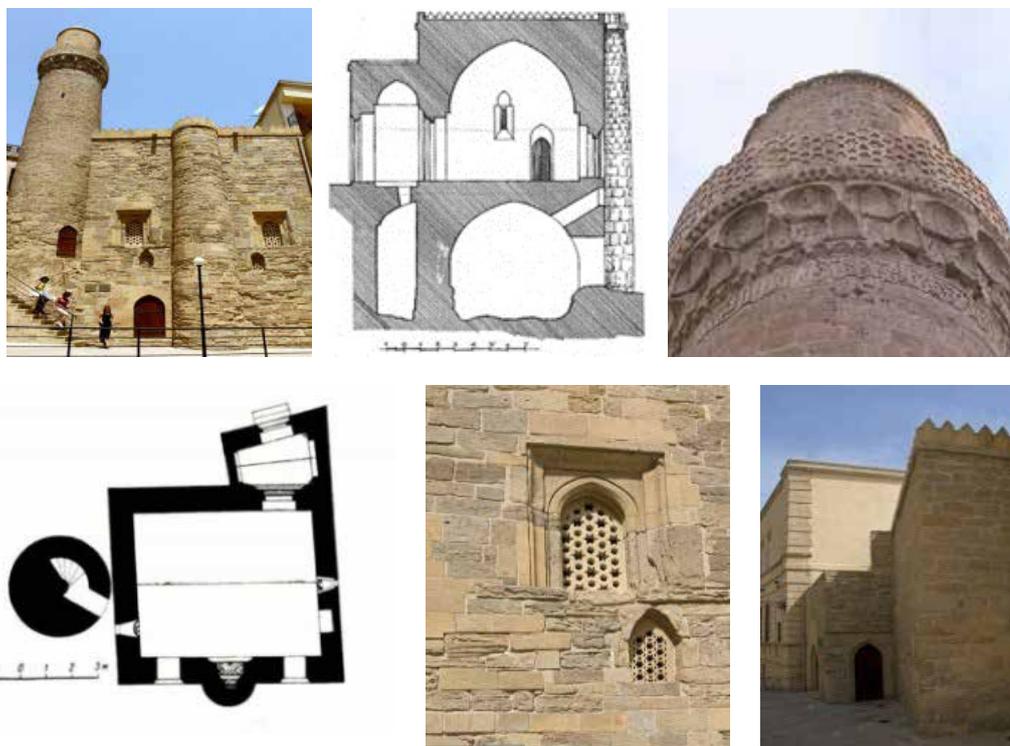


*Azim Mehdiyev*

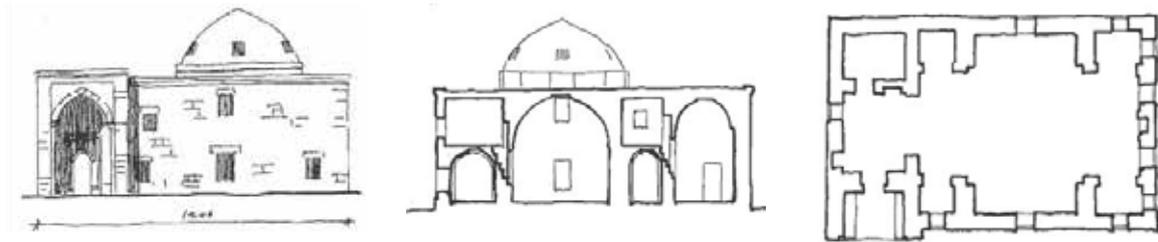
## THE ANCIENT MOSQUES OF BAKU

Today the study of architectural traditions and of the peculiarities of regional architectural schools of Azerbaijan becomes very significant. The religious architecture of Baku is the most important component of the culture of Azerbaijan. The nature of the architecture of Baku was affected by natural conditions, geographical location (access to the Caspian Sea), natural resources, primarily oil and gas, which served as sources of fire since ancient times, which promoted the cult of fire worshipers, and the richest deposits of limestone, a perfect construction material [Zeynalov, 2011: 12].

