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DESTROYED IRAVAN FORTRESS: BRIEF OVERVIEW OF HISTORICAL SITE IN YEREVAN

*Ethnographic map of the Iravan province showing the borders of districts, police stations and rural communities. 1886
Compiled by E. Kondratenko*



The outstanding 44-day military operation carried out in fall 2020 led to the liberation of the occupied Azerbaijani territories in Karabakh. As a result, Azerbaijan also gained control over its entire border with Iran and Armenia. It was also followed by rehabilitation of infrastructure and settlements in Karabakh, ahead of a return of all Azerbaijani internally displaced persons ousted from those residential areas by Armenian invaders in the early 1990s. Moreover, Baku announced its long-term plans to return refugees to their native land in Zangazur and other regions of Armenia where Azerbaijanis had lived from the ancient times. Therefore, the relevance of projects aimed at studying medieval Azerbaijani cultural,

architectural and historical heritage wiped out in Armenia is increasing in Azerbaijan. There is a need for projects aimed at researching the heritage of historical Azerbaijan, including those concerning the tragic fate of the Azerbaijani medieval city of Iravan (Irevan), which was completely destroyed and displaced by the emergence of Yerevan, the current capital of Armenia. A number of European, Russian, Ottoman and Armenian sources allow thoroughly tracking down the tragic fate of the medieval Azerbaijani city of Iravan. Following its destruction, the Armenian authorities created a myth in the 1960s with regard to an ancient Erebuni that allegedly dated back to a historical period 28 centuries ago. The discovered ruins of an Urartian fortress near Yerevan were referenced to create this myth. The world community and scholars should not show indifference to such manifestation of Armenian vandalism and falsifications.

Iravan. Dome of the Sardar mosque



INTRODUCTION

Attempts have been made through Armenian propaganda and pseudoscience for many years to prove that Yerevan is an “ancient Armenian city older than Rome” that has never had any bearing on Azerbaijan and the Azerbaijani cultural, historical and architectural heritage. It is worth mentioning that Chukhursaad, one of the four baylarbay entities of the Azerbaijani Safavid state, was located in the territory of present-day Armenia, in the Middle Ages. In 1504, Safavid Shah Ismail ordered his commander, Revangulu Khan, to build a fortress in Chukhursaad. It was constructed by 1511

and named Revan in honor of Revangulu Khan. It later started to be pronounced as Irevan, because the vowel “i” is often pronounced before the consonant “r” in Turkic languages.

The Iravan fortress became famous in the East as a site of minarets. There were eight mosques and 800 houses in the fortress and only Azerbaijani Turks lived there.

