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PhD in History

**DISTINGUISHED
WOMEN IN HISTORY OF
AZERBAIJANI ATABAY,
AQ QOYUNLU AND
SAFAVID STATES**

Conclusion. See the beginning in IRS-Heritage, № 41, 2019

This list of outstanding women's names could be continued. However, the personality of Momine Khatun, the wife of Azerbaijani atabay (ruler) Ildeniz and mother of prominent Ildenizid rulers Jahan Pahlavan (1175-1186) and Qizil Arslan, is particularly remarkable. The concept of women's governing role in the state system in the Atabay state should be generally emphasized as well.

This personality existed during an earlier era that was by far no less tension-filled than that of the previously mentioned Sara Khatun and Tajlu Begim, i.e. the epoch of the Ildenizid state (1136-1225). This time period is often referred to by historiographers as the Renaissance epoch, which saw the emergence of great poets, poetesses and statesmen, including a lot of women, such as Mahsati Ganjavi (1089-1159). But first and foremost, Momine Khatun became a personality that largely defined the history of Azerbaijan in the 12th century and left behind a heritage reflected in a mausoleum. The Mausoleum of Momine Khatun is one of the remarkable monuments of the Middle Ages.

Initially, the word "khatun" was used in the Turkic world with regard to the women who were the spouses of khans, sultans, emirs, etc., in compliance with such Western titles as "empress", "queen" and "tsarina".

The term has an ancient origin. This title had approximately the same meaning during the tenure of the Atabays.

"Divan-i lugat-it Turk" by Mahmud Qashkari defines the term "katun" as follows:

Afrasyab kızlarından olanların adıdır. Şu savda dahi gelmiştir: "Xan işi bolsa katun işi kalır. Hanın işi, emri olunca, Hatunun işi geri kalır". Bu arapların sözü gibidir. (إذا جاء نهر الله بطل نهر عيسى) (6, p. 410).

(Translation: This is how the Afrasiab girls were called (note 6). This is referenced in the following sentence, "If the khan's decision is declared, the decision of his wife will be postponed. The decisions and orders of the khan are paramount to the decisions of the Khatun». The sentence's meaning is identical to the Arabic proverb which says, 'When God's commandment arrives, that of Christ becomes meaningless – N. A.)

The same meaning is implied in reference to the "khatun" notion in Orkhon-Yenisei inscriptions (note 7).

