

Architecture of Azerbaijan

1-38843

Kitabxanası



**HEYDAR ALIYEV
FOUNDATION**

M.F.Axundov adına
Azərbaycan Milli
Kitabxanası



Ancient architectural landmarks preserved in the territory of Azerbaijan testify to a lengthy and complex development of local architectural traditions. Artistic skills of early human communities are furthermore demonstrated through Neolithic and Eneolithic relics. Natural, geographic and climatic diversity of the area forced the local artisans to address certain architectural and construction challenges since times immemorial. The areas of Azerbaijan with historically high level of development played a significant role in the emergence and dissemination of certain types of construction.

Prosperous ancient states located in the territory of Azerbaijan such as Manna (IX-VII centuries B.C.) and later Atropatena led to the foundation of urban centers encircled by substantial defense constructions and impressive ramparts. The period of the Caucasian Albania (IV century B.C. to VII century A.D.) provided another strong impetus to town-planning. Mighty walls of Gabala, earthenware waterline, defense installations in the Derbend Pass (Demirgapy), so-called long walls, the temple of Kish in Sheki (V century), Chyragala (V-VI centuries), the Circular Temple in the village of Lekit (V-VI centuries), the basilica in Qum (VI century), the Temple Complex in Mingechevir (VII century) and other constructions clearly testify a high level of urban planning in the area.

The Royal Palace of Shirvanshah, portal of Divankhane (the trial place). XV century, Baku. Patterns of the portal resembling the ornaments of Oriental carpets, comprise leaves of figs and grapes, so typical for the Peninsula of Absheron. Inside the filigree medallions on the portal's walls, verses from the Holy Qur'an are masterfully carved into the diamonds of the floral-shaped geometric figures.



Defense installations of the Sassianian period are particularly remarkable. The Maiden Tower and the set of adjacent constructions, the Gilgilchay Line of Defense stretching from the Caspian coast to Mount Babadagh, together with the Defense Lline of Beshbarmaq provide sufficient information with regard to the development of defense installations in Azerbaijan.

With the dissemination of Islam after the conquest by the Caliphate (VII century), some serious novices took place in the architecture with emergence of new types of constructions like mosques, medrese, mausoleums, caravanserais, etc. During this time, along with Islamic installations, there were Christian shrines and defense constructions erected in various parts of the Caucasian Albania. The Javanshir Fort (VII century) located in the area of Ismayilly District, and the fortress complex nearby Yukhary Askipara village, Gazakh District (V-VIII centuries) are of a particular interest indeed.

The Temple in Kish, considered the earliest Christian shrine in the Caucasus. V century, Sheki.



Peri-Gala Fortress. III-IV centuries, Zagatala.

The Three Infants Monastery. Terter.

Aghoghlan Temple. VI century,
Zeyve village, Lachyn.



In IX-X centuries, with the Caliphate's decline, small feudal states emerged in Azerbaijan. This brought about a number of local architectural traditions known as the Arran, the Tabriz, the Nakhchivan, the Shirvan and the Absheron schools.

Most of the buildings erected by the representatives of the Arran architectural school comprising places like Ganja, Barda, Beylagan, etc., were destroyed as a result of the Ganja earthquake in 1139 and the subsequent Mongol invasion (XIII century). Ruins of some installations of that period were discovered in the course of archaeological excavations in Ganja and Beylagan. Three bridges on the Ganjachay river (XII century), as well as remnants of residential premises and baths (hamam) in Beylagan create a comprehensive idea of the style and features of the Arran school of architecture.

After Ganja, Barda and Beylagan as major hubs of the Arran school, the new hotbeds of the Azerbaijani architecture emerged in towns like Nakhchivan (the Nakhchivan school of architecture), Shemakha (the Shirvan-Absheron school of architecture) Tabriz and Maraga (the Tabriz school of architecture).

Legacy of Ajami Abubekr oghly Nakhchivani constitutes the culmination of the Nakhchivan school of architecture. The Mausoleums of Youssif ibn Kusseyir and Momine Khatun he designed in 1162 and 1186 respectively present the type of design and decorative elements that seriously influenced the very style of mausoleums both within Azerbaijan and abroad.

The double minaret portal of the Garabaghar Historic & Architectural Complex. XII century, Kengerli.

