

## Brief Overview of Dagestan

**In recent years, separatist trends have been observed actively around the world. In some cases, manifestations of separatism are a result of ethnopolitical, cultural-linguistic, historical, and discriminatory factors; in other cases, the problem of separatism in one or another country is deliberately staged in the geopolitical and economic interests of certain groups. Such unsuccessful staged attempts are also undertaken against Azerbaijan. Some external, hostile forces attempt to use representatives of ethnic minorities living in peace and harmony in Azerbaijan as instruments of pressure or destabilization in the country. The subject of our research is the Dagestan peoples.**

Dagestan is a geographical toponym; in this region, from 40 to 80 tribes, ethnoses, and ethnic groups lived and still live. According to most scholars, the term ‘Dagestan’ means ‘mountain country,’ from Turkic ‘dag’ (mountain) and Persian ‘stan’ (land, place). It is still unclear when this toponym arose; however, practically all scholars support the opinion of the Russian orientalist V.V. Bartold (1869–1930), who believed that the ‘Dagestan’ term emerged in the 10th–16th centuries. Incidentally, the toponym of the Hun-Savirs’ state, Tavyaka, is translated from the Old Turkic language as ‘Mountain Country,’ from ‘*tav*’ (mountain) and ‘*yaka*’ (side). This state existed between the 6th–10th centuries. Later, in modern Turkic, Tavyaka became known as Dagestan. In the Kumyk and Nogai languages, ‘*tav*’ and ‘*tau*’ mean ‘mountain.’ In Turkish and Azerbaijani, it sounds as ‘*dag*.’ Considering that in the 16th century, the territory of the South and North Caucasus was an arena of confrontation between the Ottoman Empire and the Safavid state, one can assume that the ‘Dagestan’ toponym emerged during this period.

At the beginning of the 19th century, Dagestan referred to the territory between the Caucasus Mountains, more precisely, between the eastern part of the North Caucasus and the Caspian Sea. According to some authors, the territory of Dagestan began from the Sulak River (now in central Dagestan) and stretched as far as Baku. Some authors believe that the territory of Dagestan covered the lands between the Sulak and Samur Rivers. In 1860, when the Dagestan Region was established, its borders were defined from the Sulak River to the Samur River. In 1920, the Khasavyurt District (formerly the Kumyk District) of the Terek Region (abolished in 1921), and in 1957, the Kizlyar plains and the Nogai steppes were included in Dagestan. It is no coincidence that currently, the mountainous part of Dagestan makes up 57% of its territory.

The Republic of Dagestan was established in 1920 as an autonomous republic within the Russian Federation and is part of the North Caucasus Federal District. Its capital is the city of Makhachkala, located on the coast of the Caspian Sea. It was founded in 1844 as the Petrovsk fortification, and in 1857, the city was named 'Petrovsk' in honor of Peter I. During the Persian campaign in 1722, the camp of Peter I's army was located here. From March 1918 to March 1920, the city was held by anti-Russian forces and was called Shamil-Kala in honor of Imam Shamil. In 1922, it was renamed Makhachkala in honor of Magomed-Ali (Makhach) Dakhadaev (1882–1918), one of the organizers of Soviet power in Dagestan.

Near Makhachkala, there was the city of Semender – the capital of the Khazar Khaganate (650–969). Before that, the North Caucasus was part of the Turkic Khaganate (552–603), then the Western Turkic Khaganate (603–650).

Not far from Makhachkala, there was the city of Tarki – the capital of the Kumyk feudal state (14th century – 1867).

### ***Reference***

***Magomed-Ali (Makhach) Dakhadaev.*** *By ethnicity, an Avar. Graduated from the St. Petersburg Institute of Railway Engineers, studying on a scholarship from Prince Aselderbek Kazanalipov (by ethnicity, a Kumyk). In 1901, he joined the Bolsheviks. He was convicted but released on bail paid by his father-in-law Mohammed-Shefi, the fourth son of Imam Shamil. He was married to his eldest daughter Patimat, with whom he had a son, Adilgirey. After childbirth, Patimat could no longer have children. By mutual family consent, Makhach divorced her and married her younger sister, Nafisat. As a dowry, he received a dagger factory in Temir-Khan-Shura (now Buynaksk) and supplied daggers to the army of the Russian Empire.*

***Mohammed-Shefi,*** *the son of Shamil (1840–1906), has served in the convoy of Tsar Alexander II for 16 years from 1861, retiring with the rank of Major General. His wife, Maryam Khanum, was a Tatar from Kazan and spoke the Russian and Kumyk languages as well.*

Until the 1920s, the Nakh-Dagestani peoples of Dagestan were considered Lezgin tribes. In some sources, the term 'Lezgin' was used to denote all non-Turkic peoples of Dagestan. However, 14 small-numbered peoples of the Republic of Dagestan were officially recognized in 2020 as indigenous ones: Avars, Aguls, Azerbaijanis, Dargins, Kumyks, Laks, Lezgins, Tats, Tabasarans, Nogais, Rutuls, Russians, Tsakhurs, and Chechens-Akkins (who migrated from the mountainous part of Chechnya, Akka, in the 16th century).

It is worth noting that Turkic-speaking tribes appeared in the Caucasus at the beginning of the first millennium AD. At the end of the 4th century, the mass migration of the Huns began. Before the Huns, the Scythians lived in the territory of the North Caucasus. Their origin and influence on the formation of the North Caucasian peoples have not been established to this day. The Scythians disappeared from the world map in the 3rd–4th centuries AD.

A people consisting of several tribes and dominant in the western and central steppes of Eurasia from the 9th century BC to the 4th century AD were referred to in ancient Greek sources as Scythians. Achaemenid chronicles called them ‘sak’ or ‘saka,’ and Chinese sources used the ethnonym ‘sai.’ Some researchers believe that the customs and lifestyle of the Scythian tribes were identical to those of the Turkic peoples. Medieval historians and chroniclers called them Turks or attributed them to the Turkic peoples.

By the mid-4th century, the Sasanians pushed the Hun-Savirs out of the plains; they retreated into the mountains of Dagestan and founded the state of Tavyaka (Persian Sarir). Their strongholds were Khunzakh and Kumukh. The Sasanian state existed from 224 to 651.

### ***Reference***

***Khunzakh*** is a village in Dagestan, the administrative center of the Khunzakh District. It was the center of Sarir and the Avar Khanate. The population is about 4,200 people.

***Kumukh*** (historically Kazi-Kumukh) is a village in Dagestan, the administrative center of the Lak District. It was the center of the Kazikumukh Shamkhalate and the Kazikumukh Khanate. The population is about 2,300 people.

From the end of the 12th century until 1834, on the territory of the Sarir state, the Avar Khanate was formed (Avar Nutsalate, Khunzakh Khanate). The Avar historian Timur Aitberov believes that the Turkic-Avars, having settled in small numbers in the central part of the present-day Avaria, formed a significant part of its ruling elite but themselves dissolved among the local population. Having visited Avaria in 1837, the Russian writer and participant of the Caucasian campaigns, officer Yakov Kostenetsky (1811–1885), noted that the Avar Khanate served as a monument of Tatar rule in the mountains. The Lak theologian and thinker Ali Kayaev (1878–1943) wrote that the shamkhals and mountain khans were descendants of Tatar (Kumyk) shamkhals. The Azerbaijani historian Kemal Aliyev asserted that the descendants of the Tarkov shamkhals are the mountain tribes: the Arguanians, the Andians, the Gonodins, and others.

The discussion of the origin of the ‘Avar’ ethnonym in the Caucasus has been ongoing since the 19th century. Currently, the most widely recognized scholarly opinion is that the ‘Avars’ ethnonym relates to the name of the nomadic Turkic tribe Avar, which appeared in the North Caucasus in the 6th century and assimilated over time.

In 557, the Avar nomads moved from the steppes of Western Kazakhstan to the western bank of the Volga, into the steppes of the North Caucasus. In Byzantine sources, the Avar tribe Zabender is mentioned. Possibly, it is related to the emergence of the city of Semender in Caspian Dagestan.