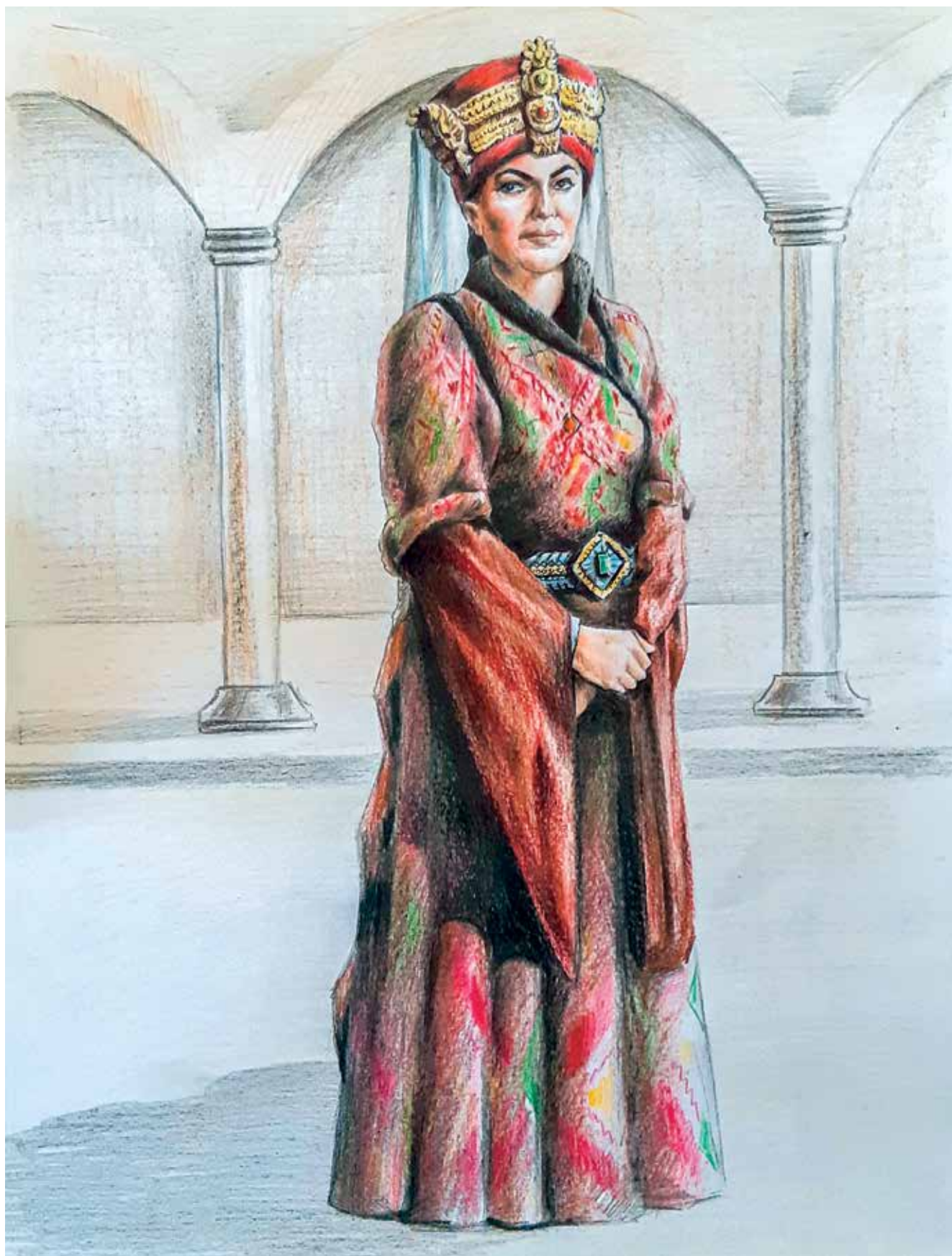
Prior to telling the story of Momine Khatun, the challenging historical period that she faced should be described. A new Seljuq state, the Iraqi sultanate ruled by the Seljuq dynasty with the capital in the Azerbaijani city of Hamadan, emerged in 1118. However, it is com-

mon knowledge that the Azerbaijani Ildeniz rulers, in fact, were subsequently at the helm of state. It is noteworthy that Z. M. Buniyadov made a substantial contribution to the studies regarding the nearly century-long historical period of the Atabay state's existence. The Orientalist conducted extensive research of the available sources. The Arabic language sources he studied included Ibn al-Asir's (1160-1233) ("al-Kamil fi-t-ta rikh" or "Perfect on history"), Sibte al-Jawzi's (1185-1256) "Mir at az-zaman fi-t-tarikh al-ayan" ("The mirror of time in the chronicle of celebrities"), Sadr ad-Din Ali al-Husayni's "Zubdat at-tavarikh fi akhbar al-umara va-l-mulyuk as-Seljuqiyya" ("The cream of the crop in the chronicles that contain data about Seljuq Emirs and rulers"), etc. These also included such Persian language sources as "Seljuq-name" by Zahir ad-Din Nishapuri (died in 1186), as well as Muhammad bin Ali Rawandi's "Rahat al-sudur wa ayat al-surur" ("The appeasement of hearts and the precursor of joy").

The founding of the Azerbaijani sultanate led by the Ildenizid dynasty (1136-1225) is linked to the role played by Ildeniz. In 1122, he initially appeared in the Iraqi sultanate and started his service for Sultan Mahmud's vizier. Following the vizier's murder, Ildeniz was subordinated to the sultan. He was listed among the Sultan's personal Mamluks after the death of Sultan Mahmud in 1132, according to Toghrul ibn Mahmud's decision.

