

# **Historiography and Nation-Building among Turkic Populations**

Edited by  
Birgit N. Schlyter



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Front cover: Statue of a Central Asian “Thinker” at the Monument of Independence in the Republic Square (Respublika Alangy), Almaty.

Back cover: Camels in a caravan. Front view of a statue outside of Registan, Samarkand.

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# Contents

<i>Preface</i>	7
<i>Introduction: Central Asian and Turkic History Revisited</i>	9
<i>On Oral History of the Soviet Past in Central Asia: Re-Collecting, Reflecting and Re-Imagining</i> Timur Dadabaev	13
<i>The Coverage of Central Asia in Turkey: The 1990s and Beyond</i> Büşra Ersanlı	31
<i>In Search of New Historiographies for Ex-Soviet Turkic States: Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan</i> Y. Emre Gürbüz	47
<i>History-Writing and History-Making in Azerbaijan: Some Reflections on the First Two Decades of Independence</i> Zaur Gasimov	69
<i>Image and Influence: The Politics of Nation-Branding in Uzbekistan</i> Anita Sengupta	91
<i>Linguistic and Social Contradictions within Uzbek National Identity</i> Rano Turaeva-Hoehne	111
<i>The Status of Uzbek as “National Language”</i> Birgit N. Schlyter	129
<i>Language and the State in Late Qing Xinjiang</i> Eric T. Schluessel	145
<i>The Authors</i>	169

# History-Writing and History-Making in Azerbaijan

## *Some Reflections on the Past Two Decades of Independence<sup>1</sup>*

ZAUR GASIMOV

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the opportunity arose for Azerbaijani historians to apply a new perspective to their country's past – before, during and after the Communist era. The history of Azerbaijan's short-lived independence during 1918–1920 was, and remains, among the favorite research topics. In addition, the subject of Karabakh and the history of Southern Azerbaijan (Northern provinces of Iran) figure prominently in the research agenda of historians. Obstacles to their work include the fact that many Azerbaijani historians have a limited command of foreign languages, problems created by the authoritarian conditions imposed by the Əliyev regime and corruption in the country's science and educational system.

Azerbaijani historiography was, up until the present day, a subject of research within the field of historiography in Azerbaijan itself,<sup>2</sup> within East European (Osteuropaforschung<sup>3</sup>) and Oriental Studies (Orientalistik/Turkologie<sup>4</sup>) in Germany, Turkey<sup>5</sup> and to some extent in Russia.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This article is a revised and expanded version of my paper Gasimov 2009.

<sup>2</sup> See Xəlili 2010; Alizade 2011.

<sup>3</sup> See Gasimov 2011.

## Writing History in the Soviet Era

During the Soviet era, Azerbaijani historiography developed within the paradigms of Marxist theory, which considered historical development to be the result of a permanent struggle between the classes. Most Soviet Azerbaijani historians (for instance, Püstə Əzizbəyova<sup>7</sup>) viewed Russia and the Soviet Union as progressive forces. They glorified Russia's "progressive proletariat" and intelligentsia for having a positive impact on the modernization of Azerbaijan from the time of colonization in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century as well as after the beginning of sovietization in the early 1920s.<sup>8</sup> The view of history as a permanent class struggle at times took absurd turns, such as when Azerbaijani historians described the 8<sup>th</sup> century anti-Arab rebel Babek as a "pre-Communist leader" simply because he used red banners.

Soviet historiography and school history textbooks published during the Soviet occupation described almost all personalities in Azerbaijan's past that criticized Islam and that had any affiliation to Russia as particularly enlightened. Soviet Azerbaijani historians condemned the period of the short-lived independence of Azerbaijan in 1918–1920 as anti-national. To mark the anniversaries of the October Revolution or the beginning of the sovietization campaign in Azerbaijan, the authorities produced a huge number of publications praising the "eternal friendship" between Azerbaijanis and Russians.

## "Perestroika" in Azerbaijani Historiography<sup>9</sup>

These trends dominated until the Perestroika years, 1988–1989, when a number of young Azerbaijani historians began to publish articles presenting an alternative

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<sup>4</sup> See Adam 2005; Morozova 2005.

<sup>5</sup> See Hacısalihoglu 2012.

<sup>6</sup> See Shnirelman 2003.

<sup>7</sup> The modern Azerbaijani alphabet was first introduced during the rule of the Azerbaijani Popular Front (1992–1993) and then reaffirmed in 2000. This alphabet is based on Turkish orthography, even though it has several special letters and sounds that Turkish does not have, for example, *ə* (cf. Persian *a* in *zamin*) and *x* (cf. German *ch* in *Dach*).