Ancient mosques such as Mohammed Mosque – Synyk-Qala(1078-1079), Khidir Mosque (XIII century), Gilek Mosque (1309) are preserved in Icheri Sheher of Baku. Mohammed Mosque or Synyk-Qala built by the architect Mohammed Abu-Bakr in A.H. 471(1074-78) represents a two-tier structure, consisting of a prayer hall with a mihrab, to which the entrance volume adjoined from the north side. The cylindrical minaret with a height of 12 m. adjoins to the mosque from the west. The entrance is arranged in the form of a vaulted arch. The main planning feature is the niche of the mihrab on the facade in the form of a semicircular compartment. According to archaeological research, the mosque is built on the foundation and premises of the pre-Islamic shrine [Fatullayev, 1982: 35]. Perhaps the mosque was built on the foundation of the pre-Islamic Fire Temple [Fatullayev, 1982: 35]. There is a preserved inscription at the entrance dating the mosque – 1078-1079.



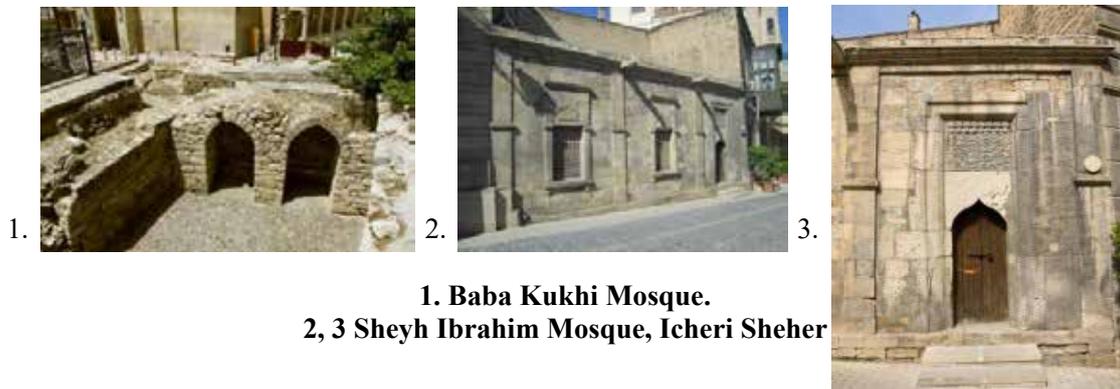
**Synyk-Qala Mosque. Icheri Sheher, Baku.**



**The Mosque of Seyid Yakhya Bakuvi. XVII century. Icheri Sheher, Baku.**



**Seyid Yakhya Mosque, Icheri Sheher.**



**1. Baba Kukhi Mosque.  
2, 3 Sheyh Ibrahim Mosque, Icheri Sheher**

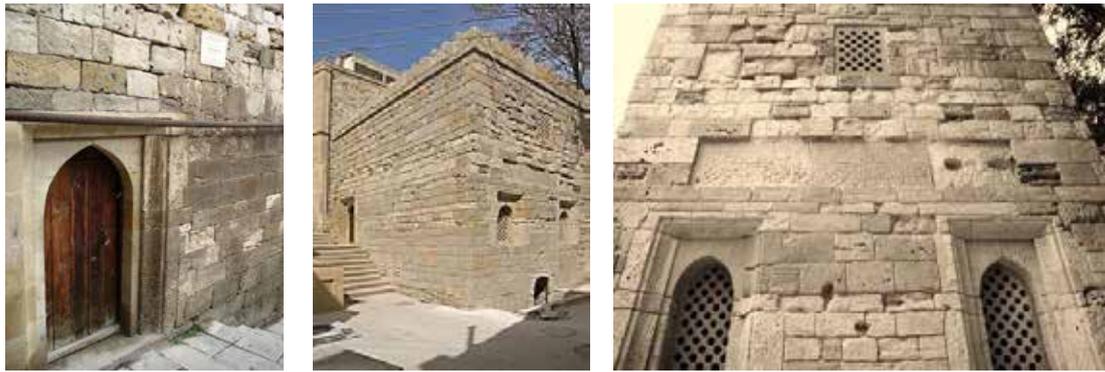
The Baba Kukhi Mosque of XI century consisted of a hall and a vestibule. Probably belonged to the compound of the Baba Kukhi Bakuvi khanegah by the Tower of Maiden.