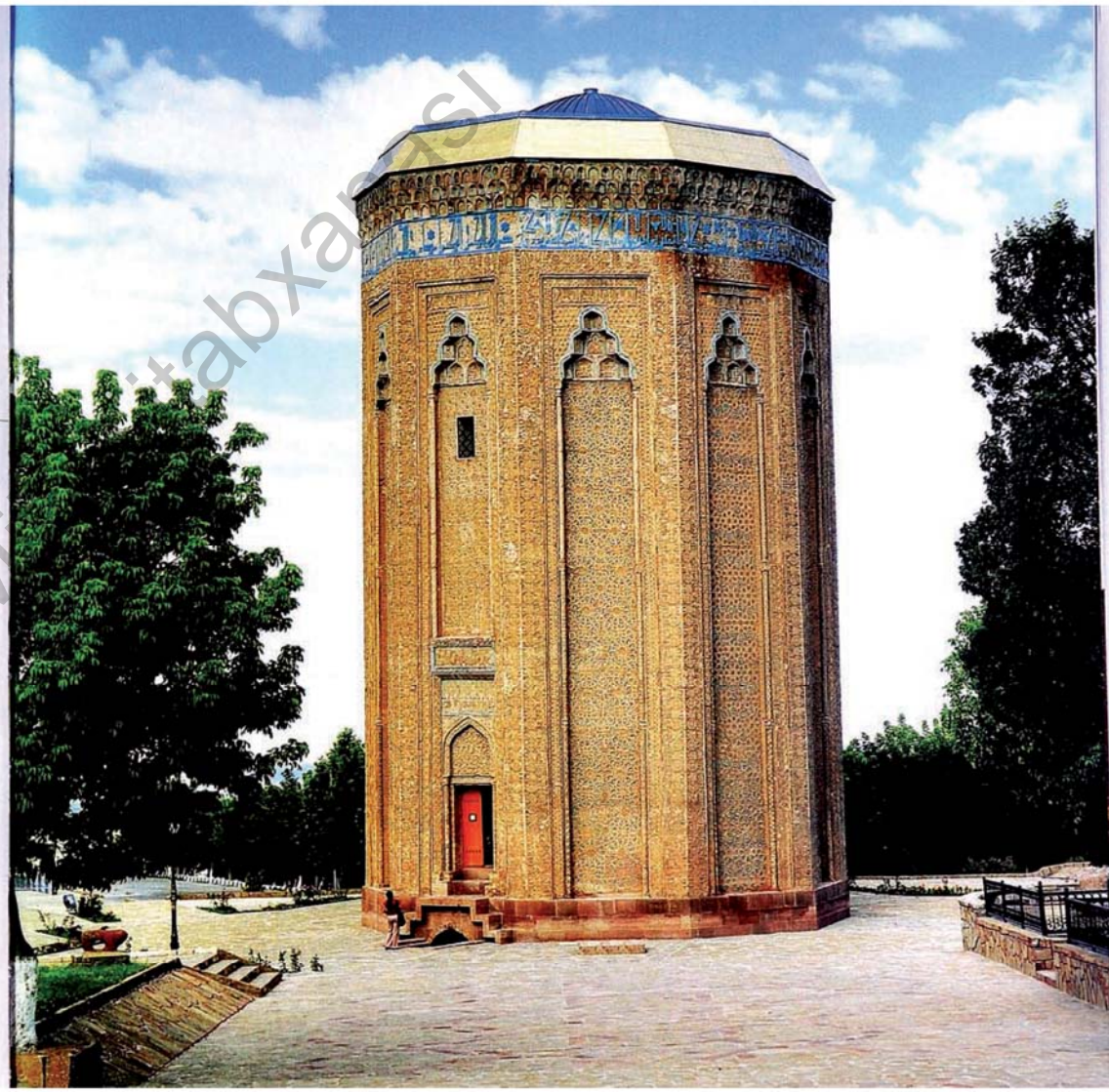


The Momine Khatun Mausoleum, a unique sample of the medieval architecture, with its extraordinary design composition and elaborate ornaments, was erected by architect Ajami Abubekr oghlu Nakhchivani as a tomb to Momine Khatun, the spouse of Shamseddin Eldaniz, the founder of the Atabey State.

The Momine Khatun Mausoleum.
1186, Nakhchivan.



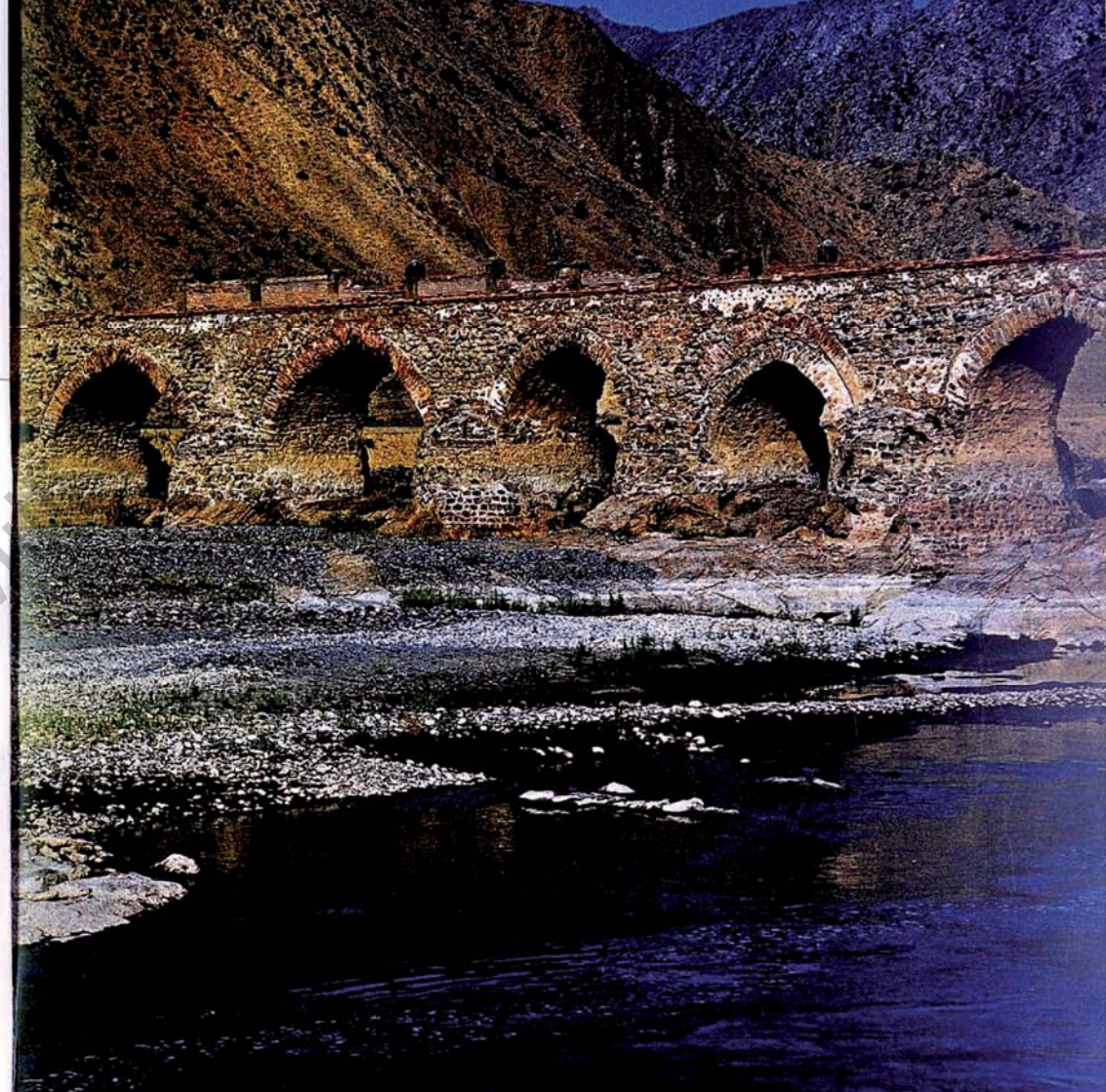
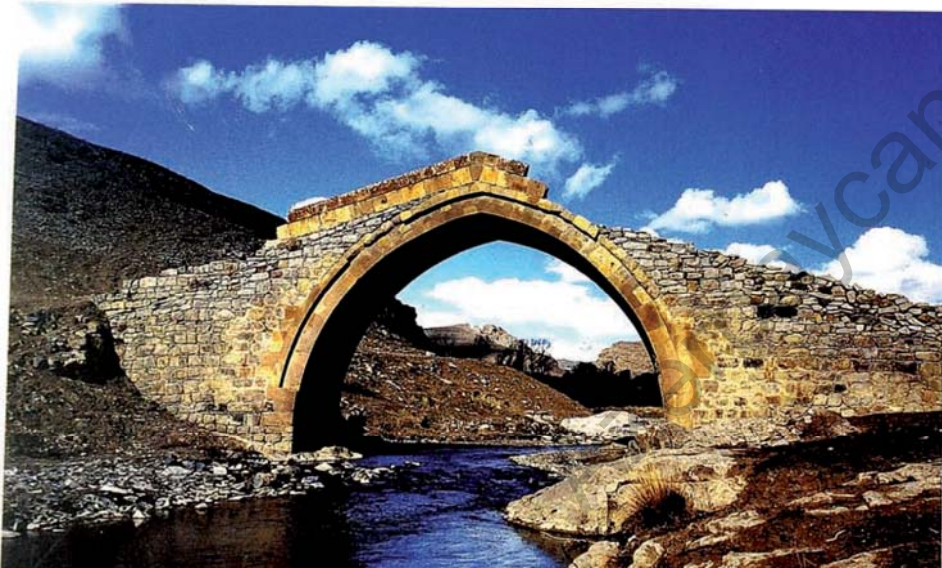
The Youssif ibn Kusseyir Mausoleum. 1162, Nakhchivan. As an ancient architectural landmark, the tomb features an extraordinary engineering design and proportionality.