IMPACT OF ARMENIAN FALSIFICATIONS

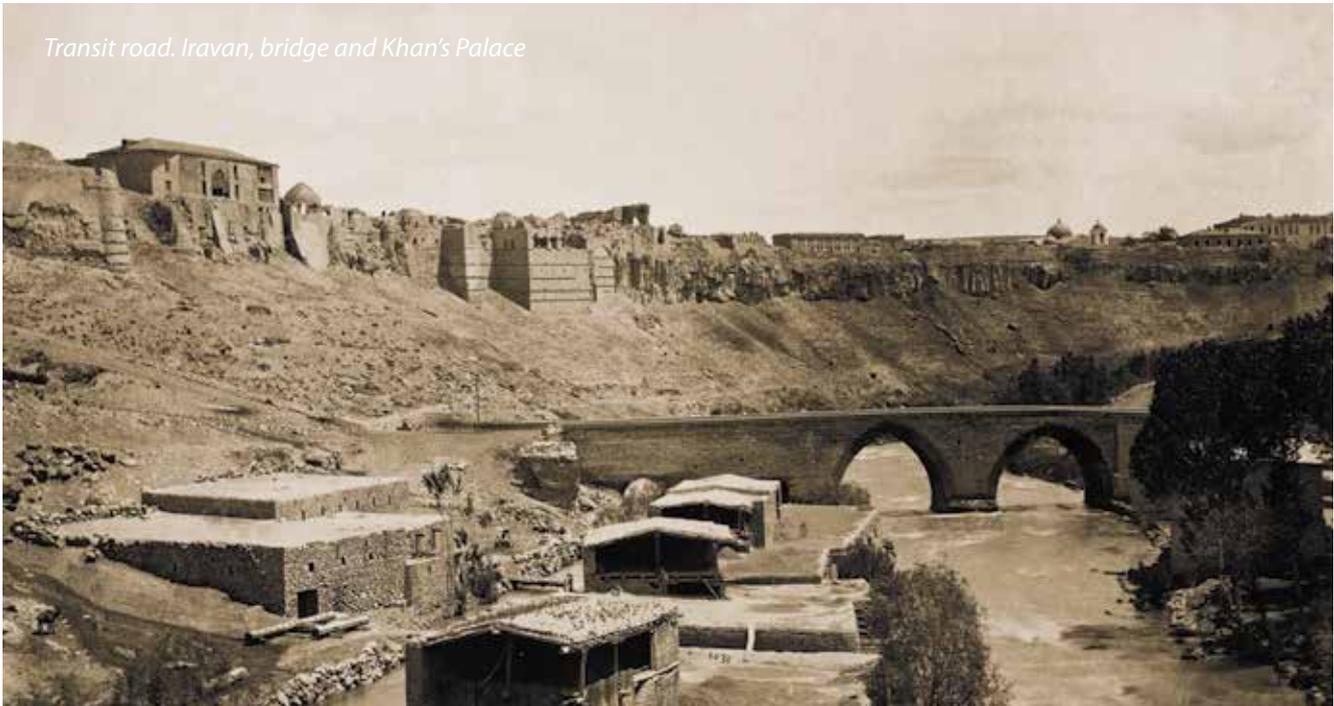
Every opportunity is used in Armenia to conceal the truth about the history of Yerevan. In May 2014, the

Armenian authorities presented the film “A capital older than Rome”, released in response to the substantiated criticism from Azerbaijan regarding the destruction of the medieval architectural and historical heritage of Yerevan by the Armenian authorities and the “Armenianization” of its history. The Armenian film describes at length and comprehensively the ancient history of Yerevan, which is allegedly almost 2,800 years old. However, two coins of 14th century Muslim Turkic rulers are referenced as the only proof of those allegations. Thus, the Armenian side is seeking to prove that the Iravan (Irevan) fortress was built not by Safavid commander Revangulu Khan in the early 16th century, but actually existed before that time period. However, a contradicting fact was revealed during studies concerning the

Hulaguids could not have minted coins in the 14th century in the city of Revan, which was non-existent at the time. In addition, Armenian media outlets, themselves, have circulated reports saying that coins started to be minted in Iravan after the 16th century during the Safavid rule and later during the reign of the Iravan khans. At the same time, the reports said the mint was located in the area of the palace of the Iravan Khan in the historical center of Yerevan, which is currently completely ruined [12].

It is noteworthy that this is not the first time Armenian propagandists falsified the coins of Azerbaijani rulers. In the 1960s, B. Piotrovsky, a Soviet academician, indignantly pointed out the falsifications of S. Ayvazyan, an Armenian scholar. Ayvazyan had reversed the in-

Transit road. Iravan, bridge and Khan's Palace



coins shown in the movie with an inscription saying they had been purportedly minted in Yerevan. A 14th century coin of Hulaguid ruler Anushirvan (Anushirvan) indicated the city of Marivan in the territory of present-day Iran, not Yerevan, as the place where it was minted. The film also briefly shows a coin by the ruler Abu Said allegedly made in Yerevan. However, the coin, itself, says it was produced in Royan, Iran. Moreover, numerous sources note that Irevan (Revan) was founded in the early 16th century, which was followed by the construction of a mint within a fortress area. This conclusion is confirmed by a number of studies conducted by foreign scholars and coin collections. Therefore, the

inscriptions upon the coins of the Azerbaijani Eldiguzids dating back to the 12th-13th centuries, regarding them as “Armenian-Hayas” coins attributed to the 17th century BCE [16].

