

## ALBANIAN HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL MONUMENTS ILLEGALLY RESTORED AND FALSIFIED DURING THE OCCUPATION OF NAGORNO-KARABAKH

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### Summary

The material and cultural monuments of Nagorno-Karabakh, which were condemned to destruction by the Armenians, are our irreplaceable national wealth as a stone memory of our history. These monuments are not only material and cultural, but also “archive” pages of our spiritual history. The destruction of historical monuments of Nagorno-Karabakh was faced with the threat of erasing the fossilized memory of our history of culture and morality.

The article states that the Azerbaijani state not only carries out the restoration of churches and other historical and architectural monuments in the territory of Azerbaijan but also takes an active part in the restoration and conservation of historical monuments included to many World Cultural Heritage outside the country. The peoples of different faiths and their temples living in its territory of Azerbaijan as a tolerant country are evident with undeniable facts. The “Armenian church” can be seen in the center of Baku city, in which the state of Azerbaijan shows the care it shows to other religious monuments. As Azerbaijan is a multi-ethnic and tolerant country, just as aborigines respect the religious monuments, places of faith and cultural values of minority peoples, the same feeling of respect for the national-cultural values of the aborigines, that is, Azerbaijanis, should also be promoted. Thus, as the sense of respect for one's culture among peoples and nations increases, it will also increase the respect and esteem of one's another.

**Keywords:** Historical-architectural, Albanian period, falsified monument, church, temple, cross stones, restoration, conservation.

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### 1. Introduction

All regions of present-day Azerbaijan in ancient times and early Middle Ages are known from history, including Karabakh, Azerbaijan was part of Albania and Atropatena States (BC IV – VII century). It was during these times that the art of architecture developed at a very high level and at a great speed in those areas. After Christianity was accepted as official religion in Albanian state, of course, this religion was in the sphere of influence of Christian ideology of existence of Albanian state to some extent.

During the existence of Albanian state which had almost a thousand-year history, temples and basilicas of different Albanian-Christian religion began to be formed in all regions of Northern Azerbaijan, including Nagorno-Karabakh. From such architectural style, characteristic for its time, it is clear that all types of architecture belonging to Eastern Christianity were developed in Albania at that time. Armenians, who deny all these historical truths, use the Christian factor to change the artistic ornaments and wall inscriptions of this type of monuments and make them

belong to Armenians (*Ismayilov, 2009:182*). This, in turn, led to the burning of the originals of the manuscripts in the Albanian churches translated into Armenian, and the changing of the inscriptions and artistic stone patterns in the interiors of the churches and monasteries.

## 2. Discussion

Despite all these falsifications, most of the monuments of the Caucasian Albania have survived to the present day, preserving their original forms in many territories of Azerbaijan (*Ismayilov, 2018:3*). Russian researcher V.P.Velichko writes: “Suspected Armenian rulers with always changing borders always relied on strong neighboring countries and always systematically betrayed them. Wherever it is beneficial for him, that is his homeland, “As historical sources show, there was no Armenian state in history, and it never had a history”. That is why fake Armenian historians were always “forced to write the history of the Armenian people” instead of “the history of Armenia” (*Gaziyev,2009:47*). Armenians, who do not have a deep history, have taken the path of purposefully appropriating Albanian monuments in the Caucasus, changing the national identity of Albanian architecture, and and “fight” tirelessly. The monuments that are most subject to appropriation and change are churches, basilicas and convent buildings. Armenians here, based on symbols and hints of Christian religion, as well as stone and wall paintings on such type monuments, present them as elements belonging to Grigorian religion. This also leads to the falsification of history. The outstanding Caucasus Studies Russian historian Y.I.Krupnov wrote about the Armenians: “There were no restrictions and coercion in studying the history of Albania. The history of Albania was studied by historians from different countries. But one thing is known: The history and destiny of Caucasian Albania should be dealt with more by Azerbaijanis than by all. In this field, they are responsible to world science, they are indebted to world science” (*Ismayilov, 2015:6*).

