

REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

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ABSTRACT

of the dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

**ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTERISTICS AND
CONSERVATION PROBLEMS OF MOSQUES AND
SHRINES IN THE NAKHCHIVAN REGION OF
AZERBAIJAN**

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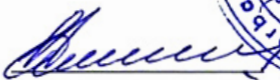


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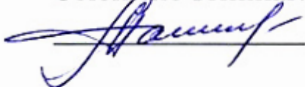


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INTRODUCTION

Relevance of the topic and current state of research.

Nakhchivan is one of the ancient regions of Azerbaijan in which architecture emerged and developed at an early stage. Architecture flourished further during the medieval period, acquiring distinctive characteristics following the adoption of Islam. The independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan created favourable conditions for architectural development. Research undertaken in the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic has revealed the region's architectural heritage to be richer than previously recognised, bringing additional monuments to light. However, not all of these monuments have been adequately investigated. Heydar Aliyev, the national leader of the Azerbaijani people, consistently emphasised the study of Nakhchivan's history and architectural monuments. Through his foresight, this prominent statesman provided direction for research into historical and cultural monuments. He stated: "Azerbaijan is a country with a very ancient history. Our historians accomplished a great deal in the twentieth century. Nevertheless, I can confidently say that the history of Azerbaijan, of its people and, more broadly, of this land and this country has not yet been studied and researched adequately. A great deal of work remains to be done in this field."¹

Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, has consistently prioritised research into the country's historical and cultural monuments.² The study of Nakhchivan's national architectural heritage is both timely and highly significant within the Republic of Azerbaijan's concept of statehood.

Mosques and shrines constitute a distinct group within Nakhchivan's architectural heritage. Unlike other architectural monuments in the region, they have not been treated as a separate

¹ Aliyev, H. A. Electronic collection of documents: Speeches, addresses, reports, interviews and statements [Electronic resource]. – Baku: – 2002, – p. 108.

² Aliyev, I. H. Order of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on additional measures to finance archaeological expeditions planned for 2008–2009 by the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences // Khalg Gazeti, – 2008, 5 February, – p. 1.

subject of research. Investigating Nakhchivan's religious architecture is essential to understanding the development of Azerbaijani architecture. The identification of numerous previously unstudied monuments through recent research further reinforces the relevance of this topic.

Nakhchivan's designation as "Naqsh-i Jahan" in medieval sources was also associated with its celebrated architectural monuments.³ Its status as an important political centre of the Atabeg and Ilkhanid states was a principal factor in its socioeconomic development. Accounts of Nakhchivan's architectural monuments can be found in the writings of E. Çelebi, J. Chardin, I. Chopin, A. Veernitsky and others. Specialist investigation of these monuments, however, began only in the nineteenth century. Researchers devoted considerable attention to mausoleums, while other monuments of religious architecture remained relatively neglected.

Accounts of Nakhchivan's religious monuments, together with readings and publications of their inscriptions, were provided by Dubois de Montpéreux in 1834; N. V. Khanykov, who visited Nakhchivan in the mid-nineteenth century; J. Dieulafoy, who visited in 1881; K. A. Nikitin in 1882; and V. M. Sysoyev and I. Azimbayov, members of the Society for the Study and Investigation of Azerbaijan, in 1926.⁴

Russian researchers undertook substantial work on the architectural monuments of the South Caucasus during the nineteenth century. More detailed information on many religious monuments in the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic can be found in the work of V. M. Sysoyev.

Information on the inscriptions and architectural structures of Nakhchivan's religious monuments was provided by V. M. Sysoyev, who visited the city in the early twentieth century; the Russian researcher K. N. Smirnov, who visited in 1934; I. P. Shcheblykin in 1943; and A. V. Salamzade in 1964.

³ Mammadova, Sh. Historical and architectural monuments of Azerbaijan / Sh. Mammadova. – Baku: Shargiyya, – 2008, – p. 47.

⁴ Azimbayov, I. Muslim inscriptions of Tiflis, Erivan and the Nakhchivan SSR // – Baku: Bulletin of Azkomstaris, – 1929. Issue 4, Fascicle 2, – pp. 295–311.

The inscriptions of mosques and shrines in the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic were re-examined by the epigraphist Mashadikhanim Nematova between the 1950s and the 1980s, and by the epigraphist Hajifakhraddin Safarli from the 1970s onwards.

A. V. Salamzade in 1976,⁵ A. V. Salamzade and K. M. Mammadzade in 1979, and R. D. Salayeva in 1989⁶ provided accounts of Nakhchivan's religious monuments. These included the Juma Mosque and Imamzadeh complex in Nakhchivan city, the mosque in Nehram village, the Ambaras, Mingis and Angash mosques, and the Kurdetal, Dilbar and Dashlar Bashi mosques.

J. Giyasi's *Architectural Monuments of the Age of Nizami*, published in 1991, discusses the twelfth-century Juma Mosque and the Kirna Mosque,⁷ including their architectural characteristics, alongside other monuments in Nakhchivan.

The works of Rizvan Bayramov,⁸ R. Amanzade,⁹ F. G. Mammadov¹⁰ and R. Aliyeva¹¹ examine the architectural characteristics of monuments in the Ordubad and Julfa districts and of the Juma Mosque in Nakhchivan city.

Although the mosques and shrines of the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic have attracted scholarly attention for many years, information on their architectural characteristics remains

⁵ Salamzade, A. V. *Ajami Abubakr oghlu and the architectural monuments of Nakhchivan* / A. V. Salamzade. – Baku: Ishig, – 1976, – pp. 28–52, 54, 61.

⁶ Salayeva, R. J. *Ordubad: Origins and formation* / R. J. Salayeva. – Baku: Elm, – 1989, – pp. 50–52.

⁷ Giyasi, J. *Architectural monuments of the age of Nizami* / J. Giyasi. – Baku: Ishig, – 1991, – pp. 48–49.

