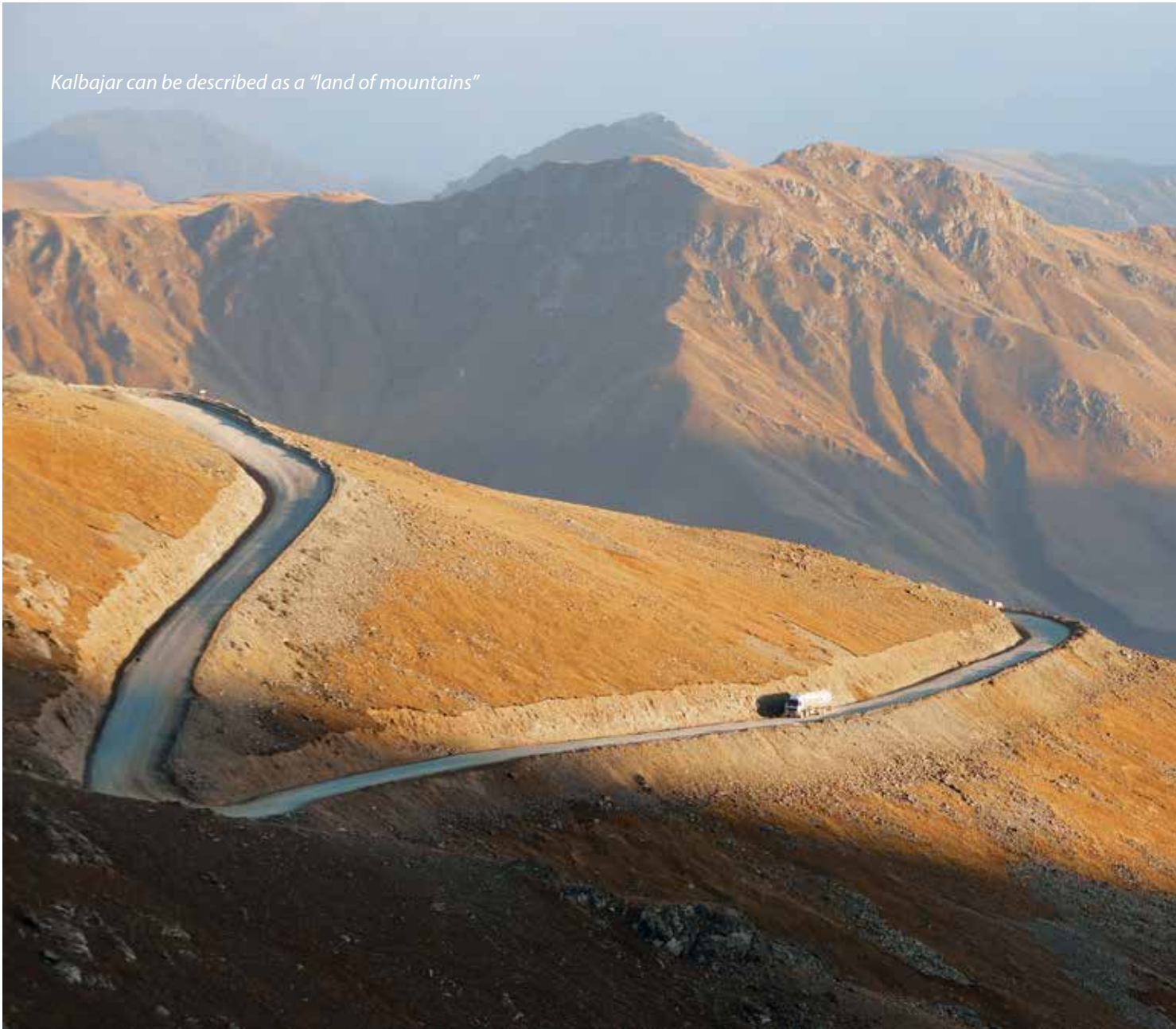


*Kalbajar can be described as a "land of mountains"*



By Mazahir TAKHMAZOV