In Albania, a special architecture called round temples was spread in the style of Christian architecture, and that architectural style belongs only to Albanians. Because elements on the stone and walls of Albanian architectural monuments of pre-Christianity are not found in the stone inscriptions of other nations and peoples. Many researchers confirm that this style belonged only to Albanians in the South Caucasus. Although the Armenians claim that these monuments belong to Armenians in the present period, the layout of the architectural structure forms and ornaments reveals that Armenians are lying. The construction of round temples in Albania dates back to the early Christianity period and according to researchers, these temples were built by Albanians who worshiped the sun, that is, in the times when they were still mixed with the worship of heavenly bodies and Christianity was not yet fully adopted. All ornaments of the architectural style of this period reflect manifestations of fire-worship, motives of worship of celestial bodies. Our analysis and studies suggest that elements belonging to Turkic-speaking peoples were mostly used in the carvings of architectural monuments of the Albanian period, as well as in stone and wall paintings. It is clear that Armenians do not accept the presence of Turkic symbols and ornaments on historical and cultural monuments in the territories where they settled. At present, this causes the monuments to be damaged by the Armenians more. If they accepted the symbols and ornaments on the monuments of the Albanian period, then it would be impossible to armenize them.

Georgian historian I.Chavchavadze fully reflected the facts of Armenians' appropriation of the monuments of the Christian era of Azerbaijan in his work “Armenians and blood-weeping stones”. He writes: “Armenians artificially Gregorianize the aboriginal Albanians and call the

lands of Azerbaijan, where they once took refuge, “Hay country”. However, researchers show that even the monuments of the Christian period do not correspond to the Armenian culture, nor to the Armenian religion (Gregorianism) and its origin. Thus, the study of Albanian-Christian monuments in the territories of Azerbaijan from architectural and historical-archaeological point of view helps to clarify many features of Christianity” (*Ismayilov, 2015:6*).

As a rule, the most complex buildings of Albanian period are considered monasteries and basilicas. Occupying Armenians presented all monuments of this type in the territories of Azerbaijan as Armenian churches. Monasteries and basilicas, unlike churches and convents, have two, three, and even four-nave majestic constructions. These monuments were intended for mass events and religious worship. Their construction style and unique features are also sharply different from the architecture of Eastern Christianity. Armenians, who call all types of constructions of the Albanian period “Armenian church”, claim that there are 500 of them in Nagorno-Karabakh. However, there were only 2 Armenian churches in all the territories of Soviet Armenia (*Ismayilov, 2018*).

In order to change the history for their own benefit, the Armenians set themselves the goal of carving out cross stones and burying them in Azerbaijani lands during the occupation. In recent years, they have expanded their cross production so much that they have become producers of cross stone in the South Caucasus. Armenian-occupiers are engaged in the production of crucifixes in the territories of Azerbaijan, although at first glance it seems like the promotion of Christianity, in fact, the course of this process serves the Armenianization of Azerbaijani lands. They were simply fed up with the work of updating the boring Armenian khachkars, which do not carry artistic meaning, and recently they began to use artistic samples and ornaments of Albanian khachkars. In this way, Armenians, carving and embossing cross stones, head stones and marks, similar to decorative designs of many Albanian cross-stone residents (only by changing ornaments of these stones), place them in different parts of the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan, around the bualgar, on roadsides, in well-groomed places of public centers, parks, gardens, cemeteries, on architectural monuments, as well as in (*Ismayilov, 2009:182*). We should also note that such a policy of mass aggression of Armenians against our monuments was the first such policy in the world. It would be appropriate to note here that the classic Armenian cross stones, Armenian religious symbols have no meaning and significance, especially since the cross images themselves are in a simple form, due to their artistic style and character. While preparing the Armenian-Gregorian crosses, their images, decorative art samples, various ornaments and other examples were not used. Therefore, the samples of the Armenian-Gregorian crosses up to the present time, being in a simple form, are not considered works of art because of their features, these crosses are nothing more than ordinary religious means used in the execution of religious rites in churches (*Kaya, 2005:108*). No matter how hard the Armenians tried, they could not completely change the structure and structure of the temples and churches belonging to the local Turks in accordance with their goals.