Ashur-bey Mosque (1169) is a two-storey structure (14x11 m) in the form of a basement and an upper prayer hall (55 sq.m.). The mosque is without a dome, 14 meters long and 11 meters wide. The planning composition and features of the construction highlights its antiquity and restructuring from the ancient fire temple. Overlapping is vaulted. The entrance is arranged in the north-eastern part in the form of a pointed arch and leads to a wide, single-chamber prayer hall. There are two openings with a semicircular arch facing outwards. Among the distinctive features – there are two mihrabs in the mosque: one is arranged along the axis of the hall and is divided into two sections by an arched belt, another one is a dome-shaped stalactite mihrab in a corner. Both are richly decorated. The Mosque's second name is Lezghi, which is due to the fact that it was given to the Lezghin workers in the XIX century for carrying out religious ceremonies.

The Seyid Yakhya Mosque was built in the early XVII century, and was located along the trade and caravan route. The building is central-domed. The mosque was built by costs of Seyid Yakhya Murtuz, who became its akhund. Seyid Yakhya Murtuz was buried at the entrance of the mosque.



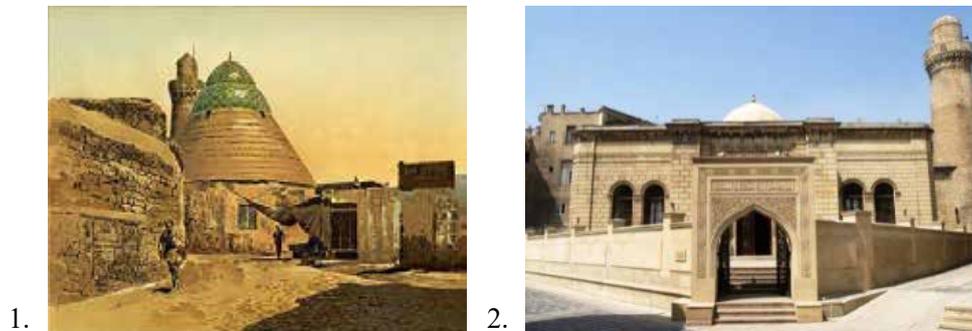
**Ashura (Lezghi) Mosque, Icheri Sheher**



