

UDC 39

CONSERVATION OF RELIGIOUS TEMPLES IN AZERBAIJAN DURING THE YEARS OF TOLERANCE AND INDEPENDENCE

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The end of the 20th century can be described as a time of great change in the political map of the world, as well as a time of intensification of global problems. In such circumstances, setting up a dialogue among religions and cultures to protect the various products of human civilization assumes great importance.

Keywords: mosque, church, synagogue, environment, tolerance, religious

In this respect, the practices of certain countries and regions rich in tolerance and enduring traditions can provide a model. Azerbaijan is a unique sample of calm and cooperation, including many nations and religious faiths. Azerbaijan is a country where mosques, churches and synagogues co-exist. Also, there is no conflict or discrimination between members of various religions. All religious faiths are equal within the modern Azerbaijan state and enjoy the same status.

In accordance with this, the traditions of tolerance formed over centuries in Azerbaijan are constantly being renewed in the public sphere. The President of the Azerbaijani Republic, Ilham Aliyev, has expressed it this way: "Religious and national tolerance dominate in Azerbaijan. All nations live as one family. I am sure, that this is a very important factor for the future of our country." [1,2]

There has not been discrimination and religious conflict in our country in spite of the many ethnic groups and different religious that have long lived together. (The exception is the Armenians who lived in Azerbaijan and endured conflicts associated with land claims.). The people lived in peace and had a high level of tolerance.

The collapse of the Soviet Union, along with independence, helped restore this historical mission and initiated a new phase in relations with national and spiritual value. Adopted in 1992 the "Freedom of religion" law of the Azerbaijani Republic contributes to friendly relations between the two religious communities

in the country and encourages the development of religion tolerance. In addition, the constitution of the Azerbaijani Republic ensures the right to freedom of conscience and guarantees religious choice. Freedom of religion and conscience in Article No.48 has been defined as follows:

"I. Every person has the freedom of conscience.

II. Everyone has the right to define his attitude to religion, profess any religion alone or with others, to profess or not profess any religion, and to express and disseminate beliefs, concerning any religion.

III. The performance of religious ceremonies is free if it doesn't violate public order or public morality.

IV. Religious beliefs and convictions do not excuse the offence." [2,17]

After gaining its independence, there were many international conferences related to religion and culture held in the country. On November 16th, the International Day of Tolerance was celebrated in Azerbaijan for the first time and our National Leader Haydar Aliyev met with the head of religious communities on his own initiative on this auspicious day. In doing so he not only demonstrated the position of the principle of tolerance, but also paved the way for the creation of a progressive tradition.

Azerbaijan has become an important center and organizer of dialogues on the international level, so its hosting of major international conferences devoted to the regulation of state-religion re-

lations and the organization of inter-religious dialogue is not a coincidence. A two-day international conference held in Baku on 3-4 April 2007 "Haydar Aliyev and Religious Policy in Azerbaijan: Realities and Perspectives," was attended by representatives of 20 countries. In recent years, Azerbaijani leadership has taken into account the important role of religious factors in regional conflicts and has implemented a number of measures promoting mutual understanding between different religions. One such measure is the International Conference: "Interreligious Dialogue: from Mutual Understanding towards Joint Cooperation," held in Baku on November 6, 2009. The future development of inter-religious historical and traditional relations, the refinement of relations between state and religion on humanistic criteria, and the restoration of broken or deformed national-religious relations dating from past centuries, are all pressing issues.

The second World Summit of Religious Leaders in Baku on 26-27 April, 2010, played an important role in the realization of inter-religious dialogue and cooperation - not only in the region, but in the world as a whole. The publication of the article "Baku is the City of Tolerance and the Sun" in the well-known Egyptian magazine "Al-Ahram Al-Arabi" was one of the results of the First International Baku Forum: "Strengthening of Tolerance in a Changing World," 19-21 December, 2012.

Restoration, construction and repair of religious monuments are conducted at the state level. Application of the Law of the Azerbaijani Republic on "the protection of historical and cultural Monuments" dated 13th June 1998, reflects the Presidential Decree of Azerbaijani Republic. [3, 3]

The historical facts prove that Muslims both respect other religions in Azerbaijan, and provide sanctuaries for construction to show their support. At the end of the 19th century, local Muslims allocated a huge amount of funds for the construction of the Alexander Nevsky Church, known as the Golden Church in Baku. This is known as an important event in the history of tolerance.