According to al-Husayni, Rawandi and many others, Momine Khatun particularly encouraged Ildeniz as early as at the beginning of his career growth. Following Momine Khatun's advice, he never interfered with palatial intrigues and stayed out of clans. In strict compliance with her instructions, Ildeniz followed a proper line of conduct. In 1132, he was granted the title of emir by Toghrul and was also appointed Atabay of Arslan Shah, his son. During the rule of Sultan Mas'ud (1134-1152) that followed Toghrul's death, Ildeniz became the atabay governing Karabakh with a residence based in Barda. In 1336, he was handed a "tugru" (seal), "yuzyuk" (finger ring) and granted the honorary "lakab" title Shams ad-Din ("the sun of faith"). At the same time, Ildeniz was authorized to run his own mint and became a family member of the Iraqi Seljuqs that same year, having married Momine Khatun, Sultan Toghrul's widow. The couple had two sons, Jahan Pahlavan and Qizil Arslan, who would later become Azerbaijani atabays, as well as a daughter. Furthermore, the sultan handed over Aran to him under the right of inheritance with some assistance from Momine Khatun. Ildeniz moved to Barda,

Momine Khatun. Artist Ajdar Gafarov



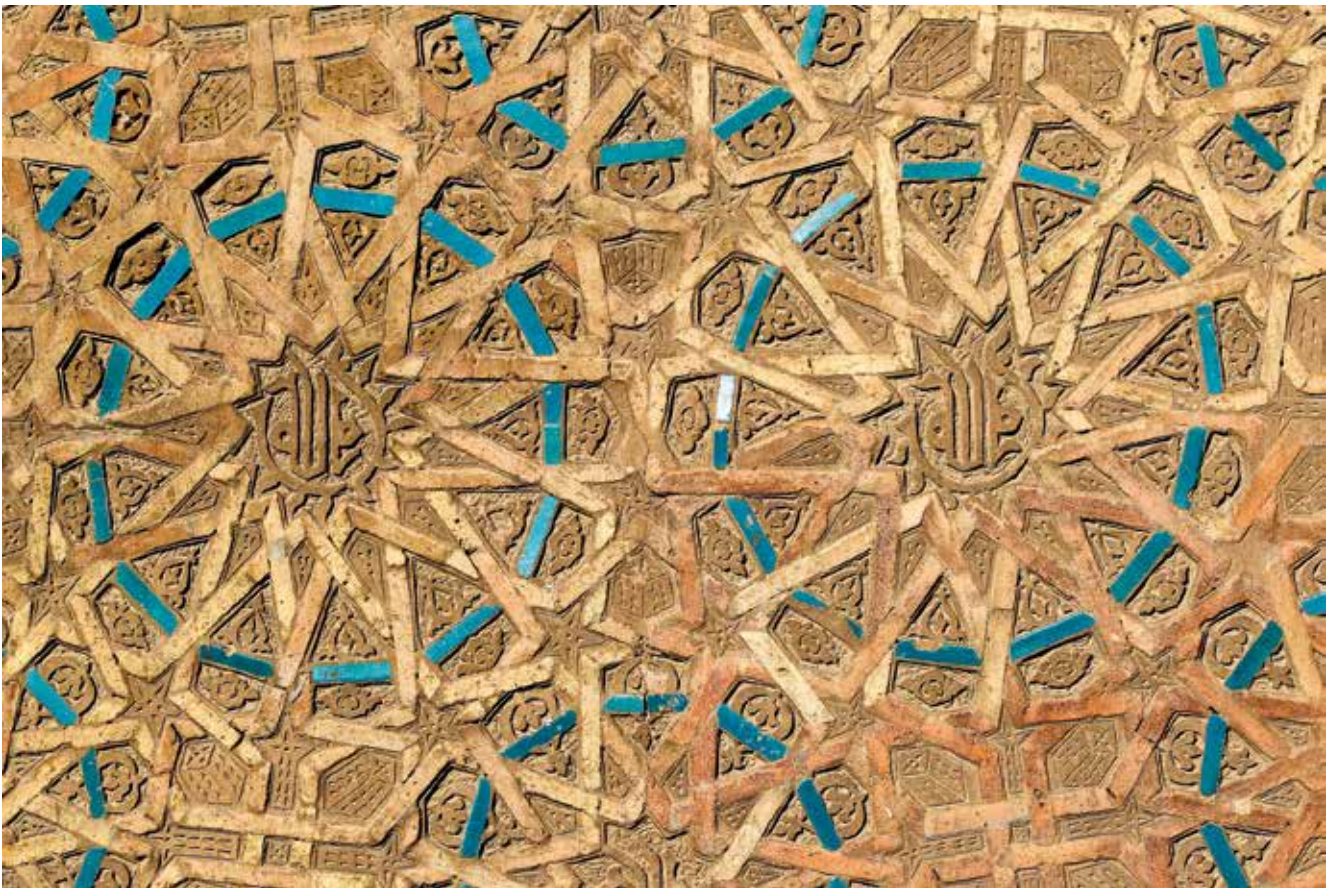


the capital of Aran, together with his wife, children and Arslan Shah, whom he was patronizing. This is the path of Shams ad-Din Ildeniz's rise to power and the way the foundation was laid for the Azerbaijani Atabay sultanate (1136-1225). Ildeniz controlled the entire territory of Azerbaijan by the mid-1140s with the exception of the Shirvan state, which was dependent on the Ildenizids. Ildeniz declared Arslan Shah the sultan after 1160, but the Iraqi sultanate existed only de jure from then onward. The Azerbaijani Ildenizid sultanate de facto emerged. Momine Khatun accompanied her husband during his trips across the country, serving as his close associate and providing valuable advice when it came to state affairs. Moreover, she played a significant role in establishing a wholesome relationship between the Sultan (her son) and the Atabay (her