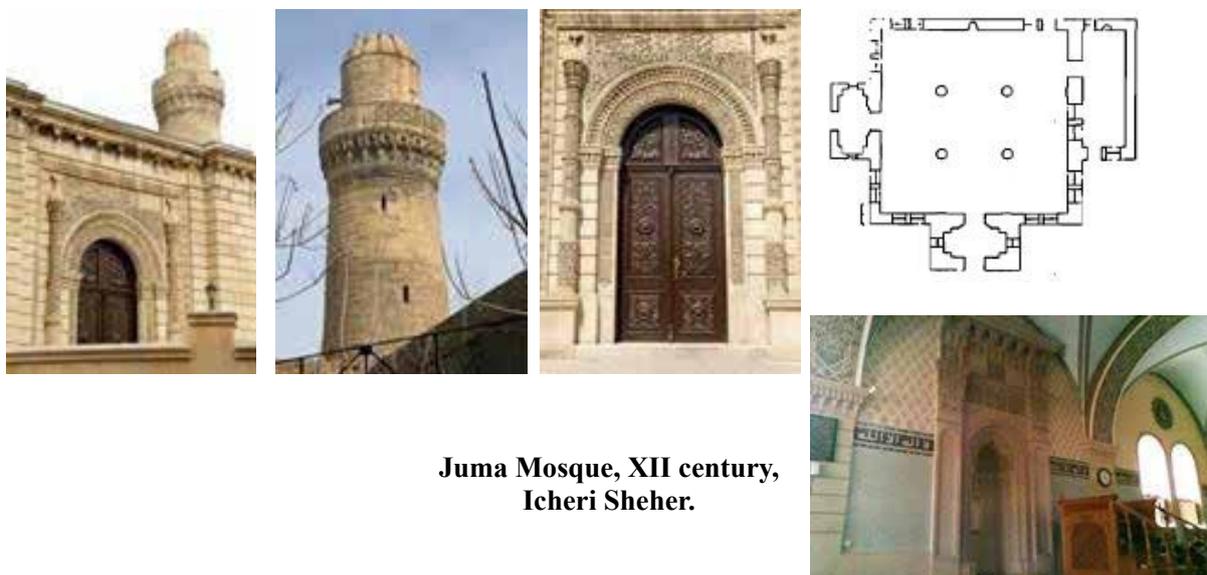
**Khidir Mosque, Icheri Sheher.**

Khidir mosque was built in 1301 on the foundation of the pre-Islamic shrine. The layout decision was affected by the relief of the site with a height difference. Entrance and window openings are framed with profiled carved frames. The mosque was a part of the compound with a caravan-saray.

Juma mosque or the Cathedral Mosque in Icheri Sheher is built on the foundation of an ancient pre-Islamic temple. From the retained inscription on the mosque it is known that “in the month of Rajab A.H. 709 (1309) Amir Sharaf ad-Din Mahmud ordered to renew this mosque”.



**1. Juma Mosque before restructuring. 2, 3. Juma Mosque’s modern view. Icheri Sheher.**



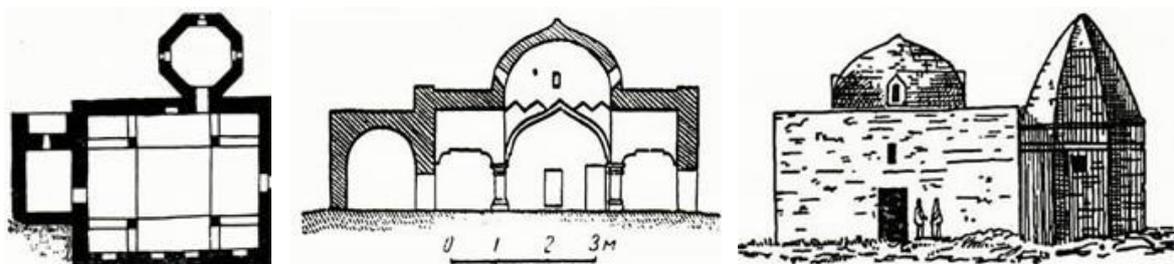
**Juma Mosque, XII century,  
Icheri Sheher.**

In the XV century minaret with a sherefee was attached to the northern wall of the mosque. Juma mosque was repeatedly restructured. According to the traveler's notes who visited the mosque in 1873, «there were four arches in the middle of the mosque, the top of which had no overlap. These arches were older than the mosque and preserved from the ancient temple of fire worshipers, which was later rebuilt by Muslims into a mosque» [Pasha-Zade, 1997: 53]. The conical dome became a special feature of Juma mosque, in the decoration of which they had used irrigated tiles. Its original appearance is known from old sketches and photographs. At the beginning of the XX century, a new central dome mosque was built on the foundation of the old mosque at the funds of Baku philanthropist Haji Shykhali Dadashev. The premises of the mosque are small.