<sup>8</sup> See Azizbekova et al. 1969.

<sup>9</sup> See Appendix 3.

view of history. During this period, it became fashionable to examine topics that were previously considered taboo. Historians such as Nəşib Nəşibli (in the 1990s Nəşibzadə),<sup>10</sup> Nəsiman Yaqublu,<sup>11</sup> Şirməmməd Hüseynov and Cəmil Həsənlı published several articles and booklets on the foreign policy of the Azerbaijani government in 1918–1920 and on its leader Məmmədəmin Rəsulzadə (1884–1955). These authors completely revised the historical role of Russia. They portrayed the role of the Soviet Union in annexing Azerbaijani territory and eliminating its independent statehood as negatively as the Tsarist Empire’s colonial war against the Azerbaijani Khanates in the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Challenged by the liberalization brought about by Gorbachev’s Glasnost and the conflict with Armenia over Karabakh, the main journal published by the Institute of History became a forum for Azerbaijani historians who sought to revise the national version of history. The Karabakh issue became a point of contention for historians on both sides. The young historian, İsa Qəmbər, and one of the patriarchs of the Soviet Azerbaijani historiography and Oriental Studies, Ziya Bünyadov (1923–1997), were particularly active in the debates with their Armenian counterparts. They challenged the artificially propagated myths of the “eternal friendship of all Soviet nationalities” and thereby exposed the existence of nationalism among the non-Russian nations in the USSR.

During this period, the Faculty of History<sup>12</sup> at Baku State University (BSU) became the second most important institution for the writing of history after the Bakıxanov Institute at the National Academy of Sciences. The Faculty of History<sup>13</sup> is the oldest center for historical research in Azerbaijan; it opened when the national government founded the university in the fall of 1919. By remaining

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<sup>10</sup> Nəşibzadə 1990.

<sup>11</sup> Yaqublu 1991.

<sup>12</sup> The Baku noble Abbasqulu Ağa Bakıxanov (1794–1847) founded Azerbaijani historiography (*tariixşünaslıq*) by writing a booklet about the history of Azerbaijan and Dagestan entitled “Gülüstanı-İrəm” in Farsi (translated by M. Ələskərli and published in Azerbaijani in 1951, again in 2000 in Latin script). Bakıxanov was engaged as a translator by the Tsarist authorities in Tiflis. He translated the peace negotiations between the Persians and Russians in 1828, which resulted in the division of the territory settled by the ethnic Azerbaijanis. The Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan was named after Bakıxanov and has been regarded as the main institution for the writing of history in the republic ever since its founding in 1945.

<sup>13</sup> See Appendix 1.

in the shadow of the Bakıxanov Institute, the faculty gained more freedom to evaluate Azerbaijan's past.

The events of January 1990, when Soviet troops intervened in Baku and killed more than one hundred people, marked the beginning of a new period for Azerbaijani historians. From that time on, the works of émigré and Western historians began to appear in the major historical journals in Baku. In particular, translations of works by the Polish-American historian Tadeusz Swietochowski about "Russian Azerbaijan in 1905–1920"<sup>14</sup> were published and had a strong impact on Azerbaijani historiography. His work had originally been published in the USA and was based on detailed research in the archives of Europe and Baku. Swietochowski visited Soviet Baku in the 1980s and was well known at the Academy of Sciences.<sup>15</sup> As his field of research was devoted to the period of Azerbaijani independence in 1918–1920, his works became very popular once the Soviet Union disintegrated and critical research into this formerly taboo area became possible.

Almost revolutionary were the publications about the Azerbaijani legions, soldiers serving on the side of the German Wehrmacht against the Soviet Army. Questioning the meaning of the "Great Patriotic War" represented nothing less than a total break with probably the most important legacy of Soviet history. Other topics that Azerbaijani historians no longer feared to broach were the Stalinist repressions against the Azerbaijani intelligentsia in the 1930s and the activities of Azerbaijani émigrés in interwar Europe. Articles written by Məmmədəmin Rəsulzadə and other émigrés (Cahangir Zeynalöglü, Mirza Bala, Hilal Munschi) during their stay in Poland, Germany and Turkey were published for the first time in Azerbaijan, and Azerbaijani historians wrote introductory texts for these publications.

