



## Manifestation of Azerbaijan's Hospitality in the Ceremonies of Ethnic Groups

*Azərbaycan'ın Misafirpərvərliyinin Etnik Qrupların Ritüellerində Tezahürü*

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### Abstract

The origins of hospitality are as ancient as human history. Hospitality, which has different meanings in the language of different peoples, means "home for travelers" in almost all languages. Hospitality is the cultural activity of the people, as well as a spiritual treasure that preserves traditions from different eras. The introduction of the custom of hospitality in each country, which has its own peculiarities, is an important indicator of attention to people. Hospitality, directly reflecting both the way of life of the people and their material and spiritual culture, has become an important factor accelerating the development of tourism in the modern world. This tradition serves not only the friendship of individuals, but also the friendly and coexistence of nations and peoples within the framework of this tradition. The conceptual basis of humanistic values is a reflection of these qualities in the execution of different traditions. The study of the norms and rules regarding food in the practice of traditional hospitality of the peoples of the world can be noted as a necessary factor for researchers working in both ethnology and ethnography. Although the tradition of hospitality in Azerbaijan is universal, it varies from region to region. This is due to the historical development of the nation, ethnic diversity and coexistence of different peoples in the country. The emergence of diversity in traditions has ensured the innovative development of the most productive custom of hospitality in society.

**Keywords:** Hospitality, Azerbaijan, Ethnic group, Ceremony, Culture.

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## Öz

Misafirperverlik kavramının kökenleri insanlık tarihi kadar eskidir. Farklı ulusların dilinde farklı anlamlara gelen misafirperverlik, tüm dillerde "yolcular için ev" anlamına gelir. Misafirperverliği insanların kültürel bir faaliyeti ve aynı zamanda farklı çağların geleneklerini koruyan manevi bir hazine olarak adlandırmak daha doğru olur. Her ülkenin kendine has özellikleriyle misafirperverlik geleneğini ortaya koyması, insana verilen önemin göstergesidir. İnsanların hem yaşam biçimini hem de maddî ve manevî kültürünü doğrudan yansıtan misafirperverlik, modern dünyada turizmin gelişimini hızlandıran önemli bir faktör haline gelmiştir. Bu gelenek sadece bireylerin dostluğuna değil, aynı zamanda ulusların ve halkların dostça ve samimi bir şekilde bir arada yaşamasına da hizmet eder. Bu niteliklerin farklı geleneklerin uygulamalarına yansımaları hümanist değerlerin kavramsal temelini oluşturur. Dünya halklarında misafirperverlik geleneğinin icrasında yiyecek unsurlarına ilişkin kural ve düzenlemelerin incelenmesi, hem etnoloji hem de etnografya alanında çalışmalar yapan araştırmacılar için gerekli bir faktör olarak belirtilebilir. Azerbaycan'da misafirperverlik geleneği evrensel olmakla birlikte, bölgeden bölgeye farklılık göstermektedir. Bunun nedeni, bir ulusun tarihsel gelişiminin özellikleri, nüfusun etnik çeşitliliği ve ülkede farklı halkların temsilcilerinin bir arada yaşamasıdır. Geleneklerdeki çeşitliliğin ortaya çıkması, toplumdaki en verimli misafirperverlik geleneğinin yenilikçi bir şekilde gelişmesini sağlamıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Misafirperverlik, Azerbaycan, Etnik grup, Tören, Kültür.

## Introduction

The ideas about social and moral values, society and state are formed primarily in the family and determine the direction of the true citizenship of the person. On the other hand, the fact that social institutions have an influential power in the development of personality and the formation of values increases their exceptional importance. The institute of hospitality, as in all nations, is reflected in various household ceremonies of ethnic groups living in Azerbaijan. These include the ceremonies such as the first stage of the traditional wedding ceremony, wedding, funeral, name-day, various holidays Novruz, Ramadan, harvest, and birthday celebrations. The philosophical essence of the custom of hospitality is not merely to host a guest and send him away. The main features characterizing Azerbaijanis include hospitality, friendliness to representatives of other nationalities, a friendly lifestyle, etc. Hospitality is one of the very ancient customs and this custom has positive properties, it has almost no negative experiences. Whether the custom of hospitality has a negative experiences depends on the character of the guest.