"Zhen Mironosist" Orthodox Church was designed in the Russian style by the architect

M.F.Verzhbitsky and was built by millionaire philanthropist Hadji Zeynalabdin Taghiyev, who provided private financial support and donations in 1909. For a time, the Temple was under the control of a regiment of infantry reserve and met their spiritual needs. But in 1920, during the Soviet period, the Church was one of the first 'signed' places of worship and the head priest was shot. The temple became a warehouse during the communist regime and after that period of time was given over to sportsmen to be used as a gym. This dilapidated Temple building was transformed into the Russian Orthodox Church in 1991. After the establishment of Arkhrey Cathedral, restoration work in Baku was allowed to take place.

The synagogue building of the Mountain Jews has been in operation since 1945. The building was in very bad condition and those who visited there to worship were disadvantaged. In the period of independence repairs were started and restoration accomplished. The second floor of the synagogue was built, creating favorable conditions for visitors to worship. On the 5th of April, 2011, the opening ceremony was held, creating a new place of worship for Mountain Jews.

The synagogue in the Red Settlement of Guba region at the Khanukov Street was built in 1888. The six cupolas (the synagogue also has 6 corners) is the symbol of those who came here from neighboring Geleduz village by permission of Huseinli Khan during the '6 days.' The synagogue is an ancient architectural monument in the oriental style with a large praying hall. The part facing the wall is called the aronkadus. It is the unprecedented, highest sanctuary in Europe outside Jerusalem. The restoration of the synagogue was begun in 1995 and finished in October 2000.

The synagogue for European and Georgian Jews was opened on the 9th March, 2003. It was built based on a project of Alexander Garberin in the architectural style of Jerusalem. This temple is considered to be the first synagogue built in the Near East in last the 60-80 years. One of the biggest synagogues in Europe, it was established in the place of the old temple.

One such reconstructed temple is the Saint Elias church in the Nidj village of Oguz region,

which belongs to the Udins. Constructed in 1723 and used by Udins as their main temple, it was given to the Armenian Grigorian Church in 1836 by special resolution of the "Russian Saint Synod." Udins haven't gone there since that time and at one point the Church was even destroyed. But after visiting Nidj in 2005, President İlham Aliyev gave instructions to reconstruct the Alban historical-religious temples. [4, 154]

One of these reconstructed monuments is the church-museum in the Kish village of the Sheki region, the oldest Christian temple in the Caucasus and in the whole world. Historically, this church belongs to the 4th - 5th century AD. The reconstruction began in 2000 and ended in 2003.

On the seashore, 4-5 km from Baku Bibiheybet Mosque is located. You can see here the tombs of VII Imam Prophet, Museyi-Kazim and his daughter, Prophet Lady Hakime as well as his two grandsons and granddaughter. This historical - architecture monument was built by Shirvanshakh II Farrukhzad ibn Akhsitan in the 13th century. This temple was blown up with dynamite in 1934. After the gaining of independence, Bibiheybet was restored. This process began in 1997. The Mosque was restored in Eastern architectural style over the course of 11 years. The "Al-Nisa" Surah of the Koran is written in mosaic of glass material. 3000 persons can perform the Namaz here at the same time.

The Djuma Mosque, located in Shemakha city, was built in 743. It is recognized as one of the oldest Muslim temples to have survived to the present date, not only in the South Caucasus, but also in the whole of the Near East. Because of terrible earthquakes in 1859 and 1902, the mosque was seriously affected, but at the beginning of the 20th century it was restored. In 1918, because of the genocide committed by Armenian aggressors, thousands of innocent people were killed, and the Djuma Mosque was burned. After independence in 2010, the restoration work of Djuma Mosque was began. Special attention was paid to the original view of the mosque within the total area to about one hectare. 1500 persons can pray here at the same time. There is a conference hall and other rooms in the mosque, too.

This tolerance opens the door to the future for our country. If the country has no tolerance, inter-religious and intercultural dialogue is impossible.