⁸ Bayramov, R. *Typological classification of Azerbaijani architectural monuments of the eleventh–eighteenth centuries* / R. Bayramov. – Baku: Sharg-Garb, – 2013, – pp. 74, 131.

⁹ Amanzade, R. *Structural systems of medieval Azerbaijani mausoleums (eleventh–seventeenth centuries)* // 8th International Symposium on Turkish Culture, Art and the Protection of Cultural Heritage. Art Events. – Konya: – 15–17 May 2014, – pp. 29, 191–192, 196.

¹⁰ Mammadov, F. G. *Connections between the architectural schools of medieval Azerbaijan* / F. G. Mammadov. – Baku: Sharg-Garb, – 2013, – pp. 17–26.

¹¹ Aliyeva, R. *The architect Ajami Abubakr oghlu Nakhchivani* / R. Aliyeva. – Baku: Sharg-Garb, – 2013, – pp. 58–59.

limited. Their typological groups, in particular, have not yet been investigated comprehensively and systematically. Studying their plans and architectural features is essential to refining their construction dates, identifying the stages of development of Azerbaijani architecture, and tracing the formation and continuity of architectural traditions. The present research therefore addresses an important and timely issue in the study of Azerbaijani architecture.

Object and subject of the research. The principal object of this dissertation is the architecture of Nakhchivan's medieval mosques and shrines, including their typology, plan and volumetric composition, and ornamental motifs. Since establishing the dates and original appearance of monuments is crucial to architectural history, the study also examines scholarly research on mosque and shrine inscriptions, photographs taken by archaeologists and historians, and selected drawings. A total of 194 mosques and 139 shrines (mausoleums, khanqahs, imamzadehs and pirs) in the Nakhchivan region were surveyed; 33 mosques and 29 shrines were selected for the dissertation. Of the 62 religious monuments examined, 18 are listed in the state register and 44 are unlisted.

The subject of the research is the identification, through the study of mosques and shrines, of the characteristics of Nakhchivan's medieval architectural monuments, their place and role within medieval Azerbaijani architecture, and aspects of the country's history that have not yet been fully explored.

Aim and objectives of the research. The principal aim and objectives are to investigate the volumetric and spatial organisation, architectural design and decorative elements of mosques and shrines in the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic; refine their construction dates; identify the ways in which the Nakhchivan school of architecture influenced the architecture of the South Caucasus and the Middle East; and examine their typological groups, their role in the country's sociopolitical life, and the persistence and transmission of traditions throughout their historical development.

Research methodology. To address the dissertation's aims and objectives, the mosques and shrines were examined in groups across two chronological periods. Their typological classification draws on

methods previously employed by Azerbaijani researchers. Comparative analysis, synthesis and analytical investigation were prioritised in examining the typological groups. As establishing a periodisation of these monuments is a central objective, particular weight was given to inscriptions in determining their dates. The monuments were also compared with contemporary examples. The study employs research methods used by prominent Azerbaijani scholars, including A. V. Salamzade, K. M. Mammadzade, J. A. Giyasi, Sh. S. Fatullayev, G. H. Mammadova, S. Kh. Hajiyeva, R. M. Bayramov and N. J. Abdullayeva.

Principal propositions submitted for defence. The principal propositions advanced in the dissertation are as follows:

- Mosques and shrines played a significant role in society's sociopolitical life and in the formation of settlements;

- Nakhchivan's mosques and shrines form an integral part of medieval Azerbaijani architecture. Their distinctive architectural characteristics emerged through regional development. These monuments are important examples of the Azerbaijani people's national cultural heritage;

- The plans, volumetric compositions, structural elements and decorative treatments of Nakhchivan's mosques and shrines demonstrate the persistence and transmission of architectural traditions. These monuments attest to the substantial contribution of Azerbaijani architects to architectural forms disseminated throughout the South Caucasus and the Middle East;

- Organising the conservation of mosques and shrines that embody the country's historical and cultural heritage is particularly important in an era of globalisation. A dedicated framework for their restoration and conservation is required.

Original contribution of the research. The dissertation's original contributions are as follows:

- The research establishes that medieval architecture in Nakhchivan is characterised by monuments constructed in stone as well as in fired brick;

- It identifies the typological groups of mosques and shrines, their stages of development, and the persistence and transmission of

traditions between these stages;

- Surviving inscriptions are used to refine the dates of monuments, enabling the architectural sequence of the typological groups to be established;

- It identifies serious shortcomings in the restoration of mosques and shrines and highlights the need for a dedicated framework to organise the conservation of architectural monuments that preserve the country's history;

- It establishes that Nakhchivan's religious architecture, as an integral part of Azerbaijani architecture, influenced religious architecture in the South Caucasus and the Middle East.

Theoretical and practical significance. The architectural forms, structural systems and ornamental motifs of Nakhchivan's religious monuments, which are characteristic of medieval Azerbaijani architecture, are important to the study of the country's architectural heritage. The evidence assembled in the dissertation can inform research into the stages of development of medieval architecture in Azerbaijan, including Nakhchivan. The materials examined and the findings obtained may be used in comprehensive studies of the architecture of the South Caucasus, the Middle East and Azerbaijan; in architectural histories and textbooks on Azerbaijan and Nakhchivan; and in future research and restoration projects.

Dissemination and application of the research. The dissertation topic was approved by a decision of the Academic Council of Nakhchivan State University in 2024. Research on the topic has been presented at international conferences and conferences held in the Republic of Azerbaijan, and published in scholarly articles. The findings informed the preparation of monument records and proposals for preserving the architectural characteristics of religious monuments, which were submitted to the Ministry of Culture of the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic.

Institution where the dissertation was prepared. The dissertation was prepared at the Department of Architecture of Nakhchivan State University.

