astronomy, medicine, and natural science were studied here.

## Discussion and Conclusions

Music and literature developed highly during the Azerbaijani Renaissance. Beautiful architectural monuments were built. A qualitative feature of the Azerbaijani Renaissance was that it included not only the revival of unique ancient values but also the integration of Greco-Roman values created in the classical and Hellenistic periods into the national culture. The Azerbaijani Renaissance created conditions for the cultural universalization of the behavior and lifestyle of various ethnic and social intellectuals gathered within the framework of classical Islamic culture. This cultural process, which took place in the conditions of extensive development of internal and external relationships of Azerbaijan's central cities in the Middle Ages, became the first embryo of the transition to a worldview of a new era in the style of feudal thinking.

According to scientists, the medieval period of Azerbaijan is characterized by a special activity of cultural relationships. Influence by the common cultural values of Persian, Arab, and Turkish civilizations enriched local traditions and gave a unique look to Azerbaijani culture. The adaptation of the ancient, pre-Islamic tradition to Islamic culture in Azerbaijan was on the path of cultural development in the new historical conditions. Then, there is a more fundamental encounter of the sedentary ethnos with the new nomadic Turkic ethnoses in the historical culture of Azerbaijan. All this allowed the formation of art interactions, new works, new styles, and trends. The success of Azerbaijani diplomats in the development of Azerbaijani culture and art should also be emphasized. So, thanks to the Aghgoyunlu ruler Uzun Hasan's wise activities, Azerbaijan had diplomatic relationships with Russia, Italy, Hungary, Austria, Poland, and other European countries in the 15th century.

At the same time, the 12th century is considered the cultural renaissance of Azerbaijan. The development of cities, economic growth increased the interest in the study of ancient philosophy, understanding the basics of science and art. The works of Nizami Ganjavi, Bahmanyar, Khagani Shirvani, Abul Hasan Shirvani, Safiaddin Urmavi, Ajami Nakhchivani, Qatran Tabrizi, Mahmud Shabustari, Nasreddin Tusi, Imadeddin Nasimi, and Mohammad Fuzuli enrich the information on interrelationships and cultural contacts. We are talking about the creative use of the achievements of ancient, Arab-Muslim, Persian, and Turkish cultures. At the same time, Azerbaijani educators applied this issue at the end of the 19th century. Because of their encyclopedic knowledge and mastery of other periods, they applied to the experience of world culture and in this case compared it with the culture of native Azerbaijan. They respected not only their own culture but also the culture of other nations. So, the great enlightener Abbasgulu aga Bakikhanov was fluent in Russian, Persian, Arabic, and French. This ability allowed him to penetrate deeply into the cultures of those people. A. Bakikhanov noted the importance of a relationship with the culture of other nations in his works "Gulustani-Iram," "Ganuni-Gudsi" ("Grammar of the Persian Language"), "Asrarul-Malakut" ("Secrets of the Universe"), and "Kashful-Garaib." A. Bakikhanov was the author of the project to establish a Muslim school based on the study of Russian and Persian languages.

Mirza Kazim Bey, who was a great enlightener of the 19th century, orientalist, professor, and dean of the Faculty of Philosophy of Kazan University, was in close contact with the scientific elite of many countries. It is enough to list his scientific and honorary titles such as the first dean of St. Petersburg University, a corresponding member of the St. Petersburg Academy, a full member of the British Royal Society, a member of the Asian Society in Paris, a corresponding member of the American Orientalist Society, a member of the Boston, USA, German Ornamentalist Society, and twice winner of the Demidov Prize of the Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg. Mirza Kazim Bey said: "It has long been proved that there is no better guide to the real achievement in the study of the antiquity of a people than the study of languages: this is the only way to the treasure of knowledge." So, the foundation of comparative art history of modern Azerbaijan was laid.

