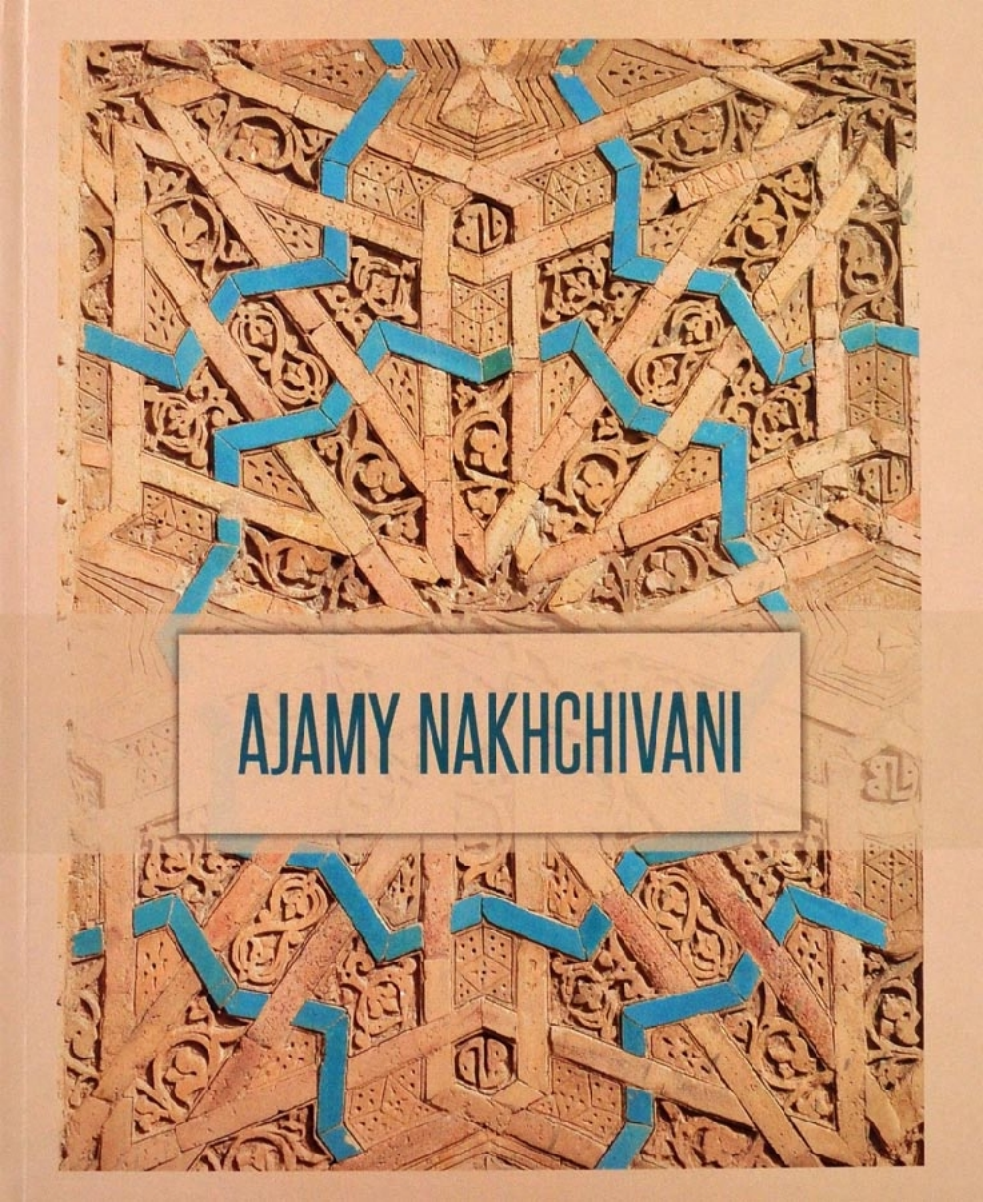




AJAMY NAKHCHIVANI



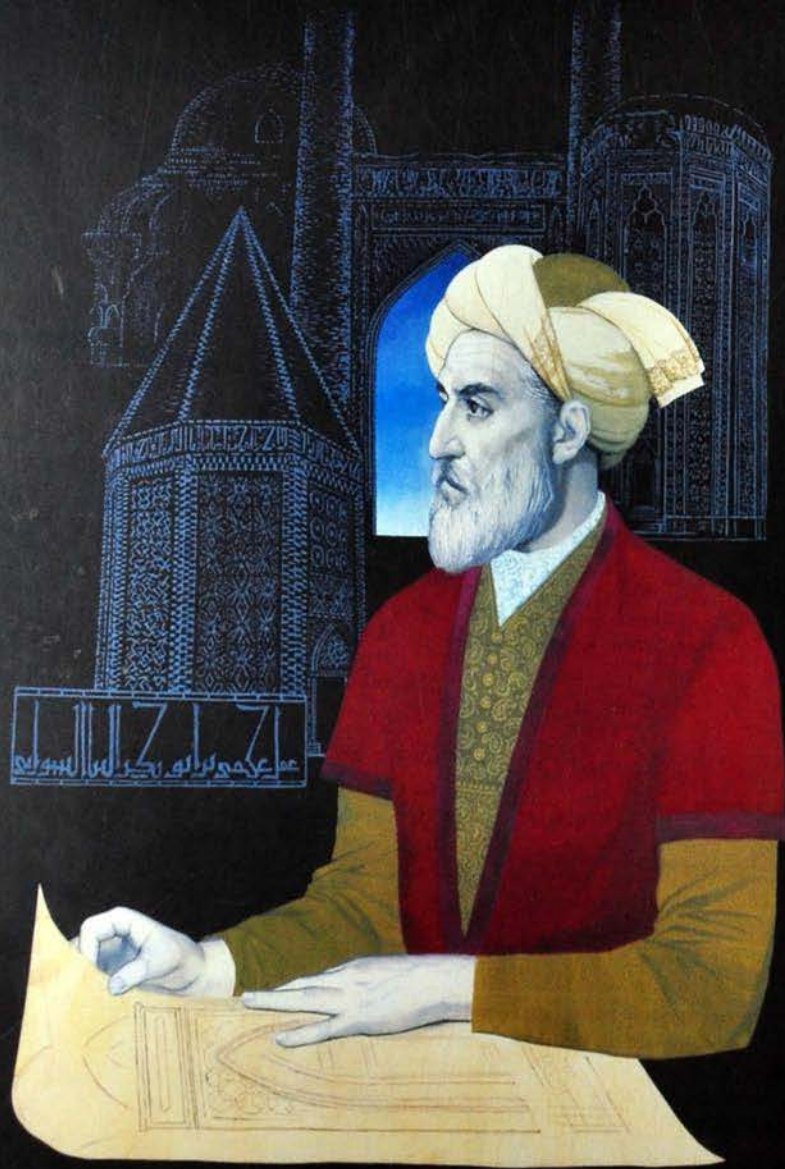
**HEYDAR ALIYEV
FOUNDATION**

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AJAMY NAKHCHIVANI

*We shall go away, the world will still remain,
We shall die; it will remain in memory.*

(from the inscription on the mausoleum of Momine-khatun)

The outstanding architect of the mediaeval Azerbaijan – Ajami son of Abubekr – was born in Nakhchivan nine hundred years ago. He spent his life there creating his magnificent works. Ajami Nakhchivani ("Ajami of Nakhchivan") – whose creative activity left deep and immortal traces in the history of the Azerbaijani mediaeval architecture – was the head and most brilliant representative of the Nakhchivan architectural school. He exerted a decisive influence on the entire scheme of development in the lands which now comprise the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic and adjacent territories. The influence of Ajami's creative work can be easily traced in the creations of many architects of the countries in Near East.

The architectural masterpieces he created nine hundred years ago have survived down the ages, and now enchant the spectator with their attractive force and undying freshness – conveying great aesthetic delight, and showing that Ajami's heritage ranks alongside world art works of undying fame. This now-restored architectural heritage gives every reason to assert that Ajami

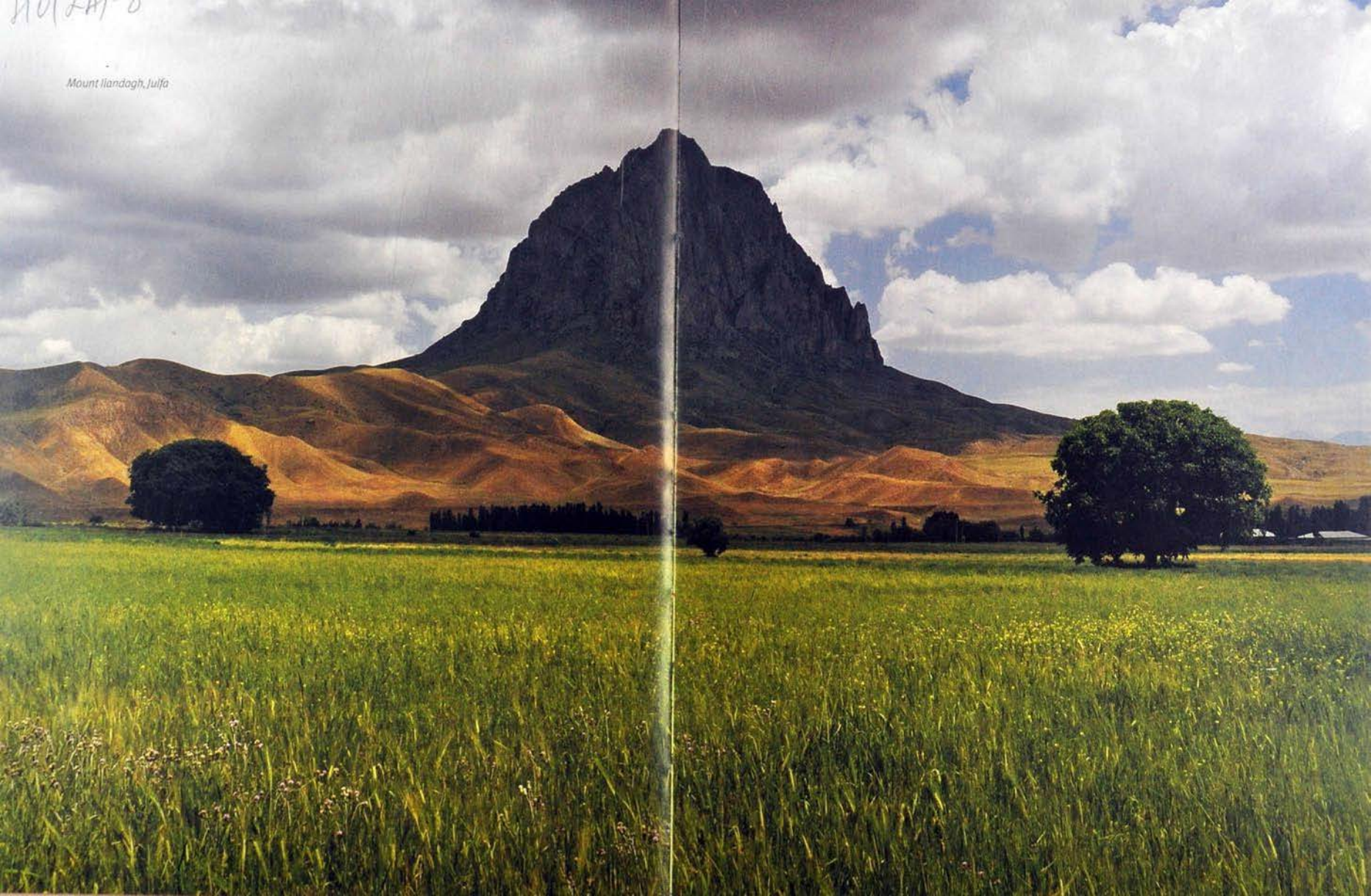
Nakhchivani was the unequalled architect of the 12th century. Literary sources of the 13th century show he bore the title of "Sheikh-ul-mukhatidsin" – meaning "the head of engineers". It was the time when architectural art in the West was still anonymous; Ajami, the author of a number of masterpieces is singled out as an artist of brilliant individuality – a titan of artistic and engineering thinking. In the history of architecture of the 12th century his name has no rivals.