A number of magnificent bridges were erected in Azerbaijan during the period of VII-XIII centuries, the most remarkable ones include the 15 and 11-span Khudafarin bridges over the Araz river (VII and XI centuries respectively), 4-span Syng-korpu Bridge (also known as the Red Bridge, XII century) in Gazakh District, and remnants of the three bridges over Ganjachay river (XII-XIII centuries), etc.

General view of the 15-span Khudafarin bridge, XI-XII centuries, Jabrayil.

Lalezar bridge, Aiguluushaghy village, Gubadly.



Atashgah Temple Complex. XVIII century, Baku. The temple was erected as a Zoroastrian shrine in the area where natural gas was running upon the surface through fissures in porous limestone.



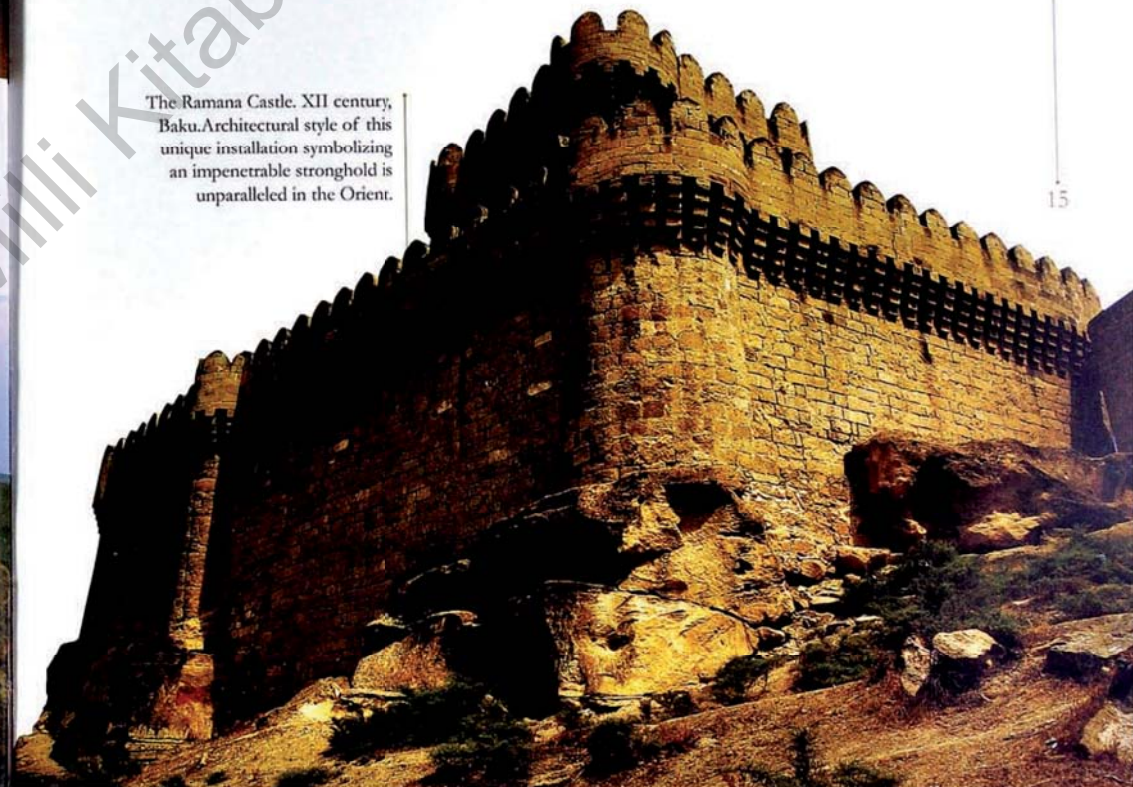
Diri-Baba Tomb lost among caves, Gobustan. Known as a sanctuary among people, the tomb of Diri-Baba was built of sandstone inside a rocky cave in 1402.