# KALBAJAR: a pearl of Azerbaijan

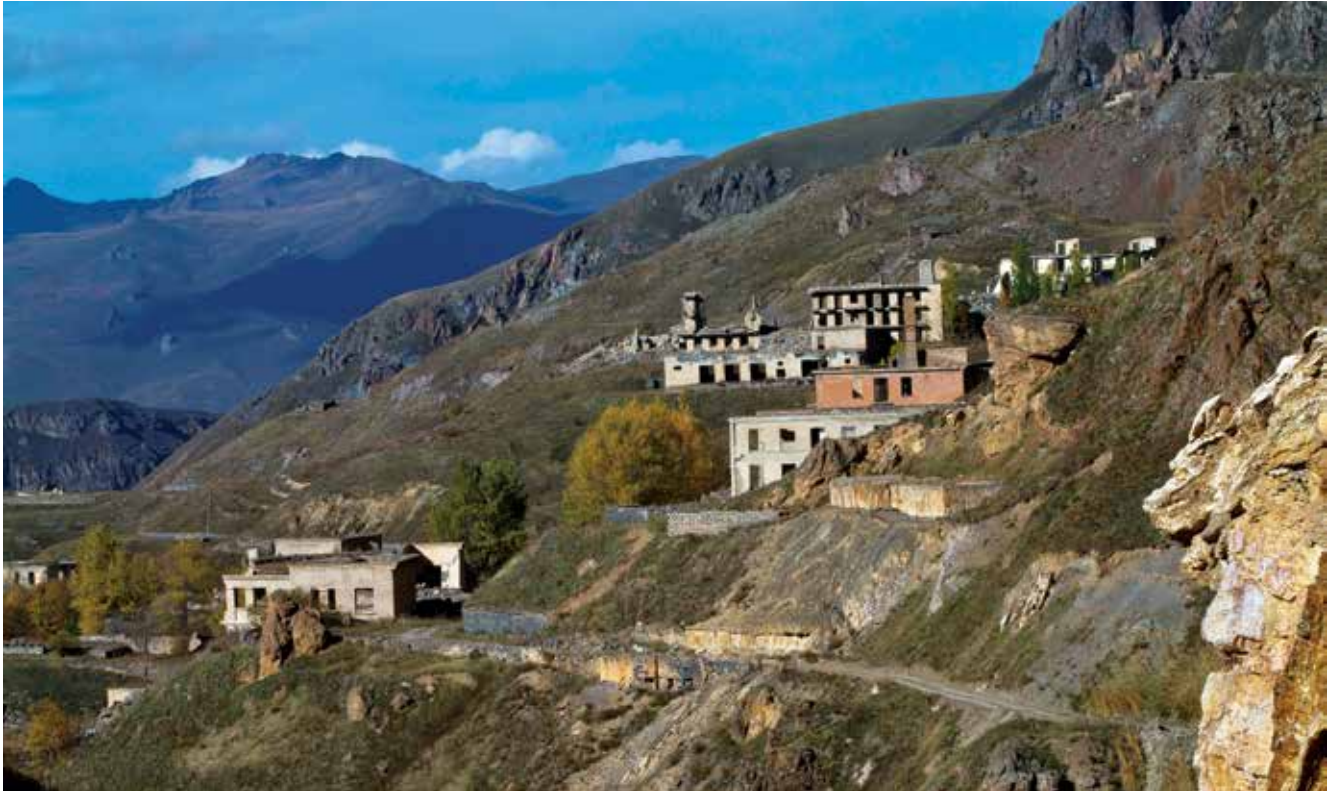


*14-15<sup>th</sup> century tombstones are evidence of the region's Turkic history*