What should be done to ensure that the principles of peaceful coexistence, non-violence, tolerance towards representatives of other nationalities, including ethnic groups, and respect for their traditions take root in the consciousness of every person? First, the answer to this question is important. Without social reality as a whole and the paradigm of world dialogue as part of it, it is impossible to understand yourself and others. The meaning of the word dialog as a philosophical category includes not only the ability to communicate, but also means listening to the other by expressing one's opinion. It is not easy for all nationalities and minorities to deserve their national and cultural characteristics, religions and languages while coexisting for centuries. As a result of the tolerance of the Azerbaijani people, the customs and traditions of the peoples living here are observed as related and close, and this feature has been achieved as a result of the coexistence in the country. However, all ethnic groups inhabiting the country are independent in preserving and developing their unique customs, national holidays, culture in general, and make full use of its opportunities.

The most important factor separating ethnic groups from each other is culture. The term "culture" is used in many senses, both in scientific literature and in the media. A broad concept

such as culture includes primarily the national or ethnicity of people, food, clothing, customs, music, visual arts, etc. that are ascribed to. In addition to this term, the use of concepts such as cultural diversity, cultural pluralism and multiculturalism has become increasingly relevant in the second decade of the twenty-first century. For instance, regarding the main character traits of the peoples, Azerbaijan is first of all famous for its patriotism, national traditions, manners, the Japanese are famous for flower arrangements, and the Russians are famous for theater, music, etc.

Against the background of an active search for the components of the national-ethnic identity of the Caucasian peoples, interest in the study of the culture of the peoples living in this space, especially the customs of hospitality, has been growing in Caucasian studies in recent decades. Works of European travelers, researchers of 19th and 20th centuries create important conditions for scientific study of hospitality in this aspect. Merchants, travelers, scholars, businessmen, and even enemies tried to learn as much as they could about this mysterious land. It was during this period that the Caucasus became the center of interest of European diplomacy. For this reason, socio-economic manifestations both in society and in the system of values existing in the family have an important influence on the prospective and dynamic development of the individual.

The processes of transformation of society in the economic and social spheres, in turn, had a significant impact on its social class structure. Since the dynamics of the transition of reciprocal class relations from macro-social relations to micro-social relations happen rapidly over time, the current transformation of customs is also felt in the institution of hospitality.

First of all, it should be noted that today no ethnic group can exist in complete isolation from other peoples, just as a person cannot exist without any interaction with others. Experimentally, every ethnic group is to some extent open to contacts, accepting the cultural achievements of other ethnic groups, but also ready to share its own cultural achievements, values. But, unfortunately, intercultural ties do not always bring positive results for the ethnic groups interacting with each other. The history of intercultural relations has witnessed several instances where particular ethnic communities and groups were unacceptable to each other. Both individuals and the ethnic groups as a whole can understand each other well (Ganiyeva, 2021: 957).

The culture of ethnic groups living in the Republic of Azerbaijan has been developing since they lived in this territory and has been mutually shaped within the framework of cultural and national-spiritual culture. Ethnic groups living within the Azerbaijani nation (Lezgins, Udins, Khinalugs, Budugs, Girizis, etc.) not only form and preserve their specific life but also fulfill some traditions of the customs of the Azerbaijani nation.

### **Literature**

This part of the study will include the theoretical basis of hospitality customs of the peoples living in Azerbaijan manifested in various rituals.

### **Methods**

Basically 3 methods were used in the research. 1. Analysis method. The first method of the study analysed the custom of hospitality and then its implementation in ethnic groups living

in Azerbaijan. 2. Synthesis method. The second method examines the fulfilment of the custom of hospitality by various ceremonies. 3. Comparative method. Third method, including the study of the hospitality traditions of ethnic groups living in Azerbaijan, compared to the hospitality traditions of Azerbaijanis.

### **The Custom of Hospitality of the Lezgins**

Lezgins, one of the Caucasian-speaking peoples, live compactly in various major cities of Azerbaijan, mainly in Baku, Sumgait, Ganja, as well as in Khachmaz, Ismayilli, Oghuz, Guba, Gabala, Gakh and Gusar districts.

