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THE INFLUENCE OF EUROPEAN CULTURE ON AZERBAIJANI DAILY LIFE IN THE LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURIES

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Abstract. This article examines the influence of European culture on the daily life of Azerbaijanis during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The study explores the integration of European elements into Azerbaijani society against the backdrop of cultural relations between Europe and Azerbaijan, the Enlightenment movement, the development of the oil industry, and socio-economic transformations. Transformations in education, women's literacy, clothing, dining culture, and interior-exterior design are analyzed through historical-comparative and ethnographic approaches. The article argues that European influence was initially adopted by the upper classes and was met with resistance in the early stages. However, over time, it evolved into a catalyst for socio-modern development processes. The synthesis of Eastern and Western values in Azerbaijani society led to the formation of new domestic habits and traditions.

Key words: Europeanization, Azerbaijani domestic culture, 19th–20th centuries, cultural influence, dress culture, dining culture, Enlightenment, East-West relations, historical ethnography, modernization.

Introduction. The cultural interaction between the West (Europe) and the East has deep historical roots. Despite their distinct civilizational paths, representatives of both cultures have long shown interest in learning from one another and establishing platforms for mutual integration (Qafqaz Albaniyasının tarixi, 2014). In contemporary times, Western culture has exerted significant influence on global cultural transformations, driven in large part by rapid technological advancements regarded as hallmarks of Western success (Hüseynov, 2007). In contrast, the dynamism of Eastern culture has largely been shaped by internal ideological frameworks focused on the moral evolution of the individual (Məmmədov, 2006). Positioned at the intersection of these civilizational zones, the Azerbaijani people have undergone modernization in daily life under the influence of European culture, making this a pertinent subject for academic inquiry.

The primary objective of this study is to identify the causes, unique characteristics, and patterns of partial Europeanization in various domains of Azerbaijani daily life during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The study also analyzes the socio-economic factors contributing to the penetration of European and Russian-manufactured goods into Azerbaijani society, assesses the advantages and disadvantages of this cultural shift, and evaluates its impact on social relations (Azərbaycan tarixi, vol. VI, 2008).

A multidisciplinary methodological framework – combining historical, sociological, cultural, and ethnographic approaches – is adopted to evaluate qualitative transformations in culture and lifestyle. Ethnographic observation and folklore materials help trace the reception and diffusion of European influences, as well as their interaction with local traditions (Dadaşova, 2003). The historical-comparative method reveals similarities and differences between traditional Azerbaijani domestic elements (eg, clothing, furniture, dining practices) and those introduced through European influence. Furthermore, the study applies a cross-cultural analytical framework to assess the selective reception and adaptation of European norms (Əfəndiyev, 1960). Through the use of historical literature, mem-

oirs, and museum artifacts, the research identifies concrete examples of cultural transfer (Azərbaycan qadınları, 2001).

Analysis and Discussion. Economic and cultural ties between Europe and Azerbaijan date back to ancient times and intensified during the medieval period through diplomatic and commercial exchanges. However, during these earlier stages, Europeans had limited influence on local domestic life, largely due to the advanced state of local culture, the central role of Islamic norms in societal structure, and the presence of strong state traditions, such as those of the Qaraqoyunlu, Aghqoyunlu, and Safavid dynasties (Azərbaycan tarixi, vol. IV, 2007). These factors restricted the ability of European missionaries and traders to disseminate their customs, beliefs, and ways of thinking. Moreover, the absence of mass engagement with Western culture limited the development of public interest in it.

A significant turning point came with the development of the oil industry, which played a crucial role in facilitating European influence on Azerbaijani culture. The 19th-century technological innovations – such as steam-powered ships and locomotives – spurred a surge in demand for oil, attracting industrialists to Azerbaijan. These settlers brought their own cultural practices, which gradually began to affect local lifestyles (Azərbaycan tarixi, vol. VI, 2008). The establishment of Western-style infrastructure and institutions began to reshape the domestic environment of urban areas.