**K**albajar, one of the most picturesque regions in Azerbaijan, is located in the country's far south-west in the Caucasus Minor mountains. The region covers an area of 3,054 sq. km. The former Goycha area and the Zangazur district, which were part of Azerbaijan until 1923, are situated west of Kalbajar. Most of Kalbajar's territory is made up of mountains rising to medium and high altitude that are of volcanic origin. The Murovdag ridge with its highest peak, Jamysh-Dagh, which rises 3,724



*Liberated from invaders, Kalbajar lies in ruins*



meters above the ground, and Mykhtoken (the highest point is the 3,616m Delidagh), are located in this region. The mountainous terrain of this territory determines the **features of the climate, which include moderately warm summers and relatively cold winters.** In addition to altitudinal zonality, the climate is influenced by adjacent arid inter-montane basins and Kura-Araz Lowland. Four out of the nine widespread types of climate available in Azerbaijan's territory are encountered in this area.

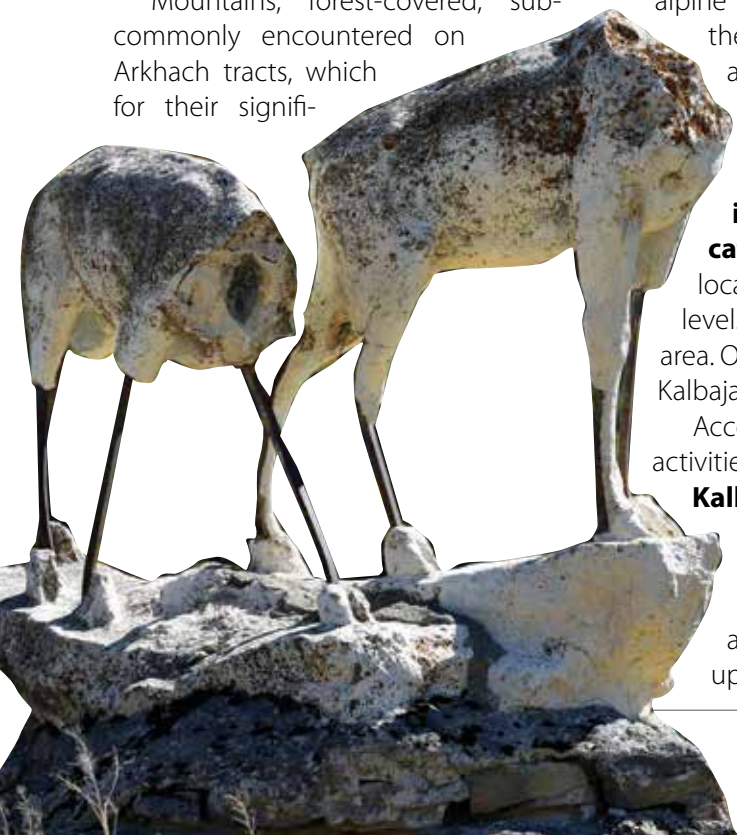
Mountains, forest-covered, sub-commonly encountered on Arkhach tracts, which for their signifi-

alpine and high-mountain types of soil and vegetation cover are the slopes of ridges, while the Sariyer, Takhta-Duz and Gara are part of the Karabakh volcanic highland, are distinguished cant subalpine and mountain-steppe terrain.

**The mentioned landmark sites have long served as summer camps used by residents of neighboring lowlands and plains as a destination for relocated cattle.**

Large and Minor Alagol are major lakes of this region located upon the Sariyer plateau almost 3,000 meters above sea level. There are also a number of smaller mountainous lakes in the area. Over 4,000 springs and waterfalls have been discovered in the Kalbajar region as well.