The feature of the Azerbaijani enlighteners' way of understanding the world associates not only with their complete understanding of Eurasian culture, but they also perceived the world and human civilization in an organic, holistic way. They understood the world as a global system and it is their position on this issue that reveals the relevance of today's development of the humanities. The appeal to the experience of Azerbaijani enlighteners shows the perspective of the problem as the interaction of the arts. The encyclopedic knowledge of Azerbaijani enlighteners allowed them to rely on the treasures of medieval oriental culture, the works of classical authors, and the experience of European Renaissance masters and Russian enlighteners. The theoretical model of the Azerbaijani enlighteners was an organic synthesis of the abovementioned cases. So, we are talking about the merging of Azerbaijani culture with the advanced cultural values acquired by European and Russian cultures.

The famous Azerbaijani enlightener Seyid Azim Shirvani studied in Baghdad and Damascus and learned Arabic culture from its primary sources. S.A. Shirvani insisted on learning the culture and languages of other peoples in his works.

The great Azerbaijani playwright Najaf Bey Vazirov believed that only getting acquainted with cultures would allow a person to become knowledgeable and serve his people worthily.

One of the important advantages of Jalil Mammadguluzadeh's work was his learning of Russian and European languages.

From this point of view, it is necessary to list the name of another great figure of Azerbaijan—M.D. Topchubashov and his regalia. So, M.D. Topchubashov taught oriental sciences at the University of St. Petersburg and was a member of the Royal Asian Society in London.

Uzeyir Hajibeyli also belongs to this category. For the first time, the great classic of Azerbaijani music justified the vital importance and inevitability of the interaction of esthetic principles of different musical cultures in his article "Issues of Music Education in Azerbaijan." According to this principle, the art of world music develops. The most important aspect is that Uzeyir Hajibeyli's creative, scientific, organizational, and journalistic activities are clear proof that they consist of a high degree of synthesis of Eastern and European music systems.

### **Development of Azerbaijani Culture in 12th–18th Centuries**

Mutual cultural ties, cultural exchange, exchange of views, and assimilation processes played a crucial role in the development of

the culture of the Azerbaijani people. Thus, the entry of Azerbaijan into the Sassanid state has identified the integration of the population of Atropatena and Albania. The mutual influence of cultures led the Azerbaijani culture to development. The Arab-Muslim culture reinforced this process. It is possible to speak about the reunification of Turkic, Caucasian, Iranian, and Arabian tribes into the Azerbaijani people. In the 11th century, the Turkish-speaking influence became stronger. The 12th century, rightly, is considered the period of the Azerbaijan Renaissance. During this period, Azerbaijan cities such as Baku, Ganja, Shamakhy, Nakhchivan, and Tabriz were developed.

During the renaissance of Azerbaijan, music and literature reached a high level of development. Marvelous architectural monuments were built. It is enough to show the Sheikh Safiaddin religious complex in Ardebil, the Blue Mosque in Tabriz, the Khan's palace, and the Shirvanshahs palace in Baku.

According to scientists, the medieval period of Azerbaijan was selected by the special activity of mutual cultural relations. Influence by the values of Persian, Arab, and Turkish civilizations enriched local traditions and made the Azerbaijani culture unique. The adaptation of ancient until Islam tradition in Azerbaijan to the Islamic culture was on the way of cultural development in the new historical context. Later on, in the historical culture of Azerbaijan, more and more confrontation of sedentary ethnoses with the new nomadic Turkic ethnics is noticeable. All these enabled the creation of interactions of art, new works, new styles, and new trends. At the same time, cultural transit relations with the Caucasus, Central Asia, Europe, Iraq, India, Russia, East Arabia, and Byzantine state must be marked as an important factor. The successes of Azerbaijani diplomats should also be remembered. Thus, thanks to the generous contribution of *Aghgoyunlu* ruler—Uzun Hasan in the 15th century, Azerbaijan has been in diplomatic relations with the Russian state, Italy, Hungary, Austria, Poland, and other European countries.