IREVAN (IRAVAN) IN AZERBAIJAN

A. J. Saint-Martin, a well-known French 19th century scholar dealing with the Caucasus studies, noted, “... **Rovan, (a title) given to one of the regions of Azerbaijan, which is possibly Revan, was named by the Muslims. It is Iravan, a part of Armenia, the capital city, which has always been part of Azerbaijan under their rule,**” he wrote [3].

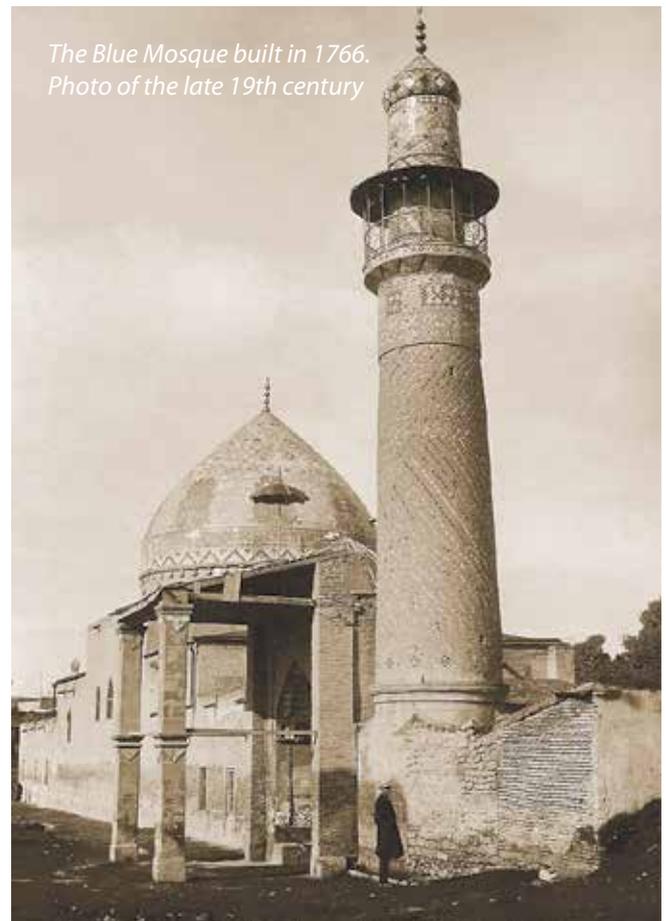
According to the “Brief historical review of the city of Iravani” by Khachatur Abovyan, a well-known Armenian educator and writer who lived in the 19th century, Armenian writers made no reference to Iravani until the beginning of the 13th century. From 1209, it had been referenced as “a location”. Abovyan regarded as completely fictitious the texts saying that Noah, having seen land from Mount Ararat in the area where the city is currently located, called the latter Iravan. He added that *“this city probably became known in 1441 when the Persians took it over during [the reign of] Jahan Shah (an Azerbaijani ruler of the Qara-Qoyunlu empire – R.H.)”* [5]. It is noteworthy that even Abovyan, who was so well-versed on the history of Armenian culture, was unaware of the exact time the city of Iravan was founded and assumed that this happened during the period of Turkic Azerbaijani rulers. Moreover, it is known for certain that Evliya Celebi, a medieval Ottoman traveler and geographer, referred to the beginning of the 15th century as the date of the emergence of a little settlement in this area. According to him, Khoja Khan Lekhichani, a merchant who was one of the people favored by Amir Timur, set foot on this land in 810, according to the Hijri calendar (in 1407-1408). He saw fertile land and settled there with all of his family members. He was increasingly becoming rich by cultivating rice and building this city. Further, Celebi added that in 915 (Hijri) (1509-10), Shah Ismail ordered Revangulu Khan, his vizier, to build a fortress on this site. Revangulu Khan erected a fortress over seven years and named it “Revan” [1].

The fact that Iravan was granted its title and became a walled city during the Safavid rule was confirmed by Academician V. V. Bartold, an outstanding Soviet Russian Orientalist.

“Iravan emerged as a settlement under Timur [the late 14th century] and became a city as late as in the 16th century during the rule of Shah Ismail and was granted its current name at around the same time,” Bartold wrote [6].