According to the outcome of the latest land management activities conducted in 1988, **the land covered by forests in Kalbajar spanned 32.774 hectares. Forests located in this area, which are attributed to Group I, are particularly valuable from the viewpoint of water protection and recreation.** Willow trees, musky willows, oaks, hornbeams, apple and pear trees, cherry plum, linden and pistachio grow upon the river valleys. Moreover, Turkish hazelnut, which was



*Statue of mountain deer also fell victim to destruction*



*Occupiers destroyed not only the city and villages, but even detached houses*



included in the Red Book of Azerbaijan and protected by the country's government, is available in the area. Turkish hazelnut trees are up to 25m high with a trunk diameter at the base ranging from 48 cm to 120 cm.

Various ore fields, valuable sources of mineral water, sand reserves of numerous types, as well as deposits of precious stones, have been found in the Kalbajar region as well. One of these **is the Soyudlu-Zod gold and ore field, which was identified in ancient times. In accordance with archaeological data, development of this deposit was tackled as early as in the 3rd millennium BCE.**

The length of underground galleries located in this area amounts to 150m. Ancient grooves, caves, pits, piles of extracted ore, as well as picks and hand mills used by ancient miners, were discovered in the Soyudlu area during the geological operations and exploration carried out in 1975-1979 and 1986-1992. Remarkably, these finds indicate that gold was produced in these territories 4,000-5,000 years ago, although the gold mines were disguised thereafter. Other gold-rich deposits, namely, Agh-Duzdagh, Mehmana, the Zod-Tutkhun site and Soyudlu-chay (river), are available in Kalbajar as well. In addition, abundant **deposits of chromites** are available in such landmark sites as Goy-dere, Gongur,

Sariyal, Gilinchly, Kazim-bina, Jomerd, Khudavang, Levchay, Shahdagh and Ipek. There are also a number of **tungsten steel and molybdenum deposits. Copper (copper-pyrite and polymetal-pyrite) deposits** are concentrated within the Delidagh copper-molybdenum field in the Murovdagh and Kechaldagh areas, notably, in the Mehman ore-rich region. Moreover, a major **zinc and lead deposit** is located near the Mehman village. **Deposits and compounds of mercury** are widespread in this area. The Shorbulag and Agyatag fields have been researched the most. Numerous **traces of antimony and asbestos** have been found as well. The Levchay and Gunashli deposits are of great importance among several discovered **traces of nephritoids**. Moreover, **jade compounds** were found in the Jomerd and Kazim-bina areas. One of the commonly discovered items was a **marble onyx** associated with deposits of white porous travertine. An **iridescent obsidian** field on Kechaldagh is among the finds as well. Reserves of **demantoid and topazolite** have been found in different areas, along with a number of **mineral paint fields. Basalt and andesite-basalt** remains have also been tracked in the Zar and Zivel villages. Moreover, a slew of **perlite** deposits are available in the Kechaldagh mountainous area. There are also **travertine, listwanite,**

*Famous hot mineral water spring Istisu*



**tuff stone and serpentinite** fields in various parts of the Kalbajar region, along with promising **cobalt and nickel** finds.