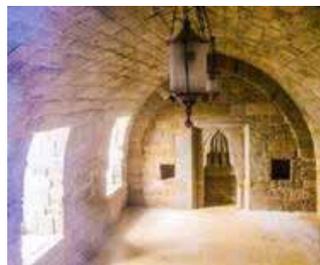
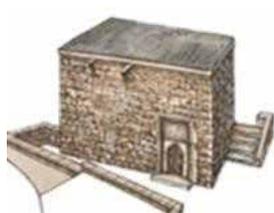
Key-Kubad Mosque (XIII century) was part of the compound of the Shirvanshahs Palace. The mausoleum of Seyid Yakhya Bakuvi (Mausoleum of the Dervish) was built near the mosque. Destroyed during the shelling in 1918, the ruins of the Mosque's outer walls and the base of the columns of the dome are survived partly.

The mosques of Icheri Sheher such as Chin-mosque, Molla Ahmed mosque, Khidir Mosque and some others were uni-hall small structures, where interiors were modest, and the focus was on the highlighting of the mihrab niche. This is mainly due to the fact that their placement appeared to be random and was constrained by the boundaries of the sites.

Chin Mosque (XIV century) served the quarter residents, whose activities were closely connected with the life of the Palace. There is an opinion that its name was associated with the ceramic decoration of the mihrab, which is designed in the style of Shirvan architecture and decorated with stalactites, representing a niche in the portal rectangular frame [Bretanitsky, 1970: 18]. «Chini» is a ceramic tile, decorated with a stylized floral ornament.



**Key-Kubad Mosque, XIII century. Icheri Sheher.**



**Chin Mosque, XIV century, Icheri Sheher.**



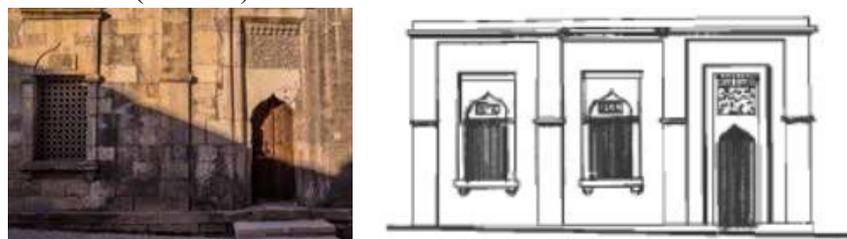
**MollaAhmedMosque, IcheriSheher.**

Molla Ahmed Mosque is one of the quarter mosques of Icheri Sheher. The mosque was named after the cleric Mullah Ahmed, the way it was known in common. The mosque has a shape of an irregular quadrangle. The inscription on the facade of the building dates from A.H. 700 (1300-1301) by Makhmud ibn Sad, the famous medieval architect.

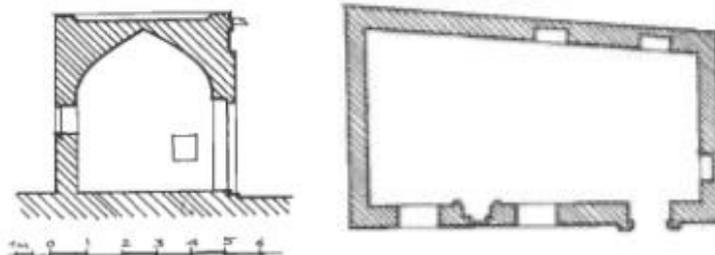


**The Mosque of Shirvanshah Palace, XV century, Icheri Sheher.**

The mosque of Shirvanshahs palace dates from the XV century. The dome mosque of a rectangular shape consists of two prayer halls and several small service rooms. The northern portal, inverted to the Shirvanshah's burial vault, is more solemn than the eastern [Bretanitsky, 1970: 18]. The small size of the hall of 70 sq. m., indicates that the mosque was intended for a limited number of persons. The minaret, square shaped at the base, then passes into a cylindrical trunk, mounted on the left-hand corner. The minaret was added later, it has a sherefe, decorated with stalactite cornice. The trunk of the minaret is encircled with the inscription, which contains the date of A.H. 845 (1441-42).