Everyone knows that the apostolic church in the Caucasus was the Albanian church. Because the Armenians accepted this religion 270 years after the Albanians accepted Christianity in 313. This is also reflected in academician Ziya Bunyadov's research. He proves with evidence that Armenians really accepted Christianity in 583 under the leadership of Gregory. Armenians are not Apostolic. The issue of whether the Armenians were Apostolic was the subject of controversy. This point is reflected in the letter of the Albanian Catholicos Avraam to the Albanians. He wrote: “After all, the Armenian Church is the Gregorian church. That is, it takes its beginning from Gregory. And Gregory is known to have been a disciple of the apostle Elisæus's disciple. If Grigory is not an apostolic, then how can the Armenian church

be an Apostolic church” (*Ismayilov,2018:3*). That's the point. As you can see, Armenians show fraud here as well.

Built on a high hill in Kalbajar, surrounded by mysterious nature, the Khudavang monastery is the largest monastery complex in Azerbaijan. Dadevang or Khudaveng complex, which is one of the most beautiful evidences of the ancient Albanian civilization, consists of Arzu Khatun church, Hassan church, Basilica and 2 chapels. The ancient architectural pattern, combined with the landscape of the region, dates back to the 8th-9th centuries. After the occupation of Kalbajar by Armenian Armed Forces in 1993, khudavang monastery complex was presented to the world as an Armenian monument. However, the Turkic names mentioned in the inscriptions here are considered one of the exact indicators of the ethnicity of those who erected the monument. The Armenians, who have to hand over Kalbajar by November 25, are also damaging historical monuments. Khudavang monastery is one of the victims of this vandalism. The bells, cross stones and other valuable items of the monastery are dismantled and illegally taken to Armenia. They also erased inscriptions on various Albanian churches, changed and removed frescoes. Even the signs of the cross have been changed. Armenians regularly carried out these forgeries during the occupation. In particular, special stone quarries have been operating to give the appearance of antiquity to the various stones and frescoes that will be newly placed on the churches, and here they have painted the stones using chemical solutions so that they do not differ from others. All this shows that “Armenians are not only enemies of Turks, Azerbaijanis, monuments of Muslim culture, but also enemies of Christian monuments, Christianity itself, history and material-cultural heritage created by all mankind”.

At present, measures are being taken to protect historical architectural objects located in all Azerbaijani territories liberated from occupation. There have never been Armenian churches or churches in Nagorno-Karabakh neither in historical terms nor in other occupied territories. It is impossible to come across any document that can prove it from any archive of the world. For the first time in Nagorno-Karabakh the expression “Armenian church” is found in the 70-80s of the XX century. It has its historical roots. Thus, the Tsarist government, which overthrew the Karabakh Khanate in 1805, established its headquarters in Shusha. Divankhana was renovated several times by the command of the Russian army and adapted to the church style. For the worship of Russian soldiers, the army leadership created conditions for the worship of Russians by hanging a bell from the tower of the khanate's divan house. Later, the divankhana of the Karabakh Khanate was called “Russian church” among the people. This is confirmed even by Armenian researchers of that time in their works. Armenian historian Zare Melik-Shahnazarov notes in his book (*Zapiski karabakhskogo soldata,1995*) that the only church in the city of Shusha is not an Armenian church, but a Russian church.

In 1918, after the establishment of the Democratic Republic in Azerbaijan, the Russian military left Shusha. After that, the Russian church remained neglected and unused until 1970. However, in the 1980s and 1990s, the Armenian leadership of NKAO repaired the Russian church in Shusha and gave the church to the Armenians living in Shusha. After that, this church, which is the only place of worship of Armenians in Karabakh, was completely Armenianized. The church was named “Armenian church” after this event (*Ismayilov, Sadikhli,2020:79*). The activity of the Armenian church in Karabakh began after the appointment of Pargev Martirosyan as the archbishop of the Nagorno-Karabakh region in 1989 by Vazgen II, head of the Armenian Gregorian church.

All these evidence and evidence suggest that there was never an Armenian church in Karabakh, Shusha, and that their names and rules were changed after they were falsified by the Armenians.