husband), which, in turn, facilitated efforts aimed at preventing infighting. This was achieved through a precise division of power and responsibilities. The sultan was granted representative credentials, while her husband received executive power. The division of power was also applied during the rule of her sons, Jahan Pahlavan and later Qizil Arslan, who became atabays.

The period of the tenure of Ildeniz (1136-1160) and his sons, Jahan Pahlavan (1175-1186) and Qizil Arslan (1160-1191), saw the peak of this dynasty's might. The well-known Momine Khatun played a tremendous role throughout this period, spanning from the rise to power of Ildeniz, the dynasty's founder, till the establishment of a well organized and precise form of governance that envisaged dividing power between the sultans and the atabays.

Al-Husayni colourfully described Momine Khatun's rightful role as a mother and wife. In fact, the sultan had a dependent position, while the atabay was omnipotent. When Sultan Arslan complained that all of the state orders and decrees with regard to such issues as land and treasury chambers were issued by the atabay, his mother replied, "This man risked his life and was involved in many fierce battles. Imagine how many Seljuqs who are older than you are in jail, living under pressure. They would have wholesome intentions if they could get out. But they cannot! And you are seated on the sultan's throne; he and both of his sons (she was referring to Nusrat ad-Din Pahlavan and Muzaffar ad-Din Qizil Arslan, the sons of Momine Khatun and Ildeniz - N.

Decoration on the Momine Khatun Mausoleum



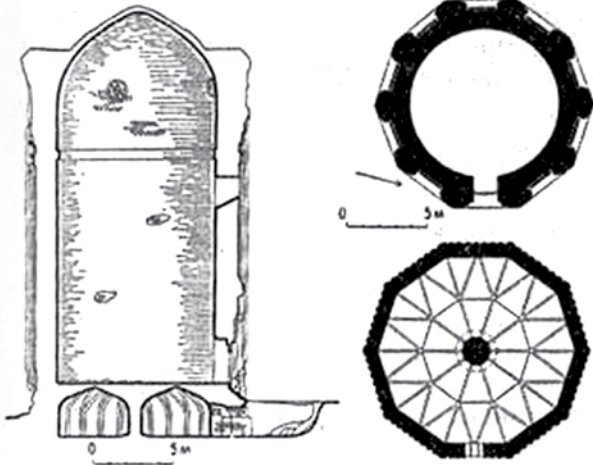
A.) are serving you, fighting your enemies and defeating your adversaries, while you and your soul are free of all this! Everything the atabay does -- whether it's a gift or something he takes away from you -- is being done for your state and for the sake of strengthening your authority. Let his deeds not sadden you and his aspirations should not disturb you as he is your Mamluk!" When Sultan Arslan heard this from his mother, he used to become silent (12, p. 144-145).