The Sabayil Castle erected as a defense construction at one of the rocky isles of the Baku Bay, nowadays submerged, is located some 350 meters away from the coast.



The Shirvan-Absheron school of architecture, with its long-term development, feature stone constructions with laconic space-and-planning parameters and elaborate vegetal ornaments carved into stone. The most remarkable samples of this school include the Synyq-Qala Minaret (1078, design by Muhammad ibn Abubekr), as well as the Castles in Mardakan (1232), Nardaran (1301, design by Mahmud ibn Said) and Ramana (XII-XIV centuries), the Diri-Baba Tomb in Gobustan (XV century), and Atashgah Temple (XVIII century). The Sabayil Castle erected in XIII century by the Shirvanshah dynasty in the harbor of Baku, nowadays submerged, is another remarkable landmark of this period.

The Ramana Castle. XII century, Baku. Architectural style of this unique installation symbolizing an impenetrable stronghold is unparalleled in the Orient.



Located in Icherisheher, over 50 historical and architectural monuments including the Maiden Tower (XII century), which has become the symbol of Baku, the Palace of Shirvanshab (1420-1460) are the distinctive chronicles of the city. Icherisheher, the Maiden Tower, the complex of Shirvanshab Palace were in 2000 included in UNESCO's list of World Heritage.

The Maiden Tower. XII century, Baku. The architectural style of this unique building, which is the symbol of invincibility, is second to none in the Orient.

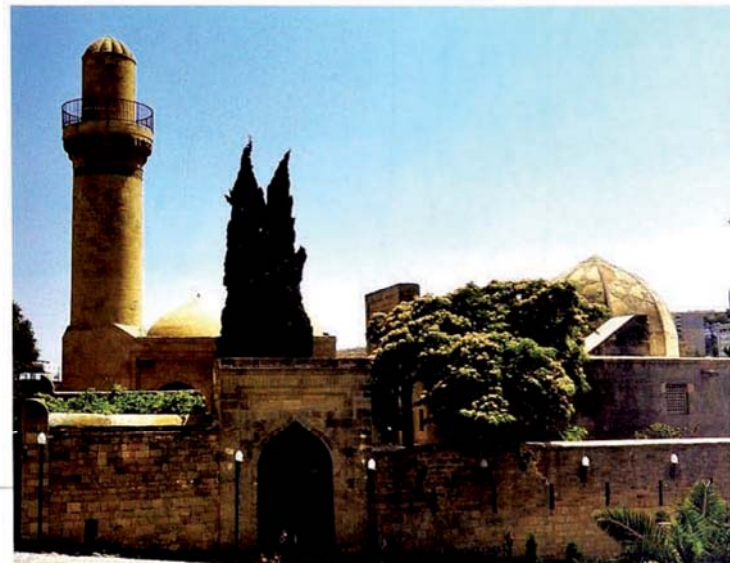




Divankhane (the royal trial place). XV century, the Royal Palace of Shirvanshah, Baku. Divankhane, an integral part of the Palatial Complex, with its extraordinary design and composition is second to none in the Orient.

The Market Square (Bazaar Meydany). Middle Ages, the Citadel of Baku (Icheri Sheher). The Market Square was discovered in 1964 beneath demolished ramshackle constructions and was later used for exposure of cenotaphs and stone figures discovered in the Sabayil Castle.

The Shirvanshah Palatial Complex. XV century, Baku.



The Rampart, Icheri Sheher. XII century, Baku.



The Elkhany State founded in the middle of XIII century provided a strong impetus to the development of architecture. The Maragha Observatory was erected during the reign of Khulagu-Khan (1256-1265), the founding father of the Elkhany dynasty.

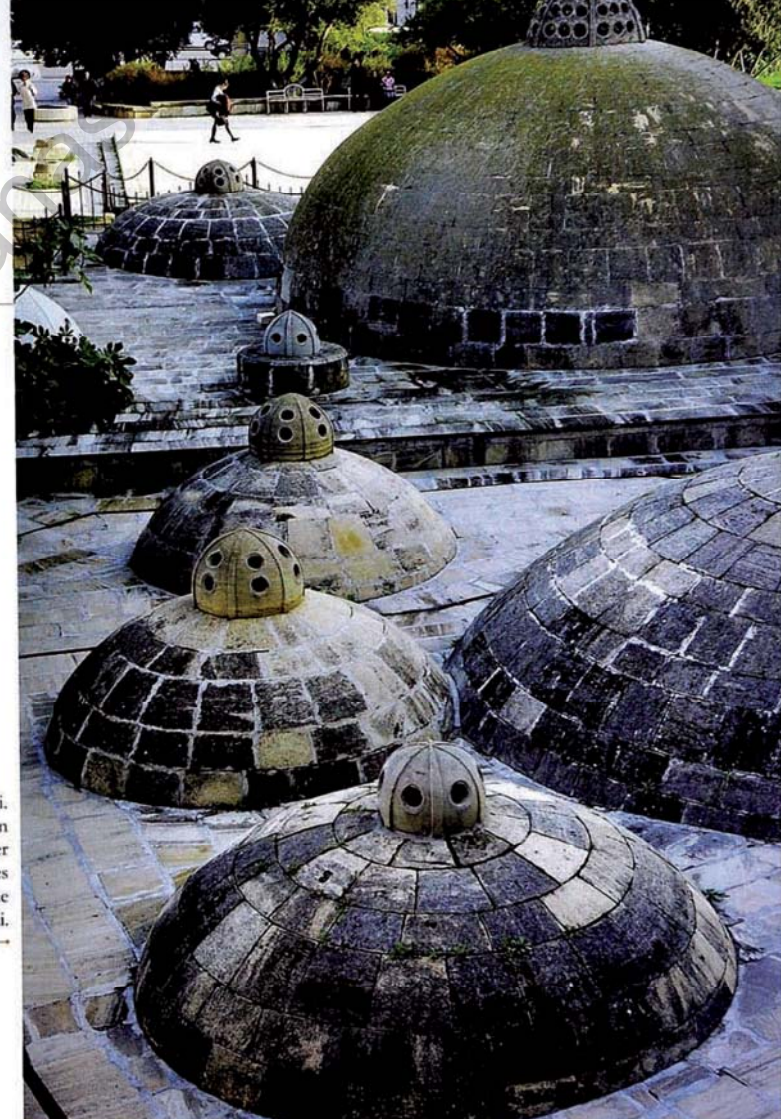
During XV-XVI centuries, the Azerbaijani architects and artists were also active in other countries where some truly remarkable masterpieces were created as well. The style of Azerbaijani architects may be traced in Bursa, Cairo, Baghdad, Herat, Samarkand and other famous hubs in the Orient.