Another critical factor in the penetration of European culture was the Enlightenment movement. According to Məmmədov (2006), the European Enlightenment, which emerged from revolutions and reforms that emancipated the individual, also influenced Eastern regions that were colonies or semi-colonies of Western powers. Azerbaijan's incorporation into the Russian Empire in the 19th century connected it directly to these processes. Enlightenment intellectuals in Azerbaijan sought to combat ignorance and backwardness by promoting literacy and education. Efforts by figures such as A. Bakikhanov and Akhundov to establish modern schools and introduce the Latin alphabet reflected this agenda, although such initiatives often clashed with imperial interests and were blocked by the authorities (Hüseynov, 2007; (Azərbaycan tarixi, Vol VI, 2008).

Despite these obstacles, public awareness of the importance of education has grown steadily, leading families to prioritize the education of their children. This shift in mentality facilitated the adoption of European cultural practices, particularly in urban settings.

From the late 19th century onward, Enlightenment discourse and increased cultural interaction with Europe began to transform social attitudes toward women. One of the most significant changes was the emergence of new perspectives on women's education. While gender discrimination in access to higher education was also prevalent in Europe – as in the case of Germany, where women were not allowed to enroll in universities until 1890 (Azərbaycan qadınları, 2001) – the issue of women's rights was a pressing concern for Azerbaijani intellectuals. In his article "The Woman Question," ("Arvad məsələsi") Jalil Məmmədquluzadə compared the status of women across various societies and concluded that gender equality had yet to be achieved, even in Europe. The final conclusion was this: "*Musavat, absolute equality!*" – that is, the complete equality of rights between men and women in all matters". (Məmmədquluzadə, 2004).

Consequently, the convergence of economic (oil), political (colonial subjugation), and intellectual (Enlightenment) forces laid the foundation for substantial changes in both the moral culture and everyday life of Azerbaijanis. These transformations are manifested in clothing, dining practices, architecture, and interior and exterior design.

The impact of European culture on Azerbaijani fashion initially became noticeable among the aristocracy. During the Safavid period, for example, Sultan Husayn issued decrees to alter male grooming styles and attire, mandating the adoption of shorter outer garments and eliminating beards in favor of mustaches. "*The Shah ordered those around him to wear robes made of broadcloth (sukonnye koftans) instead of fabrics embroidered with gold and silver threads, stating: 'Let the outer garments be*

quite short, and the sleeves only reach the elbows” (Dadaşova, 2003). These reforms foreshadowed the broader influence of European aesthetic preferences.

However, travelogues and artistic depictions from the 18th and 19th centuries suggest that traditional clothing and lifestyles persisted among lower social strata. French artist Jules Laurens, who visited Azerbaijan between 1846 and 1848, produced illustrations for his book *The Shores of the Caspian Sea* that accurately reflected local customs and traditional attire. His depictions – such as “Itinerant Dervishes,” “Religious Ceremony in Tabriz,” and “Rope Walkers” – demonstrate the continued dominance of traditional clothing styles well into the mid-19th century (Əfəndiyev, 1960).

From the late 19th to the early 20th century, the socio-economic and cultural development of Azerbaijani society led to the modernization of traditional clothing styles. This transformation was initially evident among the urban elite, in workers' atmosphere, and in school uniforms, reflecting a broader trend across Eastern societies. The fashion evolution during this period was influenced significantly by European styles. As S. Dünyamalıyeva notes, Europe, aligning its fashion with technological advancements, had already abandoned oversized feathered hats, elaborately layered undershirts, and heavy pleated garments (Dünyamalıyeva, 2003, p. 15). By the Restoration period (1815–1820), the “dandy” – an ideal of the simply dressed man – had become a new standard in European fashion (Dünyamalıyeva, 2003, p. 48).

Historically, elements of Turkic attire had been incorporated into Western dress. However, by the modern era, this dynamic reversed, with Eastern societies increasingly adopting Western garments. A similar trend was observed throughout many Eastern countries. As T. Vural explains, “in the early 17th century, the Ottoman lifestyle and fashion were in vogue in the West, particularly in France, under the label 'alaturka,' whereas by the 18th century, Western customs, termed 'alafranga,' gained popularity in the Ottoman Empire. While 'alaturka' fashion lasted about half a century in the West, Western fashion has remained a focal point in Asia Minor for nearly three centuries” (Vural, 2008).