### **Reference**

*The Avar Khaganate (562–823) occupied parts of Bavaria, Hungary, Austria, Slovakia, Poland, Croatia, Serbia, and Ukraine. Capitals – Timisoara (Romania), Szombathely (Hungary). In 805, the Avars adopted Christianity. The khaganate was destroyed after protracted wars with the Franks and the Bulgarian kingdom. The Avars were a tribal union mainly of Turkic-speaking tribes. After the collapse of the Khaganate and the adoption of Christianity, they merged with the peoples of Eastern Europe.*

*The Avar Khanate existed from the 12th century until 1864. Its capital was Khunzakh. Population: Avars and other peoples of Dagestan. In 1803, it became part of the Russian Empire. During the Caucasian War (1817–1864), it was part of Shamil’s Imamate. After the war, it was abolished, and in its place, the Avar District was formed as part of the Dagestan Region.*

*The Kumukh Khanate. From the end of the 14th century until 1867, the Kumyk state existed on the territory of Dagestan, which was referred to as the Shamkhalate, the Tarkov Shamkhalate, the Kazikumukh Khanate, and the Kura-Kazikumukh Khanate. In 1812–1820, a separate Kurin Khanate existed there. The capital was the city of Targu or Tarki (now a district of Makhachkala). The khans belonged to the Kumyk dynasty.*

Some historians note that Lezgins are the descendants of the Caucasian Albanians. Russian ‘Lezgin’ corresponds to the self-designation of the Lezgins – *lezgi* or *lek*. ‘Lezgi’ is an Iranianized form of the historical name of the Lezgins – *lek/leg*. Arab medieval authors called the Leks al-Lakz. Strabo wrote that ‘between the Amazons and the Albanians, the Gels and the Legs – Scythians lived.’ The Legs or Leks were one of the 26 tribes of Caucasian Albania, considered the ancestors of the present-day Lezgins and Laks. Strabo believed that the Amazons lived by the

Mermoda River. Scholars assume that the Mermoda is the modern Terek or Kuban River.

In written sources, the 'Lezgi' term is known from the 12th century. This was not a self-designation for a separate Dagestani nation. In the Russian Empire and among the Turks, 'the Lezgins' name referred to the numerous mountain tribes of Southern Dagestan. In the 1920s, the 'Lezgins' ethnonym was officially assigned to one of the mountain peoples of Dagestan, known from the second half of the 19th century as the Kyirin, which was introduced by the ethnographer General Peter Uslar (1816–1875).

The ancient Greek writer and philosopher Plutarch (between 45 and 50 – between 119 and 125) reported that the Amazons lived on the Caucasian ridge along the Caspian coast from the mouth of the Kura to the Samur River. There is a version that the Amazons are a distorted ethnic term 'Alazons,' after the toponym of the area along the Alazani River.

If, indeed, the Legs/Leks were the ancestors of the Lezgins and Laks, then Strabon was wrong. Because Strabon believed that the Gels and Legs were Scythian tribes. And the Scythian tribes were Iranian-speaking and Turkic-speaking tribes. This historical question requires careful study for our understanding of the past.

### **Reference.**

*The Alazani is a river in eastern Georgia and western Azerbaijan, flowing into the Mingachevir reservoir. In Azerbaijan, it is called Ganikh. The Avars call it Alazan, the Chechens – Alaz, and the Tsakhurs – Dur.*

*Kura is a historical and geographical region in Southern Dagestan. The region's toponym comes from Arabic 'küra,' which means 'region,' 'district.' It is located between the Samur River and the Tabasaran region to the north.*

### ***Derbent Fortress Wall***

*The Derbent Wall is the eastern part of the Caucasian Wall, which protected the peoples of Transcaucasia and the Near East from invasions from the north, bypassing the Caucasus Mountains, along the Caspian coast. It was built after 562 by the order of the Sassanid shah Khosrow I Anushirvan. The Derbent Fortress closed the narrow (3 km) passage between the sea and the mountains.*

*Throughout the length of the Main Caucasus Range from the Caspian Sea to the Black Sea (about 1000 km), two automobile roads exist officially from the North Caucasus to Transcaucasia. The first road leads to Azerbaijan through Derbent*

along the Caspian Sea. The second one is the Georgian Military Road from Vladikavkaz to Tbilisi through the Darial Gorge.

**'Derbent'** comes from *Dar-i band*, translated from Persian as 'Narrow Gates.' It was also known as the Albanian Gates.

**'Darial'** comes from *Dar-i Alan*, translated from Persian as 'Alan Gates.' It was also known as the Caucasian Gates.

**Lezginka** is a dynamic folk dance in the Caucasus, widespread among the Caucasian peoples. It has been known since at least 1839. Debates about the origin of this dance continue to this day. It can be stated with certainty that the homeland of the dance is the Caucasian mountains. The version asserting that the name of the dance was invented in 1958 by Lezgin cultural figures, the founders of the dance ensemble 'Lezginka,' is not correct. Until the beginning of the 20th century, all the peoples of Dagestan were called Lezgins. Most likely, hence the name of the dance. The dance was probably created during the Caucasian War (1817–1864), military actions by the Russian army aimed at capturing the North Caucasus.

The dance gained fame in 1935 in London, when it was performed at the World Folk Dance Festival by the dancers Iliko Sukhishvili and his wife, the dancer Nino Ramishvili from the Tbilisi State Opera and Ballet Theater named after Z. Paliashvili. The Georgian version of the Lezginka dance, *Lekuri*, was performed in the famous film by the Georgian director Rezo Chkheidze, 'Father of a Soldier' (1964). In Azerbaijan, the classical Lezginka and the Azerbaijani version of the dance, *Gaytaghi*, are widespread. Armenians are the only people in the Caucasus who neither wear a *cherkeska* (*chokha*) nor dance the Lezginka.

**Cherkeska** is a type of outer garment among the peoples of the Caucasus. *Cherkeska* is the Russian name for the outer male clothing since the Circassians were the first among the Caucasian peoples to start relations with the Russians. Each nation has its own name for the *Cherkeska*. *Chokha* is the Turkic name. Georgians call this clothing *chokha*, and Azerbaijanis – *chukha*.

Until the 4th century, Derbent and part of Southern Dagestan were part of the state of Albania. Then, before the arrival of the Arabs, these territories were conquered by the Persian state of the Sasanians.

From the mid-7th century, Southern Dagestan came under the rule of the Arab Caliphate (640–1055). After the Caliphate appeared in Eastern Anatolia, Iran, and the Caucasus, paganism gradually faded. Christianity spread to the territory of Georgia and Armenia. Christian states supported Georgians and Armenians. Arabs and Turks did not force them to convert to Islam. Georgians and Armenians

preserved their faith, while their churches and feudal lords preserved their lands. The peoples of Azerbaijan and the North Caucasus voluntarily adopted Islam.

In 642, the Arabs came to Nakhchivan, then almost without resistance, passed through the entire territory of Azerbaijan, and finally, penetrated Derbent. The local Persian Sassanid governors adopted Islam and came under the protection of the new rulers. Islam began to penetrate Caucasian Albania from the 7th century. The ruler of Albania, Javanshir, was the first to start the Islamization of the region. In the 9th century, the Islamic dynasty of the Shirvanshahs (861–1538) emerged, with capitals in Shamakhi and Baku. Throughout different periods of history, the power of the Shirvanshahs also extended to neighboring regions: Arran and Derbent. In the 10th century, the Islamic dynasty of the Shaddadids (951–1136) appeared, with its capital in Ganja. The Shirvanshah and the Shaddadids had Arab roots but considered themselves descendants of the Sasanians. They ruled these lands until the 11th century when the Turkic Seljuks came. In southern Azerbaijan, the Shaddadids ceded power to the Turkic state of the Eldiguzids (1136–1225).

Thus, in Azerbaijan, the Christian Albanians Armenianized, while the Persian-speaking and Turkic-speaking tribes adopted Islam. But, besides fire-worshippers, Christians, and Muslims, there were also Tengrians. Southern Dagestan was Islamized, but the rest of Dagestan remained under the rule of the Khazar-Tengrians until the end of the 10th century.

The Turkic Khazars and the Arab Muslims waged unceasing warfare with each other. In 740, the ruling part of the Khazars adopted Buddhism and found themselves surrounded by Turks (Tengrians), local pagans, and from the south, Muslims.

From 921, the mass conversion of the Turks to Islam began. As a result, by the end of the 10th century, the Turkic Khazars left the historical stage, giving way first to the Oghuz Turks, and then to the Kipchak Turks, who adopted Islam.

In the mid-9th century, some Southern Dagestan territories, including Tabasaran, Kura, Akhty, Rutul, and Tsakhur, were under the influence of the Shirvanshahs. The Derbent Emirate was also established. During that period, the Kumukh Shamkhalate consisted of only Lakia.

## **Reference.**

*The State of the Shirvanshahs (861–1538).* In historical literature, it is customary to call it by the title of its ruler. Other names were the State of Shirvan or the Shirvan State. The former Arran (Caucasian Albania), the city of Derbent, and part of Southern Dagestan were included in this state. Its capitals were Shamakhi, and, later, Baku. Population: Arabs, Persian-speaking and Turkic-speaking tribes, and partly Dagestani peoples.