In addition, Momine Khatun always tried to be aware of the state affairs and keep the situation under control. Rawandi cited the following interesting scene in "Seljuq-name" dating back to January 1174. When the Georgian troops made an incursion into the Atabay territory (they had previously attacked Ganja and committed plundering there (note 8), Momine Khatun was quick to arrive in Hamadan from Nakhchivan to deliver a warning about a new invasion. The army, led by the Atabay and his sons, headed toward Nakhchivan. Despite a plague pandemic, which inflicted significant damage to the Atabay's military, his troops seized the Abkhaz fortress Aq-shahr soon thereafter and returned to Nakhchivan, having looted the surrounding territories.

Momine Khatun, the wife of the great Atabay Shams ad-Din Ildeniz, died in mid-1175. The woman, who facilitated a normal relationship between the sultan and the Atabay, thus preventing outbreaks of strife, essentially ushered in the tradition of women's involvement in the political statesmanship of the Azerbaijani rulers. For instance, Qizil Arslan Khamush, a son of Atabay Uzbek, was appointed a governor in Azerbaijan, while Malika (princess) Jalaliyya, a daughter of Jahan Pahlavan (note 9) and Zahida-Khatun, served as his deputy in Nakhchivan.

Women of the ruling dynasty played a significant role in the life of the Azerbaijani Atabay state. Zahida-Khatun, herself, served as the vicereine of Tabriz. All the female governors of Azerbaijan had their own court, viziers and hajibs (senior officials). Moreover, all the positions in the court of princess Jalaliyya were held by women (14, p. 182).

Certainly, there were a lot of precedents concerning the Atabay women's involvement in palatial intrigues. Such a description of the developments that occurred during the complicated and tough time period after the death of Jahan Pahlavan was provided by Western



Plan and section of the Momine Khatun mausoleum according to the results of archaeological excavations

lowing in "Divan-i lugat-it Turk" by Mahmud Qashkari:
 "Güvenlinen, inanılan. Buradan alınarak "İnanç Beg" denir ki "inanılan, itimad edilen Bey" demektir (6, p. 133).

(Translation: The one who can be relied on and trusted. Therefore, 'Inanj Bay' was the name of 'the bay who could be trusted'" - N. A.).

Ildeniz had seized Rey and handed it over to Jahan Pahlavan with the right of inheritance. Inanj had to recognize his dependence on Arslan Shah and marry off his daughter to Jahan Pahlavan.

Following the death of the great Atabay Jahan Pahlavan in 1186, the enterprising widow "supported the interests of her two own sons, countering two other heirs of Pahlavan born of concubines" (24, p. 180). It is worth mentioning that al-Husayni and Rawandi referenced only one concubine mother, who gave birth to Uzbek, noting that Abu Bakr's mother was Kutayba Khatun, a Turk.

According to the Cambridge data, Abu Bakr was particularly favoured by Qizil Arslan and enjoyed his patronage, and therefore appeared to be the most probable Ildenizid successor.

Toghrul III, the last Seljuq sultan of Iran, was hailed by many sources for his multi-faceted skills both as a scholar and a military leader. The latter was once on good terms with Pahlavan, but felt uncomfortable now, to say the least, under the patronage of Qizil Arslan, who was "tough on him" (24, p. 180).