Nakhchivan plays an important role in the history of the material culture of Azerbaijan – its significance being especially vivid in the development of the mediaeval architecture of this country. The architectural monuments preserved to this day within the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic – and in particular, in the town of Nakhchivan itself – are masterpieces of mediaeval Azerbaijani architecture – monuments of world importance, at the highest level of architectural and artistic embodiment.

In the Middle Ages Nakhchivan was a major centre of Azerbaijan culture. In the field of the

110 (2A) 0

Mount Ilandagh, Julfa



Arts, Nakhchivan was the hub of an architectural and artistic school considered to be foremost among kindred schools in Azerbaijan.

According to the literary sources, Nakhchivan – whose history goes far back into the centuries before our era – became one of the important towns of the country as early as in the 10th-12th centuries AD. The prosperity of the town grew rapidly after it became the capital of the Atabey Ildeniz State in the 12th century. Nakhchivan's outstanding contribution to the development of Azerbaijani art is associated with this period.

The skyline of monuments soaring above present-day Nakhchivan are examples of the art of that period. Unfortunately hundreds of finest priceless constructions were destroyed or removed, especially during the Ottoman-Safavid wars – references to these monuments can be found in a number of history books, and in some cases the remnants have been preserved to this day as ruins.

The town which had evoked such admiration among travellers, and was referred to in chronicles with great praise, subsequently fell into de-

cay. The monuments which could still be seen even in the 19th century were ruined, due to the negligence towards ancient buildings. Among these were two monuments by Ajami.

Today Nakhchivan is a republic of advanced industry, agriculture and high-developed culture.

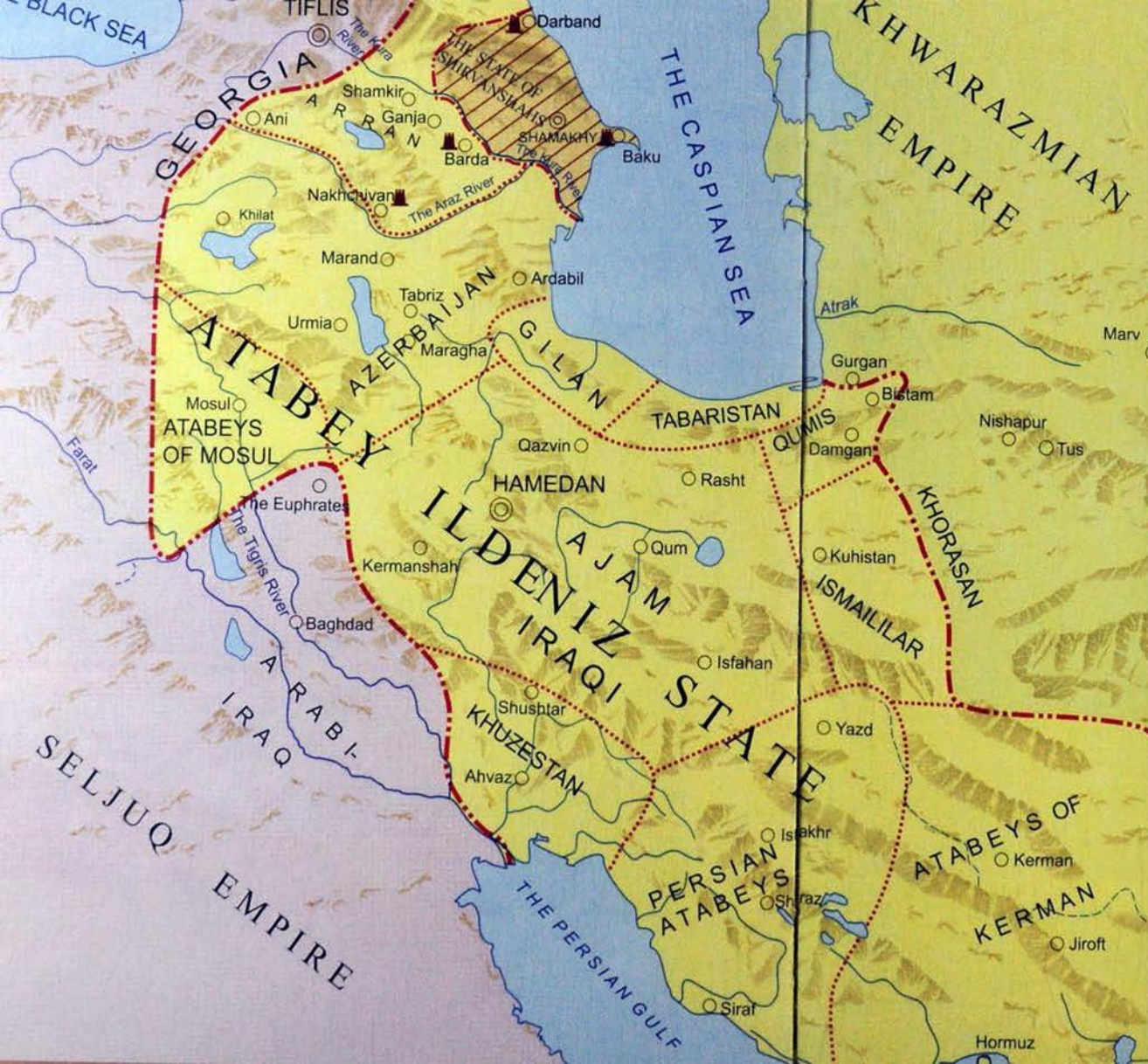
The magnificent palaces and mausoleums were erected by ingenious Nakhchivan masters, and were true masterpieces of Azerbaijani architecture. Yet their creators lived in wretched hovels. Outstanding thinkers of Nakhchivan glorified the Azerbaijani culture.

The history of Nakhchivan, one of the oldest towns of Azerbaijan, has not been given full attention – nor has its ancient architecture of the early mediaeval period been given proper consideration. The traditions of architecture which had been formed by the 12th century were mainly associated with the town of Nakhchivan itself, along with its town planning development and the construction of massive buildings.

In the 12th century the town of Nakhchivan became the centre of the architectural school



The medieval rampart, Nakhchivan



Map of the Atabey Ildeniz State (12th century)



View of main facade of the Nakhchivan Khan Palace

called "Nakhchivan architectural school", based on a tradition of building skills which was already extant by the 12th century. The height attained by this school is expressed in the creative activity of the outstanding architect Ajami, son of Abubekr, – whose contribution to the development of the artistic culture of Azerbaijan cannot be overestimated.

This high level of architectural development in Nakhchivan was the result of a whole course of historic development. Following the decline of the Arabic caliphate, some independent states were established in the outlying territories. This period was marked by a struggle between feudal states for territory, and for strengthening their dynasties. The same was also true for Azerbaijan as well as for all the countries of the Near East in the late 10th-early 11th centuries. This was accompanied by declining trade relations, and a slump in the national economies of the countries involved. This situation was fraught with popular resentment.

It was against such a background of turmoil that a military campaign to the East – launched

by the Central Asian Turkmen tribes headed by Seljuks – met instant success, and conquered Khorasan, Iran, Iraq, Asia Minor and other territories. During their reign the Malikshah Seljuks also invaded Azerbaijan.

In spite of the conquest of Azerbaijan by the Seljuks, a number of regions of the country, along with Shirvan in the north, succeeded in maintaining their independence.

Although Shirvan paid tribute to the Seljuks, it preserved its self-governing system and enjoyed independence in domestic affairs.

At the onset of the 12th century the Ildenizs established their state of the Azerbaijan Atabey in the southern regions of the country – with Nakhchivan as its capital. This Atabey state spread over a considerable territory as far as the Kur river in the North, all southern lands of Azerbaijan in the South, and parts of modern-day Iran and Iraq.

At the same time, the state of the Shirvan-shahs in the North grew in strength.

Thus, the period of small separate feudal estates came to an end, giving rise to the

Modern view of the Nakhchivan Khan Palace



emergence of two independent states in Azerbaijan in the 12th century. The political stabilization had a positive effect on the economy of these states.

Similar tendencies are clearly seen in the development of culture due to common cultural traditions of the people as a whole.

These two states – the Atabey and the Shirvanshah – were also linked by rather close political ties. The power of the Atabey was one of the mightiest states in the Near East exerting considerable political influence on Shirvan.

Political stability, improvement in economic affairs and favourable conditions for cultural activities gave impetus to the rise of architectural and artistic creative work in the country.

The 12th century in Azerbaijan is marked with considerable development of town planning, architecture and decorative-applied art. In poetry such giants as Nizami in Ganja, and Khagani in Shamakhy rose to the fore – while Nakhchivan can pride itself on the famous architect, Ajami son of Abubekr.

Azerbaijani architecture of this period can be said to have acquired features of stylistic individuality. Ancient local traditions, interwoven with Islamic culture, created the conditions necessary for establishing local architectural schools.

The formation of architectural schools in the country is reliable evidence of a high level of attainment in architecture. The foundation of architectural schools is known to require a long period of accumulation of experience and refinement of traditions.

This process is inherently associated with emergence of great masters. This process began in Azerbaijan in the 12th century giving rise to subsequent formation of the Arran, Nakhchivan and Shirvan-Absheron architectural schools.

The discovery of the existence of the Nakhchivan architectural style appeared earlier than that of the two other schools, although they preceded the Nakhchivan school chronologically. This fact is accounted for by the following considerations – the monuments bearing the names of the Nakhchivan architects have preserved



Gemigaya Rock Carving. Anthropomorphic image and images of crosses within circles. Gemigaya Mount, Ordubad, Bronze Age



*Gemigaya Rock Carving
image of a deer and spiral. Gemigaya Mount, Ordubad, Bronze Age*



*Gemigaya Rock Carving. Human and goat images
Gemigaya Mount, Ordubad, Bronze Age*

through ages demonstrating characteristic features of the school of Nakhchivan, the wide application of the techniques of this school and finally brilliant talent of the head of this architectural school – made the discovery quite reasonable.