*The Derbent Emirate (735–1075) occupied the Caspian coastal territory from Derbent to the Samur River in the south. Its capital was Derbent. Population: Arabs, Turks, and Caucasian peoples.*

The Turkification of the population of Caspian Dagestan continued from the mid-10th century to the beginning of the 19th century. In 968/969, the Oghuz, in alliance with the Pechenegs (part of the Oghuz) and the Prince of Novgorod and the Grand Prince of Kiev Vsevolod Igorevich (920–972), defeated the Khazar Khaganate. Many Oghuz served in the Khazar army, so they easily took over the former Khazar lands. The Khazar Turkic tribes became part of the Oghuz. The Oghuz and the ancestors of the Dagestani peoples had close and diverse contacts. The Oghuz made up the main part of the army of the Serir rulers. In the Serir community, the Oghuz formed a numerous stratum. According to old residents of the Avar settlement, in ancient times, Surakat was the ruler of Tanusi (a village in Khunzakh District); under him, descendants of Oghuz Khan lived, who owned the surrounding lands. According to the verbal tradition of the Khunzakh people, the Ughuzilal tukhum (clan) was exempted from tribute to the nutsal. The founder of the tukhum was a tarkhan (tax-free noble). The Oghuz formed the social stratum of the feudal tarkhans. For military service, the Oghuz were granted land plots near Mount Akharo in Khunzakh District. According to tradition, they also founded a village in Khunzakh District, Tsada. In some Avar historical songs, the name of the Avar clan Ughuzilal (Oghuz) is mentioned. The memory of the Oghuz is preserved in the expression ‘ughuzillal parlu’ (the Oghuz are coming). In the village of Akhty in Akhtinsk District, there was an Oghuzrin Surar (graves of the Oghuz) cemetery.

As is known, many toponyms in Dagestan are of Turkic origin, which is associated with the residence of Turkic tribes in the region.

In addition, the names of the villages of Padar, Karadagly, Kayakent, Oguzer and Karaman, as well as the Kaytag region in Dagestan, refer to the Oghuz tribes of the same name.

The Seljuk Turks-Oghuz reached Derbent from the south. The names of the Derbent gates ‘Kyrkhlar-kapy,’ ‘Bayat-kapy,’ and ‘Turkmen-kapy’ are Oghuz names since Bayat is the name of an Oghuz tribe. In 985–986, the commander Seljuk Beg (who served the Khazar Khagan and the Oghuz Khagan) and part of the Oghuz adopted Islam. The pagan Oghuz and Kipchaks began fighting against them. They began to be called Turkmens. Part of the Oghuz from the North Caucasus also migrated south to them, part to Europe, and part mixed with the local population of Dagestan.

In the 1040s, the Kipchaks came to the North Caucasus, pushing out the Oghuz. They played an important role in the history of Dagestan, Georgia, and Azerbaijan.

In 1249, the Chinggisids captured Transcaucasia and the city of Derbent. The South Caucasus territories became part of the state of the Hulaguids, and the North Caucasus territories became part of the Golden Horde.

In the 12th century, there was no Mongolian nation in the steppes of Asia. There were only Turks and proto-Mongols (Kidan people), who were divided into different tribes. Temujin gathered them into a single state, which was called Mongolia. The word "Mongol" comes from the name of the Mengu tribe, which was one of the Tatar clans. The ancestors of Chengis Khan came from this tribe. It is known that Chengis Khan corresponded in the Turkic language. His letters to rulers and messages to descendants were written in the Turkic language.

Regarding the origin of the word "Chengis", there is an opinion that the word has Turkic roots and is a derivative of the Turkic word "tengiz", meaning "sea". Based on this, Chengis Khan means "khan of the sea", "lord of the sea", or "lord of the universe".

During the 12th century, the Turkic-Mongolian tradition emerged based on ethnocultural synthesis. The official language of the Great Mongol Empire was Persian and Turkic. The religion was Tengriism – the worship of Tengri (Tanrı), the god of the sky. This tradition began to rapidly develop to the west and north of India. The Turkic language dominated among the elites. In 1220-1250, the Turks adopted Islam. Some of the Turks and the proto-Mongols remained in Tengriism and converted to Buddhism. They mixed with the Chinese and centuries later, today's Mongolian people and language were formed.

### **Reference.**

*The Empire of Chengis Khan (Mongol Empire 1206-1294) is a state created as a result of the conquests of Chengis Khan and his successors, including territories from Eastern Europe to the Sea of Japan and from Novgorod (Russia) to Southeast Asia. As a result of the collapse of the empire in 1269, the following state entities were formed: the Yuan Empire, the Ulus of Jochi (Golden Horde), the State of the Hulaguids (Ilkhanate) and the Chagatai Ulus. Kublai issued an imperial decree on December 18, 1271 to name his kingdom the Great Yuan (Dai Yuan, or Dai On Ulus) and found the Yuan dynasty. The capital was Khanbaliq (Beijing). The Yuan Empire (1271-1368) occupied the territories of China and Mongolia. Kublai patronized Buddhism. The empire fell as a result of the Chinese uprising (the Chinese uprising against the Turkic dynasty in 1351-1368). Then, behind the Chinese wall, the Northern Yuan Khaganate existed for another 20 years. Subsequently, there were several attempts to re-establish the rule by the descendants of the Chengisids, but without success.*

After the death of Genghis Khan, the lands under the control of the Genghisids were divided between his four sons. Thus, four uluses (appanages) emerged, headed by independent rulers who pursued a cruel policy of conquest. Azerbaijan and Dagestan were included in the ulus of the Golden Horde, where the Jochid dynasty, descendants of Genghis Khan, ruled. During the 13th and 14th centuries, the territories of Azerbaijan and Dagestan were the arena of military operations between the khans of the Golden Horde and the Hulaguids. The goal of this struggle was to seize fertile lands, large pastures of the Mugan, Mil and Shirvan steppes. The Golden Horde made their campaigns into Azerbaijan in 1262, 1265, 1288, 1290, 1318 and 1357. Military camps were mainly set up on the Mugan plain in the territory of modern Azerbaijan. This was under Chormagan, under Oljeitu and under Hulagu. In early 1386, the Golden Horde Khan Tokhtamysh and the ruler of a large feudal state in Central Asia Timur (1370-1405) invaded Azerbaijan. Timur's army chose Mugan as a place to spend the winter. In 1395, on the banks of the Terek, Timur (Tamerlane) destroyed Tokhtamysh's army.

In the 15th century, the Kazikumukh Shamkhalate became the largest Islamic and political center of Dagestan.

From the end of the 16th century to the beginning of the 17th century, the North Caucasus was part of the Ottoman Empire.

From 1636 to 1717, the Dagestan vilayat (province) was part of the Safavid Empire on the territory of the present-day Republic of Dagestan. Southern Dagestan, with Derbent, was ruled by the Safavid dynasty. In the northern and western regions of Dagestan, there were Dagestani feudal territories ruled by local dynasties under Safavid suzerainty. Important among these rulers were the Kazikumukh Shamkhal and the Utsmi of Kaitag. The northernmost Endirey Khanate was located south of the Terek River.

### ***Reference.***

*Kazikumukh Shamkhalate (8th–17th centuries) existed on the territory of Dagestan with its capital in Kumuk. Population: Arabs, Turks, and Dagestani peoples. The 'Shamkhal' term remains debatable. Different scholars proposed their versions. The most convincing is the one from the Derbent-Name chronicle, according to which, in the 8th century, during the Arab invasion, Shahbal was appointed the ruler of the region. Then it began to be pronounced as Shamkhal. By order of Chopan Bek Tarkovsky (Chopan ibn Buday – ruler of the Tarkov Shamkhalate in 1567–1589), the Kumyk chronicler Awabi Muhammad Aktashi al-Endiravi wrote the book Derbent-Name in the Turkic language. The sister of the*

*Wali of Dagestan, Chopan Bek Tarkovsky, Sultan-Agha Khatun was the wife of the Safavid shah Tahmasp I (1524–1596).*

***The Kaitag Utsmiyate**, or Utsmi-Dargo, existed from the 6th century to 1820 on the territory of the present-day Kaytag and Dakhadaev districts, and part of the Sergokala, Derbent, and Kayakent districts of Dagestan. The Utsmiyate capitals were Kara-Koreysh, Madzhalis, and Bashly. Population: Kaitags, Terekeme (another name is Karapapakh – Azerbaijani ethnos), Kumyks, and Dargins. The ‘Utsmi’ title, according to the Arabic version, originates from Arabic ‘ismi,’ which means ‘notable.’ Later, it was pronounced Usmi, then Utsmi.*

***The Endirey Khanate** existed from the beginning of the 17th century to 1827 on the territory between the Terek and Sulak rivers. It was created by a representative of the Kumyk dynasty of Shamkhals, Sultan Mahmud Endireyevsky, who, in alliance with his brother, the Shamkhal of Tarkov, defeated the Russian army in the Battle of Karaman (Karaman Field in Dagestan) in 1605. Sultan Mahmud founded the buffer Endirey Khanate and thereby stopped Russian expansion for 208 years. Its capital was Endirey (a village in Khasavyurt District of Dagestan). Population: Kumyks.*

From 1730, Dagestan was part of the states of the Afsharids and Qajars, who were Azerbaijani Turkic dynasties.