Iran, too, experienced this phenomenon. Following Nasir al-Din Shah's European tours, both clothing and ornamentation underwent substantial changes (Məmmədova, 2016, p. 376). European-style headwear, referred to as *lebadar* or *firəngi* by the public, became fashionable (Məmmədova, 2016, p. 360). Nevertheless, European fashion could not entirely overshadow the traditional Eastern aesthetic. Thus, the inclination toward Western attire was not limited to Azerbaijan but was a broader regional occurrence.

Literary sources from the period vividly reflect the evolving worldview and corresponding changes in atmosphere. In his work *Anamın Kitabı (My Mother's Book)*, Jalil Mammadguluzadeh illustrates how three sons, having received education in Russia, Iran, and the Ottoman Empire, each assimilated the culture and lifestyle of the host country, consequently distancing themselves from their national identity. Rüstəm bəy adopts Russian intelligentsia attire: a suit, vest, collared shirt, and tie. Mirzə Məhəmmədəli appears in traditional Iranian clothing, while Səməd Vahid, educated in Istanbul, wears a red fez, a suit, a white-collared shirt, and a tie, reflecting his support for Ottoman values (Məmmədquluzadə, 2004, p. 437).

These portrayals signify deeper cultural conflicts. Rüstəm, influenced by Russian culture, returns with aspirations to reform society, whereas Mirzə Məhəmmədəli rejects Western culture entirely, promoting Iranian traditions. These narratives provide crucial insights into the social tensions and ideological divides of the time. The author's depiction of Azerbaijan's position at the crossroads of Russian, Iranian, and Ottoman influences underscores how geography shaped cultural integration.

Changes in clothing coincided with transformations in thought and personal development. However, not all sectors of society welcomed these innovations. Conservative factions resisted and criticized the departure from tradition. After the spread of Islam, Eastern attire evolved to obscure the body's form, emphasizing modesty. In contrast, European fashion often accentuated the female silhouette. From the 19th century onward, women's clothing in the South Caucasus, including Azerbaijan, increasingly

reflected Western influence. As with men's atmosphere, this influence initially manifested in individual elements.

Nevertheless, the transformation in both form and content should not be merely interpreted as a shift in fashion. The static scholasticism of the medieval period gave way to a dynamic lifestyle that necessitated lighter, more comfortable clothing. Heavily ornamented outfits featuring gemstones and silver belts were replaced by simpler designs, which quickly gained popularity. By the second half of the 19th century, aristocratic women began adopting accessories like *mitaines* (French for “fingerless gloves”), typically crafted from lace or fine materials for decorative purposes. These gloves complemented outfits by emphasizing the elegance of the hands. Additional accessories included handbags and fans, which gradually replaced traditional storage pouches.

In the East, clothing was also regarded as a reflection of morality. Azerbaijani intellectuals promoting intercultural dialogue rejected the Western philosophy of prioritizing intellect over ethics, while also distancing themselves from a passive, fatalistic moralism. They supported the balanced development of intellect and morality. Prominent poets and writers of the period expressed their views on this synthesis. In *Anamın Kitabı*, Mammadguluzadeh contrasts female characters to illustrate cultural divergence. Gülbahar wears traditional Muslim attire and is literate in Islamic disciplines, whereas Zivər xanım, dressed in Western fashion with exposed neck and arms, lacks such knowledge (Məmmədquluzadə, 2004, p. 437). The intelligentsia harshly criticized women who, in embracing European fashion, lost their national identity.

Traditional wedding garments and rituals also underwent significant changes. Previously, wedding dresses were made from red fabric, a color associated with warmth, prosperity, and celebration. Accessories like red shawls for brides and grooms, red rugs at wedding entrances, and red ribbons for dowries symbolized joy and vitality. However, the Ethnographic Fund of the National Museum of History of Azerbaijan houses a rare example of a white wedding dress from the late 19th century, indicating the beginning of Western influence. Nevertheless, as Q. Əsədova argues, the adoption of white dresses likely reflected superficial imitation rather than a meaningful cultural shift and should not be seen as commendable (Əsədova, 2015, p. 100).

