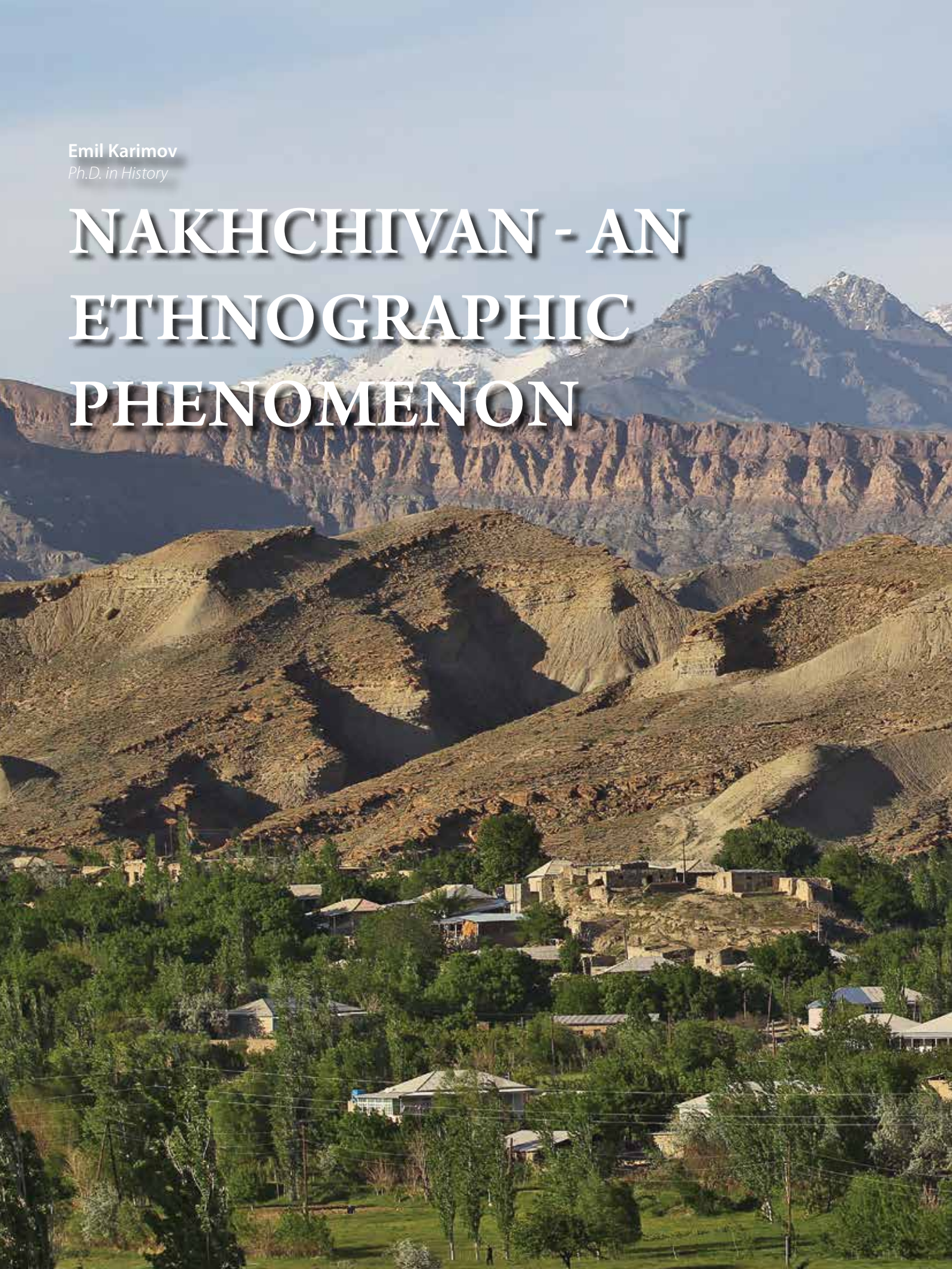


Emil Karimov
Ph.D. in History

NAKHCHIVAN - AN ETHNOGRAPHIC PHENOMENON







Azerbaijan is one of the unique historical-cultural regions of the globe. This wonderful region is one of the centers of ancient civilization, where you can observe the main stages of the development of society. At the same time, each region of the country contributes to the formation of national traditional culture. Although some areas of the country differ in their local features, together they constitute a single traditional Azerbaijani culture and in this sense complement each other. The ancient Nakhchivan region is no exception in this regard. **Historical, archaeological and ethnographic data suggest that Azerbaijanis are the indigenous population of the region.** Historian A. Klimov wrote in 1938 that the study of archaeological monuments of Nakhchivan “suggests that the Azerbaijanis of that era already knew cattle-breeding and agriculture and that the city of Nakhchivan is the oldest among the cities of Azerbaijan ... the Azerbaijani people were able to carry their culture through the centuries” (1).

The rock carvings of Gamigaya in Ordubad District, related to the Bronze and Early Iron Ages, represent a source for the study of the lifestyle, the economic life and material and spiritual culture of the people in the distant past. In the rock paintings, especially in scenes of hunting, dynamism indicating the craftsmanship of ancient artists is striking.



Throughout its history, Nakhchivan has suffered devastating invasions by conquerors. After each war, the population restored and developed its homeland, eliminating the consequences of devastation. The causes of the current besieged situation of Nakhchivan are rooted in the historical past. In accordance with the 10 February 1828 Treaty of Turkmanchay, the Nakhchivan and Erivan khanates were annexed to Russia, and in March of the same year, the so-called "Armenian province" was created in the empire, and in 1849 – Erivan Province, and Nakhchivan became one of its districts. It should be noted that the geographical boundaries of Nakhchivan were much broader before than now and included the Daralayez, Megri and Gafan mahals. However, as the region was under the rule of tsarist and then Soviet Russia, these lands were given to Armenia, and as a result the area of Nakhchivan shrank to 5,500 square kilometers.