Yet, the period of 1989–1991 was also an ambivalent one for Azerbaijani historiography. On the one hand, this period witnessed the publication of books and historical essays, such as those by Manaf Süleymanov (1912–2001)<sup>16</sup> and Fazil Rəhmanzadə,<sup>17</sup> who criticized the Stalinist regime and described the policy

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<sup>14</sup> Swietochowski 1985.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Tadeusz Swietochowski in Warsaw on 6<sup>th</sup> of December 2009. Vilayət Quliyev, who worked at the Academy of Sciences in the 1980s and met Swietochowski there in 1983, translated parts of "Russian Azerbaijan, 1905–1920" into Azerbaijani and published them in 1989 in Baku.

<sup>16</sup> Süleymanov 1989.

<sup>17</sup> Rəhmanzadə 1991.

of russification in frank detail. On the other hand, Soviet ideology did not disappear overnight; the military historian Rizvan Zeynalov published in 1991 his dissertation on the development of the Azerbaijani army in 1920–1941 that corresponded completely with the Marxist-Leninist approach.<sup>18</sup>

## Orientation towards Azerbaijan's Ancient Roots

In 1992, when the Popular Front Movement with the orientalist Əbülfəz Elçibəy (1938–2000) at its head came to power, Azerbaijani historiography focused on the Turkic-speaking world. The philosophical book-length essay by the Kazakh writer Olzhas Suleymenov, “AziYa” was translated into Azerbaijani, and studies of Dədə-Qorqud were dominant in historical and literary research. Elçibəy saw Azerbaijan as a crown of the Turkic world and was known for his pro-Turkic as well as for his anti-Russian and anti-Persian position. For Azerbaijani historians and philologists who were members of the National Liberation Movement in the 1980s and the first political parties of Müsavat and the Popular Front, this signified a revolt against “Indo-European domination”.

Some historians began to concentrate on the pre-history of Turkic settlements in the Caucasus region and revised the Soviet approach represented in Azerbaijan by the historian Iqrar Əliyev (1924–2004). After 1960, Iqrar Əliyev published several works on the history of Media (1960), Albania (1962) and Atropathene (1989). The Median state, which is considered to be a proto-Azerbaijani state formation, was established by an Iranian-speaking population, according to Əliyev. The opinion that Media and the more ancient state formation Manna were settled by Turkic tribes became dominant under Elçibəy. The key representative of this school was Professor Yusif Yusifov (1929–1998) of the Pedagogical Higher School in Baku, and Əliyev's attacks against it failed. Yusifov, an ancient history specialist, co-authored together with Sərraf Kərimov in 1987 a manual of toponymy, explaining the semantic origins of historical names for cities in the Caucasus.

In 1994, Yusifov, together with Bünyadov, published the “History of Azerbaijan from ancient times until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century”,<sup>19</sup> which

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<sup>18</sup> Zeynalov 1990.

<sup>19</sup> Bünyadov & Yusifov 1994.



was accepted at the universities of Azerbaijan as a manual on Azerbaijani history. It continues to serve as the dominant historical narrative in Azerbaijan. Some historians concentrated intensively on Turkic and Central Asian history. Similar to the period at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Baku became the second most important center of Turanism after Istanbul. The books of the Turkish thinker, and one of the co-founders of Turanism, Ziya Gökalp, were translated into Azerbaijani and published in Baku, and his life work was discussed in school history books.<sup>20</sup> In addition, books on Azerbaijani and Central Asian history written by Azerbaijani and Turkish historians in Turkey were brought to Azerbaijan.

## The Nationalization of History

Under Elçibəy, a further de-sovietization of Azerbaijani historiography occurred. This movement dropped a number of terms that were commonly used in Soviet historiography. For example, the war between the Soviet Union and Germany was no longer called the “Great Patriotic War” but simply referred to as World War II. The sovietization of Azerbaijan beginning in 1920 was now called the “April occupation” (*Aprəl istilası*).

At the same time, the main principles of Azerbaijani historiography survived the collapse of the Soviet Union. Azerbaijani historians saw their country’s past in the context of an old civilization – five thousand years of age, with Azerbaijan being looked upon as the heir of Media, Atropathene, and Caucasian Albania. Furthermore, state formations that existed under Arab rule and afterwards on the territory of modern Azerbaijan, such as the state of Atabeks,<sup>21</sup> Shirvan-Shahs<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> The historian Aydın Əbiyev published the first biography of Gökalp in Azerbaijani, where the name is spelled Göyalp; see Əbiyev 2006.

