

The Cultural Relations between Georgia and Azerbaijan

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Abstract

The Caucasus is one of the diverse regions of the world where approximately 50 nations live alongside. As, Azerbaijan and Georgia are neighboring countries that lived peacefully all their history, relations between them had a great and ancient history. In fact, Azerbaijanis is one of the biggest ethnic minorities living in Georgia and there is also Georgian minorities in Azerbaijan as well. Actually, living on the same region, having common history, interests and similar traditions made relations between these two countries more close. This article will try to scrutinize the historical development of relations between Georgia and Azerbaijan in cultural field. For instance, great Azerbaijani poets and writers that lived in Tbilisi and their work done to improve cultural ties, the Azeri newspapers published in Tbilisi will be discussion points. Furthermore, the state of cultural relations, cultural policy conducting by two countries after the independence will be our focusing area as well.

The Caucasus is distinguished with its geographical, language and cultural diversity that determines the history, mutual relations and lifestyle of populations. Sometimes the Caucasus is called as the museum of population, because approximately 50 representatives of different nations live in this region. This region always played an important role between European and Asian countries. During the history the Caucasus and its different regions were always played bolster role between the opposite powers.

The traditional amity relations relied on common history exists between Azerbaijan and Georgian people. Azerbaijanis and Georgians during the history lived in friendly neighbourhood and friendship condition. In fact, the Azerbaijanis are one of the biggest ethnic minorities living in Georgia and there is also Georgian minorities in Azerbaijan as well. Actually, living on the same region, having common history, interests and similar traditions made relations between these two countries more close.

Azerbaijan is a country that wishes to create diplomatic and cultural relations with all countries of the world. Azerbaijan is interested in being neighbour and having good relations with democratic, developed, peace-loving countries, because this is the guaranty of Azerbaijan's achievements.

The history of cultural relations of these two friendly people of South Caucasus – Azerbaijanis and Georgians who give great value to the friendship is very rich and ancient as their culture and literature.

In XII century Georgian king Builder David (David IV) married his daughter princess Tamar to Shirvanshah Manuchohr and so created friendship and relative relations with Shirvanshahs (state in the north – east part of Azerbaijan). After that, these amity relations were reflected on poets' creation. The activities of great Azerbaijani poet Nizami Ganjavi and great Georgian poet Shota Rustaveli are the reflections of cultural

relations between these two nations (Крымский, 1981).

One of the main traditional features of two nations is patriotism, and this feature were reflected both in Nizami's and Rustaveli's poems. The creative work of Nizami, his poems were read with love in -“beautiful land with paradise adornment” as he called Georgia. Great Georgian poet Shota Rustaveli also learned profoundly the creative work of Nizami and Khagani. In XVI century the poem of great Nizami “Leyli and Majnun” was translated into Georgian language by King Teymuraz.

Another great Azerbaijani poet Khagani Shirvani who lived in XII century and fell in love to Georgian girl dedicated lots of his poems to her: "I saw a beautiful girl who is like a rose-bud ... ". He even glorified Georgia in his poems and mentioned that “all doors are opened for me” talking about his Georgian friends (Shirvani, 1956).

From XVII century till 20s of XX century Tbilisi became the cultural and literary centre of all Azerbaijanis who lived in Georgia.

The preservation of grandiose and high Koroglu castle as the spiritual monument of Azerbaijanis which is situated 20 km far from Tbilisi is the sign of love and positive attitude of Georgian people to Koroglu - the national hero of Azerbaijan who lived in XVI-XVII centuries.

Another proof of cultural relations and friendship of two people is the translation of “Bakhtiyar Nama” poem of Fadai into Georgian at the end of XVII and at the beginning of XVIII century. But the author of this translation is unknown. Furthermore, in 1828 A. Sulkhanishvili again translated this poem. In present time Georgian scientist A. I. Kobidze explored the same poem and got acquainted with ancient culture of Azerbaijani people.

The Azerbaijan poet Mollah Panah Vagif who lived in XVIII created very strong political relation with Georgian king Irakli II and also praised Georgian beauties in his poems “Tbilisi, “Georgian girl”. He was a vizier of Ibrahim Khalil khan of Karabakh Khanate.

Great Azerbaijani poet Mollah Veli Vidadi lived in the palace of Irakli II and he is an author of some poems dedicated to untimely death of Irakli II's son Levan (Arasli, 1956).

The great poets and writers of Azerbaijan and Georgia Abbasqulu agha Bakikhanov, Mirze Shefi Vazeh, Mirze Felteli Akhundov, Abdurrehim bey Hagverdiyev, Jalil Mammadquluzadeh, Mirze Alakbar Sabir, Ilya Chavchavadze, Akaki Tseretili, Iakob Gogebashvili and others praised the amity of these two neighbours and tried to strengthen these amity ideas through propagating it.

Mirze Shafi Vazeh the Azerbaijan poet had lived and continued his creative activity in Tbilisi during 1840-1852. He was consigned in Tbilisi.

The famous Azerbaijani writer and scientist of XIX century Abbasqulu agha Bakikhanov had lived in Tbilisi since 1819. Since this year he gained good reputation not only as writer, but also as diplomat.