The resettlement of Armenians from Iran to Nakhchivan in 1828 greatly exacerbated inter-ethnic relations in the region. According to V. Grigoryev, in that year, 2,551 Armenians were resettled here from the Tabriz, Khoy, Salmas and Urmia mahals with Russian efforts (2). It should be noted that this book of V. Grigoryev attracted



the attention of the poet Aleksandr Pushkin. In 1836, the pages of *Sovremennik*, published by the poet, carried a review by A. Zolotnitskiy on Grigoryev's work. The incomers settled on the most fertile lands, where the local population was already living. As a result, some Azerbaijanis were forced to flee their homes. "Many groups of Armenians settled arbitrarily in the best villages where they occupied empty houses. Indigenous people suffered a lot from this, being cramped in their lives by new aliens, to whom the local authorities paid more





attention, and the natives had to yield a significant part of their land to them.”

19th century authors (V. Grigoryev, A. Dekonskiy and others) characterize the Armenians resettled here as cunning, greedy, selfish and unsociable people. According to the official of the Ministry of State Property of the Russian Empire for the Caucasus region, ethnic Armenian S. P. Zelinskiy, **Armenians who came from Salmas and settled in the village of Tumbul engaged in deception and fraud, counterfeiting,**

speculation, especially resale of gold and theft of crosses. To achieve their goals, they posed as Orthodox Christians or Muslims, depending on the situation (3: 4).

The history of Nakhchivan, which goes several millennia back, has preserved ancient evidence about the rich and diverse culture of this region. The unique monument Ashab al- Kahf (“those living in a cave” in Arabic) located in Nakhchivan is associated with the spread among the Muslims of the East of the well-known



legend according to which despite pressure from pagans to keep their faith, seven young Muslim men walked into a cave and fell asleep in it. The Koran says: "An argument began between the faithful and godless people on how to deal with the sleeping young people. They said: Construct a building over them. Their god knows them better. The faithful, who were better informed about their condition, said: We will build a temple over them. Some will say they numbered three, and the fourth one was a dog, others - they numbered five and the sixth one was a dog. They appear to be throwing a yellow stone into the abyss. There are those who say: There are seven of them and the eighth one is a dog. Say: The number of them is better known to God. They spent three hundred years in the cave and nine years into the bargain. Say: Their term is better known to Allah." (18:22-27).