Jean Chardin, a French traveler, who made a stop-over in Iravan in 1673, described the Iravan fortress and the Khan’s palace in detail [4]. He noted that the fortress, which consisted of 800 houses, was larger than a little town and populated by the Safavids [2]. The word «Safavids» implied the Turkic Qizilbash Shia population.

Some Armenian researchers are trying to prove an extensive presence of indigenous Armenians in the Iravan fortress area, referring to medieval notes of foreign travelers. However, the Armenian propagandists are being insincere, since available sources simply refer to



*The Blue Mosque built in 1766.
Photo of the late 19th century*

Armenians who came to the fortress for daily part-time work or commerce. Yervand Shahaziz, an Armenian writer, says in his book titled “Old Yerevan” that Muslims, Turks lived in the fortress, while Armenians owned shops there and went home in the evening, having locked them up [19].

According to numerous sources, Iravan was located in Azerbaijan. In particular, S. Burnashev, a Russian military adviser in Georgia, wrote in the 18th century about *“the Azerbaijani cities Iravan and Ganja”* with a slightly different spelling of these two words [13]. The fact that Iravan and other land where the Russian troops were heading were located in Azerbaijan is also evidenced by the reports issued by Gen. I.V. Gudovich, who unsuccessfully attempted to capture Iravan in 1808. In his messages, Gudovich uses the expression *“in the entire Azerbaijan and the Iravan province in particular”* [15].

The high status of the Iravan khan, who essentially was not subordinate to the Persian shah, is proven by direct correspondence between senior Russian officials and the khan. In particular, this included an appeal from Russian Empress Yelizaveta Petrovna’s secretary, Chancellor M.I. Vorontsov. Vorontsov used the words *“the*

Caucasus in the 18-19th centuries



most honorable and high-ranking ruler of the Iravan province, Megmed Khan, my sincere friend” in his letter [17].

Iravan khans frequently negotiated with tsarist Russia directly; legal documents issued by the khanate’s rulers circulated in the region for a long time. In particular, the Armenians, who were crossing over to the Russian side in the Caucasus, carried decrees and other documents in the Azerbaijani language from the Iravan rulers. Based on the Azerbaijani decrees, Armenian fugitives sought to maintain their land and arrived in the area. This indicates that the land of the present-day Armenia belonged to the Azerbaijani Turks. The Russian archives have retained those decrees issued by the Iravan rulers to some Armenians in the mid-18th century [14].

N. Bogdanov, a Soviet historian, wrote that “the last Khan of Yerevan, Sardar Huseyn Khan, originally from the Azerbaijani nomadic Qajar tribe, was related to the dynasty reigning in Iran and was a border commander in Yerevan before he was granted the title of khan”.

“Prior to the date of the Russian troops’ incursion, he ruled the khanate absolutely independently over 22 years with a merely formal dependence upon Iran,” Bogdanov said [7].

GRADUAL DESTRUCTION OF IRAVAN FORTRESS

The Iravan fortress had a large number of structures. The fortress, itself, remained in good condition even after an assault by Russian troops. It was a reliable fortified structure, which was referenced in the Russian military archives as follows: “The fortress (i.e. Iravan)...is surrounded by a double stone wall with round towers; there is a foundry and the palace of the Iravan sardar (military leader), a very good ancient building that occupies almost half of the embankment side of the fortress” [8].

The Iravan fortress, which withstood its capture by the Russian forces, was destroyed gradually by the Armenians over the course of one century. Following the “Sovietization” of Armenia, this historical site in Yerevan was demolished. The fortress, which was a historical center in Yerevan, partially remained in place until as late as the 1920s and 1930s. During that period, the authorities in Soviet Armenia started consistently destroying ancient structures. In the 1950s and 1960s, the fortress and the city’s entire historical center were completely wiped out, since a new general development plan for the Armenian capital failed to envisage pres-

ervation of the latter. This is nonsense! In cities all over the world, historical centers are primary areas slated for preservation as they are considered a source of pride and sites that have utmost architectural and historical importance... However, this was not the case in Armenia, a country where the historical center of the capital was destroyed altogether.