In Duztahir village, one of the mountainous villages of Gusar district, located in the northeast of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Lezghin traditions have been preserved. The hospitality of the village, whole population consists of Lezgin, with its favorable landscape, with its traditions, is to welcome the arriving guest with a smile and pleasant words. The residents of the industrious village are tirelessly and willingly engaged in agricultural work in all seasons. Treating a visiting guest, cooking dishes characteristic of Lezgi cuisine, such as “tskan”, delicious *Lezgi kutabs*, “*Tach*”, traditional wedding food “*Choban plov*”, “*aluga*” are popular dishes very much loved by guests and tourists. The informant notes that we always welcome guests, even if the house is small. It is reported that the Spaniards, while in the Gusar, called pizza a dish called *tskan*.

The positive aspect of hospitality is that by interacting with people, it allows you to fully explore their character and characteristics. The negative side is that abuse of people's goodwill towards the guests. Hospitality shows the level of culture of a person, his communication skills. Lezgins, like Azerbaijanis, have a more pronounced custom of hospitality. When a guest arrives in the village, a sheep is sheared at the door in his honor, a samovar is prepared and a beautiful table is set. The variety of Lezgins traditions is characterized by the way the villagers greet the guest.

In ancient times Lezgins weddings were held for seven days. Later, the number of days became three. Currently, in most families, the wedding ceremony is organized on one day. Before the wedding, a ram is slaughtered in the groom's house and all the men of the clan participate in the process. An animal cannot be slaughtered unless a guest is present at this ceremony. Such importance given to relatives is an important indicator of respect of Lezgins for each other. Lezgins, unlike other nations, serve sweets called “wedding halva” at weddings. In addition to various utensils, various Lezgi socks for the boy's home are also put in the chest, which is given to the bride as a dowry. When the bride is brought in, wedding bonfires are lit on the road before reaching the door. The gift is accepted from the owner of the house. As in other regions of Azerbaijan, a ram is slaughtered at the feet of the bride. The difference between the Lezgins ritual customs of Novruz and those of Azerbaijan is that in the evening on the day of the holiday a fire, called in the Lezgin language “*Shem*”, is lit at the doors of everyone by the number of family members.

The marriage of a boy or a girl in Lezgins could not take place without the advice of parents. The proposal about whom his son should marry usually came from his parents. If a girl

appeared in the family, whom the boy saw and chose, the matter was discussed in the family. After the family gave its consent, the guy's close relatives began to prepare for the engagement, organized a *khoncha* (“*qirartun*”) ceremony and distributed candies (“*qimin pay*”). The women would first come to the bride (“*rush akun*”), then come again for approval and brought a ring and headscarf for the girl. The girl's wedding is organized very compactly, and boy's house during the wedding brought clothes and sweets for bride. Before a boy was married, his dowry was listed in the girl's house and the elders signed it. On the night before the bride's move, “*airilik ashi*” was prepared in the girl's house. After that, close relatives invited the girl to their house (Ahmadli and Aliyev, 2017: 196).

Almost most of the above-mentioned ceremonies are organized in the same way as in Azerbaijan. It is the parents choice of a wife for the boy, a ring and clothes for the bride, etc., as well as the fact that before the wedding, relatives invite a girl who will move in with the bride as a guest.

### Hospitality at the Ceremonies of the Shahdag Peoples

The Udins, like the Lezgins, used to have a 3-day wedding ceremony. On the last day of the wedding, the groom was bathed in water with honey. In the Talysh living in the Lankaran-Astara district, the bride used to enter the groom's house with a bowl of honey, and this honey was distributed to 7 people from among the guests. Such a tradition is manifested in the “Shahdag peoples” during the execution of the “wedding syrup” ritual. The bride brings syrup and honey in a bowl called the “bride's glass” as a symbol of sweetness, and serves it to the guests, having first tapped this syrup with her finger.

And during the Shahdag peoples “yes ceremony” called “*chorakkesdi*” (Volkova, 1980: 7), the elders, who asked for the girl's hand as a symbol of agreement between the bride's and groom's families, weigh the *lavash* (bread) with honey and butter, divide it into two parts and eat it (Seidov, 1983: 5-6). This ancient tradition continues to this day, and Azerbaijanis regularly use the expression “cut you off with honey”. In the Azerbaijan as well as in Eastern peoples, if two people are having a conversation and the person who is listening has to say something very important and has to butt in, that person would say respectfully use this expression.