At the turn of the 12th century Nakhchivan became the capital of the mighty state of the Atabegs – and so the town became an important centre where town planning work, and decorative and applied arts were blossoming. Local traditions interacted with general trends inherent in the Azerbaijani architecture, which determined the individuality of this architectural school. In a short lapse of time the Nakhchivan masters not only rose to the height of resolving important and complicated problems – they also succeeded in creating works that are considered the crowning achievements in architecture of that period. These masters ranked first among the architects of Near East.

The Nakhchivan architectural school is characterized by brickwork, brick building structures, and the usage of bricks of various shapes and

forms; additionally glazes were introduced to eliminate the monotony of the brickwork.

The volumetric and compositional solutions of the Nakhchivan architects were applied to techniques which found wide resonance in the development of architecture of the Orient. The compositional arrangement of the Nakhchivan monuments displays the combination of monumentality of construction with elaborate development of the detail. These architects were famed as brilliant masters of ornamental art. The masters of this region of Azerbaijan are known for their engineering skill, application of rational methods of building.

Before passing on to an assesment of Ajami son of Abubekr's activities and an investigation of his famous works, we shall briefly touch upon town planning characteristics of the town of Nakhchivan during the period of the master's activity. It seems essential to give the reader the social background context in which Ajami son of Abuhekr lived and worked, as well as listing the nomenclature of the constructions of that time.

Nakhchivan was one of the notable towns of the period in question. The town's history can be traced far back into the centuries before our era according to the literary sources, and it had grown extensively in the course of its mediaeval history (10th-12th centuries A. D.).

The prosperity of the town soared when it became the capital of the Atabey's state in the 12th century. The fine monuments rising over the town now were created during that period. But these monuments constitute only a small part of that rich heritage of fine architectural works the town can be proud of. The traces of these works can be found only in the historical books and narrations of the travellers. The most valuable source is the anonymous Persian book written in the 13th century, entitled "Adjaib-al-Beladan" (The Miracles of the World) – which gives reliable evidence of Nakhchivan, distinguished by most exact architectural terminology.

The anonymous author writes: "Nakhchivan is a town in Azerbaijan, which is big and populated; it is situated on a high place and is well

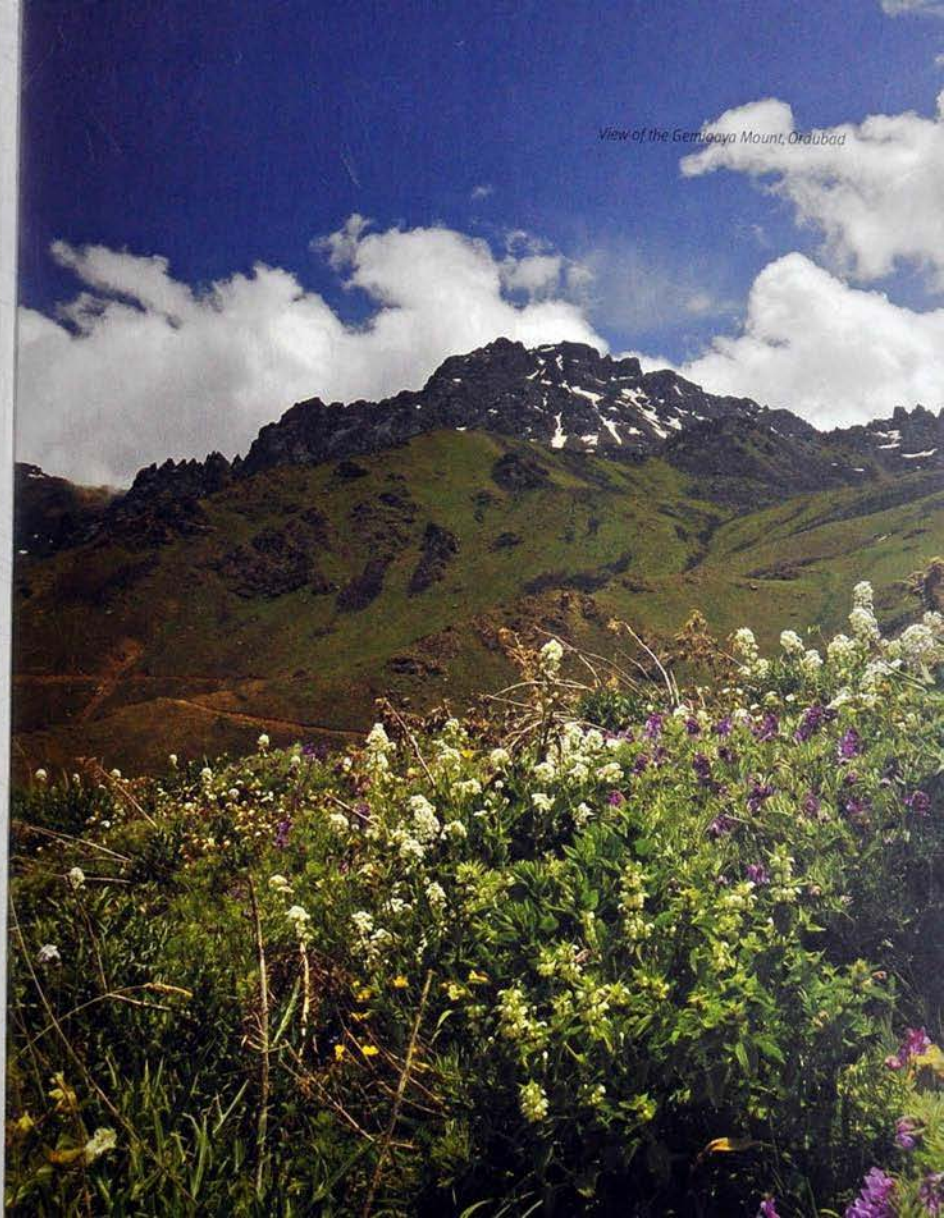
fortified. They built a lot of palaces (saray); country castles-estates (kushk); constructions for gala occasions (divan); a tower made of stone which is built near the town; a medrese, and some mosques were built in the lower part of the town; there is a pleasant spring within the walls of the tower. People say that no town in the world is so densely populated: the buildings are made of alabaster (gedz) and of baked brick.

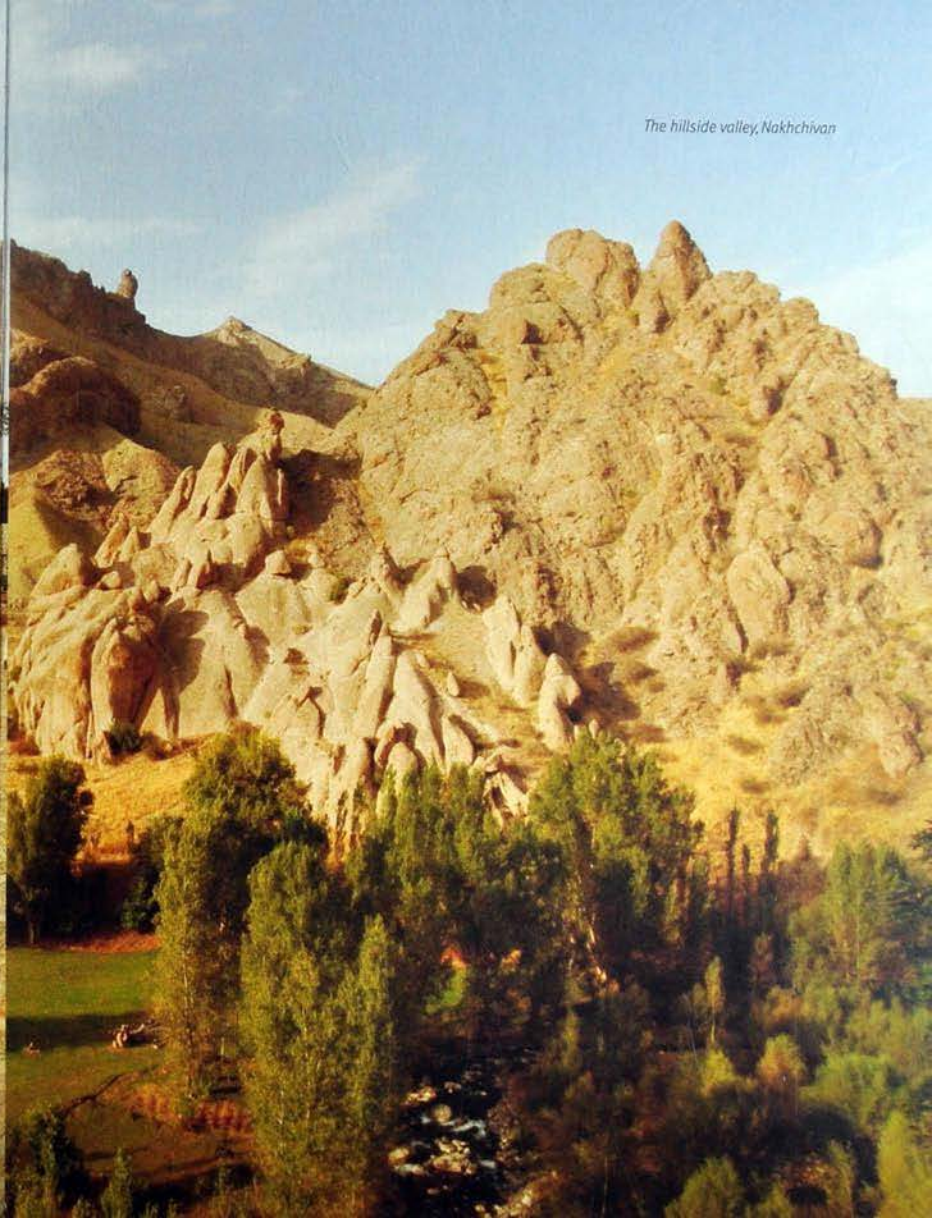
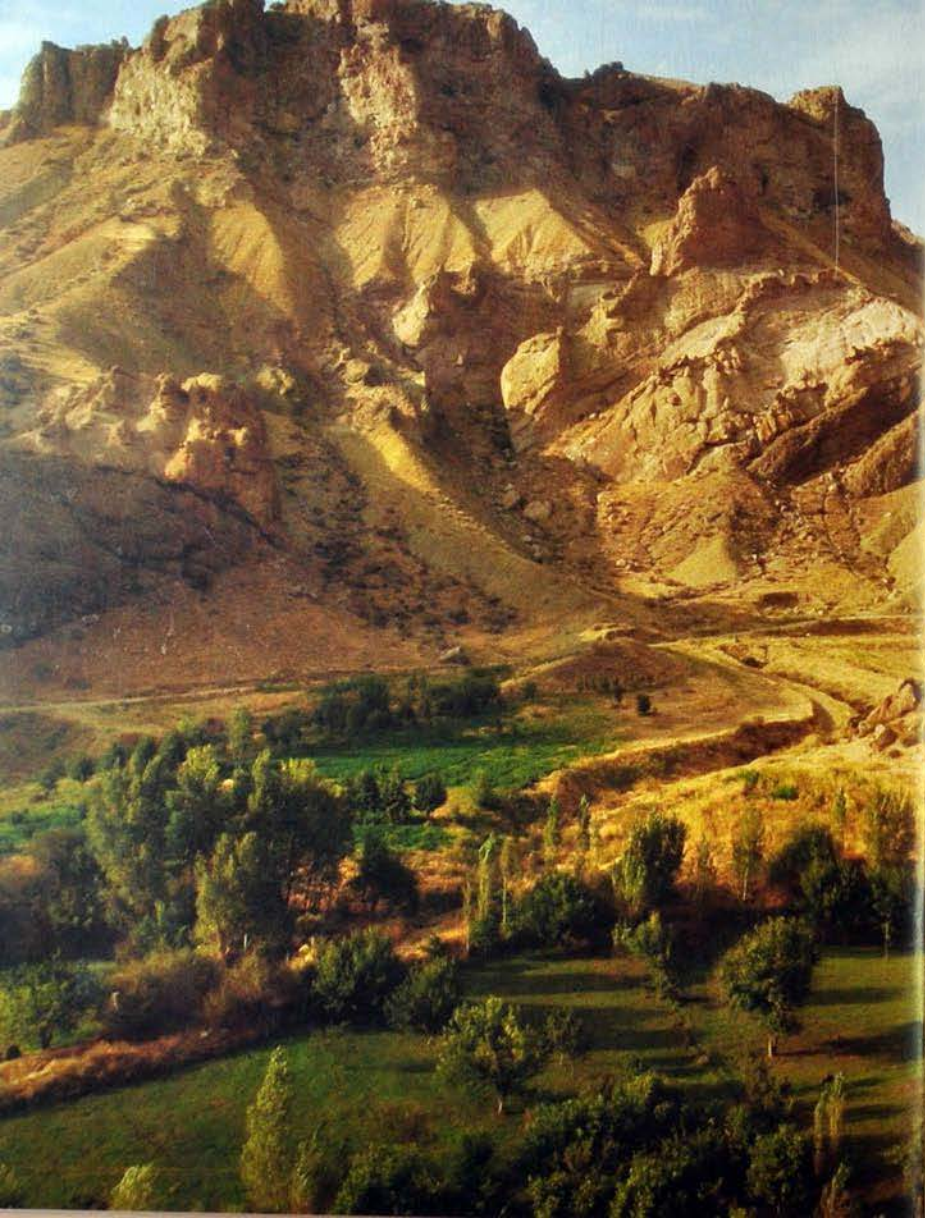
The greatest number of their kushks have three or four floors (tabake) similar to the tower. The country-side round the town (savad) is very beautiful, there is flowing water, a lot of gardens and greenery. The Araz river flows within the town...