The Armenian attempts to justify the destruction of the Iravan fortress as well as mosques and other structures by alleged consequences of the Soviet authorities' struggle with the remnants of religion are absolutely meaningless. Not only religious sites that were indeed frequently demolished during the Soviet period, but also a slew of buildings and structures unrelated to any religion whatsoever have been destroyed in Yerevan. Therefore, the current allegations of Armenian propagandists that the Iravan fortress was destroyed as part of the Soviet clampdown on religion are groundless. On the contrary, the Soviet government was restoring and retaining historical monuments and the centers of old cities. After all, no one ever considered demolishing the Kremlin in Moscow, Icheri Sheher (Old City) in Baku, the Narikala fortress in Tbilisi, the Naryn-Kala fortress in the city of Derbent in Russia's republic of Dagestan, etc. The Armenian leadership destroyed the historical center of Yerevan simply because it reminded people of the Azerbaijani Muslim past of the present-day Armenian capital. This is a crime of the Armenian authorities, which are taking these actions in a bid to hide the real history of Yerevan and Armenia from future generations. This is confirmed by Andrey Ivanov, a Russian architect who authored a series of articles concerning the ancient Yerevan that were released by Armenian media. Ivanov noted that the general layout of Yerevan approved in 1924 did not ensure retaining the ancient sites. The project was conceived and implemented by A. O. Tamanyan, an Armenian architect.

"After all, Tamanyan outlined another direction (of activity), which is ruthless destruction of the city's old material substance. Despite the whole delicacy of planning, almost all housing development laid out in the 1924 plan covered new buildings to be constructed regularly and on a quarterly basis (with the exception of several churches and mosques)," Ivanov wrote [11].

Ivanov also cited the research of other Russian scholars. *"Today it is clear that Tamanyan, who was creating a new Yerevan, acted in line with the 'destroying the place' strategy with regard to the old city, which envisaged 'eliminating all of its conventional signs, features and ste-*

reotypes,' according to N. and D. Zamyatins," the Russian architect said [10].

Prof. Karen Balyan, a corresponding member of the International Academy of Architecture (IAA), also made strongly worded remarks concerning the comprehensive destruction of the old city of Yerevan in Armenian media. According to him, a great number of Armenian architects "competed" in the destruction of the medieval buildings in Yerevan during the Soviet times. Balyan deems the current situation with urban planning in Yerevan even more deplorable. It is worth mentioning that not so long ago, a project aimed at creating "a historical center" of the city recently "surfaced" in Yerevan mayor's office. This is nonsense as the Armenian authorities, in fact, gradually destroyed the Iravan fortress, a real historical center, before deciding to "invent" a new Yerevan! Balyan noted with regard to the "Old Yerevan" project, *"Of course, this is a mock-up molded with the use of just a few remaining pieces of genuine architecture (essentially a reproduction item), let's be realistic. It has a single roof. Although Yerevan courtyards have always been outdoors, all this will turn into an indoor museum. It will be not a historically formed environment, but its imitation as a whole... I don't know how to save the old Yerevan, but this is how it is going to be"* [18].

In fact, a number of scholars and content writers have unequivocally suggested that the primary goal of rebuilding Yerevan was the destruction of Iravan's medieval architectural ensemble. Most of the buildings dating back to the Middle Ages were demolished by the Armenian authorities in Yerevan's center over several decades during the Soviet era and a modern city was built instead.

FALSIFICATION OF YEREVAN HISTORY

Following the destruction of medieval Azerbaijani architecture, the myth regarding Erebuni, an Uartian fortress whence Yerevan allegedly originated, was conceived and materialized. Simultaneously, another myth suggesting that Uartian culture and history is directly intertwined with the Armenian one was created.