In 1801, Georgia, and in 1803, the Avar Khanate voluntarily joined Russia. Some peoples of the Caucasus, i.e., the Abkhazians, Ossetians, and part of the Kabardians, also voluntarily accepted Russian subjecthood. However, the greater part of the peoples of the Caucasus remained under the influence of the Ottomans and the Qajars.

In 1813, following the Russo-Qajar War (1804–1813), the Treaty of Gulistan was concluded, under which Dagestan, Georgia, Armenia, and the present-day Republic of Azerbaijan passed to the Russian Empire. After the Qajars had gone, Russia unleashed the Caucasian War (1817–1864), intending to annex the North Caucasus to the Russian Empire. The peoples of the North Caucasus put up fierce resistance to the Russian troops. The main military actions took place in Circassia, Dagestan, and Chechnya. By 1825, Russia annexed Kabarda, and the resistance of the Circassians (Adygs) was broken. Thus ended the first active phase of the war. However, later the Qajars and Ottomans came to the aid of the highlanders. There were Russo-Qajar (1826–1828) and Russo-Ottoman (1828–1829) wars, which ended with Russia’s victory.

Following the annexation of the Astrakhan Khanate (1459–1556) lands in 1556, Russian influence spread to the Caucasus. Russian tsars started dreaming of the Caucasus. The Prince of Kiev Igor was the first to make an expedition to the territory of present-day Dagestan, i.e., the Khazar Khaganate, as early as 913. At that time, the Khazars repelled the attack. The second expedition of the Prince of Kiev Svyatoslav Igorevich led to the destruction of the Khaganate. These so-called expeditions did not aim at seizing territories but were rather plundering raids.

In 1594, the Russians sent their troops from Astrakhan to Dagestan. They captured the capital of the Tarkov Shamkhalate, the city of Tarki. The Avars (leaving aside for a while blood feuds and intertribal strife) together with the Shamkhal's army drove the Russians back. In 1604, the Russians sent a large detachment to Dagestan. They captured Tarki again. In 1605, the Ottomans sent a military detachment to help the highlanders and repeatedly drove the Russians back. In 1668, Stepan Razin, who had raised a peasant uprising in Russia, attacked and temporarily captured Derbent (Dagestan), Baku and Shamakhi (Azerbaijan), and Rasht (Iran).

From the beginning of the 18th century, the Russification of the region began. Peter the First resettled Russians and co-religionist Christians, in particular Armenians and Georgians, to the Caspian region, starting from Astrakhan in the north to Derbent, Baku, Lankaran, Gilan, and Mazandaran. Thus, in 1701, Armenians appealed to Russia with a request to liberate them from the 'heavy Persian yoke.' Russia accepted this proposal in 1702. From this moment, the preparation began for the seizure of the western coast and the south of the Caspian Sea, simultaneously assisting the Georgians and Armenians.

Then events began to develop as follows. The highlanders of the Eastern Caucasus rose against the Safavids (Sunnis against Shiites). The Ottoman Empire supported the highlanders. In 1707, the rebels, led by Haji Davud, captured and plundered Shamakhi – the residence of the Shirvan beylerbey. In 1712, the rebels plundered Shamakhi for the second time, and Russian merchants were also robbed. In 1721, they seized Shamakhi again and massacred the entire Shiite population. Armenians, Jews, and foreigners were not harmed. However, 300 Russian merchants were robbed and killed. The looting of Russian merchants during the devastation of Shamakhi by highlanders in 1722 gave the Russian government a pretext to intervene in Persian affairs and offer the Shah assistance against the rebels. All subsequent military actions took place under the flag of benevolent (toward Persia) pacification of rebels, rather than open war. In 1722–1723, the Russian army and fleet invaded Eastern Transcaucasia and Dagestan, which then belonged to the Safavid state. In the same year of 1722, the Afghans also invaded

the Safavid state, and after an eight-month siege, they captured the capital, Isfahan. Shah Sultan Husayn surrendered his power to their leader, Mir Mahmud, who proclaimed himself Shah of Iran. His power extended over eastern, southern, and a significant part of inner Iran, except Yazd. The Shah's son, Tahmasp II, moved to the northwest (to his ancestral homeland, in Tabriz), where he was recognized as the legitimate shah. Southern Azerbaijan, Gilan, and Mazandaran submitted to him. Following this collapse of the state, in the spring of 1723, the Ottoman Empire invaded the Safavid Empire. Tahmasp II sent his envoy Ismail-bek to St. Petersburg to conclude an alliance with Russia, under which Peter I promised to help expel the Afghans from the country. In 1723, Iran and Russia concluded a treaty under which Iran ceded Derbent and Baku, as well as Gilan, Mazandaran, and Astarabad (now Gorgan, Golestan Province, Iran) to Russia. Russia undertook to help Tahmasp II in his struggle with his enemies. Russian troops entered Rasht but did not assist. In 1729, Nadir Shah, who had come to power, expelled the Afghans and created the Afsharid state – the successor of the Safavid state. Nadir began a war with the Ottoman Empire for the Caucasian lands and made two campaigns into Dagestan. As for the Russians, in 1736, they were forced to leave the territories they had earlier occupied.

However, let us return to the uprising of Haji Davud (1680–1736). The figure of Haji Davud of Mushkur is actively used by some Lezgin authors as the ‘fighter for Lezgistan.’ He is presented as a leader of the national liberation movement of the Lezgins against the Safavids. A native of the Mushkur uyezd, Davud, after visiting Mecca, added the title ‘haji’ to his name. He proclaimed himself bey and began a movement to cleanse the Caucasus and Dagestan of Shiites. The Utsmi of Kaitag, Ahmad Khan, the ruler of Kazikumukh, Surkhay Khan, the ruler of the Ilisu Sultanate, Ali-Sultan Tsakhur, and Ibrahim Kutkashen joined him. An eyewitness to those events was the Russian officer of German origin, Johann Gustav Gerber (1690–1734), a geographer and ethnographer who participated in the Russian Persian campaign. He wrote, “The khan among the rebels, Daud-bek, of simple origin from Mushkur, named Daud or David, only sharp in mind.” Haji Davud strove to create an independent Sunni state on the territory of Shirvan. Gerber describes Mushkur as a district inhabited by Sunni speakers of Turkic. Mushkur was a historical region in the northeast of Azerbaijan and southeast of Dagestan, along the western coast of the Caspian Sea. Its ancient name was Maskut, after the Massagetae who inhabited the region, known as maskuts.

Haji Davud was born in the village of Dedeli (originally Arabdedeli) in the Khachmaz Region of Azerbaijan. The first mention of this village dates to the 18th century. According to the Caucasian Calendar of 1857, Dedeli was inhabited by

Sunni Tatars who spoke the colloquial language of Tatar, i.e., the Azerbaijani language. According to the 1873 data, published in 1879 under the editorship of N.K. Zeydlitz, “on the left side of the Kusar-Chay River at the Zarda-Gul-Bulakh Spring,” there were 37 Sunni Tatar households and 266 inhabitants, i.e., Azerbaijanis. Some researchers believe that the ancestral village of Haji Davud was the village of Jaba in the Akhty district of Dagestan. I think this version is fabricated since the Lezgins inhabit this village.

### ***Reference***

***Kusarchay*** is the largest river in the Gusar region of Azerbaijan. It begins in the Bazarduzu Mountains and flows into the Caspian Sea. There is a village of the same name in the Khachmaz region and the city of Gusar in the Gusar region of Azerbaijan.

***Gusar*** was originally called Ksar. According to the Oxford Concise Dictionary of World Place Names, this word comes from the Lezgin "kas" (man). According to the Russian Caucasus specialist Karl Hahn (1848-1925), the name comes from the Persian "kyukh" (mountain) and the suffix "sar", that is, "Kyukhsar" (mountainous), which is more plausible.

Initially, some parts of the Separate Caucasian Corps of the Russian Empire were located here. Gusar has always been a place of residence for Russians, Jews, Lezgins (Kyurintsy) and Azerbaijanis (Aderbeijani Tatars). A significant number of Jews moved to Guba.