Like most peoples of the Caucasus, the specific features of the Shahdag people's norms of behaviour are manifested in social life, as in the institution of hospitality, mutual assistance and twinning. In the past, it was also manifested in the custom of blood feud. It should be noted that there are very few separate studies on these customs, and publications on the Shahdag peoples are fragmentary. It is no coincidence that Y.D. Anchabadze in his review of the article on Khynalyg mentioned by us, written by Anchabadze Volkova, states that “it seems that the scarcity of sources can give a rather brief idea of the social structure of the Khynalyg people, as well as of their social life” (Anchabadze, 1982: 18).

As in the customs of the Azerbaijani people, the Shahdag peoples assign one room of the house to a guest (guest room). The living room was necessarily provided with carpets and blankets and was used only during the reception of guests.

Professor Aliaga Mammadli in his book “Ethno-cultural communities of Shahdagh: between the past and the future” writes about the Shahdagh peoples custom of hospitality at the wedding ceremony. As in the past, these days almost the entire population of the village attends the wedding, according to their custom, there was never a special invitation to the wedding ceremony. Earlier, the duration of a wedding used to be three days. However, nowadays, weddings last no more than two days. On the first day, relatives usually gather to discuss the upcoming ritual where food is also served to the guests. The organiser of this day is the father of the groom. On the second day, a tent is set up where the wedding ceremony will take place. Inside the tent, elderly people, *Aksakalss* (the male elders) drink tea in two rows. Children and women watch the process. Sometimes small tents were placed next to the big wedding tent, where the invited guests were served. And the organiser of the second day was the groom's uncle (mother's brother). In the past, weddings were organised on the roofs of houses (mainly in Khynalyg) and on threshing floors. Weddings are now held either in tents or in a special buildings for weddings in the village (Mamedli, 2023: 156).

Although wedding ceremonies in Lagija were organised according to the financial capacity of the population, the rules observed here were the same for all. Usually there were several stages of the wedding before the ceremony: 1. Approval of the choice (*gizbegenme*), 2. The consent of the daughter and her parents, 3. In return the offer of sweet tea at the bride's house, 4. The honcha of the girl's house, 5. Big khoncha, 6. In response to the big khoncha from the girl's house comes one filled with sweets, 7. Henna party, 8. Varash-the last pre-wedding transaction, 9. Drawing up a dowry, 10. Virgin wedding, 11. Young's wedding, 12. Bring dowry, 13. Bring the bride. Three days after the bride's arrival, “uzachikhdi” was organised in the house where she arrived, and the groom together with his friends was invited to the father-in-law's house (Ahmadli and Aliyev, 2017: 151-152).

### **Custom of Hospitality in Ethnic Rituals of the Udins and Talyshs**

According to the traditions of the Azerbaijani people, when the father is not at home, the eldest son is considered the second person after father in the family. In an Udi family, the second person in the family after the father is considered to be the mother or the eldest woman. A great woman in Udi is called “*Kala Kurux*”. The solution to all matters within the family fell to him. As in the case of Azerbaijanis, according to udins rules, when the head of the family enters the house, all family members stand up and he has his own place at the dinner table and it is considered improper for other family members to sit in that place. As for the custom of hospitality, in the Udi family, the son had no moral right to eat and drink with his father or socialize with a guest. M. Bazhanov writes that Udi women hide not only from their close relatives, but also from village elders and, as a rule, eat separately from the men in the family (Bejanov, 1892: 215). Currently, Udins live in Nij village of Gabala district of the Republic of Azerbaijan and partially in the center of Oghuz district.

In the Udins the genus existed as “ailux”, in the Azerbaijanis replacing the word combination “child”. But along with this, “*coga*” is also used to determine offspring among the Udi. According to Udi tradition, at the “*jogulun ahsibay*” ceremony held in spring, relatives

belonging to each zhog (generation) gather together, eat, drink and make merry (Bejanov, 1892: 221).