Inanj Khatun initially counted on forging an alliance with Sultan Toghrul. Thus, the sultan teamed up with Kutluk Inanj Muhammad, countering Qizil Arslan and Abu Bakr. Inanj Khatun was expecting her tactics to be successful, given that Toghrul defeated the caliph's troops allied with Qizil Arslan near Hamadan in 1188. However, he lost his support due to his conduct that was excessively despotic even for that era, as well as an all-out purge of his foes in Hamadan.

The Cambridge historians noted, quoting al-Bundari, that Toghrul had to surrender to Qizil Arslan in 1190. Afterwards, the latter jailed Toghrul and Shah Malik, his son, in a fortress located in the vicinity of Tabriz.

A specific date of Inanj Khatun's marriage to Qizil Arslan is not available. However, Qizil Arslan, who was simply alienating the people around him by his arrogant policy aimed at appropriating the sultanate and his aggressive behavior, faced a conspiracy in 1191. As a result, he was killed in his bedroom. Though quite an extensive

historians from the "Cambridge History of Iran". It is noteworthy that the sources the mentioned authors rely upon largely overlap with the afore-said source base of Buniyadov. The works of al-Husayni, Rawandi, al-Jawzi and many others were referenced as well. However, ibn al-Bundari al-Isfahani al-Munshi's (1190-1245) "Zubdat al-Nusra wa-nukhbat al-Usra" (note 10) is the most frequently mentioned piece amongst Arabic and Persian-language authors.

The mentioned Cambridge historians wrote that following Jahan Pahlavan's death in 1186, he was succeeded as Atabay by Qizil Arslan Usman, his brother, who had no children, in accordance with the Turkic seniority tradition.

"Pahlavan, himself, also divided his personal territories among his four sons that were under the control of Qizil Arslan. This division, in essence, was a source of weakness and strife," the source said (24, p. 180).

It is worth mentioning that most scholars believed the late 80s and 90s of the 12th century is the most difficult time for scientific research due to the limited availability of relevant data, as well as a period of significant commotion.

Inanj Khatun, who hailed from the noble family of emirs and was a daughter of Usame ad-Din Inanj Songur Bay, an influential Emir (ruler) of Rey (1160-1169), was the most brilliant and one-of-the-kind female personality of that period, which was marred by dire disturbances and strife. Her father, Emir Abbas, was convicted of conspiracy and executed in 1147 in accordance with Sultan Masud's order. The attempt by Inanj Songur, his son, to organize a riot in 1161 was a failure as well.

It is noteworthy that the word "inanj" implies the fol-

*Mausoleum of Momine Khatun.
Nakhchivan, 12th century*

source base is available in this regard, the Cambridge authors concluded that this happened under mysterious circumstances and he was killed either by one of his emirs or Inanj Khatun. In addition to other theories (14, p. 89), Buniyadov referenced the data provided by Sibti ibn al-Jawzi (VIII, 406) and Rawandi (333), who believed that Qizil Arslan was assassinated by Inanj Khatun.

According to Rawandi, Kutayba Khatun, a widow of Jahan Pahlavan, took the ring with the sultan's monogram and stamps off Qizil Arslan's finger, gave it to Abu Bakr, her son, saying, "Go and take charge of Azerbaijan and Aran" (14, p. 89). That same night Abu Bakr headed to the Alinja fortress in Nakhchivan, which was under the control of Zahida-Khatun, another widow of Jahan Pahlavan. Nevertheless, internal strife flared up soon thereafter between Inanj Khatun's sons. The fighting mainly occurred between Kutluk-Inanj Mahmud and Toghrul III, with the latter getting the upper hand. Amid high tension, Inanj Khatun sent a letter to Toghrul III, which said, "I never stopped feeling affection for you and have been hostile to your enemies...I have a lot of treasures and money, and if you allow me, I will serve you as one of your concubines, but on the condition that you undertake a marital agreement. I will arrive in Hamadan to join you and gradually hand over to you the treasures and money I have" (14, p. 91; 12, p. 104a). Toghrul III approved of the marriage proposal. However, one of Inanj Khatun's female slaves later told Toghrul that Inanj Khatun had poured poison into his drink; the sultan made her have that drink to confirm those allegations. Thus, according to Z. Buniyadov, Inanj Khatun died after consuming her own poison (14, p. 91). However, other theories have been offered in this regard as well. For example, Rawandi (p. 337) noted that Inanj Khatun was strangled by a bowstring, while al-Husayni wrote that she died in due time. In contrast, the Cambridge source said she had been executed on Toghrul's orders (24, p. 181). Buniyadov wrote that "this was the end of the life of this woman, who played an ominous role in the plots and intrigues that were rife in the political life of the Atabay state in that time period."