Archaeological excavations conducted in Kharaba-Gilan, Kultepe and Gizil Vang point to a developed urban culture in Azerbaijan. Archaeological surveys in Nakhchivan in the early twentieth century were carried out by Armenians Y. A. Lalayan (Kultepe, Gizil Vang, 1904) and S. V. Ter-Avetisyan (Kharaba-Gilan, 1913), **who stole**





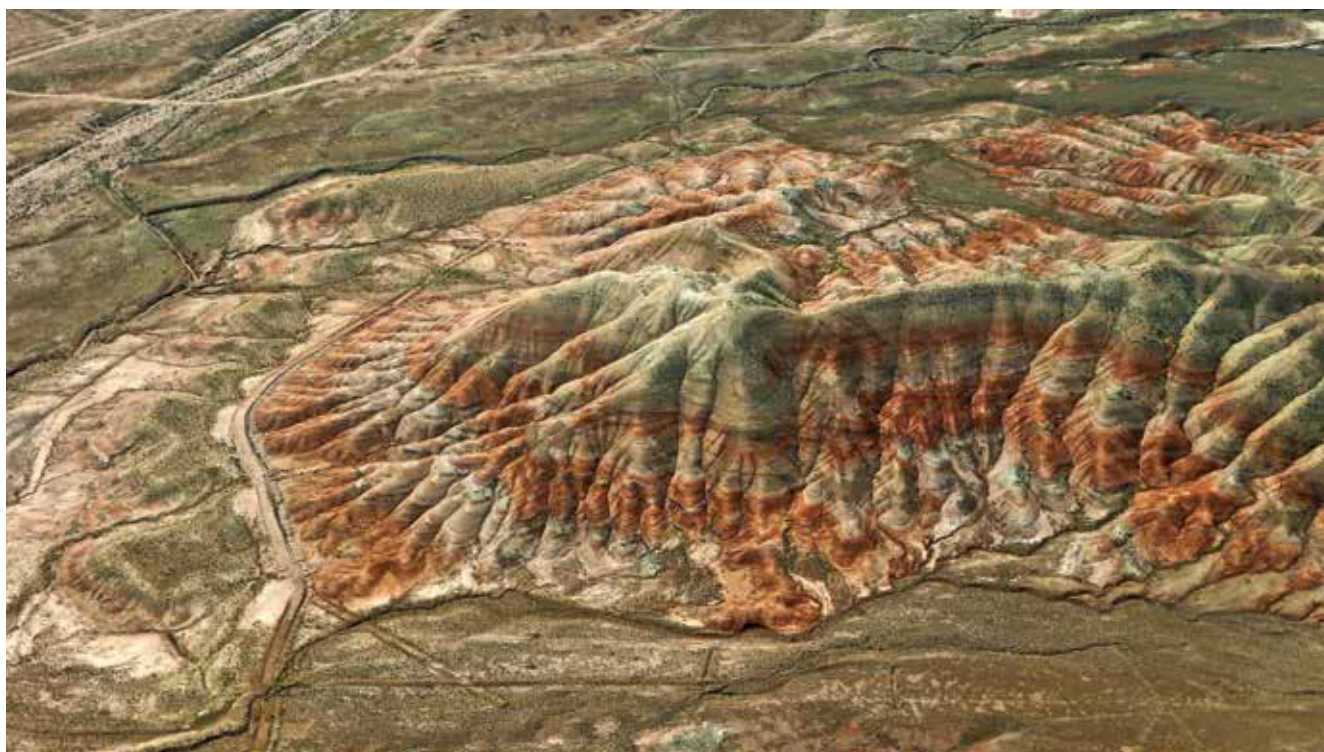
the valuable samples of material culture they found and took them abroad.