The 12th century is also considered as the cultural renaissance of Azerbaijan. Development of cities, upsurge in the economic activity increased the awareness to the study of ancient philosophy, and also to understand the basics of science and art. The works of Nizami Ganjavi, Bahmanyar, Khagani Shirvani, Abul Hasan Shirvani, Safiaddin Urmavi, Ajami Nakhchivani, Gatran Tabrizi, Mahmud Shabustari, Nasiraddin Tusi, Imamaddin Nasimi, and Muhammad Fizuli enrich the information on mutual and cultural contacts. The conversation is mainly based on using in a creative way the achievements of antiquity, Arabic-Muslim, Persian, and Turkish cultures. Expansion of Tsarist Russia in Transcaucasia, its role in the development of culture of the Azerbaijani people, Iranian, Turkish, and Russian influence elements to the culture of Azerbaijan, increase of "*mesenats*" (patronizers) of poetry and musical heritage in the Khan's palaces (Garabagh, Shirvan, etc.), M.P. Vagif and his view to art, in particular to music, *ashyg* creativity (Yusif, Hasanaga, Assad, etc.) and motifs of this creativity, form and performance manners, improvisation, relation of *ashyg* creativity with 12-17 centuries musical culture, as well as historical chronology—Abdul Latif, Mirza Adigozalov, Zeyn-Ul-Abdin—Shirvansky ("Bustan-As-Siyahi and "Riyaz-As Siyahe"), A. Bakikhanov and his creativity, Azerbaijan musical instruments of 18th century, witness of foreign travelers' (Engelbert Kempfer, Verner Fon Simes, Streys, and others), Azerbaijan's joining Russia in the beginning of 19th century and its role in the development of Azerbaijani culture, colony of tsar's policy and its barrier

in the development of Azerbaijani culture—all this chronology is evidence of the development of the cultural periods of Azerbaijan.

### The Revolution of 1905 in the Development of Azerbaijani Music

Characteristics of the revolutionary movement in Azerbaijan. In the development of the revolutionary movement in Azerbaijan the role of I. Stalin and the Bolshevik party. Revolutionary songs and hymns about the Workers' movement ("*Marselyoza*," "*International*," "*Varsavyanka (The man in Warsaw)*," etc.).

Ashyq songs in Azerbaijan, different songs of Russian and Azerbaijani proletarians, revolutionary peasant songs. Awakening of the revolutionary self-esteem in a large population circle. Be enthusiastic about identical national art and music. The first shoots of operas and songs on revolutionaries (Sattarkhan, Yefremkhan, etc.).

### Sources of Opera in Azerbaijan

1. The delayed appearance of the opera in Azerbaijan was a result of political and cultural tyranny by the Russian tsar. Religious factors slow down the development of the opera.
2. Sources of opera in Azerbaijan:
  - a) Ensemble—"*khanande*," "*tar*," "*kamancha*," *buben* (percussion musical instrument), and sometimes the fourth performer—"*nagharachy*" (*drammer*)
  - b) Folk songs
  - c) "*Skomorokh*" art (*mockery-house, pubs, gypsy, "müt-rabi*" (dancing boy in woman's dress)
  - d) "*Petrushachiy*" ("Petrushki" Puppet Theater) theater "*Kilim atasy*,"
  - e) "*ashyg*" theater
3. Religious sources of opera in Azerbaijan are (a) religious dances, (b) dervish creativity, (c) mystical scenes—"*shabih*" (elegy) scenes (*Shabih* theater is our religious feelings, our religious love, and it is a way to relieve it by paying the burden of suffering...). Their date of creation, access calmly to religious thematic household lines, and so on. The role of music in "*Shabih*" (Mughams, Instrumental accompany.) Other features: Western Europe, literary dramas of the Middle Ages, religious dramas of "*miracle*," parallels of "*mysteries*" (*Mystère* (Latin—ritual) —one of the medieval European theater genres, which is related to religion).
4. Sources of opera in city care (a) "*zorxana*" (*Zorxana* is the area where the wrestlers are fighting in ancient Azerbaijani cities), "*kandirbaz*" (Circus artist showing numbers on the rope)—their history, (b) drama—music in theatre, "live pictures"—In Shusha amateur troupe—led by the writer-educator A. Hagverdiyev, Fizuli's "*Leyli and Majnun*," "*Farhad and Shirin*" by A. Navaih. In the late 90s staging of these works—"*Bakhtsiz javan*" ("Unlucky youngster"), "*Pari Jadu*," "*Dağıdılmış yuva*" ("Destroyed nest") by A. Hagverdiyev. "*Musibati Fakhraddin*" tragedy drama. The role of music in these works.
5. The general effect of the 1905 Revolution in the awakening of Azerbaijani people's self-esteem. Influence of musical culture of Caucasian peoples and Russian musical culture.