<sup>21</sup> The monograph by Ziya Bünyadov is still considered to be a fundamental work on this issue. See Bünyadov 1989. It was a translation into Azerbaijani from the original text of his Ph. D. thesis written in Russian, which was published by Bünyadov in 1965 in Moscow. Another book by Bünyadov on the latter period was published in Russian in 1978 and in Azerbaijani in 1985. See Bünyadov 1985.

<sup>22</sup> See Aşurbəyli 1998.

and the medieval states of Ağ Qoyunlu and Qara Qoyunlu,<sup>23</sup> were assumed to have had relations with European states.

Currently, Baku historians such as Fəridə Məmmədova (Farida Mamedova)<sup>24</sup> and the archaeologist Rəşid Göyüşov, are actively exploring both the religious traditions of monotheist Caucasian Albania, where Christianity is as old as the Armenian and Georgian Churches and where there was strong resistance to Islamization under the Arabs, and Islamic traditions, particularly those under Shah İsmail Xətai (İsmail Xətai).

In 1993 a monument for Xətai was inaugurated in one of the districts of Baku. Xətai, an ethnic Azerbaijani from the Safavid dynasty, ruled the Persian Empire and is regarded as one of the founders of classical Azerbaijani literature, since he wrote several poems in Azerbaijani. He remains a favorite subject of research for many historians of literature as well. While many acknowledge Azerbaijan's ancient history, most historians concentrate their research on the period of the late 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

## Main Trends in Modern Historical Writing

Several current trends can be discerned in modern Azerbaijani historiography: *Karabakh*: Karabakh (*qara* 'black', *bağ* 'garden') – a tiny mountainous region in Caucasus Minor – is a place of shared Armenian-Azerbaijani history. Governed by the Muslim nobles, Karabakh, with its mixed population of Azerbaijanis, Kurds, and Armenians, was made a Russian province in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It became a borderland between Armenians and Azerbaijanis, where both sides competed for political and cultural control over the region. There were mortal clashes between the Armenian and Azerbaijani armies in 1918–1920, when the two nations existed as independent states. Karabakh was a part of the Republic of Azerbaijan from 1918 till 1920. After Armenia and Azerbaijan became Soviet-

<sup>23</sup> See Mahmudov 1991.

<sup>24</sup> Fəridə Məmmədova's monograph on Caucasian Albania emerged in 1977. In 1993, she published her *opus magnum* on the historical geography of Albania in 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC – 8<sup>th</sup> century AD. Her last publication "Caucasian Albania and Albanians" (Mamedova 2005) led to a broad discussion at the Bakıxanov-Institute of History. The head of the Institute Yaqub Mahmudov criticized the book by Məmmədova for being pro-Armenian, inasmuch as she had shown the neighboring state of Caucasian Albania – Greater Armenia – on the maps published in the book.

governed in 1920, Karabakh was included in the Republic of Azerbaijan, while Zangezur – a borderland region between Armenia, Iran and Azerbaijan – became Armenian. The population of Soviet Karabakh, which had an autonomous status within the Soviet Socialist Republic of Azerbaijan, was mostly Armenian. During the Perestroika period, the Armenian national movement laid claim to Karabakh as well as Armenian-populated regions in Southern Georgia (Samtskhe-Javakheti). These claims, together with mass deportations of ethnic Azerbaijanis from Armenia, led to anti-Armenian pogroms in Baku and Sumgait in 1989. The war between Armenians and Azerbaijanis continued after the collapse of the USSR and ended in May 1994, when a cease-fire agreement was signed between Baku and Yerevan. Due to the war, Azerbaijan lost control over Karabakh as well as over several surrounding provinces. The numerous Armenian communities of Baku, Sumgait and other Azerbaijani cities and the Azerbaijani population of Armenia became refugees and internally displaced persons. Many of them are still living in refugee camps in rural regions of both countries. France, the USA and Russia are members of the so-called Minsk Group which aims at a peaceful settlement of the Karabakh conflict. The co-chairs of the Minsk Group visit Armenia and Azerbaijan regularly, and they arrange meetings between the presidents of the two countries. The negotiation process has been going on in this fashion since 1994, but without any evident success thus far. Armenia claims an independent status for Karabakh by arguing in terms of the right of self-determination, while Azerbaijan insists on the principle of territorial integrity, which excludes any independent status, but offers broad autonomy for Karabakh.<sup>25</sup>

Without a doubt, the history of Karabakh and its political, economic and social development have been key topics of Azerbaijani historiography. This issue has been omnipresent since the beginning of the conflict over Karabakh in the 1980s. Prominent historians such as Ziya Bünyadov and Iqrar Əliyev as well as the historian-geographers Budaq Budaqov (1928–2012) and Gıyasəddin Geybullayev wrote about the Karabakh issue in the 1990s, although neither regional history nor contemporary history was their main field of specialization.