The medieval architectural school of Nakhchivan was famous throughout the East. It manifests itself in both residential and public buildings. Buildings of Ordubad

attract special attention in terms of both architecture and ethnography and are popularly known as "harpishtali evler". On the ground floor of these houses there are corridors with semicircular eight- or six-pointed arches, which are unique for their construction technique. These corridors, which are lined with fired bricks with high artistic taste and have several doors, represent paths that connect rooms and the courtyard. The decoration of windows with stained glass is also characteristic. According to the expert on the history of architecture, R. Salayeva, **it is difficult to find analogues of Ordubad homes in the entire East.**

Watercourses – cheshma - in the courtyards of Ordubad differ for their original design. Water enters them through special canals from kahrizes. These watercourses are located at a depth of 3-5 meters and have stone stairs, the number of steps on which reaches 40. Therefore, these watercourses are known among the people as "girkhayag" (literally, "centipede"). In the past, the number of kahrizes in and around the city was





much higher. The historian and Caucasus ethnographer, I. Chopin, who visited here in the 1820-30s, recorded 70 kahrizes. In the past, such cheshmas as Haji Fateh cheshmasi, Bilal cheshmasi, Peji cheshma, Meyramcha

cheshma and others were known in Ordubad.

Nakhchivan is one of the important centers of Azerbaijani crafts. They have been engaged in weaving and carpet weaving in particular for centuries







here. This is evidenced by archaeological finds in Kultepe. During excavations, clay spinning wheels and bone tips of spindles attributed to the 4th-3rd millennia BC were discovered here. They produced fleecy and pileless carpets from camel wool.

As elsewhere in Azerbaijan, Nakhchivan carpets are also rich in geometric shapes and images of plants and animals. Carpets were decorated with unique patterns. In the past, Nakhchivan, Ordubad, Julfa and Shahbuz were known as centers of carpet weaving from wool and silk.





Among the many highly artistic carpets, we should note the Nakhchivan fleecy carpet (1802). Zili-type carpets were common mainly in Nakhchivan.

Other arts and crafts were also highly developed in Nakhchivan. At the beginning of the 19th century, their number in the region reached 100. Jewelry, artistic processing of metal, stone and wood, embroidery, production of utensils, pottery and etching were widespread. V. Grigoryev recorded 53 fruit stalls, 35 stalls

of brocade and textiles, two silver stalls, two - weapons stalls and 13 forges at the Nakhchivan market in 1829. In 1880, the number of stores at the city market reached 425.

Artistic embroidery and wood processing are characterized by specific features in Nakhchivan. It is no accident that surveys by art critics G. Aliyeva and A. Aliyeva are devoted to these popular arts. Samples of these arts were known throughout the East. An anonymous 13th century work "Wonders of the World" states: "In Nakhchivan they manufacture household products - beautiful fabrics, thin blankets and wooden bowls. Patterned tableware manufactured by Nakhchivan masters from wood is distributed as gifts around the world." Carving, ornaments and inlay were widely used in woodworking.

Like in several regions of Azerbaijan, traditional techniques of embroidery such as julma, chakhma, tortikma, gondarma and nagda are also widely used in Nakhchivan. Jewelry was placed on velvet, silk and cotton fabrics. With regard to patterns in samples of folk art, their originality catches the eye. However, the art of painting on fabric is a specific craft in the region of Nakhchivan.





In this art, patterns were applied to cotton fabric by stamping. Samples of this art reached a high artistic level and differed for their diversity. The famous Turkish traveler of the 17th century, Evliya Celebi, noted that galamkari, as well as bahramguri embroidery and chintz tablecloths of Nakhchivan enjoyed renown worldwide.