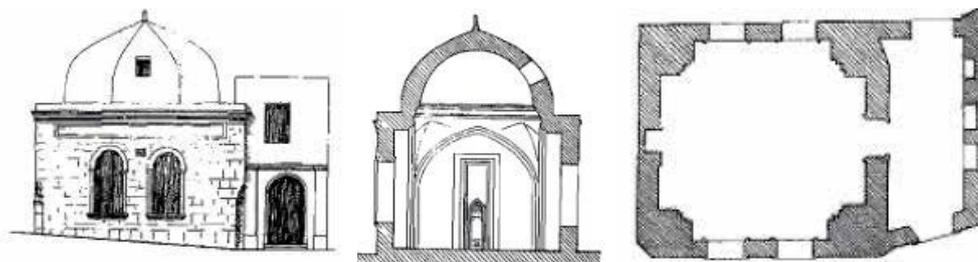
**Sheih Ibrahim Mosque, 1415, Icheri Sheher.**



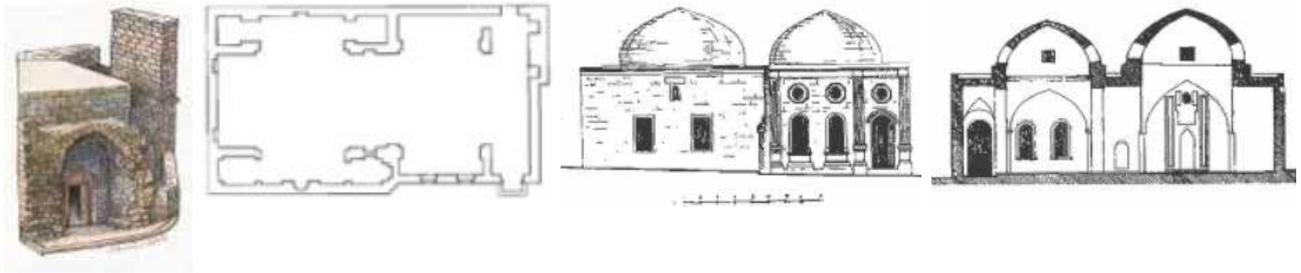
**Sheih Ibrahim Mosque, 1415, Icheri Sheher.**

Sheikh Ibrahim Mosque of XV century was built in 1415-16. The asymmetrical facade of the mosque is divided into three parts. The mosque is a single-hall. Mihrab is decorated with stalactites.

Haji-Bani Mosque of the XVI century is named after its architect, Haji Bani. It is central dome shaped. The mihrab is opposite the entrance. From the survived inscriptions it is known that the mosque was rebuilt in A.H.1320 (1902) – the hall for women was added. Gileyli mosque was built in 1309 during the Shirvanshah period and is a cross-shaped construction with two domes 14 meters long and 10 meters wide. The original construction was in the shape of the equal cross with the rooms attached in the corners.



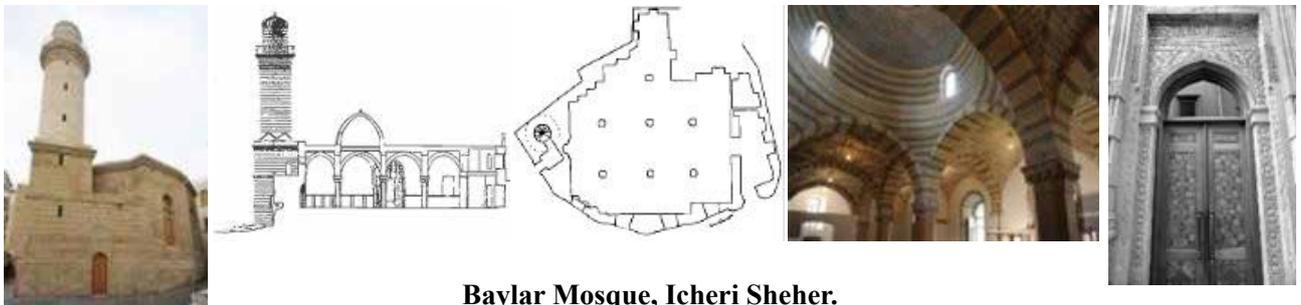
**Haji-Bani Mosque, XVI century, Icheri Sheher.**