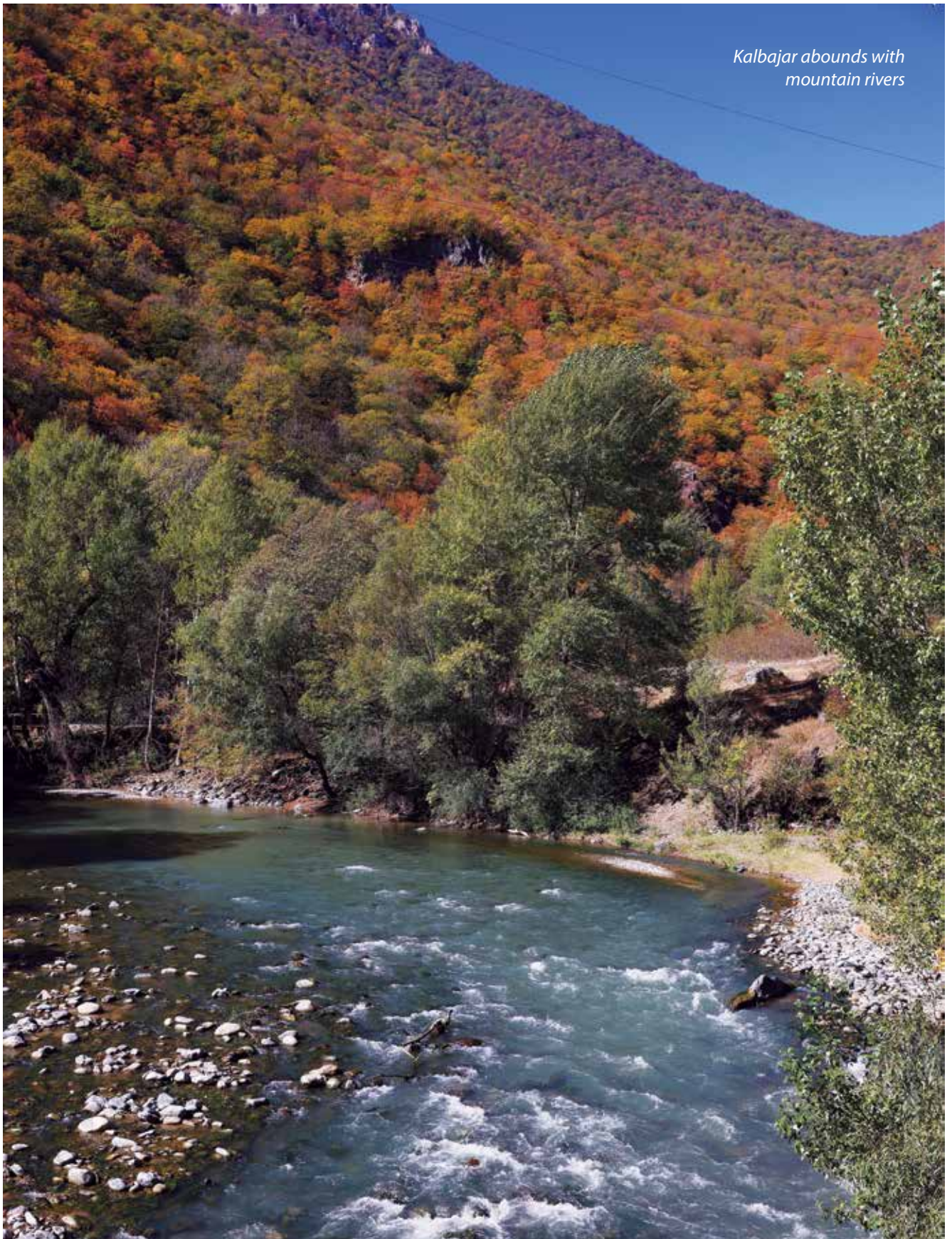
Overall, a significant number of mineral deposits have been discovered in the Kalbajar district, including augite, agate, azurite, actinolite, amethyst, anhydride, barite, biotite, bornite, bronzite, vesuvianite, bismuthite, diallage, diopside, dolomite, galena, garnierite, hematite, gold, garnet, ilmenite, calcite, quartz, cinnabar, cobaltite, covellite, flint, crocoites and cuprite. The fields in Kalbajar are also rich in silver, arsenic, gypsum, labradorite, blue spar, leucite, limonite, magnesite, magnetite, malachite, marcasite, copper, molybdenite, muscovite, nickeline, obsidian, olivine, onyx, opal, orthoclase, pentlandite and pyrite, as well as pyrrhotite, platinum, prehnite, rhodonite, siderite, spessartine, sphalerite, sphene, talcum, topaz, cerusite, zircon, tourmaline, fluorite, fuchsite, calcozine, chalcopryrite, chalcedony, chlorite, microcline, chromite, spinel, bournonite, jadeite, serpentine, coral, jasper, rhinestone and tiger's eye.