In the last decade, a new generation of Karabakh historians emerged in Azerbaijan. In 2004 Zemfira Hacıyeva (Gadzhieva) published her analysis of the

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<sup>25</sup> For more reading about the history of the Karabakh conflict, see De Waal 2003 and Leeuw 2000.

Tsarist description of the Karabakh province of 1823.<sup>26</sup> In 2005 the historian and ethnographer Arif Yunusov published a book on past and present Karabakh in English.<sup>27</sup> A year later, Mamedov and Musaev published a monograph on the history of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over Karabakh in Tula.<sup>28</sup> In the context of Karabakh, Azerbaijani historians, such as the Iranist Solmaz Rüstəmovə-Tohidi (Rustamova-Togidi), focused intensively on the ethnic clashes between Armenians and Azerbaijanis that took place in Baku in March 1918.<sup>29</sup> The main trend in writings on Karabakh is the ambition to demonstrate its historical bond with the Azerbaijani khanates and state, the Azerbaijani-speaking population as well as its significance for Azerbaijani culture with Shusha as its center.

*Local history:* Local history has gained importance in present-day Azerbaijan. Historians write about the provinces of Nakhichevan, Zangezur, Shusha and Yerevan, which in the 19<sup>th</sup> century had an ethnically mixed population (mostly Armenians, Muslim and Yezidi Kurds, and Azerbaijanis). Local history has also become an attractive topic. Baku is still the favorite subject of new studies, and the treatise on Baku in the Middle Ages by the historian Sara Aşurbəyli (1906–2001) remains the fundamental research work on the city's history.<sup>30</sup> More publications about the history of the villages around Baku, like the city of Maştağa, have recently emerged. Research on the local history of Nakhichevan has a clear political context, since the president's family is of Nakhichevani descent and this region was of paramount importance in Heydər Əliyev's political career after 1990–1991. Studies of other cities and cultural centers, e.g. Gandja and Shamakhy, are mostly a product of initiatives taken by younger historians.

*Russian and Soviet colonization:* Studies of Russian and Soviet colonization, settlement policy in Azerbaijan and repressions against Azerbaijani cultural elites in the 1930s constitute key trends in post-independence Azerbaijani

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<sup>26</sup> Gadzhieva 2004.

<sup>27</sup> Yunusov 2005.

<sup>28</sup> Mamedov & Musaev 2006.

<sup>29</sup> Rustamova-Togidi 2009.

<sup>30</sup> Aşurbəyli 1998.

historiography, particularly since the publication of the bibliography of sources on Azerbaijani history prepared by the historian Süleyman Əliyarov.<sup>31</sup> This publication includes documents on the colonial policy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and reveals the strong feelings held in Azerbaijani society. In 1990, the same collection of documents was published in Russian translation. Three years later, in 1993, Ziya Bünyadov's book *Qırmızı terror* ('Red Terror') appeared in bookstores in Baku.<sup>32</sup> In 1998, the historian Məmməd Cəfərli (Mamed Dzhafarli) published his work on the "Political Terror and the Destiny of Azerbaijan's Germans".<sup>33</sup> More recently, fundamental works by contemporary historians Eldar İsmailov (1950–2014)<sup>34</sup> and Cəmil Həsənlı<sup>35</sup> on the Stalinist and post-Stalinist regime in Azerbaijan have emerged.

*Military history:* The examination of military history was one innovation in Azerbaijani historiography prior to 1991. During the Soviet occupation and shortly after 1991, Azerbaijani historians published some books, including Steklov's 1927 polemic volume on the Musavat Army<sup>36</sup> and Musa Qasımlı's work on World Wars I and II.<sup>37</sup> Once neglected, military history is now becoming more popular. Azerbaijani military traditions during the first period of independence are a particularly popular theme. The development of the army in 1918 and the biographies of Tsarist military leaders of Azerbaijani descent are favorite topics. In 1991, Pərvin (Parvin) Darabadi published his dissertation on the military aspects of Azerbaijani history at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>38</sup> Other key works on the military are devoted to the first Republic, its military ministers and World War II. Nəsiman Yaqublu published the biography of Fətəlibəy-Düdənginskiy, the Azerbaijani officer who served both in the German and the Soviet armies during World War II, and remained in Europe after its end

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<sup>31</sup> Əliyarov [1989] 2007.