The spiritual culture of Azerbaijanis living in Nakhchivan is very rich too. Legends associated with Ashab al-Kahf, Ilandag and other places still exist. I. Chopin's article about the musical culture of the Azerbaijani population of the Nakhchivan and Erivan regions, published in 1840 in the St. Petersburg magazine *Mayak*, contains information about the dances Guvang (sedentary dance) and Mirzayi. The author notes that Armenian incomers living in these regions do not have their own national music and have learned Azerbaijani music. Collective dances yalli in the region differ with their choreographic content and variety of genres. Vocal yalli is common mainly in Ordubad, Sharur and Shahbuz, and vocal-instrumental - in Sharur. A. Alakbarova, who researched the Nakhchivan yalli, notes that dozens of types of yalli dances - Tanzar, Sheril, Marali, Gaz-Gazi, Kochari and others – were common in Nakhchivan in the past.

Nakhchivan is one of the oldest agricultural regions of Azerbaijan. Gardening should be specially mentioned. Dozens of species of fruit have been produced here through national selection. In the 1830s, the city of Nakhchivan had 184 orchards and Ordubad - 473. In Ordubad there were 50 vineyards. In the 1880s, the number of gardens in Nakhchivan reached 1,263. Nakhchivan's city school inspector A. Nikitin wrote in 1882 that 60 species of grapes were cultivated in the Nakhchivan district (5). Here Azerbaijani gardeners grew





such species of grapes as Ag Khalili, Gara Khalili, Gizil Uzum, Asgari, Huseyni, Ordubadi, Khachabash, Kishmishi, Tabarza, Shafai, Marmari, Sahibi, etc., species of apricots such as Badami, Abutalibi, Tabarza, Ag Erik, Injanabat, pears such as Sini, Gulabi, Hivili, Gizil Armud, Shakari, species of quince such as Andamiji, Ordubadi and Vanandi, species of peaches such as Selami, Ordubadi, Narinji, Anjiri, Ag Nazli and Girmizi Nazli, species of cherries such as Ag Gilas, Gara Gilas, May Gilasi, Sari Gilas, apples such as Rajabli, Sultanli, Yazli and other fruits. In the 1880s, 12 rare species of cherries were grown in the village of Bilav alone (S. P. Zelinskiy, 1880). The sort of melon "tutma" was characteristic of the region, especially Nakhchivan and Ordubad. The summer and winter "tutma" from the village of Aliabad were particularly well-known. Such species of tutma as Nadirkhani, Miyanbur, Agjanabat, Goyjanabat and Narinji were widespread in the region. Nakhchivan watermelons have a good taste despite their large size.

All of the above cultural artifacts were created by talented Azerbaijani craftsmen - ancient inhabitants of this amazing and beautiful land.

Unfortunately, during the Soviet era, the cultivation of most of these fruit species was discontinued as a result of the policy of "agricultural intensification".

It should be noted that, although a lot has been

done to explore the rich and diverse traditional culture of Nakhchivan, the ethnography of this region has not been studied adequately. **It is necessary to create fundamental works both on the history of Azerbaijan and on the history of Nakhchivan, which is part of Azerbaijan.** 🌸

References

1. Климов А.. Памятники прошлого, газ. «Бакинский рабочий», 18 ноября 1938 г.
2. Григорьев В. Статистическое описание Нахичеванской провинции, Спб, 1833
3. Зелинский С.П. Три магала: Нахичеванский, Ордубадский и Даралагезский. Географо-статистическое и сельскохозяйственное описание. // «Сборник сведений о Кавказе», т. 7, Тифлис, 1880
4. Деконский А.Г. Экономический быт государственных крестьян в западной части Шаруро-Даралагезского уезда, Эриванской губернии. // «Материалы для изучения государственных крестьян Закавказского края», т. 1, Тифлис, 1885.
5. Никитин А. Город Нахчыван и Нахичеванский уезд, «Сборник материалов для списания местностей и племен Кавказа», вып. II Тифлис, 1882