In addition to the mentioned ore-rich and other fields, **deposits of building sand and clay** are available in Kalbajar. The region is also known for its mineral water. Such sources of **mineral water as Upper and**

**Lower Istisu, Goturlu and Turshsu** are located there. Information regarding the thermal springs that served as a basis for creating the well-known Istisu resort dates back to the 12th century. The composition of water derived from Istisu resembles that produced from the springs of Karlovy Vary, which is known across Europe, but it is considerably richer. There are a total of three outlets for these water springs, including those located west of the Istisu resort, southwest of Deli-dagh on the highway stretching from Upper Istisu toward Kalbajar and north-east of Deli-dagh near the Tutkhun river. Moreover, there are **sources of acidic water of the Narzan type** in various areas, **along with outlets of radon water**, which are very effective in the treatment of cardiovascular disease.

Despite the rugged and mountainous terrain, **caravan routes that were of great importance in Caucasian Albania's trade with other countries, including European ones**, crossed the territory of Kalbajar in the past. It is no coincidence that numerous coins minted in various states, as well as silver, copper and bronze-made utensils, were found during archaeological excavations carried out in the region. Mineral deposits served as the main goods slated for exports,





*Kalbajar abounds with mountain rivers*



*Famous Lev Fortress*

while valuable jewelry played an important role among imported items. The Barda-Dabil caravan route stretching along the Terter river operated for a long period of time in the early Middle Ages. Such safeguarding fortresses as Lok, Lachin, Ulukhan and Galaboynu were built along this path in this period of history. In order to prevent caravans from going astray due to inclement weather during winter snowstorms, high stone-made slabs with signs were placed along the roads. This road,

dubbed as the **“wagon tract”** in the 19th century, was used to link Goycha to Ganja, stretching via the Zod overpass and onward toward Tiflis. As early as in the last century, a part of the “wagon tract” connected Goycha and Karabakh. Major roads connected the region with Nakhchivan, Daralagoz and Jermuk; another highway stretched from the lower stream of the Khachin river to lowland Karabakh. Salt played a significant role in trading with Nakhchivan, while wheat and livestock were





used in trade relations with Goycha and Karabakh.

The Kalbajar district is also distinguished for a significant number of historical and architectural monuments, including remarkable temples and monasteries. According to archaeological research, **monasteries in this region, in fact, had libraries and operational hotels. These shrines also served as educational centers,** nurturing spiritual values, conducting extensive missionary activities and contributing significantly

to the cultural life of local residents. The Khotavang (Khudavang) monastery, which is one of the most significant shrines in the entire Caucasian Albania, is particularly worth mentioning. Researchers concluded that a part of it emerged at the outset of the spread of the Christian faith in the Caucasus region. Overall, **Kalbajar was one of the main centers of Christianity in the Caucasus** where Christian communities initially emerged. The life and activity of **Hasan Jalal**, an



*In Kalbajar, natural scenery coexists with sites created by human hands*



outstanding 13th century statesman of Caucasian Albania, is closely related to this region.

The spread of Islam in the Caucasus stipulated **the emergence of mosques in this region**. Christian educational institutions were gradually replaced by

Muslim schools, i.e. madrasah. Moreover, a significant number of people sought religious education in Ganja and Barda, as well as cities that served as major Oriental Islamic centers. **In addition to churches, monasteries and mosques, "pirs" (ancient shrines) remained active in the region.** No cases of inter-religious feud or discord have been reported throughout the history of this region.