<sup>32</sup> Bünyadov 1993.

<sup>33</sup> Dzhafarli 1997.

<sup>34</sup> İsmailov 2003.

<sup>35</sup> Həsənlı 2008.

<sup>36</sup> Steklov 1927.

<sup>37</sup> The historian Musa Qasımlı (Baku State University) is the first scholar to write about World War I in Azerbaijani (Qasımlı 2000–2004). The author focuses not only on the policy of the regional powers in the Caucasus and Azerbaijan but also on the international process at that time.

<sup>38</sup> Darabadi 1991.

and was eliminated by the Soviet KGB in the 1950s.<sup>39</sup> In the same year, Yaqublu published a book on the liberation of Baku from the Bolsheviks by Ottoman and Azerbaijani troops in September 1918.<sup>40</sup> A writer and essayist, Qilman Ilkin (1914–2009), wrote a book on the “Turkish troops in Baku” in 2003.<sup>41</sup> Şəmistan Nəzirli and Nailə Vəlixanlı are the most famous military historians of the republic. In 2004–2006 Nəzirli published two books on the officer Yadiqarov and on General Şixlinski and published a monograph on persecuted military figures.<sup>42</sup> Nəzirli has been writing short articles about military history in Baku-based newspapers, such as “Ayna” and “525ci qəzet”. Vəlixanlı edited the catalogue “Azerbaijani generals”, which was published by the Academy of Sciences in 2005.<sup>43</sup> These attempts on the part of Azerbaijani historians to focus on military history are, of course, also part of the post-communist search for identity, which was damaged by the defeats during the Armenian-Azerbaijani war over Karabakh.

## Populist History-Writing during the Əliyev Dynasty

Since the unstable democracy under Elçibəy transformed itself into stable authoritarianism under Əliyev senior (1993–2003) and junior (since 2003), Azerbaijani historiography assumed a new field, which can hardly be claimed to be objective. In the past decade alone, Azerbaijani historians have produced a huge number of pseudo-scientific publications on Əliyev. Dozens of Əliyev biographers have described the life of the “Ulu öndər” (‘Great Leader’) of Azerbaijan. Among them, one can find the publicist Elmira Axundova, who has been working on a six-volume biography of Heydər Əliyev and regularly publishes short articles about his career in a variety of periodicals.<sup>44</sup>

The head of the Bakıxanov Institute, Yaqub Mahmudov, stresses the role of Əliyev in Azerbaijani history in his publications, interviews and public lectures.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Yaqublu 2008a.

<sup>40</sup> Yaqublu 2008b.

<sup>41</sup> Ilkin 2003.

<sup>42</sup> Nəzirli 2005.

<sup>43</sup> Vəlixanlı 2005.

<sup>44</sup> Axundova 2013.

<sup>45</sup> Mahmudlu 2005. The publication is quite polemic.

A huge photo of the former President adorns the homepage of the Department of History at Baku State University (BSU), and announcements of the school history textbooks published and edited by Mahmudov in the past decade can be found there.

As during the period since Perestroika, the theme of the first Republic (1918–1920) and its leader Rəsulzadə is still in fashion. At the same time, the Bakıxanov Institute,<sup>46</sup> the BSU History Department and other institutions try to concentrate on the history of the Azerbaijani Democratic Republic while neglecting to give prominent attention to Rəsulzadə, who is a potential rival of Heydər Əliyev as an “Azerbaijani Atatürk”. Nevertheless, the historians close to the Məsavat and Popular Front parties (Yaqublu, Balayev) continue to publish actively on this theme. After the main works of Rəsulzadə written in Turkish, Azerbaijani and Russian from the time of his exile were reprinted in Baku at the beginning of the 1990s, historians began to analyze the different aspects of Rəsulzadə’s thinking, including religion, language, philosophical views and political orientations.

Azerbaijani historians during the Perestroika period devoted considerable attention to the topic of Turan, which had been taboo earlier. At the moment, it is still of interest but is no longer as popular as it once was. The basic works of Turanist authors, such as Ziya Gökalp,<sup>47</sup> Yusuf Akçuraoğlu,<sup>48</sup> and Əli Bey Hüseynzadə,<sup>49</sup> have been translated into Azerbaijani and were reprinted in Baku in 2006 and 2007.