According to the 1897 census (the first general census of the Russian Empire), 1,595 people lived in Qusar, of which 936 were Orthodox, 361 Muslims and 211 Jews.

Until 1920, the main population consisted of Russians.

According to the 1921 census of Azerbaijan, Russians made up 32.1%, Lezgins - 28.3%, Azerbaijanis - 27.6%, Persians - 3.6%, Mountain Jews 2.0%.

Today, more than 90% of Lezgins and more than 9% of Azerbaijanis live in the Gusar region.

To achieve his political goals, Haji Davud appealed to the Russians for help but was rebuffed. Nevertheless, the internal turmoil in the Safavid state allowed him to attack Shamakhi, Ardabil, and even Tabriz unimpeded. The Ottoman Empire fully supported his actions since, starting from 1514, there were continuous wars between Sunnis and Shiites – the Ottoman Empire and the Safavid state. During that period, the Ottomans besieged Vienna three times. Due to Safavid

offensives, the sieges were abandoned. The Ottomans failed to capture Europe, and the Safavids were unable to expand beyond Kandahar (Afghanistan).

In 1728, Haji Davud was summoned to Ganja, where he arrived with his family, including four sons, two brothers, and his retinue. They were all taken into custody and sent to the Ottoman Empire. According to one version, he came for negotiations with the Ottoman governor, and according to another, for a wedding. Probably, his aspiration for independence and unruliness alarmed the Ottoman authorities. But the question arises: why was he not killed, and why was his entire family and retinue sent to the Ottoman Empire?

But there is another version, according to which, after Nadir Shah came to power in Iran, having subdued the Afghans, Kurds, Turkmens, and others, he requested the Russians to leave the occupied territories. This meant that Haji Davud was facing terrible revenge from Nadir Shah. For this reason, he and his entourage were relocated to the Ottoman Empire.

In his fears, Haji Davud proved farsighted. Later, Nadir Shah undertook four bloody campaigns into Dagestan in 1734, 1736, 1741, and 1745. Surkhay Khan I of Kazikumukh was defeated in 1741 in battles near Kazi-Kumukh, surrendered, was held captive in Derbent, and died in 1748. The rulers of Kaitag, Tabasaran, Mekhtuli, and Tarkov declared their submission to Nadir Shah.

Haji Davud is often referred to as a Lezgin ruler who has controlled Lezgin lands in Dagestan. Some ‘scholars’ assert that by origin, he was a Lezgin. However, it should be noted that all landlords in Lezgistan, regardless of ethnicity, were referred to as Lezgins.

Regarding the confusion about the origin of Haji Davud, I will give several notable examples. Thus, for instance, Lezgin authors also write that Fatali Khan originated from a noble Lezgin family and, like most Lezgins, was a Sunni. His father’s name was Lezgi Akhmet. Indeed, in Russian-language literature of the 19th century, there were such versions that the Guba khans had local origins. According to the ‘Review of Russian Possessions Beyond the Caucasus’ of 1836, the progenitor of the family of the last Guba khans was Lezgi-Akhmet. This version has not been confirmed. It is well known that all of Dagestan, i.e., the central and southern parts of modern Dagestan, was formerly called Lezgistan. And all the peoples of Dagestan were called Lezgins. During that period, the Azerbaijani poet and ashug Lezgi Akhmet lived and worked (18th century), who met with the ashug Kheste Kasum (1680–1760s) in Derbent in 1741 or 1742. According to an unconfirmed version, the competition of ashugs (poetic riddles (*deyishme*)) was arranged by Nadir Shah himself. Ashug Lezgi Akhmet was born in the village of Kurush,

founded by Azerbaijani Turks. Territorially, Ashug Akhmet came from Lezgistan. Therefore, he could have been called Ashug Lezgi Akhmet, or indeed, he may have been a Lezgin. Ashug Fatali Velikentsky (late 17th – early 18th centuries) was from the Village of Velikent of the Kaitag Utsmiyate (now the Village of Velikent in the Derbent district), and Ashug Khalid Karadaghli (1822–1875) was from the Village of Karadaghli (now the village of Karadaghli in the Derbent district). All of them were Dagestani Azerbaijanis and representatives of the Dagestani school of ashugs.

A similar trend was also observed in relation to Azerbaijanis. Russians in the 1900s called Azerbaijanis Caucasian Turks, Azerbaijani Turks, or simply Muslims. Many peoples of the Caucasus under the Safavids called Azerbaijanis Kyzylbash, and under the Qajars – Qajar. The Safavids, Afshars, and Qajars were rulers of large empires, which included present-day Iran. Therefore, many historians mistakenly or deliberately called these empires Persian. These dynasties were Azerbaijani, Turkic. The Kumyks, Laks, and Dargins also called the Azerbaijanis Qajar. Among the Avars, Andis, Chamals, Banuals, and Archins, the ethnonym ‘Azerbaijanis’ was associated with the term ‘padar.’ Among the Laks, Dargins, Avars, and Archins, another name for Azerbaijanis was known: *hamshari*, meaning ‘fellow countryman, compatriot’ in Persian.

Fatali Khan (1736–1789) was the ruler of the Guba Khanate (1680–1810). Having received a small possession (Guba) from his father, Hussein Ali Khan, he united the adjoining Caspian territories around it, which included Tabasaran and the Derbent, Baku, and Shirvan khanates up to Ardabil (Southern Azerbaijan, the present-day Iran). He was born in 1736, in the family of the Guba Khan Hussein Ali Khan and Peri Jahanbike Utsmiyeva, daughter of the Kaitag Utsmi Ahmad Khan. Fatali Khan himself was married to Tutibike, the sister of the Kaitag Utsmi Amir Hamza. In general, there existed kinship and close ties between the Kaitags, the shamkhals, and the Guba khans. In the Guba Khanate, Azerbaijanis, Tats, Lezgins, and Jews lived.

### ***Reference***

*Historically, the population of the city of Guba consisted mainly of Azerbaijanis. According to the 1873 data, the ethnic composition of the city of Guba was as follows: Azerbaijanis 52.2%, Jews 45.3%, and Russians 1.9%.*

*According to the 1897 data, the ethnic composition of the Guba district was as follows: Azerbaijanis 38.3%, Tats 25.3%, Lezgins 24.4%, Jews 2.2%, and Russians 1.4%. The Kubinsky district included the Kubinsky, Divichi, Kusarsky and Khachmaz regions.*

*According to the 2021 data, the ethnic composition of the Guba region is as follows: Azerbaijanis 79.22%, Tats 9.10%, Lezgins 5.87%, Jews 2.2%, and Khinalugs 1.43%.*

On the territory of Kaitag, the Kaitags themselves and remnants of nomadic peoples lived, including Savirs, Huns, Turks, Khazars Tatars, and Jews, and with the accession of the mountain Dargin unions Gapsh, Gank, and Muira, also Dargins.

The dynasty of the Guba khans descended from the Madzhalis branch of the Kaitag Utsmii, whose genealogy is attributed in historical literature to the Arab Quraysh. In Russian sources from the 17th century, the dynasty of the Guba khans or individual Kaitag Utsmii are also mentioned as rulers of the Kumyks, and their envoys called their land ‘the Kumyk land.’ In the 19th century, the language of the Utsmii was mentioned as Turkic or ‘Tatar mixed with Turkish.’ The phrase ‘Turkish mixed with Tatar’ referred to the Kumyk language. One of the dialects of the Kumyk language is still called Kaitag.

As a result of discord, the younger (Velikent, Engikent) branch exterminated the entire senior Madzhalis branch, except for the minor Huseyn Khan, who was saved and taken to the Tarkov shamkhal by his milk-brother. Upon reaching adulthood, he went to Salyan (Azerbaijan) and married the daughter of the local qazi. From this marriage, Ahmad Khan was born, who became the founder of the dynasty of the Guba khans.

Renowned Russian scholars and ethnographers from the late 17th century to the early 20th century (P. Butkov, S. Bronevsky, Ivan Chopin, V. Bartold) unanimously stated that the rulers of Guba and Derbent were Karakaitags or Kaitags.

The well-known Russian and Soviet historian and founder of the Russian school of Oriental Studies, V. V. Bartold (1869–1930), wrote that around 1640, “part of the Kaitags separated from their fellow tribesmen and moved to areas located south of Dagestan. The leader of those resettled, Huseyn Khan, managed to establish a new principality for himself in Salyan and Guba. From this branch of the Kaitags came Fath Ali Khan, ruler of Guba and Derbent.” It is reliably known that Huseyn Khan received Guba to govern and the title of Khan from the Safavid Shah Sefi II Suleyman (reigned 1666–1694).