Structure and length of the dissertation. The dissertation

comprises an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, a bibliography, illustrations and tables. The introduction contains 32,852 characters; Chapter I, 100,938; Chapter II, 67,639; Chapter III, 54,798; and the conclusion, 5,992. The dissertation contains 262,219 characters in total.

MAIN CONTENT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Introduction discusses the relevance of studying Nakhchivan's religious monuments, the existing scholarship, the research aim and objectives, the methodology, the propositions submitted for defence, the original contribution, the dissemination of the findings, and the theoretical and practical significance of the study.

Chapter I, entitled “**Historical Development of Nakhchivan's Religious Monuments**”, comprises four sections. The first section of **Chapter I**, “**Stages in the Historical Development of Nakhchivan's Religious Architecture**”, examines the monuments across two stages: the eleventh–fifteenth centuries and the sixteenth–nineteenth centuries. The second section is entitled “**Investigation of Nakhchivan's Religious Monuments**”. Some monuments from these periods are known by two different names in the scholarly literature. For example, the Amirkhan Mausoleum in Khanagha village, Julfa district, is locally called a “takya” because it serves as a pilgrimage site and a venue for ceremonies. The Kirna Mausoleum in the same district, although serving a similar function, is referred to as a mosque. While the volumetric and spatial organisation of these buildings is not typical of mausoleums, they were erected to commemorate Islamic holy figures. Their designation as mausoleums, mosques or shrines is therefore conventional and should not itself give rise to disagreement over their functions. This section comprises two subsections. The first, “**Religious Monuments of the Eleventh–Fifteenth Centuries**”, contains two further subdivisions, examining **mosques** and **shrines**, respectively. These provide detailed descriptions of the architectural characteristics of Nakhchivan's mosques and shrines from this

period, including their plans, volumetric compositions, structural elements and ornamental motifs. Inscriptions on the monuments are used to establish their dates.

The third subsection of the second section, “**Religious Monuments of the Sixteenth–Nineteenth Centuries**”, comprises two subdivisions devoted to **mosques** and **shrines**, respectively. These provide detailed information on the monuments and discuss their architectural characteristics.

The third section of Chapter I is entitled “**Prominent Medieval Architects from Nakhchivan**”. Scholars studying the architectural monuments of Azerbaijan, including Nakhchivan, date the formation of the Nakhchivan school of architecture to the eleventh and twelfth centuries. In construction inscriptions, the architects identified themselves as natives of Nakhchivan. Prominent names include Ajami Abubakr oghlu, Ahmad ibn Ayyub al-Hafiz al-Nakhchivani, Sheikh Juhanna oghlu, Khwaja Jamal al-Din, Amir al-Din Masud, Muhammad son of Haji, Fakhr al-Hajj Haji Muhammad Naqi, Imamgulu Nazar oghlu, Ahavi Muhammad Molla Zahir and Naqqash Zeynalabdin. According to L. Bretanitsky, the Akhsadan Baba Mausoleum near the Barda Mausoleum was also built by Ahmad ibn Ayyub al-Hafiz.¹²

The fourth section of Chapter I is entitled “**The Role of Mosques and Shrines in the Sociopolitical Life of Settlements and Their Influence on Settlement Formation**”. Research shows that religious beliefs have played an important role in human life throughout history. Religious buildings, particularly mosques, occupied a significant place in medieval cities. Although these cities contained numerous mosques, the centrally located Juma mosques were recognised as places of public assembly. Mosques functioned both as places of worship and as civic centres where matters of importance to society were discussed and resolved. According to M. Nemat, they also hosted judicial proceedings and cultural and

¹² Bretanitsky, L. S. The architecture of Azerbaijan in the twelfth–fifteenth centuries and its place in the architecture of the Near East / L. S. Bretanitsky. – Moscow: Nauka, – 1966, – pp. 484–485.

educational activities.¹³ The Turkish scholar İ. Cerrahoğlu describes their wide-ranging functions, noting that social and economic issues were addressed there and that the wounded were even treated in mosques during wartime.¹⁴ In and around medieval Nakhchivan, one of the major cultural centres of Azerbaijan and the Middle East, khanqahs played an important role in the country's sociopolitical and ideological life. One such shrine is the Alinjachay Khanqah in Khanagha village, Julfa district. Research demonstrates the importance of religious centres in the formation and development of cities. Astabad, in present-day Babak district, was one of the cities that developed around a religious centre; its remains survived until recently. Fazlullah Naimi, the renowned Azerbaijani philosopher-poet and founder of Hurufism, was born and lived there.

Chapter II is entitled “**Analysis of the Typological Groups of Mosques and Shrines**”. Its first section examines mosques.

The first subsection examines “**Mosques of the Eleventh–Fifteenth Centuries**”. Although all the mosques of this period have rectangular plans, their roof structures differ. The first group is represented solely by the Juma Mosque in Nakhchivan city. It belongs to the category of centrally domed mosques, which comprises several variants. The Atabeg Mosque may be classified as a single-chamber domed mosque. Historical sources describe it as a monumental building constructed of dressed stone.¹⁵ Researchers suggest that rooms or porticoed passages flanked the mosque, which formed part of a larger architectural complex.¹⁶

Religious buildings with square plans and spherical domes were constructed between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, although their structural arrangements differed in certain respects. The Kirna Mosque belongs to this type. A. V. Salamzade considered

¹³ Nematova, M. What is inscribed on stone becomes history // – Baku: Elm ve Hayat, – 1990. Nos. 11–12, – p. 21.

¹⁴ Cerrahoğlu, İ. Mosques // – Ankara: Diyanet Journal, – 1994. No. 46, – p. 11.

¹⁵ Aliyeva, R. The architect Ajami Abubakr oghlu Nakhchivani / R. Aliyeva. – Baku: Sharg-Garb, – 2013, – p. 58.