The allegations came after Soviet archaeologists discovered ruins of an Uartian fortress in the 1950s in Teishebaini, a short distance away from Yerevan, along with a cuneiform plaque with the letters "RBN" in Cyrillic font. The inscription with the three letters was immediately interpreted by the Armenian side as the word "Erebuni" or Yerevan. However, the cuneiform inscription refers not to Erebuni, but the Uartian fortress Irpuini,

not to mention Yerevan itself. Armenian scholars, themselves, note that the language, culture and history of Urartu have no bearing on the Armenians, especially since the ancestors of so-called Armenians lived far from this region in the Balkans when the Urartians built fortresses in the Caucasus. The Armenians began to shape up centuries after the collapse of the Urartian state. It took many more centuries for them to emerge in the Caucasus region thereafter. Nevertheless, the cuneiform "RBN" was linked to the history of Yerevan, in accordance with the mentioned far-fetched allegations, which drew fire from eminent Soviet and foreign scholars, including those who contributed to the Teishebaini excavations. This was repeatedly pointed out by I. I. Mints, an academician at the USSR Academy of Sciences. Mints was a leading and world-renowned scholar dealing with the Soviet historical science, who had visited the site of the Urartian fortress excavations. It was also confirmed by Academician B. Piotrovsky, a well-known archaeologist, historian and Orientalist, who carried out the excavations.

Having arrived in time for the Erebuni celebrations, the Soviet scholars were astonished by the fact that the hastily built "Urartian township" was presented by the Armenian authorities as a real ancient city. In reply to relevant questions from Soviet historians, their Armenian colleagues said it was a mock-up museum facility aimed at familiarizing young people and visitors with the appearance of ancient Urartian buildings.

Maxim Pakharenko, a Russian journalist and researcher, who recently visited Yerevan, accurately termed the Erebuni complex as a Soviet-Urartian fortress, since almost all of its parts were built during the Soviet era and presented further as a mock-up of the Urartian period. Pakharenko also said the Erebuni museum "was full of copies of artefacts". According to

him, Erebuni does not look like an ancient site as it is "a fortress rebuilt in the Soviet times".

"It is sensed that Soviet re-builders added special impressiveness to the Erebuni walls... Most likely, the Soviet renovators

made the stone-made foundations of the walls higher on purpose," Pakharenko wrote.

As for the alleged Urartian tomb and mausoleum discovered in Yerevan in the area of the Avtoagregat plant in 1984, Pakharenko said *"apparently, this mausoleum was entirely newly built from the outside"* [9].

Nowadays, this fake fortress in Yerevan is presented as an ancient architectural monument, which is shown to residents and visitors. Films are made, books and articles are written about this mock-up, which is regarded as "a forerunner" of Yerevan. All this started with the destruction of the Iravan fortress, the real historical center of the city where 800 medieval structures were once located... The international community and scholars should not tolerate these acts of Armenian vandalism and falsifications.