In 1711, Haji Dawud invaded the Guba Khanate, seized the then capital Khudat, and killed Sultan Ahmad Khan, who was a Shiite. The Khan’s supporters managed to save the young son, Huseynali Khan, father of Fatali Khan.

Today, the Kaitag district is an administrative-territorial unit within Dagestan. Its population is about 39,000. Dargins make up 91%, and Kumyks 8% of the population. Some Kaitags moved to Azerbaijan or mixed with local Azerbaijanis and Kumyks. Currently, the Kaitag language is considered a branch of the Dargin language. From the Turkic-speaking Kaitags, only the name of the district remained. In the Middle Ages, the picture was completely different. Topographically, Kaitag was divided into two parts: Highland Kaitag, or the Uzden part, and the flat part, or Terekeme. The inhabitants of the first part were free people – Uzdens. The Terekeme were dependent on the higher class – the beks. The Kaitags were Oghuz Turks. According to some historians, they came in the 11th century with the Seljuk Turks.

### **Reference**

*The Terekeme plain is a historical and geographical area, divided into upper and lower parts. Currently, its territories are part of the Derbent, Kaitag, Kayakent, and Tabasaran districts of Dagestan. The Terekeme were resettled from Azerbaijan in the 16th century. They are an ethnic group of Azerbaijanis who were nomadic herders.*

According to the 1890 data, the ethnic composition of the Kaitag district was as follows: Dargins 37%, Kaitags 26%, Kumyks 23%, Terekeme 9%, Kubachins 4%, and Jews 2%. The Kaitag Utsmiyate was abolished in 1820. No earlier statistics exist. The comparison of various sources shows that the Kaitags were Turkic-speaking people related to the Guba khans. Most of the population was Turkic-speaking Kaitags, Kumyks, and Terekeme. It also included Dargins and Mountain Jews. The capital of the Utsmiyate was the Village of Kala-Koreysh, then Urkarakh and Madzhalis. Important villages were Bashly and Yangikent. The population of Kala-Koreysh numbered several hundred people: the Utsmii, his family, and close ones, who were 100% Turkic-speaking, i.e., the first Kaitags. Dargins were the main population in Urkarakh. The main population of Madzhalis, Bashly, and Yangikent was also Turkic-speaking.

In Dagestan, there are two districts where the descendants of the Kayi tribe live: Kayakent and Kaitag. The first is derived from the word ‘kayi’ and the Turkic ‘kent’ (town, settlement). The second is derived from the word ‘kayi’ and the Turkic ‘dag’ (mountain). Kayi (Kayy, Kay) is one of the twenty-four ancient Oghuz tribes, from which the dynasty of Ottoman sultans and caliphs descends. In Azerbaijan, the ‘gaytagi’ dance is widely spread; its rhythm is like the lezginka. It is possible that the dance was created by Kaitag settlers. The ‘Kaitag’ embroidery, originating in the 16th century, is also widely known.

\*\*\*

The longest war in Russian history was the Caucasian War. Historians are in full agreement regarding the end date of the war. They still cannot precisely determine the start date. The official version is 1817–1864. Some write, 1801–1864. The Caucasian War, however, in fact began in 1785. The first liberation movement (1785–1791) was led by the first imam of the North Caucasus, Sheikh Mansur (1760–1794). Later, there were continuous armed clashes. Highlanders and Chechens regularly attacked Russian fortresses and stanitsas.

Why did the Russians wage war against the highlanders of the Caucasus for almost half a century? How did numerous multi-lingual tribes unite to resist Russian intervention? What factors exacerbated the Russians' positions?

Firstly, the landscape of the region created problems for the Russians; the mountains and forests allowed the highlanders to resist successfully.

Secondly, Russian troops destroyed forests, crops, and grain, and confiscated livestock. Then they destroyed the rebellious villages. Therefore, the resistance acquired a universal, popular character.

Thirdly, Muslims declared ghazavat – a holy war against the infidels. The Muslim uprising was led by the imams of Dagestan: Ghazi Muhammad (1795–1832), Gamzat Bek (1789–1834), and Sheikh Shamil (1797–1871). In the early 1840s, there was not a single Russian soldier left in Dagestan.

During the Caucasian War, the Russians formed auxiliary detachments of mountain militia in the region: Nazran, Mountain, Ossetian, Samur, Tanaur, Shamkhal, Chechen, Ingush, Avar, Akushin, Dagestani, Jaro-Lezgin, Kazikumukh, etc. In the early 1850s, the Dagestan irregular regiment was formed. Initially, it consisted entirely of Avars. These were blood enemies and opponents of muridism. Then Russians, Georgians, Ossetians, and representatives of other Caucasian ethnoses began to join this regiment. The Kazikumukh, Kurin, Shamkhal, and Mekhtuli khans were loyal to Russia, and their militias also participated in Russian army campaigns. The geographical location of their territories allowed them to act without fearing Shamil's revenge, since Russian troops were nearby. The Chechen leader, Bey Bulat Taymiev fought on the Russian side with his detachment. Part of the Avars, mainly from Khunzakh and Chokh, fought on Russia's side. For the same reason, Shamil ceased armed resistance to the Russians, first of all, because he lost Haji Murad (1818–1852), who was his military commander and naib, in fact, his right hand from 1840 to 1851. The Avars followed Haji Murad.

On August 13, 1834, Imam Gamzat Bek killed the Avar khans Abu-Nutsal and Umma Khan. On September 19 of the same year, Haji Murad's elder brother, Osman, and several of his associates killed Gamzat Bek. During the shootout, Osman was also killed. Since then, Haji Murad, who was the milk-brother of the Avar khans, has become the leader of the Avars. This event distanced the Avars from the murid movement. Haji Murad and the Avars went over to the Russian side.

In 1836, the Russians appointed Ahmad Khan Mekhtulinsky the ruler of Avaria, and rivalry and enmity began between him and Haji Murad. Haji Murad was arrested, his house destroyed, and his property plundered. He managed to escape from captivity, and in 1840, he joined Shamil.

Military failures and internal disagreements forced Shamil and his naibs to take a desperate step. At the end of 1851, Haji Murad went over to the Russians in Tiflis. His family was allegedly arrested, and he fled from Shamil because he was accused of unsuccessful military actions. In reality, he planned to obtain intelligence information on military forces, roads, and fortresses. In April 1852, seeing the Russians' suspicious attitude towards him, he attempted to escape into the mountains, but was killed near the Village of Onjali (Gakh Region of Azerbaijan).

Secondly, in 1853, the Crimean War began, and Shamil awaited the advance of Ottoman troops into Transcaucasia to unite with them. But this did not happen, and further resistance became pointless.

Thirdly, by the late 1850s, some of Shamil's Chechen naibs, including Yusuf-Haji Safarov and Eski Khulkhulinsky, went over to the Russians. Thus, all of Chechnya and many areas of Dagestan were virtually lost. By that time, the common people were already tired of the endless war. Both Chechens and Avars, like others, sought to preserve their people, villages, and lands. For these reasons, Shamil decided to cease military activity and turn to spirituality. On 7 September 1859, Shamil and his 400 murids descended from the Avar Village of Gunib. His murids, fully armed with banners, dispersed and were not subjected to further persecution. Shamil was met by the Commander-in-Chief of the Caucasian army, Prince Baryatinsky (later viceroy in the Caucasus). Shamil did not know Russian, and the Prince did not speak Avar. The translator was Colonel Alibek Penzulaev, a Kumyk by origin. The circumstances of the negotiations, the dialogues, and even the words remained a secret. About a month later, a meeting took place between Shamil and the Russian Tsar Alexander II in the town of Chuguev, near Kharkiv. All Shamil's conditions were accepted, and he left the Caucasus forever with his family. The Tsar presented

Shamil with a golden saber. He was received everywhere with honor as the head of the Imamate. Shamil and his son Ghazi-Muhammad were guests at the wedding of Tsarevich Aleksandr (the future Emperor Alexander III) in St. Petersburg. Shamil died in 1871 in Medina.

There are different versions regarding Shamil's ethnicity. Researchers write that Shamil was an Avar, as were Muhammad Ghazi and Gamzat Bek. But his paternal ancestor was Kumyk Amir Khan. At home, with his family members, Shamil spoke the Kumyk language. He was a murid of Imam Ghazi Muhammad, a Kumyk by ethnicity. They were both born in the Village of Gimry. The Avar name of the Village is Genub from the word 'geni,' which means pear. Other versions are linked with Kumyk 'qymra,' which means the name of a plant, and Turkic 'gemry,' which means pasture. Shamil said that he knew Arabic, Avar, Turkish, and Kumyk. Once, he called himself 'a simple Tatar.' At that time in Russia, Kumyks and Azerbaijanis were called Tatars. E.g., when Shamil was in a nine-year exile in Kaluga, he had two translators: one from Russian and the other from Kumyk. In Kaluga, Colonel Dmitry Boguslavsky, who knew Arabic and Kumyk well, conducted secret surveillance of Shamil. Correspondence with the Tsarist government was performed in the Kumyk Turkic language.