### A New Turning Point in the Development of 19th Century of Azerbaijani Music

General characteristics of sociopolitical life of Azerbaijan in the early 19th century. Development of trading capital and its influence on Azerbaijani culture. New impressions in Azerbaijan

literature and poetry. M. F. Akhundov, his life and creativity. M. F. Akhundov's creativity. (Philosophy, literature, alphabet reconstruction) and the influence of Western Europe on the literature and poetry of Azerbaijan (Charles de Monteskye, Volter, Deni Didro, Paul Henry Holbach, Heinrich Heine). The beneficial effects of Russian poets (A. Griboyedov, A. Pushkin, M. Lermontov, and others). The rise of musical life of the Azerbaijani people of the 19th century. Unified relations of the 19th century Azerbaijani musicians and poets. 19th century Azerbaijani music and poetry (Mirza Shafi Vazeh, Gasimbay Zakir, Khurshudbanu Natavan, Seyid Azim Shirvani, and others). The outstanding musicians, singers, and *ashygs* of the 19th century. (Sadigjan, Alaskar, Abbasgulu, Dadash, Mashadi Issi, Haji Husu, Chatyoghlu, M. Behbudov, Abdul Baghi, Islam Abdullayev, Kechachi Mammad, Palazoghlu) Characteristics of their creativity. Shusha, Shamakhi, Baku—as a center for the development of musical culture in Azerbaijan. Bringing tar to Azerbaijan. Changes in the design of tar by Sadygjan. Azerbaijani musical and poetic *ashyg* creativity of 19th century. *Ashyg* song, its theme and style. Main subjects. Theoretical attempts of justification music. Navvab Shushinski (Mir Mohsun Navvab) and his creativity in this field. Mugham. Kind of oral professional music. Azerbaijani mugham.

The 17th–18th century is a period in which the Azerbaijani *ashyg* poetry and the people's creativity developed extensively. At that time, the *ashyg* poetry, which found a wide range in Azerbaijan, also had an impact on the neighboring people. The heartfelt songs, which praised the desires and aspirations of our *ashygs*, were respected in every corner of the Caucasus.

While speaking about cultural relations, A. Bakikhanov, M. F. Akhundov, M.Sh. Vazeh, German Bodenstern, and literary councils with several Georgian writers should not be forgotten. It is impossible not to speak of the activity of Azerbaijani theater in Tbilisi, legendary *khanande* Bulbul, N. Narimanov showing activity in Tbilisi, A. Shaig and their literary, cultural enlightenment creativity. The friendship between the composer and art figure Polad Bulbuloghlu and Vakhtang Kikabidze (his singing with love, singing in private of Azerbaijani folk song "*Bari bax*—Look here!") and such type of other facts (this list can be extended) is indisputable. The great leader Heydar Aliyev's obvious influence has been on these cultural relations (close friendly relations with E. Sheverdnadze).

According to scientists, the development of national cultures on the basis of the interrelationships of cultures, especially quoting the advanced practices of developed countries of world civilization is of great importance for the development of modern science and culture in Azerbaijan. It is known that the history of world culture represents inexhaustible sources of ideas, knowledge, scientific theory, and so on. At the same time, the use of that rich knowledge must be based on a strict selection system. However, it is possible to study the knowledge accumulated in the history of Azerbaijani culture through the interaction of art.

Based on the abovementioned thoughts, the urgency of the problem of studying the interaction of art in the Azerbaijani humanities, especially in art history is clearly revealed. A concrete way of developing Azerbaijani art is based on the study of the relationship between art and the realization of comparative analysis. The relevance of this view is also explained by the fact that national cultures were possible as a result of the expansion of national exchanges in the 16th and 19th centuries. As a result,

today the "Whole Planetary System" of culture has been identified in the 21st century.

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