In the reign of his majesty Ildeniz (Nakhchivan) acquired complete grandeur. The royal palace Idar-al-mulk was erected and governmental buildings were set up (Dovlat-khana)..."

Later the anonymous author describes the Nakhchivan cemetery – praising its unique beauty. He reports that the place had fine mausoleums and mosques.

View of the Gernigaya Mount, Ordubad





The hillside valley, Nakhchivan



A stone-carved figure of a ram, Nakhchivan

This source confirms that Nakhchivan was still a town of great importance in the 13th century following its flourishing in the 12th century when Nakhchivan had first become the great and fine capital of the Atabey state.

The above-given quotation enables us to perceive the grandeur of Nakhchivan at the time when Ajami Nakhchivani lived and worked there. We have every right to think that he was not only the author of the most well-known works, but many other fine buildings are likely to be associated with his name. Some of his works were undoubtedly mentioned by our inspired anonymous author.

The large quotation from the work "Miracles of the World" affords us the opportunity to examine general features of the town planning scheme of Nakhchivan and how similar it was to that of other mediaeval towns of Azerbaijan.

We see the town proper enclosed Icherisheher (or Maiden Town) with walls – the citadel of the city. Many interesting structures, including some memorials, were apparently situated outside the

tower in the Bayir-Sheher (the Outer City) of Nakhchivan.

The reference to multistoreyed ceremonial buildings is of great interest to us when considering the aspects of civic planning of the city.

The fact that the Araz river had flowed through the town is very interesting. It is of importance since it shows the great size of the town – which is in accord with the figure of up to 250 thousand people.

The data gives substantial detail about the magnificence and scale of the town – but no details, however, are given concerning its layout.

The earliest map of Nakhchivan available is the one compiled by Russian military engineers in 1827.

This plan shows some remnants of some few mediaeval constructions preserved. Based on this plan the conclusion can be drawn that the centre of the mediaeval town was based around the square which housed the Momine-khatun mausoleum. The ensemble which includes the mausoleum, this square housed also a number of another

An open air museum, Nakhchivan



large constructions, together with the royal palace and market buildings.

According to the literary sources and the plan mentioned, the planning scheme of Nakhchivan was characterized by the appearance of extensive gardens surrounding the residential buildings.

By the middle of the 17th century Nakhchivan still preserved its architectural significance, despite the destruction caused by the Ottoman-Safavid wars in the 16th-17th centuries. A number of complexes and separate constructions survived in spite of the devastation, and these monuments were quoted by an anonymous author of the eighteenth century. Of great interest to us is the evidence reported by the Turkish traveller E. Chelebi, who visited the town in the 1650s.

Referring to the Nakhchivan mausoleum, this traveller tells that there were 10,200 houses, about 70 religious buildings (among which he mentioned 10 mosques). There were 20 "mehman-sarays", presumably he means caravan-sarays, or lodgings for merchant travellers; 7 fine baths, 33 minarets, about 1000 shops, and

he adds that the most part of the buildings were fine. E. Chelebi was especially delighted with the mosques and baths – the remnants of the bygone splendour. Of a great importance is also his testimony that the domes of some mosques were covered with glaze. Some baths had interiors with glazed facings and marble floors.

This brief evidence gives an idea of the town where Ajami lived and worked, and to whose glory he so greatly contributed.

To assess the creative image of Ajami Nakhchivani especially through the prism of those of his buildings which remain extant today, it is of great importance to acquaint readers with the type of the structure which later was given the term of "tower mausoleum" – to which the Nakhchivan tombs are attributed.

The period preceding the 12th century – the time of the Nakhchivan architect's activities – was characterized by the establishment of local feudal states at the periphery of the Arabic Caliphate. These were nominally under the Caliph's rule, but in fact enjoyed independence due to the effective



The medieval rampart, Nakhchivan

Medieval mosque
in Nakhchivan



internal collapse of centralized power. These feudal rulers reigned as secular sovereigns. They exercised the greatest concern for the strengthening their personal power-base and consolidating their own dynasty – and thus they used art as a tool of soft power and influence upon people's minds.

It is known that both ecclesiastical and secular rulers in Western Europe of mediaeval times employed all kinds of arts – painting, sculpture, music and architecture – as powerful means of shaping the consciousness of the people towards support of the ruling classes. In the countries of Near East prohibition of pictorial representation of living creatures by the Islamic religion limited the application of art, and forced both clients and masters to seek artistic ways which could be reconciled with Islamic thinking. This very fact can explain the rise of individualistic architecture in the countries of Near East in the 10th century – it served the rulers as a useful tool of implanting the ideas of their power and immortal significance in the minds of common people. This epoch witnessed the construction of large cult and

memorial constructions, richly adorned with ornamentation.

It was under these conditions that most of the tower mausoleums were built. Art historians had long ascribed these tower mausoleums as religious buildings.

The study undertaken by the writers of this essay makes it possible to advance the idea that most of the tower mausoleums were, in fact, memorial monuments.

The investigation of the tower mausoleums shows that funeral underground chambers are of minor importance in the general design of these monuments. The main idea of these buildings is expressed by their overground section. These monuments – in which the overground section rose to over 30 m in height – were profusely decorated and were intended to immortalize the buried person, glorifying their personality, and emphasizing the eternal character of their power. The interpretations of the architectural divisions, the character of ornamental decorations, the wide use of artistically performed inscriptions – all

these facts aided in the fulfillment of this task. The tower mausoleums bear inherent similarity to sculptural monuments of the Western Europe. In both cases the monuments served the aim of immortalizing the dead. In accordance with specific conditions the same task was resolved by various ways.

This trend had been especially felt in the countries of Near East during the period of Ajami son of Abubekr's activities – and the Ildeniz monarchs were no exception among sovereigns of that time. Splendid tower mausoleums were built in Azerbaijan particularly in the area influenced by the Nakhchivan architectural school. This typological group of monuments is by right crowned by the creations of Ajami, – for example, the mausoleum of Yusuf son of Gusseyr, and the mausoleum of Momine-khatun.

Voluminous literature is available, devoted to the heritage of Ajami Nakhchivani. There is barely a book on the history of architecture where no reference to his works are found. Due to the descriptive character and limited space, this essay does

not intend to present a full review of the sources on the subject, although some references on the works described here are given.

The earlier of the mausoleums mentioned above – the mausoleum of Yusuf son of Gusseyr (1102) – is known to the wider public as "Ata-bala Gumbazi" (The Father and Son dome). These monuments consist of an underground tomb and an overground tower. Both the tomb and the overground chamber are of octahedral shape. The walls of the mausoleum built from squared bricks are only 80 cm thick which shows daring constructive skill of the architect. These walls of small thickness are reinforced only at the corners by projections due to which flat niches are produced both on interior and exterior faces of the mausoleum. The exterior surface of the mausoleum is crowned by an octahedral marquee of pyramidal shape, made of bricks – while the interior dome has a pointed outline. Hence considerable free space is left between the inside and outside spans. We have here a two-layer domed ceiling widely used in the architecture of Near East – a



Mausoleum of Yusuf ibn Gusseyr, Nakhchivan

Modern view of the mausoleum
of Yusuf ibn Gusseyr, Nakhchivan



technique found in wide application in the constructions of mausoleums all over Azerbaijan.

The niches of the outer faces are lined with ordinary bricks. The surfaces are filled with solid geometrical ornament of various patterns on their faces. This ornamentation is of unusual character, as it is made up of separate blocks which were fabricated in advance, then fastened to the faces of the planes as ready-made plates. The marked artistic effect is attained by successful combination of standard masonry and brick ornamentation.

The junctions of the ornamental plates are carefully smoothed – owing to which the plane of each of the faces is seen as a solid ornamental carpet, with the pattern varying from face to face.

Of the different pattern is the face looking out to the West – the one which is located over the entrance of the mausoleum. The entire plane of this face is divided into two parts – in the lower, deeper part, the arch of the pointed form is located. Above it there stretches broad geometric ornament – the upper half of the plane is filled

with a Cufic inscription with a band of geometrical ornament above it.