The great son of Azerbaijan people, the founder of national dramaturgy Mirze Fatali Akhuzadeh had lived, worked since 1834 and he died in Tbilisi. He became acquainted with Georgian culture and art and had a friendship relation with Giorgi Eristavi who was considered the father of modern Georgian theatre (Qasimzade, 1956).

A. Tsereteli translated M. F. Akhuzadeh's poems into Georgian language. In one of his articles he appreciated the author of “Viziri-Khani-Lenkeran” M. F. Akhundzadeh as the great artist, the father founder of Azerbaijani dramaturgy. He wrote about it: “This play is the work of M. F. Akhundzadeh. Azerbaijan life was brightly described as it is reflected in a mirror. His plays are the product of great talent. There are no artificial words and thoughts in these poems” (Edebiyyat ve incesenet qezeti, 1953)

The Georgian poet Iosif Grishashvili had translated “Easter Poem” of M. F. Akhundzadeh on the occasion of his 120 years of anniversary.

Azerbaijan newspapers such as “Ziya”, “Ziyayi-Kafkazia”, “Keshkul”, the “Eastern Russian” journal of M. Shaxtanxlini since the end of XIX century, the “Mollah Nassraddin” journal of J. Mammadquluzadeh since the beginning of XX century were published in Tbilisi. The “Mollah Nassraddin” journal made a great, progressive influence on the Caucasus, Middle Asia, Iran, Turkey and the whole East (Borchali, 1998).

Famous Azerbaijani writers, poets, enlighteners and public figures Nariman Narimanov, Abdullah Shaiq, Hassan bey Zardabi, Husseyn Javid, Firrudin bey Kocharli, Mirze Alakbar Sabir, Mammad Said Ordubadi, Ali Azmi, Aliqulu Qamkusal, Sultan Majid Qanizadeh and others got education at Gory Seminary and Alexandrovski Institution of Tbilisi. Above mentioned public figures had close relations with political-public and literary-cultural societies in Tbilisi (Chobanov, 1977).

Great composers of Azerbaijan, the founders of the professional Azerbaijani music Uzeyir Hajibeyli and Muslim Magamayev got their education at Gory Seminary, too. They perpetuated Azerbaijani music in Georgia.

Firrudin bey Kocharli wrote many articles about Akaki Tsereteli the great poet of Georgian people and introduced him to Azerbaijani people, because he was one of the best friends of Azerbaijan among the Georgian poets at that time.

Famous Georgian poets and writers M. Javakhishvili, Sh. Aragvispireli, G. Abashidze, K. Kaladze, K. Leonidze and others talked about the amity and kind neighbourhood of these two nations.

There are some poems in Azerbaijani literature reflecting the friendship of two nations. “Vagif” of S. Vurgun, “The Georgian city” of M. Rahim, “The Caucasian Army” of S. Rustam, “Me” of H. Husseynzadeh might be example for above mentioned fact.

One of the facts which reflect the amity relations between Azerbaijan and Georgian people is the announcing of the foundation of Azerbaijan Democratic Republic in Tbilisi in 28 May, 1918. This republic began its activity in Tbilisi, moved to Ganja, and at least to Baku in September.

During Soviets Azerbaijanis had got opportunity to get education both in Azerbaijani and Russian. Along with these languages, they also learned the Georgian language. The periodicals in Azerbaijani were published in Georgia. After the collapse of Soviet Union new reviving was began in Borchali- the territory where Azerbaijanis lived. Borchali is one the important lands of Azerbaijan people, because Azerbaijanis live in their homeland, in their own land, in the land of their ancestors in Borchali – Georgia (Chobanov, 2008).

Georgia as the democratic country provides all equal opportunities to develop and self- confirming to the national minorities who live in the territory of Georgia. All citizens of Georgia regardless of nationality and religion have the same rights and duties.

Today the Azerbaijani theatre and approximately 150 schools exist in Georgia. Along with this the newspapers are published and the new programs are prepared in Azerbaijani. In 2009 the cultural days of Azerbaijan were held in Georgia, and in 2010 the Georgian cultural days were organized in Azerbaijan.

The guarantees of the cultural relations between Azerbaijan and Georgia are the Ministries of Culture and Tourism of two countries and the Heydar Aliyev Foundation.

There are some many examples about the successful corporation, economic development, political and cultural relations of Azerbaijan and Georgia. The strong political and friendship relations between the Presidents of Georgia and Azerbaijan are the proof to these examples.

Mikheil Saakashvili the president of Georgia once told in his speech: “Our countries –are the part of the body which moves each other. It is impossible to image better relations than it is between Azerbaijan and

Georgia. We are the beginning and the ending of one another. Our relations are broader than ordinary relations. I am sure that we will continue to support each other in a future.

“God presented to our people great blessing such as to be neighbours, to create strong relations. Our ancestors, grandfathers and fathers were witnesses of the positive result of this happiness. Our duty is to keep alive these traditions, continue and to convey to future generation in a more high level than it is”. These valuable thought is from the quotation of great person of Azerbaijan people Heydar Aliyev (Eliyev, 1998).

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