¹⁶ Salamzade, A. V. Ajami Abubakr oghlu and the architectural monuments of Nakhchivan / A. V. Salamzade. – Baku: Ishig, – 1976, – p. 29.

its plan and volumetric composition characteristic of mausoleums.¹⁷ K. M. Mammadzade described it as a religious complex and suggested that it might have been a khanqah.¹⁸ J. A. Giyasi, by contrast, argued that its spatial organisation was not typical of mausoleums and identified it as a mosque.¹⁹ The inscription on the Amirkhan Mausoleum, which resembles the Kirna Mosque in volume and certain architectural elements, suggests that it belongs to the group of mausoleums erected over the graves of prominent individuals in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and also used for religious ceremonies. This explains why it is locally known as a “takya”.

The second typological group comprises two mosques: the mosque in Khanagha village and the mosque within the Khanqah architectural complex. Both may be classified as mosques with column-supported domes (a system of columns and arches supporting the roof). Both have rectangular plans and are covered by six domes. This arrangement of plan and volume was also employed in the Juma Mosque at Marand.

The third type comprises the Vanand and Girkhkimsana mosques, which have columns and flat roofs. Their flat roofs distinguish them from the preceding examples. Unlike the first group, whose plans are almost square, the second and third groups are characterised by central halls divided into several parts by columns. This planning arrangement occurs in fourteenth-century monuments and later mosques.

The second subsection examines “**Mosques of the Fifteenth–Nineteenth Centuries**”. Mosques of this period generally have rectangular plans and flat roofs. The first type comprises mosques with column-supported domes, constructed on high plinths. The Juma Mosque and the Yukhari Ambaras Mosque in Ordubad are

¹⁷ Salamzade, A. V. Ajami Abubakr oghlu and the architectural monuments of Nakhchivan / A. V. Salamzade. – Baku: Ishig, – 1976, – p. 52.

¹⁸ Mammadzade, K. M. The art of construction in Azerbaijan from ancient times to the nineteenth century / K. M. Mammadzade. – Baku: Elm, – 1983, – p. 34.

¹⁹ Giyasi, J. Architectural monuments of the age of Nizami / J. Giyasi. – Baku: Ishig, – 1991, – p. 49.

among the earliest and finest examples.

The second type consists of columned mosques, some built on low plinths and others without plinths. In certain examples, a plinth was constructed on only one side to accommodate the terrain. The Takeshiyi and Angash mosques belong to this type.

Some columned mosques have two storeys, the finest examples being the Sarshahar Mosque and Mingis Mosque I. The two storeys differ in their architectural treatment: the lower storey employs pointed arches and squinches, while the upper storey has a flat ceiling. Square columns divide the lower hall into two parts. In both mosques, the façades are articulated by window openings between square columns.

Some columned mosques have no plinth. These comprise several variants, including the four-column type, which research shows to be particularly characteristic of the nineteenth century. The Dilbar Mosque in Ordubad, the Angash Mosque and Yayji Mosque I, all with square plans and four-column spatial arrangements, belong to this typological group.

The Shah Abbas Mosque in Yukhari Aylis village, Ordubad district, belongs to the third type of mosque with a veranda. Its distinguishing feature is a colonnade along the western façade. The square columns supporting pointed arches in its northern half indicate that square columns and engaged columns were once employed in its internal structural system.

The research indicates that a single tier of windows is primarily characteristic of nineteenth-century mosques. Features of the plans and volumetric compositions of earlier mosques, including their two tiers of windows, gradually changed over time.

The second section of Chapter II is entitled “**Shrines**”. Like mosques, shrines underwent changes over time. During the early Seljuk period, mausoleums were built mainly over the graves of individuals involved in state administration. Under the Ilkhanids, monuments erected over the graves of individuals identifying themselves as sayyids, sheikhs, babas or pirs became widespread. These monuments subsequently developed into pilgrimage shrines.

The first subsection is entitled “**Shrines of the Eleventh–**

Fifteenth Centuries". Shrines can be divided into several groups according to their plans and volumetric compositions. The first type comprises mausoleums with crypts and octagonal, tower-like superstructures. Noah's Mausoleum belongs to this type. Only the foundations of its octagonal-prism crypt and some of the architectural decoration of its superstructure had survived. It was restored in accordance with the architectural composition of twelfth-century Nakhchivan mausoleums. Unlike other examples, Noah's Mausoleum has a rectangular, open-air structure added in front of its crypt. Researchers suggest that such structures first appeared in front of mausoleums in the late thirteenth century and became more widespread in the fourteenth. The Piri Suleyman monument in Tananan village, Sharur district, may also be included in this type. Its superstructure is square, with squinches providing the transition from the square base to the hemispherical dome. Researchers consider square pirs and shrines to have become widespread from the second half of the thirteenth century.

The second type comprises the Amirkhan Mausoleum and the Yarali Sultan shrine: cubic, single-chamber structures with central domes. Their principal distinction from the preceding type is the absence of a crypt.

The third type is represented by the mausoleum of the Khanqah architectural complex, which combines tower-like and domed mausoleum forms. Like the Amirkhan Mausoleum and the Yarali Sultan, it stands on a square base. Unlike those examples, however, it incorporates a transition from the square base to an octagon, and from the octagon to the circular base of the dome.

The fourth type is represented by the mausoleum within the Garabaghlar pir complex. It is constructed of local stone in the form of an octagonal prism and, unlike other mausoleums, has no crypt.

The fifth type comprises domed shrines with cruciform plans aligned with the four cardinal directions. The Malik Ibrahim shrine belongs to this type. The same spatial arrangement was employed in the Yanikhli Mosque in Tovuz district, the Pir Hasan Mausoleum in Mardakan and other monuments.

The sixth type consists of shrines with four supports, vaulted

roofs and central domes. Their main bodies are articulated by four arched openings facing the cardinal directions. These openings are connected by vaults that provide the transition to a hemispherical dome. The finest example is the Sheikh Abu Said Mausoleum in the Malik Ibrahim cemetery.