Talyshs compactly live on the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan Masalli, Lerik, Yardimli, Astara, Lankaran, including mixed with Azerbaijanis. It was considered important for a Talysh family to have Ziyad fish on the table of Novruz holiday, along with various dishes and sweets. And a number of ceremonies they meet with fresh fish on their table. The Talysh mostly had baked bread called "Bishi" during the wedding ceremony. According to information, during the henna ceremony in the girl's house, the groom and with 10-15 friends and peers came to them. At this time in the girl's house, only "Bishi" was put on the table for the groom and his friends. "Bishis are made of dough. Several layers of dough were placed on top of each other, made the size of a gogal and baked in a pan with melted butter, on the stove. After both sides are fried, the "cookies" are removed from the pan and sprinkled with powdered sugar on each side. The powdered sugar is gradually absorbed into the oiled fried dough. It was then brought to the groom's table, and part of it was placed in the bride's chest and sent to the groom's house. There were eighteen types of plov. These include "fish plov", "chigirtmaplov", "fisinjan-plov", "bakhla-plov", "dolma-plov", "kallapachaplov" (also called black plov), "arishtaplov", "sabzi kuku-plov", "bean plov", "turshukabaplov", "groats plov", "doshamaplov". Due to its content, such plov was cooked both daily and at weddings and days of mourning (Javadov, 2004: 249, 255).

Hospitality was also reflected in beliefs. Thus, grandmothers, well acquainted with tried and tested beliefs, looking at their hands stained in dough, address family members, "a guest will come to the house". "Overturned shoes are considered sign of guests are the door". When a person's "right eye twitches" during a conversation, this means either rejoicing or, according to the belief, the arrival of a guest (Babayev, 2000: 55).

Among the proverbs about the guest there are similar and different proverbs among the ethnic minorities living in Azerbaijan. We witness this tendency when we look at the proverbs and sayings of several ethnic groups. "The guest who arrives late should bring bread for himself" (Cər kağı kiyi həhne pşə gərəg çikakotkoa), "The uninvited guest is sitting in an unswept place" (Sas kundə kiyə yokundə cigə cūvtarmə), "An uninvited (unwelcome) guest eats at your own expense", (Sas kundə kiyi hinəne barışilli qantarmə) and "The guest comes with his sustenance" (Muqman viçin rizki qalaz kveda) (Melikova, 2016: 105). The proverbs mentioned above belong to the Khinalugs.

"A guest up to three days" (Muqman pud yikandi jeda) (Melikova, 2016: 105). And those listed refer to Lezgin proverbs. "Do not look at the guest's mouth while he is eating" (Mehmon xorək hardədə bəçəy qəvi emərəx). "Do not say a harsh word to family members in the presence of the guest" (Mehmoni tonə be kədəkiyon qonə sıxan məkə) (Melikova, 2016: 136).

And these proverbs used belong to the Talysh. "If a dog is on its back, turning from side to side, six guests will come to the house", "who looks after something carefully, a guest will come" (Abbasli et al, 2005: 180).

Hospitality in Kurds customs and beliefs is observed by the phrase the guest is a messenger of God, and the one who does not accept him, does not accept God. According to the

Kurds custom of hospitality, the guest was treated as a member of the family, and even the female members of the house did not hide from him (Ahmadli and Aliyev, 2017: 154).

### Conclusion

The long process of society formation shows that hospitality has been one of the mechanisms of provision, carrying out first of all the formation of good-neighbourly relations of an individual and society. At the same time, the climate, peculiarities of settlement layout, the prevalence of individualism, collectivism, etc. differences between a number of factors and diversity of social practices allowed many peoples as well as ethnic groups to form peculiar traditions of receiving guests, a unique culture of hospitality.

When approaching hospitality from the point of view of national relations, the process of convergence of mixed cultures is manifested. The institution of hospitality existed in a very similar form among the ancient Germans, Australians, English, Arabs, Indians, northern peoples, including Azerbaijanis, and various peoples of the world. In peoples far from each other in space and time, the customs performed at the ceremony of greeting guests could not be accidental. They confirm the strength of some deep structures of this rite, its semantic motives.

Ethnic groups further reinforce the tradition of living as friends and brothers regardless of race, affiliation, religion or gender. Be it Udins in Gabala, Tsakhurs, Avars, Ingiloyls living in Zagatala, Gakh districts, Lankaran, Astara, etc. Talyshs living in the regions are now working peacefully in Azerbaijan, in peace and tranquillity. As can be seen, they have been able to comfortably preserve and develop their culture, language, national peculiarities and traditions. This is the result of multicultural and tolerant attitude towards any people living in the territory of Azerbaijan.

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