A number of other topics attract considerable attention. “Ayrılıq” is the title of one of the most famous songs in Azerbaijan and means ‘partition’ and ‘separation’. Initially performed by the Ardabil-born female singer Rübabə Muradova (1933–1983), “Ayrılıq” remains in the repertoire of Flora Kərimova. It refers to the partition of the Azerbaijani territories between Russia and Persia in 1813–1828. Both during the Soviet occupation and in post-Soviet Azerbaijan, this topic remained a key part of Azerbaijani historiography. In 1990, the historian Şövkət Tağıyeva published a monograph on the Tabriz rebellion of

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<sup>46</sup> See Appendix 2.

<sup>47</sup> Göyalp 1991.

<sup>48</sup> Akçuraoğlu 2006.

<sup>49</sup> Hüseynzadə 2008.

1920.<sup>50</sup> The medievalist Kərim Şükürov published the chronology of the Türk-mənçay treaty of 1828.<sup>51</sup> All of the history textbooks for secondary schools and universities have a map of the “United Azerbaijan”, which includes the modern Republic of Azerbaijan and the so-called “Southern Azerbaijan”, the territory of Iran inhabited by ethnic Azerbaijanis (including the cities of Tabriz, Ardabil, Urmiyya and Maraga).

Generally speaking, Azerbaijani historiography changed considerably after the emancipation period of Perestroika and the restitution of state sovereignty in 1991. These changes are clearly visible, not only in the themes of most dissertations and historical publications, but also in the way history is taught in schools and in the way history books are written. Even the language is different: while most historical articles and books before 1991 were written in Russian, the great majority of publications in modern Azerbaijan now appear in Azerbaijani.

## Concluding Remarks: Shortcomings in Modern Azerbaijani Historiography

Despite some positive changes, Azerbaijani historiography continues to suffer from a vast number of problems:

First, Azerbaijani historians, like their Russian and Central Asian colleagues, have to work in an authoritarian state, which severely limits the freedom of scientific expression. Contemporary Azerbaijani historians are not allowed to write objectively about the 1970s and 1980s and the period after 1993, since Heydər Əliyev was in office during those times (eventually followed by his son), which means that authors are obliged to depict these periods in positive terms. In reality, the 1970s and 1980s are characterized by total stagnation throughout the entire USSR, including Azerbaijan, and the 1990s are marked with immense losses for Azerbaijan in the war with Armenia and the crackdown on democracy.

Second, the knowledge of foreign languages among historians in Baku leaves much to be desired. An overwhelming majority of them are only able to read Russian and Turkish. That is one of the reasons why most Azerbaijani historians have rather poor contacts with other research institutions abroad. As a

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<sup>50</sup> Tağryeva 1990.

<sup>51</sup> Şükürov 2006.



consequence, they do not have access to the international publications on Azerbaijani history that have recently emerged.

Third, the problem of corruption is pervasive, not only throughout the educational system at Azerbaijan's universities, but also in research institutes at the Academy of Sciences. Some students rely on bribes to complete their Ph. D. and post-doctoral programs.

*Appendix 1. Faculty of History, Baku State University*<sup>52</sup>

Departments	Foundation Year	At present headed by (name and year of birth)
Archaeology and ethnography	1947–1948	Qüdrət İsmayılzadə (1934)
Countries of Asia and Africa	1922, re-organized in 1965	Məhəd Sofiyev (1932)
History of Azerbaijan (for arts and humanities)	1941	Azad Rzayev (1952)
History of Azerbaijan (for exact sciences)	2001	Mehman Abdullayev (1958)
Study of Sources and Historiography of the History of Azerbaijan and Methodology	1980	Anar İsgəndərov (1958)
New and Modern History of the Countries of Europe and America	1919, 1979	Məmməd Fətəliyev (1938)
Ancient and Middle Ages History	1981	Yaqub Mahmudov (1939)
History of the Slavic Countries	1977 founded as a Chair of Soviet history; 1992 renamed to Eastern European History Department; 2001 renamed to History of Slavic countries	Tofiq Vəliyev (1934)
History of Turkish Peoples	1992 separated from the Chair of Soviet History; since 2012 established as a separate chair	Əsməd Muxtarova <sup>53</sup> (1944)
History of Caucasian Peoples	2012	İradə Hüseynova (1963)

<sup>52</sup> The data are from the official internet page <http://history.bsu.edu.az/> (15.11.2012).