The Cufic inscription above the entrance reads: "This is a tomb of a Hoja, eminent rais (chief), of pious faith, knowing the beauty of Islam, head of sheikhs. Yusuf son of Guseyr. In the time of Shaval, in the year of the seventh and fiftieth and five hundredth (557/1162)".

Along the top of the ornamental face there is a wide band in the form of a frieze, filled with broad Cufic inscription. On the face left to the entrance there is an inscription bearing the architect's name: "Ajami son of Abubekr, the Nakhchivan architect".

Above the frieze there is a pyramidal marquee, without ornamentation.

The interior of the mausoleum was once plastered. The remnants of this plaster can still be seen on the inside walls of the mausoleums.

In spite of the simplicity of the composition, the monument produces a great artistic impression due to its fine proportions and the wealth of ornamental decoration. The architect shows



The Memorial of Ashabi-Kahf, Julia
Ashabi-Kahf landmark mentioned in the Holy Qur'an and dating
back to the 7th millennium B.C

subtle artistic flair, having separated the planes of the faces with angular blades that have no ornamental decorations.

The largest and the finest of the mausoleums of Azerbaijan is that of Momine-khatun – which is known among local people as “Atabey Gumbezi”. Built 25 years after the completion of tile mausoleum of Yusuf son of Guseyr, the mausoleum in question presents a more expressive architectural and artistic accretion of the compositional principles, which were already laid down in the mausoleum of Yusuf son of Guseyr.

The proud inscription “The work of Ajami son of Abubekr, the Nakhchivan architect” is placed not on the lateral side, as in the case with the mausoleum of Yusif son of Guseyr – but is seen on the most conspicuous spot above the entrance of the mausoleum.

The inscriptions record the date of construction 1186. The dedication of the monument to Momine-khatun is also expressed in the inscription of the monument itself. Momine-khatun was the wife of Ildeniz Atabey Jahan Pahlavan.

The monument consists of two sections: the underground crypt and overground tower.

The crypt is of decagonal form in plan. The internal space of the underground chamber is determined by the constructive diagram used for supporting the ceiling. The crypt is spanned by a ribbed vaults resting on a central powerful pillar.

It should be noted that this technique – later widely used in Western Gothic architecture – was applied by Ajami much earlier.

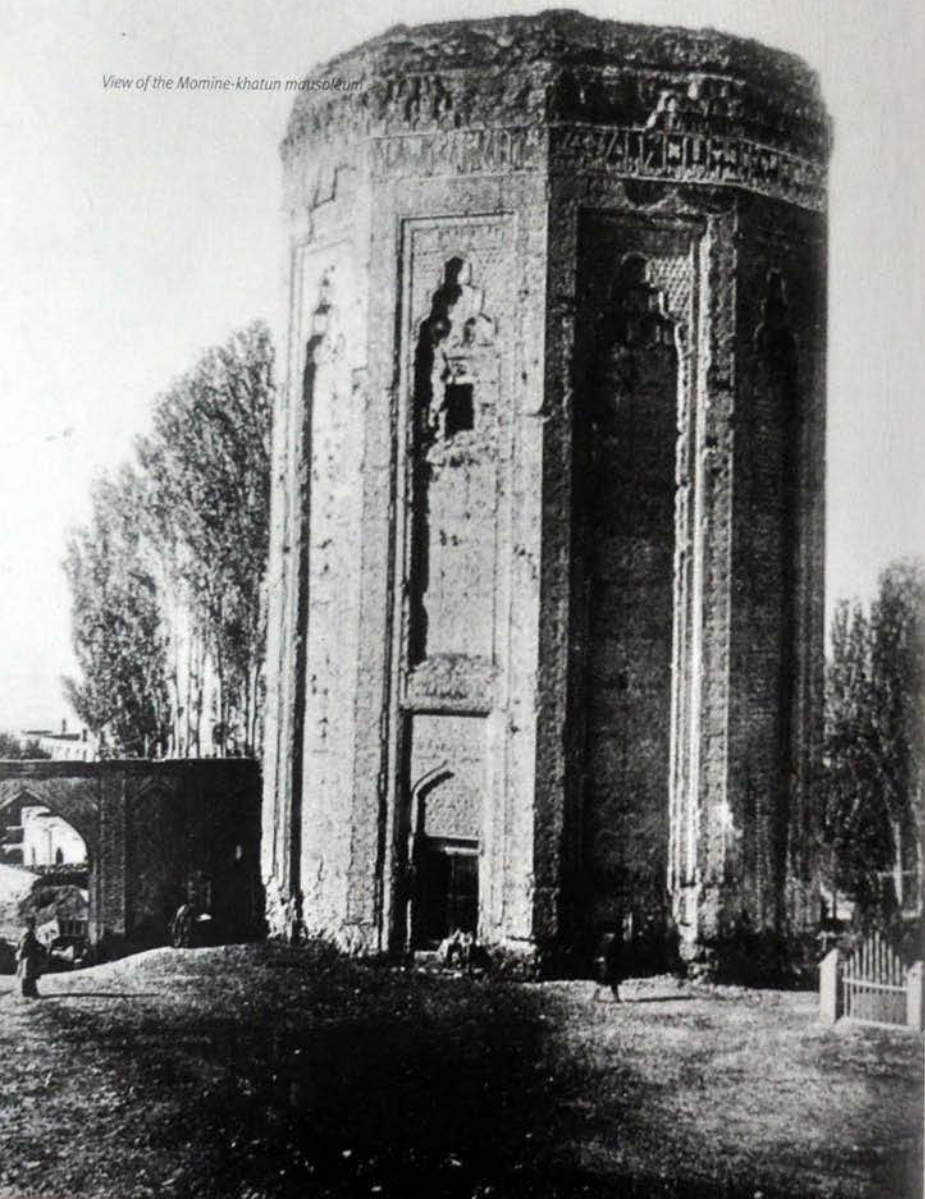
The external overground section of the mausoleum is of decagonal shape standing on a base of the same geometry, while the overground chamber inside is of circular form.

The composition of the mausoleum intended for circular survey has determined the similar shaping of almost all the faces. The only exception is one face on the entrance which is slightly shaded by a small portal, which does not disturb the general composition of the face. The ornate decoration is concentrated on the external surface of the mausoleum.



View of the Momine-khatun mausoleum

View of the Momine-khatun mausoleum



Each of the ten exterior faces is resolved in the shape of a shallow niche, crowned by a stactite arch, which adds to the plasticity of architectural appearance of the mausoleum. The whole surface of the faces is covered by a solid design of geometric ornament with various patterns. The broad and mighty angles of the decagon are completely different from those of the mausoleum of Yusif son of Guseyr. In the latter, the angles form borders separating ornamental faces – while in the mausoleum, the angles are of voluminous character, giving the impression of a powerful deep skeleton of the construction. Having introduced the faces of colour glaze in the elaborate ornamentation of niches, the master achieved the lightness of the plane of the faces in comparison with which the angles are real buttresses. Unlike the mausoleum of Yusif son of Guseyr, the angular projections, consisting of three elements are adorned with ornamentation.

Based on the compositional principles laid out in the mausoleum of Yusif son of Guseyr, in the second mausoleum the architect consider-

ably enriched the ornamentation and numerous inscriptions by decorative means – the latter in fact, also adds to the decorative expressiveness. Similar to the mausoleum of Yusif son of Guseyr, the ornamentation of the Momine-khatun mausoleum is made up of bricks laid according to pattern. The innovation in the ornamentation of the Momine-khatun mausoleum is the application of slip-glazed bricks of turquoise-blue, which was introduced with great taste – and which greatly aids in the intricate laced pattern of burnt brick, intensifying the artistic expressiveness of the mausoleum, and creates unique colour of the construction as a whole.

The ornamentation of the mausoleum is concentrated mainly on the planes of the niches, and makes the spectator marvel at the richness of artist's imagination – and his success in creating various patterns from similar elements.

Without going into the detail concerning each pattern of the mausoleum of Momine-khatun, we shall touch upon some general principles of ornamentation design. The design of

each face has a different pattern, not copied in the remaining ones. The foundation of the ornamental designs are composed of multipetal rosettes, octahedrons, hectahedrons, rhomboids, five-pointed stars, etc. The design of the ornament lacks complete exclusive character. It can be repeated infinitely along all sides and its boundaries are limited only by the contours of the laces.

The faces are covered not only by the simple repetition of the ornamental rapport, but also by its mirror reflection in horizontal direction.

The glaze introduced into the pattern, and focused at the main joints of the ornament, aids to the perception of its composition. No description of the Momine-khatun mausoleum can give full notion of the strong impression that spectator receives while observing the mausoleum in full size. The inventiveness of the master in making up ornaments is striking. He succeeded not only in producing ornamentally various pattern but also in preserving unique character of design. Only the presence

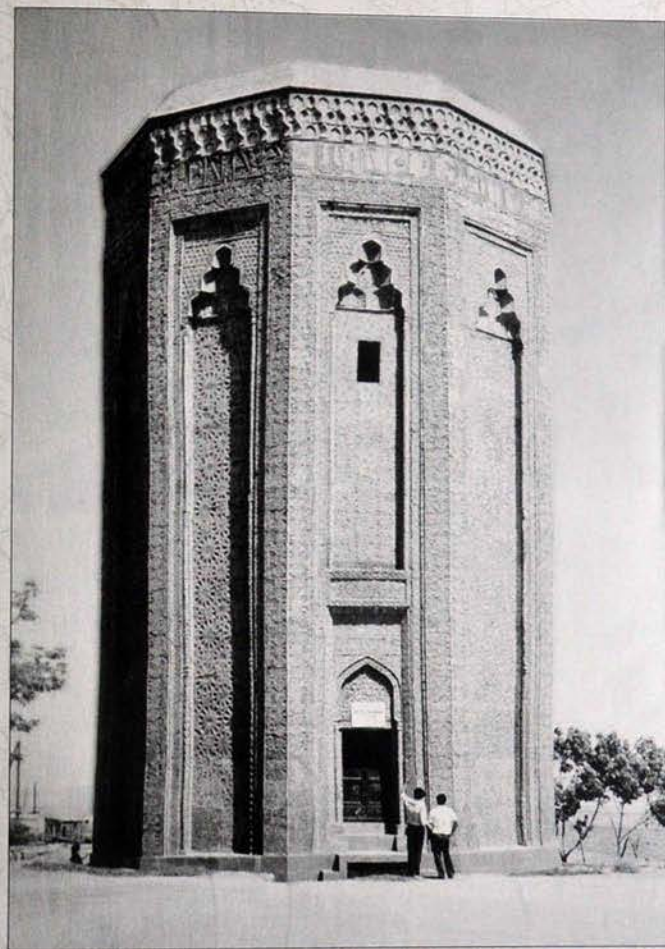
of the blue glaze, concentrated in the joints of the ornament, enables us quickly to make out the differences in patterns.

In this case the ornaments of the different faces are related to one another through subtle differences.

The intricate nature and at the same time extreme accuracy of the pattern design may be expressed as geometry, arrayed in delicate ornamental form.