The seventh type comprises shrines with verandas, rectangular-prism volumes and flat roofs. The Aza, Girkhkimsana and Khanagha pirs belong to this group, although their internal arrangements vary.

The eighth type is represented by the mausoleum-shrine in Garabaghlar village, which has a rectangular-prism volume and a vaulted roof. As noted, the buildings within this pir have curved, vaulted ceilings. The entrances to its rectangular buildings also differ: one is narrow, while another is broad and arched. These differences are thought to reflect construction at different times.

The second subsection is entitled “**Shrines of the Sixteenth–Nineteenth Centuries**”. Shrines from this period display a simpler architectural treatment. The first type is distinguished by a cruciform plan and a central dome. It includes the Nehram and Parchi imamzadehs. The plan and volumetric composition of the Nehram Imamzadeh recall the fourteenth-century Malik Ibrahim shrine.

The second type includes the Nakhchivan Imamzadeh, which has a linear composition. Its three interconnected rooms distinguish it from other monuments. The core of the shrine is a mausoleum built on a square base. The muqarnas used internally, together with the windows set into the dome of one of the rectangular chambers, establish parallels with both earlier monuments and the Nehram Imamzadeh.

The third type comprises shrines with rectangular plans and flat ceilings, including the Tiri, Pirmagsud, Baba Yagub and Arafsa pirs. Some, such as the Baba Yagub and Pirmagsud pirs, have a single chamber; others, such as the Arafsa pir, have two. The pir in Goynuk village, Babak district, consists of independently constructed rooms positioned side by side.

Mausoleum-shrines form a particularly noteworthy group. Although described as mausoleums because holy figures are buried there, their plans and volumetric compositions resemble those of

mosques. This is clearly evident in the Kirna Mosque, the Amirkhan Mausoleum and the Yarali Sultan shrine. Their form probably reflects their additional use as places of worship.

The third section of Chapter II is entitled “**Structural Elements and Ornamentation**”. A variety of structural systems and decorative motifs were employed in Nakhchivan’s medieval mosques and shrines, shaping both their exterior and interior appearance. Architectural elements included domes, niches, squinches, vaults, columns, windows, timber structures, glazed tiles, shabaka latticework, muqarnas, plain decorative brickwork, relief ornament and carved decoration. Muqarnas constituted an essential and integral component of mausoleum decoration in medieval Azerbaijani architecture, including that of South Azerbaijan, and in Anatolia.²⁰

The fourth section of Chapter II is entitled “**Historical Roots of Architectural Elements and Ornamental Motifs**”. The ornamental motifs used in Nakhchivan’s architectural monuments have ancient origins. The research suggests that these motifs carried specific symbolic meanings. Cruciform elements occur in the plans and volumetric compositions of the Malik Ibrahim shrine and the Nehram and Parchi imamzadehs, and in the shabaka latticework of the Juma Mosque in Ordubad. The Garabaghlar Mausoleum is known to have had portals facing the four cardinal directions. The Sheikh Junayd Mausoleum likewise had entrances facing all four directions. Research associates these architectural elements with the ancient beliefs of the Azerbaijani people. Scholars have rightly linked such signs to the cosmogonic and religious beliefs of Turkic peoples.²¹ Conceptions of the world’s four cardinal directions are reflected in Turkic mythology and Azerbaijani folklore.

The research shows that the Azerbaijani people retained their ancient beliefs after adopting Islam. We argue that cruciform plans, volumetric compositions and ornaments were associated with these

²⁰ Bayramov, M. Structural elements and ornamental motifs in the architecture of Nakhchivan’s mosques and shrines // – Baku: Memar, – 2025. No. 42, – pp. 174–183.

²¹ Görgünay, N. Traces of Oghuz tamgas and Göktürk letters in our arts / N. Görgünay. – Ankara: Turkish Historical Society, – 2002, – pp. 8–9.

earlier beliefs rather than with Christianity. The same may be said of other motifs, including eight-pointed stars and crescents. Researchers interpret these images as expressions of beliefs concerning celestial bodies, symbols of deities, and elements of ancient belief systems in Azerbaijan. Ear-of-grain motifs were widely used in Nakhchivan and the Middle East, symbolising the tree of life, vegetation and fertility more generally.

The fifth section of Chapter II is entitled **“Comparative Analysis with Monuments in Azerbaijan and the Middle East”**. Nakhchivan’s status as one of medieval Azerbaijan’s advanced cultural centres, and particularly as the capital of the Eldiguzid state in the twelfth century, contributed to its cultural development. The Nakhchivan school of architecture extended beyond the territory of the present-day Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic to South Azerbaijan, Eastern Anatolia and Iraq. Research shows that this school, which emerged in the twelfth century, was distinguished by its originality, acquired new characteristics during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and maintained its traditions into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.²² The architecture of Nakhchivan’s mosques and shrines developed within, and formed an integral part of, the architectural traditions of Azerbaijan and the Middle East.

Chapter III is entitled **“Issues in the Preservation of Mosques and Shrines in Nakhchivan”**.

The first section is entitled **“The Current State of Architectural Heritage Conservation”**. During the Soviet period, inappropriate uses of religious monuments, insufficient attention to their protection and the absence of scientifically substantiated restoration projects led to the deterioration and destruction of historical and cultural monuments.²³ Following the restoration of the Republic of Azerbaijan’s independence in 1991, researching and protecting these monuments, which form part of the Azerbaijani

²² Bretanitsky, L. S. The architecture of Azerbaijan in the twelfth–fifteenth centuries and its place in the architecture of the Near East / L. S. Bretanitsky. – Moscow: Nauka, – 1966, – pp. 486–488.