The Kalbajar district, one of the most abundant Azerbaijani regions with an ancient history and culture, was severely affected by Armenian occupation. The region's natural resources were subjected to looting for 27 years and its cultural and historical heritage was blatantly destroyed. An article featuring more detailed information regarding the natural riches of this region is due to be published in our next issue. 🌟

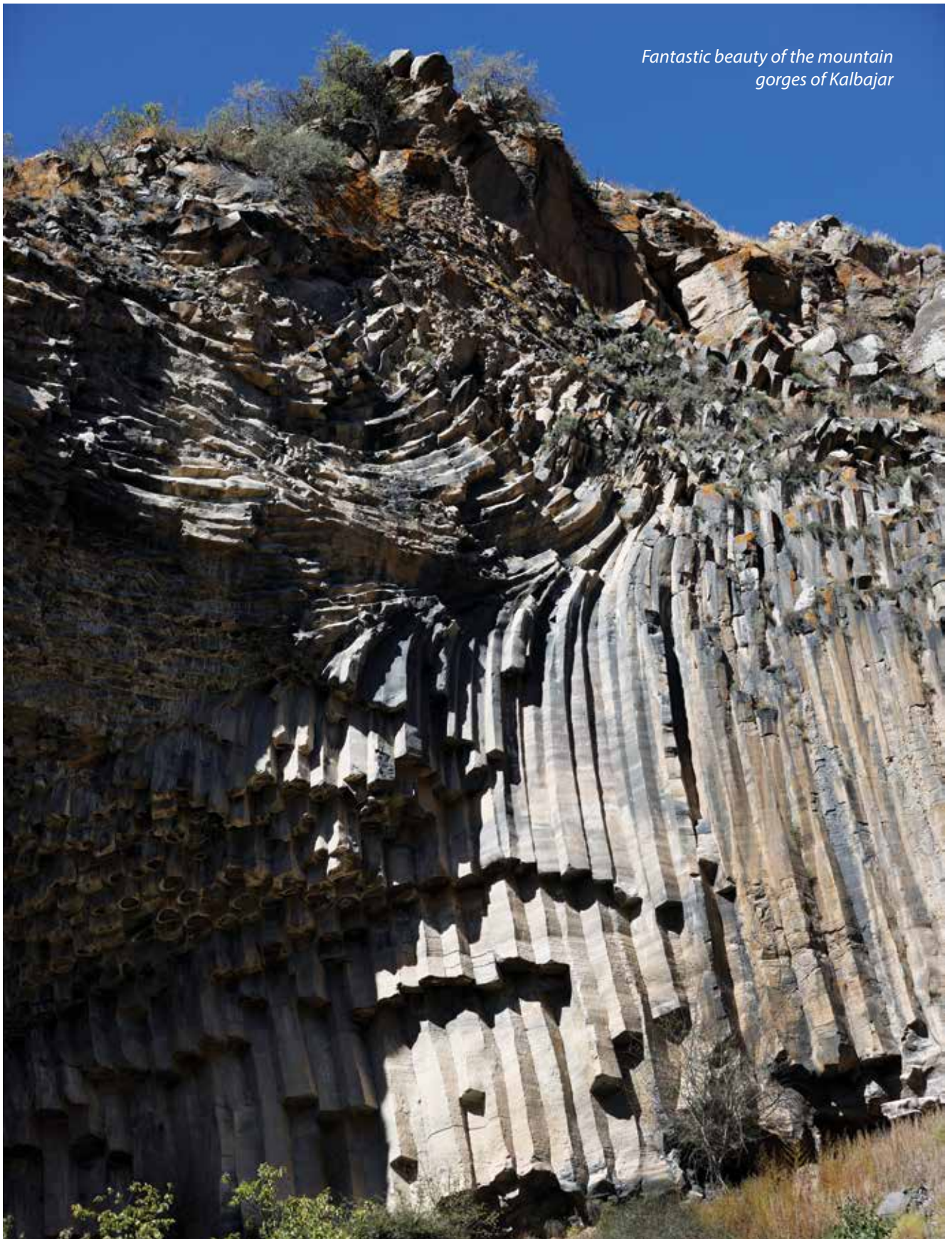


*Abandoned springs will soon be restored*

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*Fantastic beauty of the mountain gorges of Kalbajar*