Armenian aggression against Azerbaijan damaged not only the socio-economic sphere, but also our cultural heritage. İlham Aliyev explained certain facts regarding this: "The fact-finding mission of the OSCE, monitoring in the occupied regions in 2005 prepared and submitted a report based on this monitoring. According to the report, everything was destroyed. Armenian aggressors destroyed all historical monuments. Cultural centers were destroyed, all exhibits were stolen, and museums were robbed. The tombs of our forefathers and our mosques were destroyed. Armenia did all of this. The fact-finding mission of OSCE confirmed all of this and showed it in their report." [4, 159]

Armenians took over Turkic-Orthodox monuments not only in the South Caucasus, but also in West Azerbaijan. Those monuments which they couldn't adopt, destroyed before burying their tracks. For this reason, in Yerevan, "City of mosques and monuments", there was left just one mosque and this mosque they referred to as Persian. In 1832 Russian officer I. Shopen registered 12 mosques in Yerevan: 1) Castle Mosque; 2) Shah Abbas Mosque; 3) Zal Khan Mosque; 4) Novruzali bay Mosque; 5) Sartib khan Mosque; 6) Huseyni khan Mosque; 7) Hadji Imamverdi Mosque; 8) Hadji Djafar Mosque and 4 others. [5, 21]

In the Garabakh region more than 2000 various cultural monuments were registered. The majority of them were epigraphic monuments. The tomb of Sheikh Yagub in Fizuli region, Goch Akhmedli Djuma Mosque, Hadji Alesker Mosque, Mir Ali tomb in Ashagi Veyselli village and in Ahmedli village, the tomb of Sheikh Ibrahim, Akhmed Sultan Tomb, Djalal Tomb, Djuma Mosque in Khoradiz village, the tomb in Shikhlar village of Djabrail region (1308) and other tombs, 12 cornered tomb in the Khachin Derbend village of Agdam region, Djuma Mosque, Shakhbulag Mosque of Agdam, 8 cornered tomb in Shusha, Mamayi Mosque, Meshedi Shukur the son of Mirsiyab Mosque Caravanserai,

Djulfalar Mosque, Hadji Yusifli Mosque, Saatly Mosque, Yukhari Govheraga Mosque, Ashagi Govharaga Mosque, Garasaggaq tomb in Lachin, Soltan grandfather's tomb, Sheikh Ahmed tomb, Sri ahig tomb. The tombs in Djidjimli village are very precious examples of the material culture for our history. All monuments were destroyed by Armenian vandalism. [6, 5]

The Azikh and Taglar caves and the Garakopek and Uzerliktepe mounds were deliberately destroyed, as were the mounds located in Khodjaly, Agdam, Agdere, Fuzuli, and the Djabrail regions. Cemeteries, tombs, mosques, temples, and monuments belonging to Caucasus Albania, as well as other national monuments located in Shusha, Lachin, Kelbedjer, Gubadly, Zengilan, Fuzuli were removed. The destructions continue today. Everything discovered during archaeological excavations are removed to Armenia. Note that destruction of historical and cultural monuments by Armenian aggressors in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan is contrary to the following international laws: "On protection of cultural property during armed conflict" (1954 Hague Convention) "On protection of the Archaeological Heritage" (1992 European Convention) and "On protection

of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage" (UNESCO Convention 1972). [7]

As a result of the occupation of 20% of Azerbaijan territory by Armenian aggressors, more than 1 million citizens live displaced lives and our historical-religious monuments have been destroyed. This situation prevents the strengthening of tolerance and inter-religious cooperation.

Nevertheless, the historically established tradition of tolerance continues at the state level in Azerbaijan and over time these traditions have been enriched with new qualities.

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AZƏRBAYCANDA TOLERANTLIQ VƏ MÜSTƏQİLLİK İLLƏRİNDƏ DİNİ MƏBƏDLƏRİN KONSERVASIYASI

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XX əsrin sonunu, əsasən, dünyanın mövcud siyasi xəritəsinin dəyişməsi, habelə ictimai həyatın müxtəlif sahələri ilə bağlı bir sıra global problemlərin yaranması və gərginləşməsi ilə səciyyələndirmək olar. Belə bir şəraitdə başər sivilizasiyasının müxtəlif mədəniyyətlərinin qorunması üçün dinlər və mədəniyyətlər arasında dialoqun yaranması böyük əhəmiyyət kəsb edir.

Açar sözlər: məscid, kilsə, sinaqoq, ətraf mühit, tolerantlıq, din

ТОЛЕРАНТНОСТЬ В АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНЕ И КОНСЕРВАЦИЯ РЕЛИГИОЗНЫХ ХРАМОВ В ПЕРИОД НЕЗАВИСИМОСТИ

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Конец двадцатого века в значительной степени характеризуется изменением существующей политической карты мира, а также появлением и напряжением ряда глобальных проблем, связанных с различными сферами общественной жизни. В этих обстоятельствах диалог между религиями и культурами необходим для охраны культурного наследия человеческой цивилизации.

Ключевые слова: мечеть, церковь, синагога, окружающая среда, толерантность, религия