²³ Mammadova, Z. G. Scientific and theoretical foundations of restoration: A textbook / Z. G. Mammadova. – Baku: AzUAC, – 2007, – pp. 6–172.

people's national and spiritual values, became a major priority. Heydar Aliyev, the national leader of the Azerbaijani people, consistently valued architectural monuments and emphasised the importance of their conservation.²⁴ State support enabled restoration and repair work at the Momina Khatun, Yusif ibn Kuseyir and Garabaghlar mausoleums, the Sheikh Khorasan Khanqah, the Khan's Palace, the Ordubad icehouse, Nakhchivangala, Alinjagala, the Gulustan Mausoleum and dozens of other monuments. Some historical and cultural monuments in the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, particularly religious buildings, were restored and repaired on the initiative of local residents and with their funding. Although these interventions altered certain aspects of their exteriors and interiors, the architectural character of many monuments was largely retained. Nevertheless, restoration caused considerable damage to the historic appearance of the Khanqah complex in Julfa district, the Parchi Imamzadeh in Khanliglar village, Sharur district, and the Juma Mosque in Ordubad. The decoration of the Ordubad Juma Mosque's mihrab, formerly embellished with muqarnas, Arabic-script inscriptions and vegetal ornament, was completely destroyed. Its arched niche was flattened and entirely tiled, and religious inscriptions wholly different from the originals were added around it.²⁵

The second section of Chapter III is entitled **“Problems in the Conservation of Mosques and Shrines”**. The protection of Nakhchivan's religious monuments is governed by the laws of the Republic of Azerbaijan. As in other fields, Heydar Aliyev played a major role in establishing the legislative framework for the protection of historical and cultural monuments. As a result of the Republic's targeted policy, Azerbaijan became a member of the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property in 2002. Icherisheher, including the nationally significant

²⁴ Mammadova, G. Heydar Aliyev and Azerbaijani architecture // Respublika, – 2023, 6 May, – p. 8.

²⁵ Bayramov, M. The current state of architectural heritage conservation in Nakhchivan // – Baku: International Academy of Architecture of the Countries of the Orient, – 2025. Vol. 25, No. 1, – pp. 86–94.

Palace of the Shirvanshahs and Maiden Tower, was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. The presidential orders signed by Ilham Aliyev on 21 February 2024, establishing the Ordubad State Historical and Cultural Reserve, and on 22 May 2025, introducing measures for the restoration and conservation of the Momina Khatun Mausoleum in Nakhchivan city, a historical and architectural monument of world significance, are important instruments for safeguarding monuments. The Gulustan, Ordubad and Arpachay historical and cultural reserves and the Gamigaya Historical and Artistic Reserve currently operate in the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic. Their territories, particularly those of Arpachay and Ordubad, include mosques and shrines, creating favourable conditions for their preservation and conservation. Despite this legislative framework, Nakhchivan, like other regions of Azerbaijan, faces several challenges in conserving architectural monuments, including mosques and shrines. These principally include insufficient staffing for reserve protection; repairs and restoration undertaken on private initiative without due regard for the buildings' architectural characteristics; inadequate radio and television coverage of architectural monuments; insufficient professional supervision of restoration and repair; and the absence of an overarching framework for such work.

The third section of Chapter III is entitled “**Contemporary Examples of Adapting Approaches to the Preservation of Azerbaijan’s Mosques and Shrines**”. Considerable work has been undertaken in Azerbaijan to organise the restoration, protection and conservation of historical and cultural monuments. Heydar Aliyev’s 1998 instruction to improve and restore the Ashabi-Kahf shrine exemplifies the high regard accorded to national and spiritual values. A particularly important contribution was the adoption, by presidential order of 27 December 2013, of the State Programme for the Restoration and Protection of Immovable Historical and Cultural Monuments and the Improvement and Development of Historical and Cultural Reserves for 2014–2020.²⁶ Some mosques and shrines have

²⁶ Aliyev, I. H. Order of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the State Programme for the Restoration and Protection of Immovable Historical and

been restored and safeguarded through the initiative of urban and rural communities. Examples include the Yukhari Ambaras Mosque in Ordubad, mosques in Vanand, Nusun and Dasta, and other mosques throughout the autonomous republic. Research indicates that assigning appropriate uses to historical and cultural monuments, including mosques and shrines, is an effective means of conserving them. The performance of religious ceremonies helps ensure both their protection and their upkeep. Examples include the Yukhari Ambaras Mosque in Ordubad, the Juma mosques in Nusun and Vanand, and the Baba Yagub shrine in Dasta village.

One of the most effective contemporary approaches to protecting mosques and shrines is to provide on-site custodians. The presence of custodians at the Ashabi-Kahf shrine near Nakhchivan city, the Parchi Imamzadeh in Sharur district, the Nehram Imamzadeh and other monuments supports both their operation as cultural sites and their protection.

The fourth section of Chapter III is entitled “**Proposals for the Preservation of Mosques and Shrines**”. These proposals include recruiting volunteer custodians for mosques and shrines in the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic; raising public awareness of their significance; incorporating them into tourist itineraries; producing and distributing information brochures; promoting the monuments through the media; delivering lectures in universities and secondary schools; establishing links with cultural and creative organisations; and involving specialists in the preparation of restoration and repair projects.

The fifth section of Chapter III is entitled “**A Management Plan for the Conservation of Mosques and Shrines**”. The plan’s principal aim is to safeguard these monuments, ensure that repairs and restoration follow scientific and professional principles, preserve their authenticity and historical and architectural characteristics, and facilitate their use by communities and for tourism. To this end, a new department should be established within the bodies responsible for overseeing monuments, with appropriate posts and a

professionally qualified staff. Its organisational structure should ensure daily monitoring. Staff appointed under the management plan should regularly assess the condition of mosques and respond promptly to any damage. Mosques, shrines and other monuments deteriorate over time as a result of natural processes, human interventions and other damaging factors. Timely restoration can protect monuments while ensuring the efficient use of resources. Conservation should extend beyond restoration to fostering informed public attitudes towards these monuments. Digital documentation is also important to the conservation of mosques and shrines.