Wedding customs themselves also declined after Soviet occupation. The traditional practices of weddings and mourning ceremonies came under strict state control. Collective weddings were promoted, often accompanied by emotional slogans and speeches, while elder-blessed unions were ridiculed. Despite this, some generations continued to uphold traditional values and sought the guidance of elders.

Western fashion, particularly for adults, faced criticism and resistance. Yet, innovations in children's clothing were more readily accepted. Young girls were dressed in short, ornate Western-style dresses, while boys wore caps and short trousers. These changes were especially prominent among schoolchildren. Many schools in Baku adopted European-style uniforms. As Əsədova notes, both girls' and boys' schools implemented dress codes that visually distinguished their students (Əsədova, 2015, p. 100). Eventually, these uniforms influenced everyday clothing choices, and students incorporated European-style outfits into their wardrobes.

In her memoirs, Göhvər Usubova, a graduate of the Alexander Russian-Muslim School in Baku, recalls: “We had two uniforms – one for daily wear and the other for formal ceremonies” (Cabbarov, 2011, p. 143). The key components of these uniforms – woolen jackets, suits, ties, and caps – were foreign to traditional Azerbaijani attire, symbolizing a broader cultural transformation.

Following Soviet occupation of Azerbaijan, public courses were organized with the aim of cultivating the “appearance of an exemplary Soviet citizen.” Young women and girls were taught new styles and forms of dressing. The resolution of the 2nd Congress of the Communist Party of Bolsheviks of Azerbaijan (AK(b)P) in October 1920 emphasized the importance of special measures tailored to Muslim social customs, including handicraft cooperatives, literacy schools, women's clubs, and

awareness campaigns among men (Azərbaycan tarixi, vol. VI, 2008, p. 241). Consequently, the historically shaped clothing traditions of Azerbaijan entered a new phase of development under the influence of European fashion. This phenomenon was not exclusive to Azerbaijan but was also observable in other Eastern countries such as the Ottoman Empire and Iran. The modernization process began with subtle changes in clothing details, and Western cultural influence became evident even in ceremonial practices, which traditionally preserved conservative values. Among all segments of society, the modernization of women's clothing faced the most resistance compared to that of men and children. With the establishment of Soviet rule in Azerbaijan, the formation of modern dress culture gradually led to the decline of traditional attire.

Europeanization also affected interior and exterior design, as well as dining culture, prompting a gradual shift away from Eastern aesthetics. As a result of increased contact with Europe, new elements were incorporated into Azerbaijani households. Traditional floor-spread meals (“açma” and “dəstərxan”) began to disappear, replaced by tables and chairs. Although tables and chairs were previously used for writing or other tasks, they had not become widely integrated into dining practices in the Middle Ages. Initially, in the early 19th century, meals at the table were typically reserved for men, but over time, all family members began to dine together. Cutlery such as forks, spoons, and knives were introduced, replacing the practice of eating with hands. These innovations entered domestic life through merchants, intellectuals, and students who had ties with various European countries. Despite these changes, the essence of dining culture remained largely intact. Modernization was more pronounced in urban areas, whereas rural communities continued to preserve traditional dining customs. Even today, floor-spread meals are still common in villages, where food is eaten by hand and cutting bread with a knife is considered inappropriate.

Tea and dining sets became essential elements of a neat and orderly dining table, attracting significant attention. The desire to own high-quality sets in accordance with one's taste and budget stimulated the entry of foreign manufacturers into the local market. During this new period, European countries acquired the secrets of porcelain production and began mass manufacturing. Consequently, Azerbaijan shifted its porcelain imports from the East to the West, with France, Germany, Britain, and Russia emerging as leading producers. Due to Russia's protectionist policies and high import tariffs on foreign goods, Russian porcelain brands such as “Imperial,” “Gardner,” and “Kuznetsov” became highly popular in Azerbaijani households.

One of the most well-known porcelain stores in late 19th to early 20th century Baku was the “Blestyashchiy Magazin,” popularly referred to by locals as “Şəşə” (meaning “glass”). This store offered porcelain products from China, Japan, England, Russia, France, Germany, and Italy. It procured its goods directly from manufacturers and even had its emblem stamped on the products. For instance, a tea set preserved in the Ethnography Fund of the National Museum of History of Azerbaijan bears both the seal of the “Karl Jassen” factory in Riga and the inscription: “Mikhail Useinov's brilliant store. Baku” (MATM, EF, inv. No. 9895).