**Gileyli Mosque (Gilek), 1309, Icheri Sheher.**

In 1805 a rectangular room 11 meters long was attached to the mosque. Great attention is paid to the portal where an ornament in the form of a stalactite belt is applied. The windows are decorated with carved lattices. The name of the mosque corresponds to the name of the quarter where lived merchants of silk, originally from Gilan.

Bayler Mosque in Icheri Sheher of XIX century is built on the foundation of an ancient temple. The mosque consists of a vestibule and a three-nave hall. The space design in the form of a polychromatic alternation of finishing's a subject of interest.



**Baylar Mosque, Icheri Sheher.**

The mosque of Haji Amirshah or Sheikh Ibrahim (Sheykh Ibrahim or Shirvanshah Ibrahim I, who died in 1417) was built in A.H. 818 (1415- 1416) along the trade route leading to the Salyan Gate. The mosque is quadrangular in shape, covered by a semicircular vault. The facade of the mosque is divided into three square parts, each with a window. The inscription in arabic was preserved above the entrance door of the mosque: «In the time of Sultan Sheikh Ibrahim the son of Sultan, the honorary head of Hajj Amir Shah ibn the deceased Hajja Haji Yagub in the eight hundred and eighteenth year (1415-16) ordered to build this mosque» [Pasha-Zade, 1997: 489].



**Haji Amirshah or Sheykh Ibrahim Mosque, Icheri Sheher.**



**Haji Heybat Mosque, Icheri Sheher.**



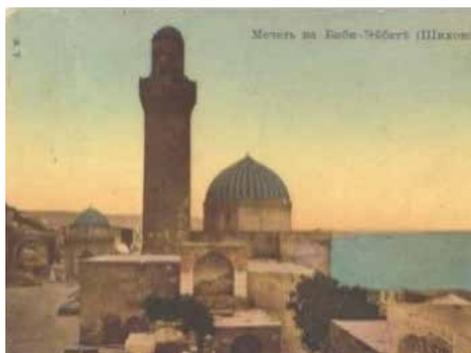
**Mirza Ahmad Mosque, 1345, Icheri Sheher.**

Haji Heybat Mosque of the XVIII century (1791) is located in the northern part of Icheri Sheher fortress. It was named after its architect. It is the mosque with a square vestibule and a prayer square hall with niches and service space. The architect and his wife were buried in the corner of the prayer hall. Mirza Ahmed Mosque was built in 1345 by Haji Mirza Ahmed on the foundation of an ancient temple. Similarly to the mosque of Haji Heybat, it is the quadrangular shaped and consists of a square lobby and prayer hall with niches, and service room.

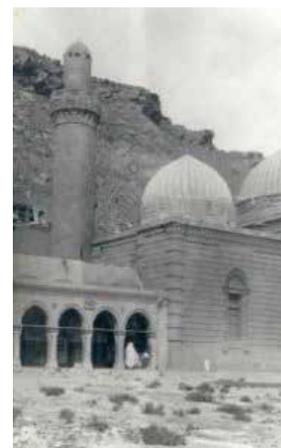
The cultural-educational, political center «Bibi-Heybat» was on the same cape in the Baku bay at the historical location of the ancient shrine. The mosque of VIII century was a quadrangular shaped building with a dome and an adjoined minaret from the south-east side. The minaret at the base had the shape of a square tetrahedron, and an octagon shape at the level of the roof of the mosque. In 1930's the shrine was destroyed by the Soviet authorities. According to the number of sacred graves, the cult-memorial complex ranks third for sacred places of the Islamic world, where the Musa al-Qazim family representatives are buried. His daughter Khatim (Ukeima) (a) khanum (A.H. 629 -680) is buried here. Thus, the restoration of the Bibi-Heybat mosque was of great importance not only for Azerbaijan, but for the whole east as well, since this place is considered one of the Islamic shrines. Nowadays the religious status of these places is also revived with the reconstruction of the mosque.