Armenians brutally exterminate underground cultural samples, i.e. archaeological monuments of Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh with financial support and participation of the USA, England, Netherlands, Ireland, Spain and other countries. Every summer months all mounds in Khojaly, Aghdam, Khojavand, Shusha, Kalbajar, Karkijahan, Khankendi were demolished and razed to the ground by various archeological groups of foreign countries with the organization of the Institute of Archeology and Ethnography of Armenia. All archaeological samples found during excavation, including labour tools, household items, hunting weapons, pottery, jewellery, pottery, etc. were carried to Armenia (*Ismayilov, 2009:182*).

With such illegal excavations carried out by foreign researchers with the help of Armenians, they try to convince the world community that these lands were once Armenian territories. Allegedly, if this issue is “proved”, they will justify their own aggressive policy. Therefore, the Armenians have been trying hard in this direction and do not hesitate even to present their imaginary dreams as reality for years.

As a result of our investigations, it became clear that during the occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh, state-registered 50 tombs, 67 mosques, 92 shrines, 106 temples, 32 bridges, 39 fortresses, 262 memorials and 253 archaeological monuments remained in our territories. Among the architectural monuments, the Islamic religious monuments, i.e. mosques, tombs, shrines and other places of faith, were the most destroyed and damaged by the Armenians. During the registration in the USSR period the stones of the Albanian period, gravestones, many art-written stone samples, gravestones, archeological monuments around Shusha fortress were not taken into account. Inside the castle, the residential houses of many prominent people, tombstone monuments, neighborhood mosques, neighborhood baths, residential houses built in a special style, houses with balconies in a special style, and artistic stone samples were left out of the register (*Ismayilov, 2012:12*). The fact that the monuments were out of registration somehow made it easier to falsify them from the Armenians.

Registration of monuments in Karabakh was carried out by Armenians in stages for several years. 1700 monuments were registered in 2000, 1200 monuments in 2006, 289 monuments in 2010, and 361 monuments in 2011, making a total of 3550. In 2012, the Armenian press reported that the number of historical and cultural monuments in Nagorno-Karabakh and its surrounding areas is 4,000. In fact, of the 4,000 monuments, which the Armenians claim to have in Karabakh, 1,450 are Armenian churches, newly built by Armenians during the occupation period, and modern cross-stones carved and erected. As a result of our research, it was revealed that the total number of immovable historical and cultural monuments in the occupied territories does not exceed 2550 (*Ismayilov, 2022:111*).

### 3. Conclusion

Our research proves that Ancient Albanian temples, as well as material and cultural values obtained as a result of archeological excavations, which had been subject to destruction several times since the day of the establishment of Nagorno-Karabakh, were stolen and falsified, as well as mosques, baths and public buildings were destroyed and lost their former appearance. Local buildings were either dismantled and falsified, or three-storey, five-storey buildings were built in its place, or used not according to their purpose.

We conclude that the victims of the aggression of Armenians against the Azerbaijani people, which lasted more than two hundred years, were not only our lands, but also our compatriots, our holy places, as well as our ancient Albanian historical and cultural monuments,

our temples, which are thousands of years old. Because starting from XIX century Armenians settled in Karabakh and western Azerbaijan first occupied and destroyed historical lands of Azerbaijanis and then our monuments from time to time.

From our research, we have come to the conclusion that the implementation of restoration and conservation work is not as easy as it can be seen. From our research, we have come to the conclusion that the implementation of restoration and conservation work is not as easy as it can be seen. This is a very difficult and important issue. Restoration and conservation work will be carried out on the basis of art works, manuscripts and information contained in documents left in XVIII-XIX centuries, which will help to some extent to the restoration.

Another problem lies with the restorative architects and artists who are likely to face during the restoration of monuments during the restoration process. These problems are reflected in the restoration of buildings with a complex technical structure, in finding materials, in the complete destruction of ornaments, works, and paintings in some buildings, and in the absence of any sketches for their restoration.

At present, repair and restoration works have started in the territories freed from occupation. Reconstruction and restoration of historical-architectural monuments are carried out in these works. In the end, it will ensure the development of tourism sector by carrying out restoration and conservation of monuments in our liberated territories, preserving its history and antiquity.

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