To a certain extent, the architecture of XVI-XVIII centuries is a follow-up of the traditions established in the previous centuries. That said, rapid development of commerce made caravanserais (medieval inns) a prevalent form of construction activities of the day.

Hamams (bath-houses) were another wide-spread type of construction in mediaeval Azerbaijan, as it was also the case with other Oriental states. Along with sanitation and hygienic functions, hamams were broadly used for leisure and relaxation. The bath-houses preserved to this day, like the bath in Nardaran settlement of Absheron Peninsula (1388, design by Keshtasif Mussa oghlu), the Gasymbey Hamam (XIV century, Icherisheher, Baku), the Hajji Gayib Hamam (XV century, Icherisheher, Baku), baths in Basqal (XVII century), Chokek Hamam (Ganja, XVII century), neighborhood baths in Shusha (XIX century), Chuhur Hamam (XIX century, Guba), Agvanlar Hamamy (Sheki, XIX century), the bath in Abdal Gulably village in Aghdam (1900, design by Kerbalai Sefkhan Garabaghi) are worthwhile mentioning as magnificent architectural landmarks of their time indeed.



Domes of the Hajji Gayib Hamam (bath-house). XV century, Icheri Sheher, Baku. Located in the lower terrace of the Shirvanshah Palatial Complex, the bath was buried underneath the ground to stay warm in winter and cool in summer.



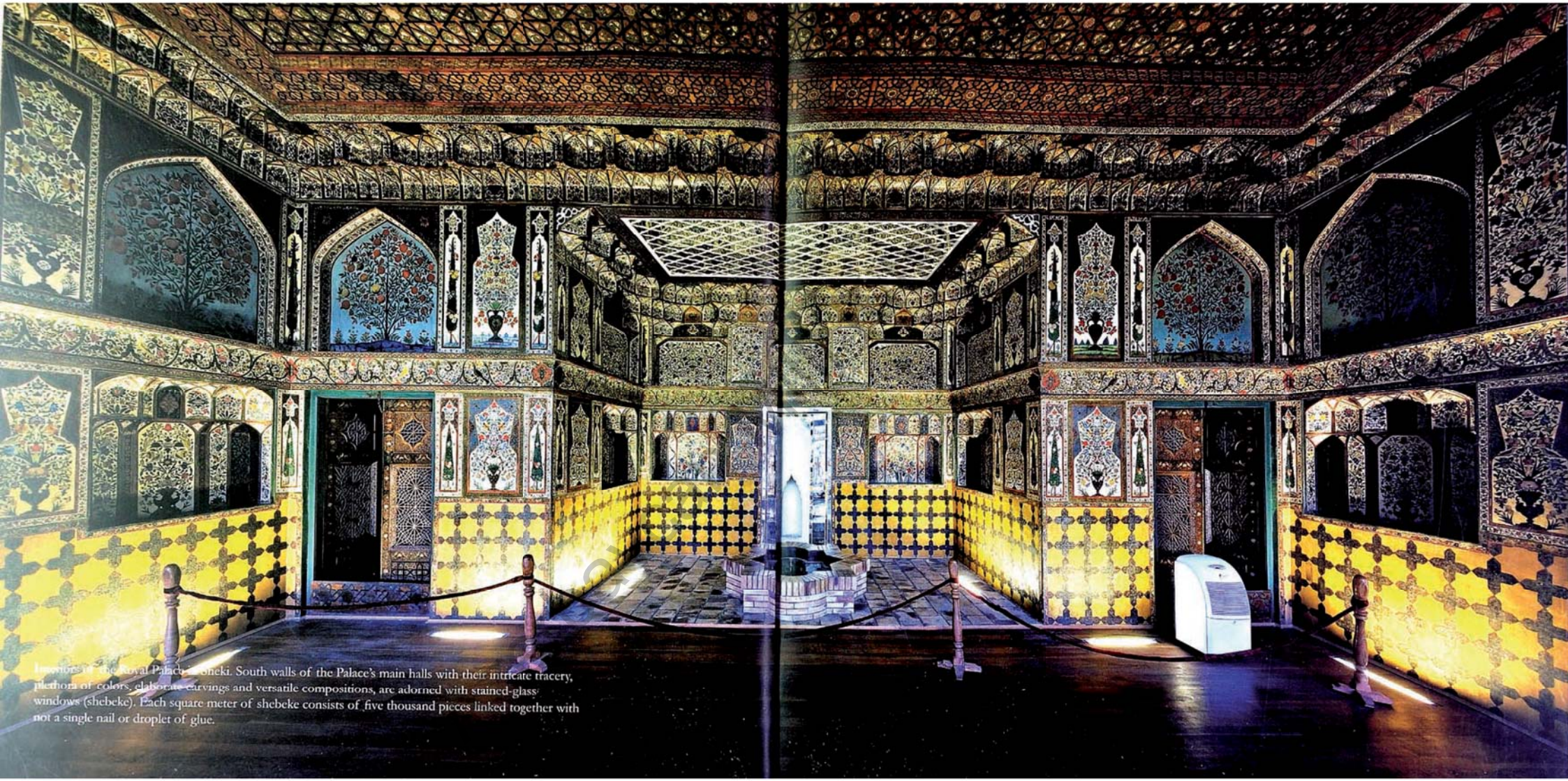
The Upper Caravanserai. XVIII-XIX centuries, Sheki. Known for its grandeur and space all over the South Caucasus, this inn features brick and river stone, so typical of the architecture in Sheki.