In the northern part of Dagestan, Avar was the language of interethnic communication, and in southern Dagestan, the Kumyk Turkic. Imam Shamil was an expert in the Islamic religion, an organizer, and a military commander. Thanks to these qualities and the knowledge of the two aforementioned languages, the imam successfully led the resistance of the highlanders for 25 years.

Throughout history, Southern Dagestan and Northern Azerbaijan had close contacts in all spheres, especially in the economy. The former used the winter pastures in the territory of Northern Azerbaijan. The latter used the summer pastures of the Rutuls and Tsakhurs. In ancient times, Azerbaijani Turks founded the Village of Kurush (now the Village of Kurush in the Dokuzpara district of Dagestan) – the southernmost Village of Dagestan and Russia and the highest (2560 m) Village of Dagestan, Russia, and Europe. The Village of Kurush was located near the height of Bazarduzu (4466 m). Azerbaijanis crossed Mount Shahdag (4243 m) to the summer pastures in Kurush. In 1952, most of the population was resettled to the north, the territory of the Khasavyurt district, in the Village of Kurush (New Kurash). Part of the population moved to Azerbaijan.

On the territory of Southern Dagestan and Northern Azerbaijan, there are a lot of ethnically mixed villages. The development of bilingualism contributed to the interaction of people in all spheres. Lezgins, Tabasarans, Tsakhurs, Rutuls, and

Aguls spoke their native languages and Azerbaijani Turkic. Islam, mutual understanding, and traditions strongly affected the process of cultural interaction. Today, the people of the South Caucasus speak their native languages and Russian. The people of Northern Azerbaijan speak Azerbaijani, their own, and Russian.

Some "scientists" claim that the Azerbaijani state did not exist before 1918 and the nation of "Azerbaijanis" did not exist before 1936.

At the beginning of the 18th century, Russians called Azerbaijanis *adjemi*. This is incorrect. The Ottomans called the Persians *adjemi* (new, beginner), and the Azerbaijanis - *adjemi-Turks*.

Since the beginning of the 19th century, Russians called Azerbaijanis "Basurmans", "Aderbeijani Muslims".

Since the beginning of the 20th century, the terms "Transcaucasian Tatars", "Aderbeijani Tatars" and "Aderbeijanians" have appeared.

Before 1918, in Russia, all Turkic-speaking Muslims of the Transcaucasus were called Caucasian Tatars. Many peoples speaking Turkic languages were called Tatars by Russians, adding an adjective related to their place of residence.

Azerbaijan is a geographical name, in ancient times – Atropatena. As a self-designation, Azerbaijanis, like Azerbaijanis of Iran, Uzbeks and others, used the term Turk. Since 1918, the country was called Azerbaijan, and the inhabitants – Turks. In 1939, under the Soviet Union, the term "Azerbaijanis" appeared.

The Azerbaijani Turks dominated the territory of Iraq, Iran, Western Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Eastern Georgia and Southern Dagestan for centuries. The Azerbaijanis created the following states:

- **Jalairids** – a dynasty of sultans (1340-1410), originating from the Turkic tribe "Jalair".

Ahmed Jalair – the last ruler of the Jalairid dynasty (1382-1410), is considered one of the first Azerbaijani poets. He wrote poems in Azerbaijani, Arabic and Persian. - Kara Koyunlu - an association of Oghuz Turkic tribes led by the Turkoman dynasty from the Oghuz clan "Ive" (1375-1468). Jahan Shah (ruled in 1436-1467), the first among the rulers of Kara Koyunlu to accept the title of sultan. Jahan Shah was also known as a poet who wrote in the Azerbaijani Turkic language under the pseudonym Haqiqi. - Ak Koyunlu - an association of Oghuz Turkic tribes led by the Sunni Turkoman dynasty from the Oghuz clan "Bayandur" (1453-1501).

- **Safavids** - the Shah dynasty, rulers of the Safavid state (1501-1736). The first ruler of this dynasty was Ismail I (1487-1524), born in the city of Ardabil (Southern Azerbaijan, Iran).
- **The Afsharids** ruled in Iran (1729-1796), and then in Khorasan (1750-1796). The founder of the dynasty, Nadir, was a Qizilbash from the Kirklu clan of the Afshar tribe. Napoleon Bonaparte in a letter to Fath Ali Shah Qajar considered himself the new Nadir. Joseph Stalin called Nadir, along with Ivan the Terrible, his teacher.
- **The Qajar Empire** (1789-1925) - the Turkoman tribe of the Qajars. According to the "Ethnohistorical Dictionary of the Russian and Soviet Empires", it is a sub-ethnic group of Azerbaijanis. During the time of the Qajars, the heirs to the throne were appointed governor of Azerbaijan.
- **The Azerbaijan People's Republic** (1918-1920) is the first democratic republic in the Muslim East (lands where the Muslim religion is actually dominant or predominant in terms of the number of its followers).

Some Dagestani scholars, ethnographers, and journalists write that Azerbaijan supposedly assimilates other indigenous peoples. Allegedly, many Lezgins write 'Azerbaijani' in the ethnicity field, since otherwise, one cannot make a career. Due to the lack of work or conditions for the sale of agricultural products, Avars and Lezgins leave for Russia in large numbers. Azerbaijanis, allegedly, immediately buy up their lands. And there are a lot of lies of this kind.

There is an Avar historian, Timur Aitberov, who takes an anti-Azerbaijani position and writes about discrimination against Transcaucasian Avars and the Avar language in Azerbaijan. Lezgin historian Sheriban Pashayeva notes that in Azerbaijan, pressure is exerted on Lezgins and Avars, whereas her scientific advisor, Lezgin historian, patriarch-founder of the school of Oriental studies in Dagestan, Professor Amir Rzaevich Shikhseidov (1928-2019), spoke from the position of friendship and brotherhood with Azerbaijan. Another well-known Lezgin historian, Professor Nazim Magomedov, Archi historian Magomedkhan Magomedkhanov, and Lezgin historian Sherafetdin Magaramov also take an objective, friendly position.

In 1990, in Dagestan, a Sadval movement was created, aimed at supposedly the struggle for the rights of the Lezgin people in Azerbaijan. In 1994, a terrorist attack was committed in the Baku metro, for which ten members of Sadval were convicted. After that, the activity of the movement declined. The VI Congress of Sadval in April 1996 officially rejected the demand for Lezgin statehood since it was considered harmful for interethnic relations between Lezgins and Azerbaijanis.

In 1992, in Azerbaijan, the Lezgins created the Party of National Equality of Azerbaijan. In the same year, the 'Samur' Lezgin National Center was founded, the goal of which was enlightenment and preservation of the culture of the Lezgin people.

Since 1999, in Russia, the Federal Lezgin National-Cultural Autonomy (FLNKA) has existed, the main goal of which is the preservation of identity and the development of language, education, and national culture. Identity and culture are good, but under the term 'Lezgins,' this organization tries to unite all the peoples living in the south of Dagestan and the north of Azerbaijan: Tabasarans, Rutuls, Aguls, Tsakhurs, Udins, Kryzes, Khinalugs, and Budug. However, these peoples have their own languages and do not understand Lezgin. They communicate with Lezgins in either Azerbaijani or Russian. In the early 2010s, this organization and some Lezgin and Dagestani 'nationalists' made a resonant statement that Russia had presented Azerbaijan two Lezgin villages and the Samur River.

This was the 'truth.' In 2010, two villages in the Magaramkent district, Khrah-Uba and Uryan-Uba, which emerged on lands leased from Azerbaijan, passed to the Khachmaz Region of Azerbaijan. In May 1954, the territories of these villages were temporarily transferred to the Dagestan Autonomous Republic of the RSFSR as pastures. In 1984, the validity of the respective document was extended for another 20 years by the decision of the Council of Ministers of the Azerbaijan SSR. The jurisdiction of Azerbaijan over these villages was never disputed by either the RSFSR or the Russian Federation, which was reflected in the treaty on the demarcation of the Russian-Azerbaijani border. The Khrah-Uba and Uryan-Uba residents were given a choice to accept Azerbaijani citizenship and remain on these lands or move to Dagestan. The Uryan-Uba residents chose the first option and stayed. The Khrah-Uba residents left. Khrah-Uba was renamed Palidli.