Renowned firms paid close attention to the preferences of their clientele. Items such as rosewater containers, small bowls (piyalə), cloud-shaped dishes (bulud), and hookahs (qəlyan) were in high demand in the East. Porcelain products were manufactured with local demand in mind. A special category of these items, referred to as “Eastern goods,” was produced by European factories. In addition to mass production, these companies accepted special commissions from the upper classes. Such custom-made items featured family names or private emblems in ornate designs and were significantly more expensive. These exclusive items were typically found in aristocratic households. For example, a saucer adorned with lilac motifs bears the inscription “B.B. Ashurbekov” (MATM, EF, inv. No. 7957).

Historically, Azerbaijani households utilized a wide range of metal tableware, which evolved over time. However, despite the country's abundance of raw materials, its colonial status prevented the

establishment of local manufacturing industries. Extracted ores were processed in Russian factories and returned to Azerbaijan as finished goods, which in turn constrained local artisanal production and limited their market access.

Europeanization during the late 19th and early 20th centuries also influenced architecture, interior and exterior design, and the refinement of traditional construction techniques. Local building traditions were enriched, playing a significant role in creating more functional and comfortable living and working environments. Alongside functionality, attention was also given to aesthetics, with efforts made to optimize landscapes, improve urban planning, and upgrade irrigation and communication infrastructure. These developments contributed to the neatness, functionality, and visual appeal of cities, towns, and residential areas. "In 1898, the master plan for Baku, prepared by engineer Fon der Nonnen, was approved by the City Duma" (p. 168). This plan was later edited by Mammad Hasan Hajinski and became the primary document guiding the development of Baku. According to M. Suleymanov, the late 19th – early 20th century in Azerbaijan was marked by the coexistence of Eastern and Western cultures: "In the central quarters of Baku, Asia and Europe lived side by side. The city featured luxurious residences and hotels such as Metropol, Old Europe, Madrid, New Europe, Leon, as well as public baths like Ermitaj, Mironov, restaurants such as Greece, Dardanelles, and clubs like Edison, Ermitaj, Ermans, etc." (Süleymanov M., 1989, p. 77).

From the late 19th to early 20th centuries, technological progress and changes in household conditions led to innovations in traditional house types. Residences of different social classes – bourgeois landowners, workers, and peasants – differentiated not only in architectural design and decoration but also in interior organization, furnishings, and amenities. Social distinctions were also evident in residential quarters, streets, food establishments, and other public spaces. In architectural design, local composition principles and European traditions were synthesized and evolved together. The palace of philanthropist and oil magnate HZ Taghiyev serves as a prime example of the cultural synthesis of East and West. Both the European and Eastern halls of the palace reflect the highest artistic expressions of their respective cultures. "All of the interior furnishings were imported from Russia, France, America, and Germany. Furniture came from America, while damask curtains and paintings were of German origin" (Taghiyev HZ, 2010, p. 205). The building itself represents a synthesis of multiple architectural styles: "the symmetrical main façade is Italian Renaissance; the washroom is in French Rococo; the dining room is in Flemish Baroque; and the bedrooms are in modern style" (Namazova N., 2019).

Conclusion. The findings of the research reveal that European cultural influence during the late 19th and early 20th centuries left a profound mark on Azerbaijani society not only in terms of public and cultural consciousness but also at the level of everyday life. The process of Europeanization brought about extensive changes in fashion, table culture, women's social status, and educational practices. Although selective in nature, this process merged with local traditions to form a new and distinctive cultural identity. Azerbaijanis adopted Western styles clothing while reconciling them with moral values. Although dining culture incorporated new elements such as tables, chairs, and cutlery, traditional cuisine remained largely unchanged. Modernization was more evident in urban settings, whereas rural communities preserved ancestral food traditions.

Urban architecture became more elaborate and functional, while technological innovations from the West enriched local construction practices. This played a vital role in creating more convenient living and working spaces. Thus, modernization in Azerbaijan was not merely the mechanical adoption of Western influence, but a result of intercultural integration and synthesis.

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