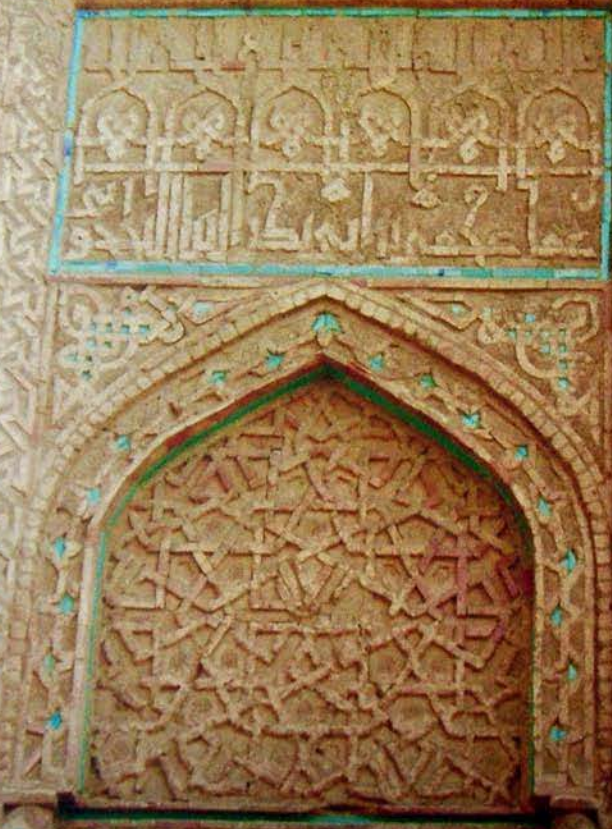
Above the niches there is a frieze bearing a Cufic inscription. Made of glazed bricks, 97 cm high, this inscription fills a very large space in the composition of the construction.

Following the frieze with the inscription there are three rows of stalactites, forming a transition to the marquee which crowns the monument. Today only the first 10-12 rows of brickwork have been preserved from the now-ruined marquee. These rows make it possible to ascertain that the upper ceiling was of pyramidal marquee-like shape. Several glazed bricks can be seen on the remnants of the lower part of the marquee –



View of the Momine-khatun mausoleum

Inscription and ornaments on the wall
of the Momine-khatun mausoleum



which shows that in the past the planes of the marquee had figured facings made of glazed bricks.

Richly and elaborately adorned, with vertically directed divisions, the monument is perceived as a monumental construction – arrayed in elegant, almost fragile forms. "Fragile monumentality" is, perhaps, the most appropriate definition of the general characteristics for the Momine-khatun mausoleum. Thus the architect taking into consideration the fact that the mausoleum is devoted to the woman could create elegant appearance in spite of tremendous sizes and general monumentality of the construction.

The Momine-khalun mausoleum is a work of the greatest skill, a masterpiece of mediaeval Azerbaijani architecture. The peculiar features of this construction are the exquisite grandeur of the general appearance and gracefulness of some of its elements. The compositional features, the principle and elements of ornamental decoration of the mausoleum were followed in a number of later Azerbaijani mausoleums.

The well-known professor Mikhail Alpatov gave a detailed artistic analysis of this mausoleum in his three-volume "World History of Art", where he concludes – "Such a highly-developed feeling of form, such a classic completeness of composition and the perfection of accomplishment cannot be seen in the architecture of Middle Europe of that time. The Nakhchivan mausoleum gives the impression of humanism similar to the best works of classic literature of the East, such as the immortal poem "Shahnameh" by Ferdousi (10th-11th centuries) or "Leyli and Majnun" by Nizami (12th century)".

The third work bearing Ajami's name is the gateway of the complex which he built – a portal with two minarets. The inscriptions of this portal were read and published as early as in the middle of the 19th century by a well-known Russian Orientalist N. Khanykov.

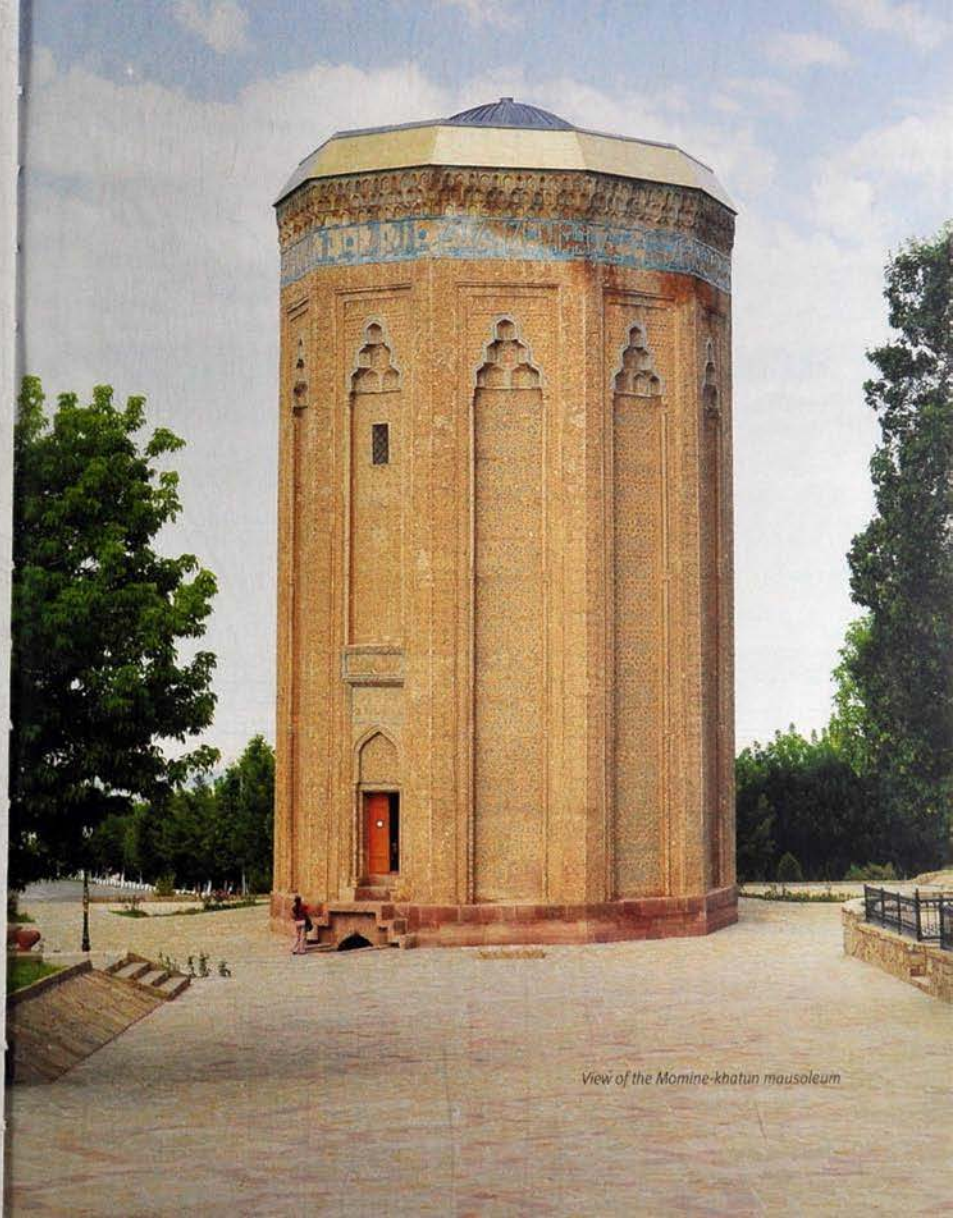
The text of this inscription is identical with those of other monuments: "This is the work of the architect Ajami, son of Abubekr, of Nakhchivan!" and is written in Arabic, in Cufic script.

Up to the recent time this interesting monument has not received due attention – it hasn't been analysed from the point of view of architecture and art. However the assessment of this construction is of great importance for the investigation of the creative life of its author – for the study of the architect's approach to the solution of various architectural compositions and finally, for the general assessment of the whole complex, of which the Momine-khatun forms a part.

The architectural composition of the minarets in the Muslim countries features the individualism of local architectural schools. From scores of the most beautiful minarets (according to E. Chelebi there were 33 minarets in Nakhchivan as early as in the 17th century) these two minarets in question are the most ancient ones representing the Nakhchivan architectural school. Two components making up this monument – the twin minarets and the portal, linking them, create expressive architectural composition of memorable appearance.

Undoubtedly, Ajami was one of the first authors of this composition which later – beginning with the 13th century – has been widely spread. The minarets of cylindrical form with smooth planes without ornamentations are treated to single out the portal comprising the center of the composition, adding to the solemnity of this memorial. The architectural divisions and all the ornamental components are concentrated on the plane of the portal. The plane on which the chief element of the portal, the arch, is located – is not deep, and bears the ornamental design and the inscriptions. The arch is flanked with exquisite pointed niches of stretched proportions which create the contrast, thus emphasizing the central arch.

This scheme, masterly used by Ajami, was later replaced by minor forms in eastern architecture – the composition with two minarets then loses its original freshness. As to the question of the place of the portal with two minarets in the Momine-khatun complex, it is necessary to contradict the hypothesis supporting direct relation between the portal and the mosque. The portal in its