The sixth section of Chapter III is entitled “**Proposals for a Management Plan for Religious Monuments in the Nakhchivan Region**”. A management plan for their restoration and conservation should ensure high scholarly standards in research and restoration while preventing errors in present-day interventions. In practical terms, restoration should not employ materials such as concrete, metal or synthetic paints where these are incompatible with a monument’s historical and architectural characteristics. Instead, local materials should be used to strengthen the original structure, and the monument’s original appearance should be reinstated as accurately as possible. All measures should comply with the legislation of the Republic of Azerbaijan and international standards. Core conservation principles should include assessing the significance of monuments, ensuring minimum intervention and transparency in reconstruction, and exploring opportunities for reuse.

The **Conclusion** summarises and interprets the principal findings of the research:

1. The architectural elements and ornamental motifs used in Nakhchivan’s religious monuments emerged from both the Islamic Renaissance and the ancient religious beliefs of the Azerbaijani people [14].

2. The cruciform plans and volumetric compositions of shrines, particularly the Malik Ibrahim shrine and the Nehram and Parchi imamzadehs, were associated with the Azerbaijani people’s religious and mythological conceptions [4].

3. Nakhchivan’s religious monuments are important sources for

studying the architectural history of Azerbaijan and Eastern Anatolia and the historical and cultural connections between these regions [7].

4. The presence of architectural styles employed in mosques and shrines across the South Caucasus and the Middle East also reflects the economic, cultural and political connections of the ancient tribes inhabiting Azerbaijan [11].

5. Hurufism, Bektashism, Nuqtawism, the Safaviyya and other religious movements and orders played an important role in the emergence and development of Nakhchivan's religious architecture [18].

6. Mosques and shrines are important sources for studying architectural history, sociopolitical processes and movements, and the activities of their prominent representatives [6].

7. Various structural systems and forms of decoration were employed in mosques and shrines to achieve architectural refinement and harmony [1].

8. The architectural styles of mosques and shrines were closely connected with the traditions of Karabakh and South Azerbaijan. These connections are reflected in the construction and decorative treatment of monuments in those regions [11].

9. Despite their distinctive characteristics, Nakhchivan's mosques and shrines emerged and developed as an integral part of medieval Azerbaijani architecture.

10. Sun-dried brick, fired brick and stone were used as building materials for mosques and shrines, with lime, gypsum and clay mortars employed as binding materials.

11. The research demonstrates that the Nakhchivan school of architecture was connected not only with the Maragha and Arran schools, but also, in certain respects, with the Shirvan–Absheron school.

12. As part of medieval Azerbaijani architecture, Nakhchivan's mosques and shrines passed through two stages of development. Nevertheless, continuity and the transmission of traditions are clearly evident in their architectural styles, particularly in their plans, volumetric compositions, structural systems and ornamental motifs.

13. Distinguished by their architectural character, mosques

were also important cultural centres in medieval Azerbaijani society. They contributed to socioeconomic development and played a significant role in the administration of medieval states [21].

14. The architectural elements and motifs employed in mosques and shrines, including domes, muqarnas, cruciform and ear-of-grain ornaments, and multi-pointed stars, are closely associated with the ancient history and religious and mythological beliefs of the Azerbaijani people [14].

15. The study of mosques and shrines demonstrates that Nakhchivan's religious architecture developed through sustained architectural exchanges across a broad geographical area, encompassing different regions of Azerbaijan, South Azerbaijan and Eastern Anatolia, rather than in isolation. Its religious monuments are therefore closely connected with the architectural traditions of these territories.

16. Changes in the plans, volumetric compositions, structural systems and ornamental motifs of Nakhchivan's mosques and shrines were shaped by historical and political developments and by the requirements of sociopolitical movements.

The dissertation's findings are reflected in the author's following scholarly publications:

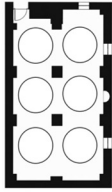
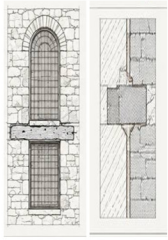
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Region / Type	Mosque 	Mausoleum 	Imamzadeh 	Khanqah 	Pir 
Nakhchivan	4	1	1	1	
Ordubad	19			1	8
Julfa	6	2			3
Babak	1		1		3
Sharur			1		1
Sadarak	2				
Kangarli	2	4		1	

Khanagha Mosque		
Map location	Monument information	Current condition
 	Khanagha Mosque stands in Khanagha village, Julfa district. Dating to the fourteenth century, it has a rectangular plan and domed roofs.	The monument is in critical condition, with severe damage to its walls. Repairs, particularly in the interior, have destroyed some of its historic fabric.
Former condition	Current condition	Plan
		
Dome interior	Structural detail	Architectural drawing
		

 – Critical condition – Severe damage. Urgent restoration and conservation are required.

 – Fair condition – Some deterioration and defects. Restoration measures are recommended.

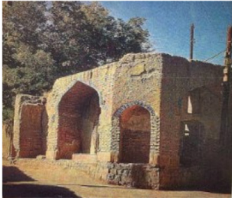
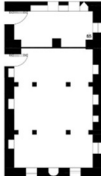
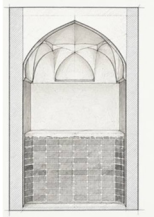
 – Good condition – Later repairs have altered its historic appearance, but there is no current risk of collapse. Routine maintenance is required.

 – Monuments included in the list approved by Resolution No. 132 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan, dated 2 August 2001.

 – Monuments not included in the list.