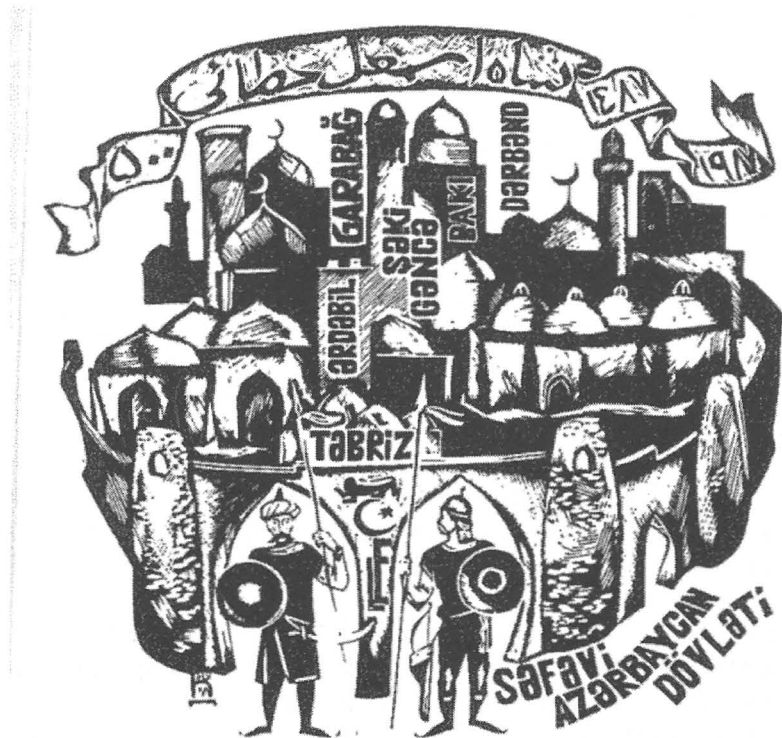
<sup>53</sup> Muxtarova is an editor-in-chief of the academic journal on history, *Tarix və onun problemləri* [History and its Problems], which is published four times a year.

*Appendix 2. Bakıxanov Institute of History, National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Azerbaijan*<sup>54</sup>

Departments	Foundation Year	At present headed by (name and year of birth)
Ancient History of Azerbaijan	1947; re-organized in 1957	Kamal Əliyev (1927)
Medieval History of Azerbaijan	1947; re-organized in 1957	Oqtay Əfədiyev (1926)
New History of Azerbaijan	1947	Hacı Həsənov (1952)
Modern History of Azerbaijan	1936 as Soviet History Section	Adil Məmmədov (1929)
History of Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan	1990	Nigar Maksvell (1954)
Heydər Əliyev Scientific Research Unit	2008	Ədalət Qasımov (1956)
Historical Geography of Azerbaijan	2002	Fəridə Məmmədova (1936)
History of Azerbaijan's foreign relations (since the 18 <sup>th</sup> century)	2002	Həsən Əlibəyli (1940)
History of the Caucasus (since the 18 <sup>th</sup> century)	2002	İradə Bağırova (1956)
Social History and Historical Demography	2011	Kərim Şükürov (1956)
History of Karabakh	2011	Qasım Hacıyev (1950)
History of Azerbaijani Diaspora	2002	Məryəm Seyidbəyli (1955)
Universal History (2 sections: History of Europe and Russia, American History Research)	2010	Tofiq Mustafazadə (1949)
Derbent History Research Group	2002 within the Department "History of the Caucasus"	Şahin Fərzəliyev (1940)
Borçalı History Research Group	2002 within the Department "History of the Caucasus"	Hacı Həsənov (1952)

<sup>54</sup> This institute was originally founded as the Association for Study and Exploration of Azerbaijan (*Azərbaycanı Tədqiq və Tətəbbü Cəmiyyəti*) in 1923. The data are from the official internet page <http://www.istoriya.az/index.php> (15.11.2012).

Appendix 3. A cover page (6/1989) of the popular journal *Azərbaycan. Ədəbi-bədii jurnal* [Azerbaijan. Journal of Literature and Arts], published by the Azerbaijani SSR Writers' Union.<sup>55</sup>



Рессам Хәсəнəгə МƏММƏДОВ.

<sup>55</sup> The painter Həsənağa Məmmədov projected the “Great Azerbaijan” by including Derbent, Tabriz and Ardabil onto the map of an imaginary Azerbaijan. All three of the alphabets for Azerbaijani used at different points of time, are to be found on this cover: Arabic-Persian characters appear at the top of the illustration; the names of “Azerbaijani” cities as well as the name of a fictional state *Səfəvi Azərbaycan Dövləti* are written in Latin script; and the name of the painter is in Cyrillic beneath the drawing. All newspapers and journals were printed in “Russian letters” until the end of the 1990s.

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