View of the Momine-khatun mausoleum



*Garabaghar Historic and Architectural Complex
12th-14th centuries*

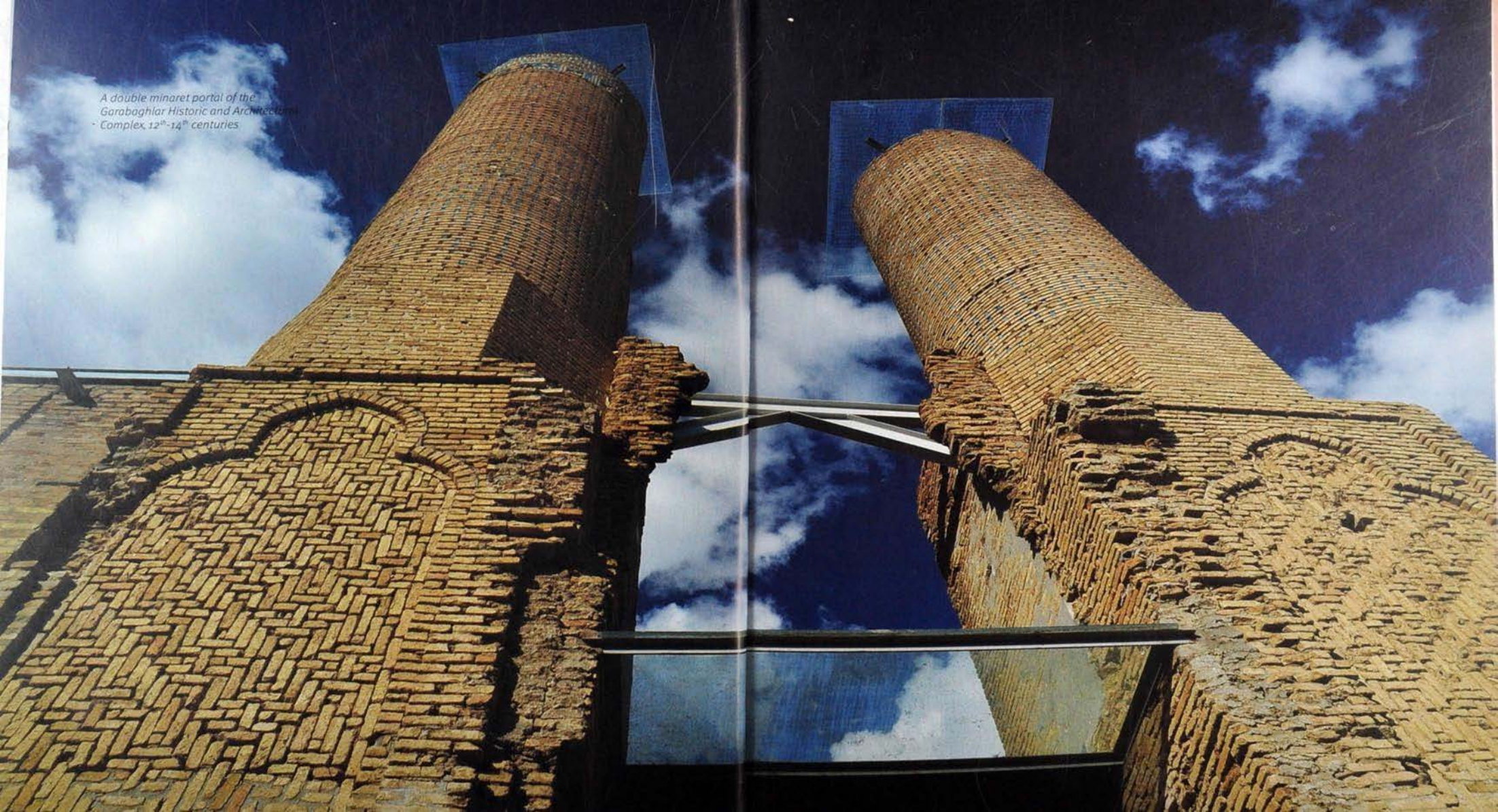
structure has no relation with the mosque. As it is seen from the drawing by J. Delafout, the mosque had its own entrance portal. Also, of considerable importance is the date written on the portal. According to the text by N. Khanykov, devoted to the inscriptions of the portal, it is well-known that the portal was built in 1187, i. e. a year after the completion of the Momine-khatun mausoleum. Besides, the inscription with the name of Atabey Jahan Pahlavan tells about his death.

The conclusion may be drawn from the above mentioned facts that the portal with two minarets was completed after the death of Atabey Jahan Pahlavan and is connected with the Momine-khatun mausoleum. Some scientists – while analyzing the inscriptions on the portal – rightly suggest that Atabey Jahan Pahlavan was buried in the Momine-khatun mausoleum. Thus, it is clear that the portal with twin minarets together with the memorial – the Momine-khatun mausoleum make up a single whole. In spite of the presence of minarets this architectural composition is of a memorial character. This is mainly seen in the fact that

the portal is represented by a triumphal arch. These minarets are seen to be simple cylindrical constructions with some thinking. The resolving of minarets in the Nakhchivan school could be traced in one more important monument, which was probably built in the 12th century or at the onset of the 13th century – the Garabaghar minarets. Unfortunately, the crests of the both minarets were ruined and were, not preserved to the present day – thus making the identification of their appearance rather difficult.

For a long time the attention of the travellers visiting Nakhchivan was drawn not to the Momine-khatun mausoleum, but instead to the Juma mosque which forms a part of the general complex. This can be attributed to a tremendous size of the Juma mosque. For instance, the French traveller Tavernie, who visited Nakhchivan in the 17th century, singles out only the Juma mosque of all the monuments of the town. He describes this mosque as one of the most majestic ones in Asia, but at the same time marks the destruction and the bad condition of the building.

A double minaret portal of the
Garabaghlar Historic and Architectural
Complex, 12th-14th centuries



To recreate the general view and the scheme of construction of this unpreserved monument we had to make use of the drawing of the French traveller J. Delafout – who visited Nakhchivan in the 19th century – and of the photograph by Jacobsthal, made at the end of the 19th century. There is additionally one drawing made after a photograph of that period, and the travel memoirs of some people.

In the middle of the 19th century V. A. Engelhardt, in the newspaper "Caucasus", wrote: "This is a tremendous building with arches made of trimmed stone. The interior still preserves the traces of fine relief carving. The part of the building is already ruined, the other part is threatened with destruction. At a distance of 50 sages from the mosque there are gates with a pair of minarets 20 sages high, comprising the complex of the mosque. Though earlier the space from the mosque to the gates was occupied by some buildings belonging to the mosque, they have now disappeared, and the gates seem to belong to a lone tower nearby".

Judging from the pictures of the mosque it is possible to draw the following conclusions; only the central part of the building is seen in the pictures. This was a cubic structure square in plan, spanned by a pointed dome, as it is seen from the pictures; four walls are cut by twin arches. The side walls of the hall were made in the form of open arches, which shows that the central part of the mosque was surrounded from all the sides with rooms and passages.

At that time the religious buildings played a very important part in the construction and planning of big towns. In large towns there was always a big Juma mosque – the central mosque. On rare occasions there were several Juma mosques, depending on various planned regions or according to the will of the ruler. These Juma mosques played an important role in the architectural appearance of towns. This eminent role was prescribed to the Nakhchivan mosque which can be easily seen in its tremendous size and the place occupied in the architectural ensemble in the centre of the city.

The data available confirms the fact that in the towns of Nakhchivan, Ganja, Shamakha, Barda the complexes of the Juma mosques were built in the 11th-12th centuries or even at the beginning of the 13th century – but unfortunately there exists only scarce information on these important monuments. The Nakhchivan Juma mosque is undoubtedly the most dignified one of the monuments of the type found in the 12th-13th centuries.

The Nakhchivan Juma mosque belongs, as it is seen from the photographs, to the group of monuments of central-domed type, in the photographs one can clearly see the scanning of its central part by a dome of a big diameter. From the general composition of the mosque it can be suggested that the central prayer-hall was surrounded by circular galleries.

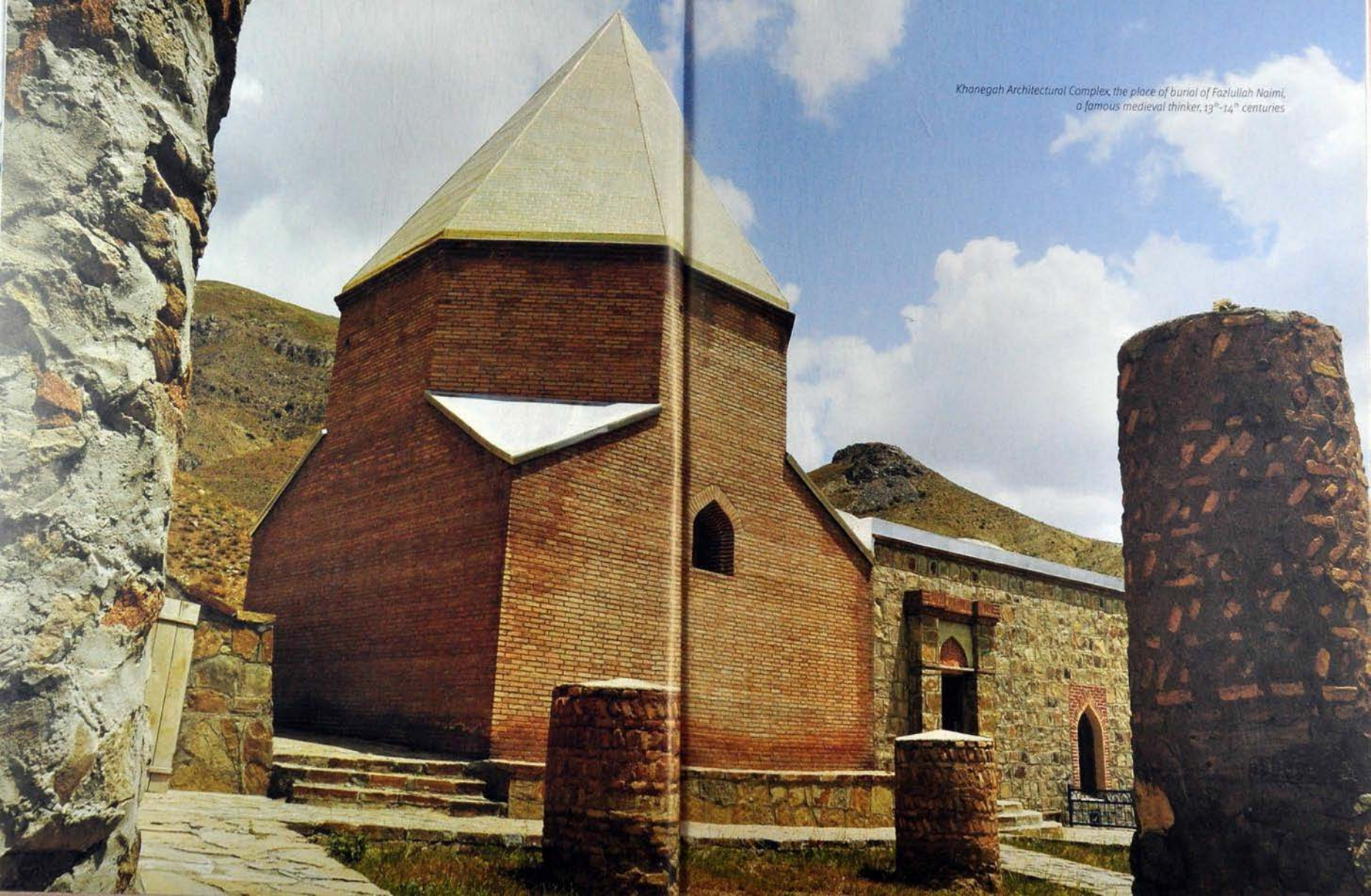
We can get some idea of the general size of the Juma mosque by comparing it with the Momine-khatun mausoleum, according to the drawing of the 19th century. In this picture the Juma mosque is much higher than the Momine-khatun mausoleum. If the total height of the preserved

part is established to be 26 metres, then it's possible to imagine the Juma mosque as a tremendous building – over 30 metres high.

It is possible to state that Ajami Nakhchivani – putting it in current terms – was the chief architect of the Atabey state – at least, when Nakhchivan was the capital of this state. It is undoubtedly so, since the complex, comprising the Momine-khatun mausoleum, the Juma mosque and the portal with twin minarets, made up the central ensemble of the town. The creator of such an ensemble could only have been the leading architect of the state. The recreation, at least, theoretical, of the process of building the ensemble of the Momine-khatun mausoleum, and the assessment of functional purposes with the number of the buildings making up this complex is a matter of great importance.