As for the Samur River, earlier, Azerbaijan took up to 90% of the Samur River flow. Since 2010, this proportion has been 50 to 50%.

At the end of May 2010, a special meeting was held in Moscow, devoted to the problems of the North Caucasus. There the then President of Russia Dmitry Medvedev called on human rights defenders and representatives of non-governmental organizations to pay attention to the situation of the Russian-speaking population of the North Caucasus, take effective measures aimed at stopping the outflow of Russians, and contribute to their return to this region.

For more than 300 years, Russia tried to make the North Caucasus Russian land by all means, including forceful ones. Repressions were applied, deportations of

Circassians, Chechens, and Ingush took place, Cossacks were resettled, and settlements were Russified. The Russian language became the lingua franca here.

The Republic of Dagestan is the only region of Russia that borders Azerbaijan. Important transport routes pass through it. The length of the border between Dagestan and Azerbaijan is 327.6 km, of which the river border is 55.2 km.

The ethnic map of Dagestan has remained largely unchanged for centuries. Between 1813 and the 1920s, a significant portion of the Azerbaijani population moved from Dagestan to Transcaucasia and Iran. After the 1920s, a substantial portion of the Jews also moved from Dagestan. On the border with Azerbaijan, in the southern part of Dagestan, Lezgins were settled. Higher up, on the coast of the Caspian Sea to the north of Derbent, Azerbaijanis live. To the west of the Azerbaijanis live Tabasarans, Aguls, and Tsakhurs. On the western coast of the Caspian Sea, starting above Derbent, in Izberbash, Kaspiysk, and Makhachkala, virtually, to the north up to Kizlyar, Kumyks live. Avars live in the west and part of central Dagestan along the border with Chechnya and Georgia.

In 1897, the ethnic composition of Makhachkala was as follows: Russians 52.6%, Azerbaijanis 17.8%, Jews 5.9%, Kumyks 4.2%, Avars 0.5%, and others.

In 1926, the ethnic composition of Makhachkala was as follows: Russians 50.3%, Jews 2.2%, Kumyks 7.6%, Azerbaijanis 1.5%, Lezgins 2.8%, Avars 1.6%, and others.

In 2025, the ethnic composition of Makhachkala was as follows: Avars 29.4%, Dargins 17%, Kumyks 14.9%, Lezgins 13.3%, Laks 5.60, Azerbaijanis 4.5%, Jews 1%, Russians 3.6%, and others.

In 1897, the ethnic composition of Derbent was as follows: Azerbaijanis 66.7%, Jews 14.9%, Russians 7.45%, Avars 1.9%, Armenians 4.2%, and others.

In 1926, the ethnic composition of Derbent was as follows: Azerbaijanis 33.9%, Jews 28.6%, Russians 23.8%, Lezgins 3.8%, Armenians 3.6%, and others.

In 2025, the ethnic composition of Derbent was as follows: Azerbaijanis 32%, Jews 1%, Russians 4%, Lezgins 33%, Armenians 1%, Tabasarans 13.11%, Dargins 6%, and Aguls 3%. The city population is 129,285.

In 1921, the Derbent district was formed (the city of Derbent is not part of the district). In 1926, the ethnic composition of the Derbent district was as follows: Azerbaijanis 56.3%, Lezgins 2.2%, Tabasarans 1.8%, Dargins 2.6%, Russians 3.6%, Kumyks 25.3%, and others.

In 2025, the ethnic composition of the Derbent district was as follows: Azerbaijanis 49.5%, Lezgins 20%, Tabasarans 13.11%, Dargins 10.36%, Aguls 2.85%, and others. The population is 101,643.

In 2025, the ethnic composition of the Tabasaran district was as follows: Tabasarans 79%, Azerbaijanis 18.40%, Aguls, and others. The population is 52,830.

In fact, the Azerbaijani population of Dagestan is concentrated in the cities of Makhachkala and Derbent, and in the Derbent and Tabasaran districts.

Between 1990 and 2002, the Lezgin population of the city of Derbent doubled. The Jewish population decreased significantly.

In the Safavid era sources, the Turkic element, which created and ensured the existence of the state, was called 'Kyzylbash' and 'Turk,' like in Anatolia, and the local population and Iranians serving in the civil administration were called 'Tajiks' (plural form 'tajikan' or 'tajikiyye'). The 'Tajiks' in state service did not play any significant role in the political life of the state, as was the case in the Seljuk state.

Most often, the Safavids called the Persians 'Tats.' Currently, in the eastern part of the Iranian world, all the way to Chinese Turkestan, the term 'Tajik' is widespread and refers to Iranians who speak dialects of the New Persian language. The term 'Tajik' in its evolution and content represents an analogy with 'Tat.'

## **Reference**

*The Tats (versions: Caucasian Persians, Transcaucasian Persians) are an Iranian ethnic group living in Azerbaijan and Russia (mainly in the south of Dagestan). Versions of self-designations (depending on the region) are Tati, Parsi, Dagli, Lokhijikhon. They speak the Tat language, which, along with Farsi, Dari, and Tajik, belongs to the southwestern group of Iranian languages. Among the Tats, the Azerbaijani and Russian languages are also widespread. According to the Great Soviet Encyclopedia (GSE), in culture and daily life, the Tats hardly differ from Azerbaijanis.*

*The word 'Tat' is of Turkic origin and has been used to denote people who were non-Turkic by language. It has long been proven by historical and linguistic sciences that various Turkic tribes called their non-Turkic neighbors 'Tat.' Soviet ethnographer S.A. Tokarev noted the following about the origin of the Tats: "By language, these are Iranians, apparently representing the Iranized but not Turkicized remnants of the ancient population of Transcaucasia. However, the origin of the Tats is not entirely clear. In their culture, they differ little from*

*Azerbaijanis...” The believers profess Islam. Sunni Tats mainly live in the Guba and Shabran regions of Azerbaijan and Dagestan (Russia), in villages west of the city of Derbent. Tats also live in Georgian Gombori (Sagarejo municipality).*

***The Mountain Jews**, like the Tats, are a sub-ethnic group of Dagestan and Azerbaijan. Until the mid-19th century, they lived in the south of Dagestan and the north of the Baku governorate. They first moved to the north of Dagestan, then to Russia, and later to Israel. Tats are Muslims, and Mountain Jews are Judaists. Both sub-ethnic groups are Persian-speaking, but consider themselves close to the Azerbaijanis. They call themselves Yahudi or Juhud (in Azerbaijani, Jew). Mountain Jews live in Baku, Guba (Krasnaya Sloboda), Goychay, Gusar, Khachmaz, Oghuz, Shamakhi, and Ganja. The Mountain Jews of Azerbaijan are the only Jewish community in the post-Soviet space that demonstrates a prosperous demographic situation. Besides the community of Mountain Jews, there are also communities of Ashkenazi Jews and Georgian Jews in Azerbaijan.*

Azerbaijanis are the indigenous people of Dagestan along with Avars, Dargins, Kumyks, Lezgins, and others. They primarily reside in the southern part of Dagestan, the city of Derbent, and the Derbent and Tabasaran districts. They also live in Makhachkala, Kaspiysk, and Kizlyar. According to the 2024 data, the population of Dagestan was 3.3 million. The Turkic-speaking people (Kumyks, Nogais, and Azerbaijanis) make up 21.3% of the population of Dagestan – about 660,000. Lezgins make up 13.3%, about 417,000. Azerbaijanis make up 3.7%, about 117,000.

In Azerbaijan, representatives of various ethnicities, including Lezgins, Avars, Tsakhurs, Rutuls, Udins, Khinalugs, Kryzs, and Budukhs, reside. The places of their compact residence are concentrated in the north of the republic. Many Lezgins and Avars reside in the large cities of Azerbaijan: Baku, Ganja, and Sumgayit.

According to the 2024 data, the population of Azerbaijan is 10.2 million. Azerbaijanis make up more than 90% of the population. Lezgins make up 2% of the population of Azerbaijan – more than 200,000.

Since ancient times, the peoples of Azerbaijan and Dagestan have communicated closely, establishing economic, cultural, religious, and political relations. All this is reflected in their history, culture, and everyday life.

The Tabasarans, Aguls, Tsakhurs, and Rutuls, along with their own languages, speak Azerbaijani and Lezgin. The Lezgins also speak Azerbaijani.

Interest in developing comprehensive relations and increasing the volume of trade is confirmed by mutual visits of different-level leaders, business circle delegations, scholars, and cultural figures from both republics. Dagestan is also a connecting link in the development of relations between Russia and Azerbaijan.