It is worth mentioning that this personality's actions were probably prompted further by the cruel practices and laws of that turbulent period. It is possible that this woman's contribution to her country was not as significant and her aspirations were not as noble as those of Momine Khatun, but her name also went



down in the history of the Azerbaijani Atabay state for many centuries to come. As for Momine Khatun and the mausoleum named after her in Nakhchivan, which is also regarded as "the Atabay dome", it is known that Shams ad-Din Ildeniz started building it above his wife's grave shortly before his death. The great atabay passed away in 1175 a month following the death of Momine Khatun. Therefore, the construction of this mausoleum was completed thereafter, i.e. during Jahan Pahlavan's rule in April 1186. The mausoleum was built by Ajami ibn Abubakr Nakhchivani, a well-known Azerbaijani architect of the 12th-13th centuries.

The above-mentioned convincingly indicates that all these personalities had a profound impact on the course and developments of the Azerbaijani history.

Notes:

Note 6. A legendary shah of Turan (the entire steppe area of Central Asia). The issue regarding Turan



Atabay Shamsaddin Eldaniz and architect Ajami at the construction of the Momine Khatun mausoleum. Artist Ajdar Gafarov

and Iran continues to cause controversy between the Iranian and Turkic historiographers. British linguist and scholar Brown's utterances are particularly relevant in this respect. "Though every educated Persian and Turk was aware of the everlasting conflict between Iran and Turan as described in the classical *Shah-name* (The Book of Kings) by Ferdowsi, Sultan Selim, in his military correspondence dated April 1514 personifies himself as one of the legendary Persian kings Firuddin, Khosrow and Darius, while Shah Ismail identifies himself with Afrasiab, a Turkic prototype," the scholar said.

Note 7. Following the enactment of the "valide" title in the Ottoman Empire, concubines began to be called "khatun" as well. Afterwards, the word started to be used to respectfully address women who had a certain social status.

Note 8. It would be fair to say that the Georgian troops made numerous incursions into the territory of the Azerbaijani Atabay state both prior to and after the mentioned developments, looting its land and popula-

tion. Later, in 1211, the Georgian military carried out a large-scale military campaign into the Azerbaijani territory. Having committed a pogrom in Maragha, they laid siege to Tabriz. The city was governed at that time by Zahida-Khatun, the spouse of Atabay Jahan Pahlavan. She offered a buyout to the attackers that would include money, jewelry and goods to prevent plundering. According to al-Husayni (107a), the buyout was so huge that "all the Georgians, including both senior and junior ones, enriched themselves... The Georgian troops took so many captives with them that no one except Allah knows their number."

Note 9. Pahlavan loved Kutluk-Inanj Mahmud and Amir Amiran Umar, his sons born of Inanj Khatun, more than all of his other children.

Note 10. This is an abridged version of the work by Imad ad-din al-Isfahani titled "Assistance amid the weariness and a refuge of the creatures". The only manuscript, which is stored at the Paris-based national library of France, has not been published to date. In the preface,

Momine Khatun with her sons.
Artist Ajdar Gafarov

al-Bundari wrote that he would preserve all the historical facts cited by Imad ad-din. Baron Rozen, who drew a comparison upon a scene from the Battle of Manzikert to check how diligently al-Bundari had kept his promise, concluded that "indeed, he did not miss anything that was substantial" (14, p. 9-10). ❀

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