To advance a reliable hypothesis – in addition to the above-mentioned monuments and their inscriptions – we possess another historic document – the plan of Nakhchivan, made up in 1827, which was already cited.

*Khanegah Architectural Complex, the place of burial of Fazlullah Naimi,
a famous medieval thinker, 13th-14th centuries*



This plan shows that the square on which the Momine-khatun mausoleum was erected was the centre of the town – and at the same time it allows us to state that the complex comprised also the palace building. This suggestion is only natural. It is not surprising that a group of architects led by S. Vahidov while examining the Momine-khatun mausoleum in 1939-1940 noted that the palace of the Ildeizids was a part of this complex – though they did not know anything about the plan of 1827 (it was discovered in 1956). In early sources where Nakhchivan architectural monuments are mentioned, the palace of Ildegizids seems to be mentioned only once. This reference is given in the anonymous manuscript "The Miracles of the World", quoted previously. Depicting the apartment houses of the palace in Nakhchivan the author writes that "in his majesty's days of Ildeiz (Nakhchivan) achieved full splendour. The royal residence was established there..." This information undoubtedly invokes the palace of the Ildegizids.

It is natural to believe that the palace was the earliest, the first building in the complex of the centre of the town, while the remaining constructions were grouped around it later. In this town planning situation we have every reason to state – from historical and architectural point of view – that the building of the palace of the Ildegizids was erected by the author of this complex – Ajami.

It goes without saying that the Ajami's creative activity is in no means limited by the monuments mentioned above. It is quite probable that a lot of magnificent buildings of Nakhchivan, put up mainly in the 12th century, and referred to in the manuscript "Miracles of the World" were similarly the works of his creative genius.

Ajami, as chief architect of the Atabey State, expanded his activity outside Nakhchivan too. It is especially expedient to suggest that the construction of the most important building in Maraga and Hamadan – the latter a subsequent capital of the Ildegizids – were commissioned from him.

One of the main problem arising while considering the activity of the medieval architects is the assessment of the degree of elaboration and preparedness of the preliminary made drawings, figures, and so forth.

It is known that in the Orient the architects widely used models of the constructions to be built. These models served not only as visual aid for the work of the architect himself, but also for the customer who in this way could get the idea of the construction. It is also known that the architects also made templates to execute their creative ideas. But along with above-mentioned points it was also necessary to develop a general plan and the diagrams of the facade.

The most famous European masters of the 12th-13th centuries took part in the construction of the cathedrals – the main buildings in the architecture of that time. The completion of the building of the most significant churches took a longer period than one generation of masters could fulfil during their life-time. The erection of the cathedral of Notre-Dame in Paris, and the cathedral in Cologne

along with many other cathedrals, have continued over centuries. In the East, however, the completion even of the most majestic constructions took a short time. The famous mausoleum of Soltan Sanjar in Merve, the Mausoleum of Okdzaitu in Sulataniye, a grand mosque of Alishah in Tabriz were erected in just a few years. The same happened in Nakhichevan. The central complex, created by Ajami in Nakhchivan the big mosque, the Momine-khatun mausoleum, the portal and probably the palace of the Ildegizids – took a short time to be built. The elucidation of this fact is a matter of great importance from two points of view.

Firstly, the creation of a grand constructions in short periods by one master could be fulfilled only if elaborate drawings were available. The mathematically precise and surprisingly accurate arrangement of intricate ornamental compositions and inscriptions, covering the planes of the Momine-khatun mausoleum could have been provided only if there were the drawings made up beforehand, templates and other accessory materials at the master's disposal.

Farhad Domain, late 1st millennium B.C. – early 1st century A.D., Shahbuz



The epoch in which Ajami lived and worked was famed in the countries of East including Azerbaijan for highly developed mathematical science and geometry. The mathematical treatises by Omar Khayyam, refer to the beginning of the 12th century enjoyed great popularity. Although mathematical treatises were not preserved in Azerbaijan, it is clear that mathematical works by the outstanding Azerbaijani scientist-astronomist of the 13th century Nasraddin Tusi – and the Maraga observatory which he established – could only appear on the basis of earlier-founded highly-developed scientific traditions in the field of mathematics.

Architecture was one area in which skills and scientific knowledge in mathematics were applied. Without mathematical experience it would have been impossible to realize the module system of the buildings, the proportional schemes, or the erection of arches and domes. The treatise "The Key to Arithmetics" by Giyas-ed-din-Kashi confirms our point of view. One of the chapters of this treatise is devoted to the methods and rules of measurements and construction of architectural constructions.

The striking proportionality of the Momine-khatun mausoleum, the intricate structure of its arches, dome and particularly, ornamental compositions is a vivid manifestation of the architect's comprehensive mathematical knowledge of his time.

Ajami was a well-educated man who was well-versed in the scientific knowledge of his age.

At the beginning of the 14th century Rashid-ad-din singles out those architects who "could make drawings". They must have been the most talented masters who succeeded in reaching heights of their art. When historical chronicles or even the famous poets mentioned the names of the architects, they were referred to as the men, who attained learning.

On the other hand, as the construction of grand buildings was in the hands of one architect from the beginning to the end of its construction, the conditions were rife for one particular master to establish exactly the design and execution he wished to deploy.

The achievements of architecture in the West in the 12th century and its positive features were

the result of a joint work of stonemasons – while Ajami's works reveal his individuality, and are the unique masterpieces of his creative genius.

The Nakhchivan monuments created by Ajami were fine examples to follow for architecture not only in Azerbaijan – but also beyond its borders.

Numerous monuments found in Nakhchivan and its neighbouring territories bear resemblance to some architectural traits which are characteristic of Ajami's work. In Azerbaijan this influence manifests itself from Barda in the North, to Hamadan and Zanjan in the South – thus covering a large territory.

The architects who call themselves the natives of Nakhchivan left inscriptions in their monuments during the 14th century, and successfully continued the traditions of the architectural school which they represented. It is enough to mention their memorials in Julfa, Maraga, Garabaglar, Barda, Hamadan, Salmas, Khava, Urmi. In spite of the weakening of the school as a whole over the later centuries, Ajami's traditions have lived through the centuries, and can be seen today.

It is not mere chance that from its first steps Azerbaijani architecture was enhanced by works of Ajami son of Abu-berk – which served as a rich source for the national architectural heritage.

Sadig Dadashov and Mikail Useynov – who took part in the competition for creating the draft of mausoleum over the grave of Nizami in Ganja in 1926 – invoked the heritage of Ajami, having taken the mausoleum of Momine-khatun as their example. The search of these young specialists – who at that time had not completed their university education – was very important, since at the very time they studied another masterpiece of the Azerbaijani mediaeval architecture – the ensemble of the Shirvanshah Palace in Baku. On the basis of elaborately taken measurements they made a comprehensive analysis of the architectural and compositional features of the buildings of the palace ensemble. These works by Ajami were known to them only from earlier publications.

Historical logic is certain to play a part in this process. These young authors attempted to create the mausoleum of the ingenious master of poetry,

A mountainous landscape in Nakhchivan



Nizami, on the basis of the art of his contemporary master Ajami, and were guided by the architectural style of the 12th century.

The influence of Ajami's works – especially his architectural and artistic manner – can be traced in resolving the problem of using local architectural traditions in the development of the Azerbaijani architecture of the 20th century, and the influence which manifests itself at every stage of this process.

Memorial constructions serve as examples in this. This can be seen in the volumetrical construction and ornamental decorations of the pedestal of the Nizami monument in Baku (S. Dadashev and M. Useinov; sculptor P. Abdurrahmanov), in the mausoleum of Nizami in Ganja (A. V. Sarkisov), in Vagif's mausoleum being built in Shusha (A. V. Salamzade, F. I. Kanykov). One can clearly discern compositional ideas traced back to the town's mausoleum, as well as the application of architectural components belonging to Ajami's work in these novel interpretations.

The spirit of Ajami's creative activity is embodied in the building of the National Library named after M. F. Akhundov in Baku, and in some of the stations of the Baku Metro system.

The architectural techniques of Ajami found their application in the practice of the Azerbaijani architects in the architecture of residential housing blocks too.

The influence of the Nakhchivan architect was spread far beyond the borders of his native land, and this phenomenon is open to new discoveries – as the study of his creative activity deepens and grows it is essential to note that the influence of his architectural ideas was manifested long after creation of his works. The well-known Austrian art critic E. Dite – in his book "The History of Turkish Art", written jointly with the Turkish art critic O. Aslanapa – noted that in a number of mausoleums put up by famous Turkish architect Sinan in Istanbul in the 16th century a direct relation with the Nakhchivan mausoleums could be traced. How could Sinan have been acquainted with the Nakhchivan mausoleums? E. Dite quotes well-es-

tablished facts of Sinan's participation in the campaign of Suleiman the Splendid (1535-1536) to Iran – when he visited Nakhchivan in the capacity of the engineer of the troops Janissary troops together with the Ottoman army.

The fact of this influence is supported by other Turkish scholars. The architect Vedat Dalokay, in his paper "Sinan and Society", speaks about the mausoleum of Khosrov Pasha in Istanbul, writing – "the breath of the Atabey's tombs is felt".

We should like to emphasize once again that Ajami exerted decisive influence on the development of the mediaeval Azerbaijani architecture as the leader of the Nakhchivan architectural school. This influence shows itself in typology, in constructive design and particularly in the architectural components. Of numerous examples amply cited in literature, we quote the following... In the tower section of the mausoleum Gulistan near the village Jugi (13th century), the treatment of the faces with geometrical ornament resembles those of the Momine-khatun mausoleum, and can be characterized as its direct imitation. The same

can be said about numerous memorials in the north and the south of Azerbaijan.

Earlier we invoked the opinion of the eminent Russian art critic M. V. Alpatov – who noted the humanistic feeling of the architectural image of the Momine-khatun mausoleum as its great virtue, and who compared this mausoleum with the poem "Leyli and Majnun" by Nizami. The humanism of Nizami was one of the revelations of true rise of social thought in Azerbaijan in the 12th century.

Just as the Italian Renaissance later gave rise to promoting great scientists, writers and artists, the rise of culture mentioned above played a considerable role in the development of outstanding masters in the development of humanism in Azerbaijan in the 12th century. This peculiarity of Ajami's creative activity, his humanism was rightly felt by M. V. Alpatov. In fact, the works of the Nakhchivan master are the product of artistic thought which greatly surpassed mediaeval thinking in their humanistic scale, intricate character of divi-



Four seasons at one spot in the lake Goygol, Ordubad



Babat lake famous for its floating islands, Shahbuz

ARCHITECT AJAMI NAKHCHIVANI

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*(The painting is preserved in the Azerbaijan National
Art Museum named after R.Mustafayev)*

Map of the Atabey Ildeniz State (12th century) was drawn up by the Azerbaijan State Committee of Land and Cartography and by the Institute of History named after A.Bakikhanov at the Azerbaijan National Academy of Science.

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