Palaces erected for local rulers dominated the architecture of XVIII centuries. The Royal Palace of Sheki Khans (dukes) is one of the most outstanding samples of this kind. The Palace presents a harmonious combination of the whole set of popular and applied arts. The Residence of Baku Khans in Icheri Sheher (the Citadel) and the Asgaran Fortress erected by Panakh-Ali-Khan of Garabagh are among the captivating landmarks of the said period.

The Historic and Architectural Reserve of Yukhary Bash and the Royal Palace in Sheki (XVIII-XIX centuries) are among the world's most famous monuments of architecture. The Palace of Sheki khans was erected in 1761-1763, during the reign of Husseyn Khan, the grandson of Hajji Chelebi Khan, the founding father of Azerbaijan's first independent Khanate (Duchy). Not a single nail or a piece of adhesive material were used in the course of construction. The Palace features some outstanding works of wood and glass. Interiors are adorned with geometrical patterns and versatile vegetal ornaments together with hunting and battle scenery. The mural paintings, magnificent shebeke, tracery, cuttery and carvings are absolutely amazing!

The Royal Palace in Sheki. XVIII century, Sheki.





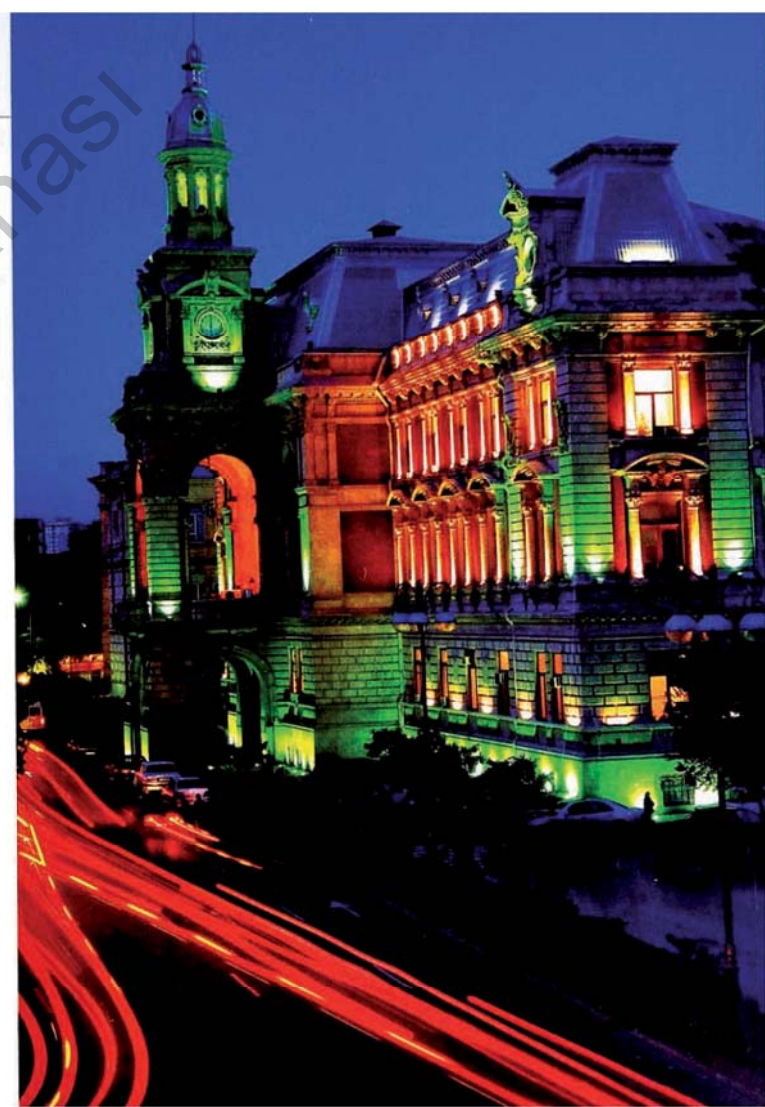
Intricacies of the Royal Palace in Isfahan. South walls of the Palace's main halls with their intricate tracery, plethora of colors, elaborate carvings and versatile compositions, are adorned with stained-glass windows (shebeke). Each square meter of shebeke consists of five thousand pieces linked together with not a single nail or droplet of glue.

New types of constructions that emerged in the area after the annexation of North Azerbaijan to Russia played a significant role in the development of local architecture. The elements of Gothic were applied in the construction of certain residential premises, along with the styles traditionally prevalent in the Azerbaijani architecture. French Gothic style of the Murtuza Mukhtarov Palace (later Wedding Hall, 1911-1912) or Venetian Gothic of Ismailiyye building of local charity (nowadays office of the President of the National Academy of Sciences, 1908-1913), both designed by Joseph K. Ploshko, are a vivid example of this. Together with residential premises, public buildings had a significant share in the construction activities of the day. Edifices of the Fine Arts Museum in Baku (1888-1890, design by Nicholas A. von der Nonne), and the Caty Hall (nowadays The Baku Executive Authorities building, 1900-1904, design by Joseph V. Goslavski) are just a few to mention.