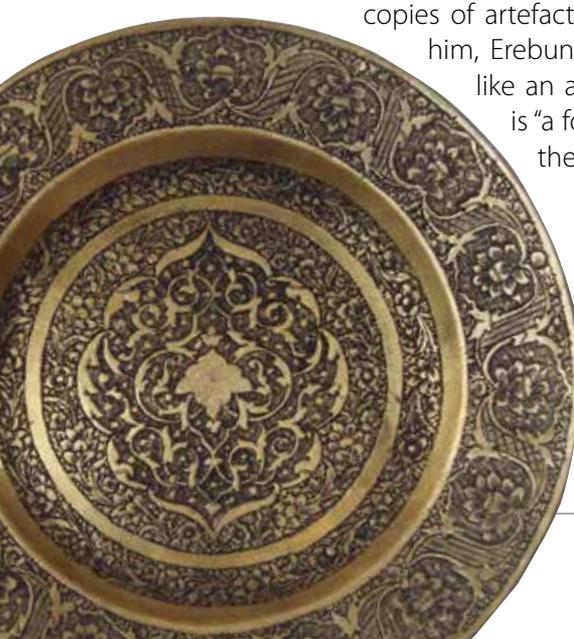
CONCLUSION

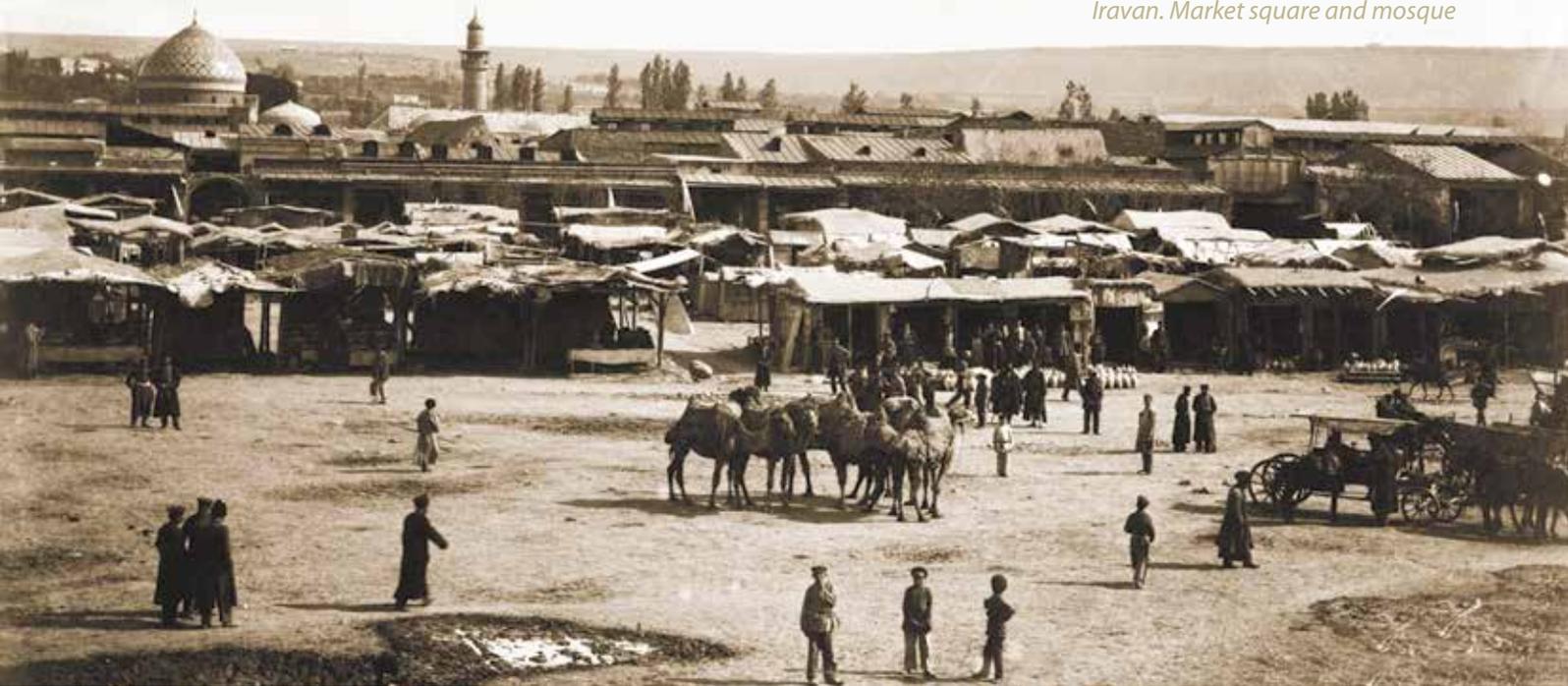
Throughout a long historical period, foreign, Russian tsarist and Soviet scholars shunned the study of Azerbaijan's historical territory in the Caucasus and considered this issue from the viewpoint of Iran and Turkey's history, as well as the stand-off between these countries and Russia. As a result, the glorious pages of Azerbaijani history, including those of the Iravan Khanate, were ignored, although the latter had left an indelible mark on world history, culture, architecture and socio-political developments in the Caucasus region. After the break-up of the Soviet Union and the establishment of an independent Azerbaijan, the country set a course for researching its historical heritage and exposing the false Armenian historical premises.

The Azerbaijan Republic is a spiritual successor of great medieval empires of the East, countries and khanates that existed in different periods of history in the Caucasus, Asia Minor, the Near East and Middle East. Essentially, the entire territory of the present-day Republic of Armenia was a historical part of Azerbaijan for many centuries. Azerbaijan will continue to expose the Armenian lies and reveal the true history of the region based on reliable sources to the world community. ✨

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Iravan. Market square and mosque

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