1.



2.



3.



4.

**1, 2, 3. Old photos of Bibi Heybat. 4. Bibi Heybat after reconstruction**

Most of the quarter mosques did not single out from the habitable buildings. In addition, it can be said that many of them were built on the foundations of pre-Islamic shrines. The Baku mosques consisted of single-section small buildings with an asymmetrical composition and attached minaret. This is due to the fact that they are built on the basis of the architectural principles of pre-Islamic temples, in the planning basis of which lay a square of walls, covered with a vault – which served as the initial link in the construction of mosques. This is due to the fact that they are built on the roots of the architectural principles of pre-Islamic shrines, where the planning design is based on a square of walls, covered with a vault which serves as the initial element in the construction of mosques.

Most of the mosques are asymmetric in shape and represent a layering of several construction stages given that during the ages the mosques were repeatedly restructured and expanded. Exteriors and interiors of the Baku mosques were distinguished by their modesty. Entrance and window openings facing the facade side of the building had profiled frames and ornamented medallions. Later they began to pay attention to decorating the portals and mihrabs with stalactites, attaching minarets. XIII-XIV centuries in the architecture of Baku mosques are characterized by increased attention to decorativeness and features of architectural and spatial forms. As an example, the portal of Gilek-mosque, decorated with stalactite belt.

A similar process is also observed on the territory of Iran where from the X century onwards the type of the mosque which layout, more specifically, a square shaped room crowned with a dome, generated from the Zoroastrian temples had widely spread out. Small single-hall domed mosques square in shape are also typical for the architecture of Antalya: Hoja Hasan mosque of XIII century and Sircala (XIII century) in Konya, Kurshunlu mosque (1377) in Kutahya, the mosque in Manisa-Ilyas Bey (1362). The mosque of Ahmet Gazi in Antalya is the stone domed square in shape mosque [Remzi, 2003: 494-505]. A square shaped mosque was built also in Sigachik [Ertan Daş, 2007: 25-48].

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### **Azim Mehdiyev**

#### **The Ancient Mosques of Baku**

*The architecture of Baku's mosques occupies a special place in the overall development of the cult architecture of Azerbaijan. Ancient mosques such as Mohammed Mosque-Synk-Qala(1078-1079), Khidir Mosque (XIII century), Gilek Mosque (1309) and others are preserved in Icheri Sheher of Baku. Most of the quarter mosques did not single out from the habitable buildings. In addition, it can be said that many of them were built on the foundations of pre-Islamic shrines. The Baku mosques consisted of single-section small buildings with an asymmetrical composition and attached minaret. Exteriors and interior were modest. Later, they began to focus on decorating of the portals with stalactites and the Mihrab decoration.*

### **Azim Магдієв**

#### **Стародавні мечеті Баку**

*Архітектура бакінських мечетей займає особливе місце в загальному розвитку культової архітектури Азербайджану. Древні мечеті, такі як Мечеть Мухаммеда-Синик-Кала (1078-1079), Мечеть Хідіра (XIII століття), Мечеть Гілека (1309) та інші, збереглися в Ічері Шехері в Баку. Більшість мечетей цього кварталу не виділялися з житлових будівель. Крім того, можна сказати, що багато з них були побудовані на фундаментах доісламських святинь. Бакінські мечеті склалися з односекційних невеликих будівель з асиметричною композицією та прикріпленим мінаретом. Екстер'єр та інтер'єр були скромними. Пізніше вони почали зосереджуватися на оздобленні порталів сталактитами та оздобленням Міхраба.*

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