The Azerbaijan State Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre. 1910-1911, Baku, design by Nicholas V. Bayev.

The building of Municipal Executive Authorities of Baku (former City Hall), erected in 1900-1904, was a 'swan song' of an outstanding architect J. V. Goslavski (1865-1904), also known as Rastrelli of the Caucasus among his contemporaries.





Ismailiyye building was erected by old Bakur's oil tycoon Mussa Naghiyev based on the design of J. K. Plosbko to commemorate M. Naghiyev's late son Ismayil. Looted and burnt by dasmnaaks (Armenian nationalists) and communists during tragic events of March 1918, the building was restored under the Soviets in 1922-1925. It was exactly the time when Qur'anic verses carved on the facade were replaced with five-pointed stars as symbols of the Soviet epoch.

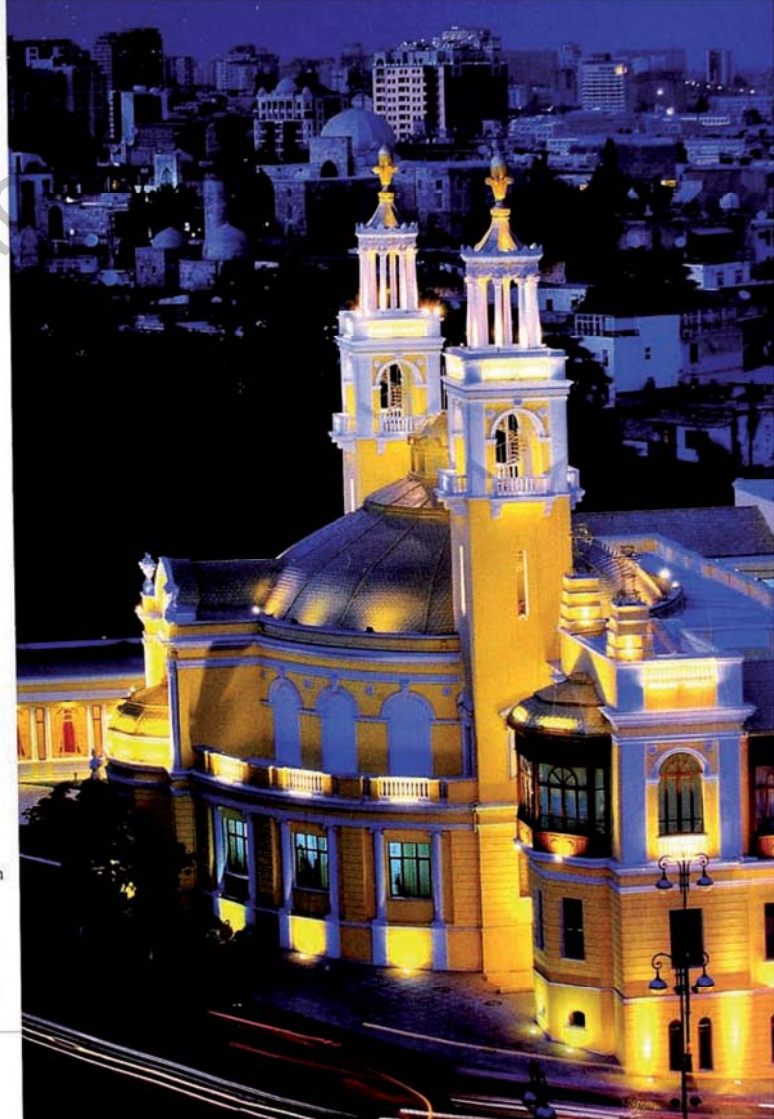
Theatre buildings featuring the second half of XIX century presented a brand new type of constructions in Azerbaijan's architecture. The first theatre building was erected in Shamakhy in 1858 (design by Gasym-bey Hajibababeyov). In later years, the Taghiyev Theatre was erected in Baku (now the Azerbaijan State Operetta Theatre, 1883, design by P. I. Kognovitski), and the Azerbaijan State Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre (1911, design by N. V. Bayev).

A very peculiar school of architecture emerged in Garabagh in the middle of XIX century, with kerbalai Sefikhan Garabaghi as the most outstanding representative. It was him who reconstructed Imamzadeh complex in Barda in 1868, erected Ashaghy and Juma Mosques in Shusha (1874-75 and 1883 respectively), as well as Hajji Alakbar Mosque in the town of Fuzuli (1890), and Garabaghlylar Mosque in Asgabat (1880).

The most remarkable buildings erected in Baku in the early XX century include the Public Assembly Club (nowadays the M. Magomayev Azerbaijan State Philharmonic Hall, 1910-1912), the residences of Isa-bey Hajinsky, a renown entrepreneur and public figure (1910-1912), Mussa Naghiyev, one of the leading local oil barons, the Ashurbeyovs noble family, former Phenomenon Cinema (nowadays the Abdulla Shaiq Azerbaijan State Puppet Theatre).



The Abdulla Shaiq Azerbaijan State Puppet Theatre (former Phenomenon Cinema). 1912, design by J. K. Plushko. Substantial reconstruction and renovation was undertaken in 2007.



The Muslum Magomayev Azerbaijan State Philharmonic Society. Erected in 1910-1012 as the Public Assembly's summer club was used as a philharmonic hall since 1936. Substantial renovation conducted in 2004.



Interior of the Aghabala Guliyev residence (nowadays Union of Architects of Azerbaijan). 1899, design by K. B. Skurevich, Baku.

Residence of Isa-bey Hajinski, a famous entrepreneur and public figure. 1910-1912, Baku. The building witnessed General Charles de Gaulle as a visitor during his trip to Moscow through Tehran in November 1944.



Stately edifices of the M. F. Akhundov National Library (1960), the Azerbaijan State Academic National Drama Theatre (1960), the Central Mall (1961), the Government House (1936-1952), Mirvari (the Pearl) Café (1960), and Gulistan Palace (1969-1982) added further value to the city's image.