Vanand Mosque		
Map location	Monument information	Current condition
 ▲ ■	Vanand Mosque stands in Vanand village, Ordubad district. It dates to the fourteenth century and has a rectangular plan.	Although its condition is satisfactory, repairs have substantially altered both its interior and exterior. The historic motifs on the mihrab have been completely removed.
Former condition	Current condition	Plan
		
Historic entrance portal	Door construction	Mihrab before and after
		

- – Critical condition – Severe damage. Urgent restoration and conservation are required.
- – Fair condition – Some deterioration and defects. Restoration measures are recommended.
- – Good condition – Later repairs have altered its historic appearance, but there is no current risk of collapse. Routine maintenance is required.
- – Monuments included in the list approved by Resolution No. 132 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan, dated 2 August 2001.
- ▲ – Monuments not included in the list.

Shah Abbas Mosque		
Map location	Monument information	Current condition
 ▲ ■	Shah Abbas Mosque stands in Yukhari Aylis village, Ordubad district. It dates to the seventeenth century and has a rectangular plan.	The mosque is in good condition. Inappropriate repairs have completely altered the historic architectural elements of its interior and exterior. Rooms have been added around it.
Former condition	Current condition	Plan
		 1 2 3 4 5
South wall and mihrab	Drawing of the mihrab	Historic columns
		

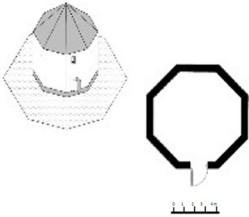
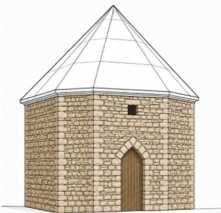
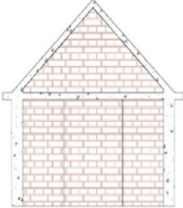
■ – Critical condition – Severe damage. Urgent restoration and conservation are required.

■ – Fair condition – Some deterioration and defects. Restoration measures are recommended.

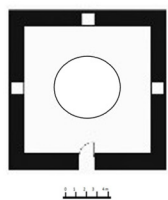
■ – Good condition – Later repairs have altered its historic appearance, but there is no current risk of collapse. Routine maintenance is required.

■ – Monuments included in the list approved by Resolution No. 132 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan, dated 2 August 2001.

▲ – Monuments not included in the list.

Garabaghlar Mausoleum		
Map location	Monument information	Current condition
 	The Garabaghlar mausoleum complex stands in Garabaghlar village, Kangarli district. Built in the thirteenth –fourteenth centuries, it has an octagonal plan.	The mausoleum is in critical condition. Its ceiling, in particular, is severely deteriorated. Urgent intervention is required to undertake restoration and conservation.
Former condition	Current condition	Plan
		
Interior view	Restoration drawing	Section
		

-  – Critical condition – Severe damage. Urgent restoration and conservation are required.
-  – Fair condition – Some deterioration and defects. Restoration measures are recommended.
-  – Good condition – Later repairs have altered its historic appearance, but there is no current risk of collapse. Routine maintenance is required.
-  – Monuments included in the list approved by Resolution No. 132 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan, dated 2 August 2001.
-  – Monuments not included in the list.

Amirkhan Mausoleum		
Map location	Monument information	Current condition
 	Amirkhan Mausoleum stands in Khanagha village, Julfa district. Built in the fourteenth century, it has a quadrangular plan and a dome.	The mausoleum is neglected. Its interior, in particular, has suffered severe damage and inappropriate interventions. Urgent restoration measures are required.
Former condition	Current condition	Plan
		
Dome interior	Mausoleum entrance	Interior architectural elements
		

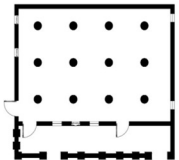
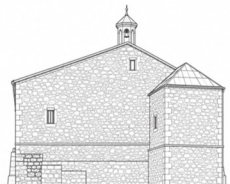
 – Critical condition – Severe damage. Urgent restoration and conservation are required.

 – Fair condition – Some deterioration and defects. Restoration measures are recommended.

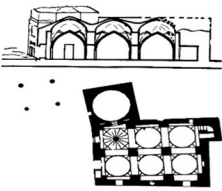
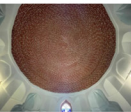
 – Good condition – Later repairs have altered its historic appearance, but there is no current risk of collapse. Routine maintenance is required.

 – Monuments included in the list approved by Resolution No. 132 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan, dated 2 August 2001.

 – Monuments not included in the list.

Old Shahtakhti Mosque		
Map location	Monument information	Current condition
 	The Old Shahtakhti Mosque stands in Shahtakhti village, Kangarli district. Built in the nineteenth century, it has a square plan.	The mosque is in critical condition. Its western wall has collapsed and remains in ruins. Urgent restoration and conservation measures are required to safeguard the building.
Former condition	Current condition	Plan
		 
Collapsed section	Restoration drawing	Timber columns and capitals
		

-  – Critical condition – Severe damage. Urgent restoration and conservation are required.
-  – Fair condition – Some deterioration and defects. Restoration measures are recommended.
-  – Good condition – Later repairs have altered its historic appearance, but there is no current risk of collapse. Routine maintenance is required.
-  – Monuments included in the list approved by Resolution No. 132 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan, dated 2 August 2001.
-  – Monuments not included in the list.

Alinjachay Khanqah Mausoleum		
Map location	Monument information	Current condition
 	The Alinjachay Khanqah Mausoleum stands in Khanagha village, Julfa district. Dating to the fourteenth century, it has a quadrangular plan and a dome.	The mausoleum is in fair condition. Deterioration and damage affect the interior, particularly the inscriptions. Following repairs, some historic architectural elements are only partially preserved.
Former condition	Current condition	Plan
		
Inscriptions	Entrance doorway	Mausoleum interior
 		 

-  – Critical condition – Severe damage. Urgent restoration and conservation are required.
-  – Fair condition – Some deterioration and defects. Restoration measures are recommended.
-  – Good condition – Later repairs have altered its historic appearance, but there is no current risk of collapse. Routine maintenance is required.
-  – Monuments included in the list approved by Resolution No. 132 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan, dated 2 August 2001.
-  – Monuments not included in the list.

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