Mirvari (the Pearl) Café, erected in 1960 by using spread concrete technologies, provided a cutting-edge solution for its time. Design by V. Shulgin, engineering by N. Nikonov.

A brand new phase in town-planning and architecture of Azerbaijan was launched in 1960. The Baku Subway started operating as of 1967. The underground features a high level of artistic decoration and good quality of construction works through a very appropriate synthesis of architecture and figurative art.

Icheri Sheher subway station, operating since 1967, reconstructed in 2008.



The Government House. 1936-1952, Baku,
design by L. Rudnev and V. Munz.

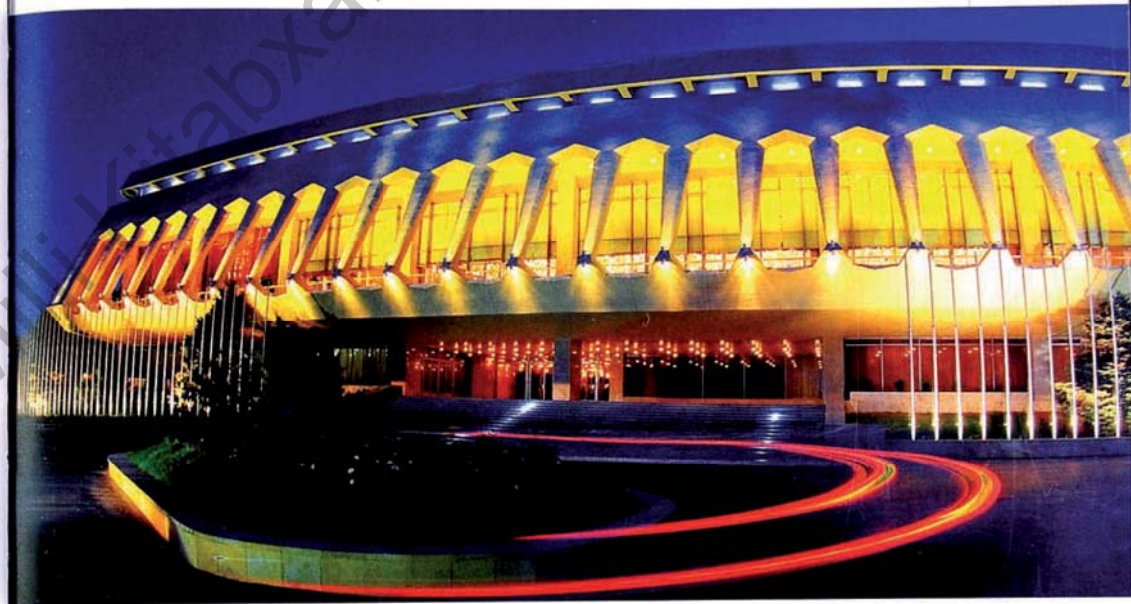


The Heydar Aliyev Palace. 1972, Baku. Design
by B. I. Ginzburg, V. S. Shulgin and
E. R. Melhisedekov.

Gulistan Palace. Erected following the initiative
of the National Leader Heydar Aliyev during his
administration in 1969-1982.



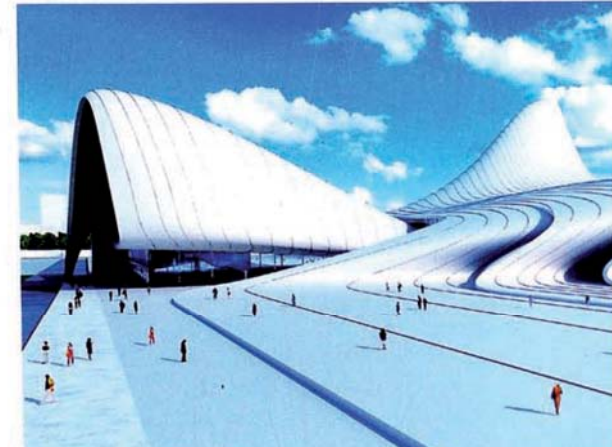
The Scientists House. 1946-1948, design by
M. A. Usseyenov and S. A. Dadashov.
Bahram Gur Statue inspired by poem by Nizami Ganjavi.
1960, sculptor G. Sujaddinov, A. Mustafayev.





Regain of the national independence in 1991 provided a strong impetus to the development of Azerbaijan's architecture. A synthesis of Oriental and Occidental make the image of Baku magically attractive. The city combines old-style heritage buildings designed in traditional style with the constructions in European style.

The Heydar Aliyev Center.
Baku, design by Zaha Hadid.



'Port Baku'



'Flame Towers'



With a view to preserving historic images of the Azerbaijani towns and urban planning traditions, special decisions were made and relevant steps taken in Azerbaijan. Status of the national historic and architectural reserves were granted to the town of Shabran and Chyraqqala Fortress (2002) in the District of Shabran, the village of Ilisu in Gakh District (2002), Kish village in the District of Sheki (2003), Pir-Husseyn Khanegah in Hajigabul District (2004).

That being said, the architectural legacy of Azerbaijan has also recently suffered a serious loss. With the occupation of Daghyg Garabagh and adjacent areas such as Lachyn, Kalbajar, Aghdam, Fuzuli, Jabrayil, Gubadly and Zangilan in the early 1990's, the policy of destruction of numerous Azerbaijani architectural landmarks was launched. The major architectural sites located in the territories under current occupation include the Ganjasar Monastery (1216-1238, Kalbajar), Aghoghlan Temple (VI century, Lachyn), The Three Infants Monastery (Terter), the Khudaferin Bridge (XI-XII centuries), the Shusha Citadel (1750-1757), the Saatly Mosque (XVIII century, Shusha), Gara Beyuk-Khanum Fortress (second half of XVIII century), the Shahbulag Fortress of Panakhali-Khan (XVIII century, Aghdam), just to mention a few.



I-39543