

Ayshan Huseynova
Azerbaijan Tourism and Management University
(Azerbaijan)

ayshan96huseynova@gmail.com

FORTRESS WALLS OF ICHERISHEHER: A SYMBOL OF RESILLIENCE

Abstract. The fortress walls surrounding Icherisheher (the Old City in Baku) reflect its ancient history more than the historical and cultural monuments located there. Those fortifications, which witnessed crucially historical events for ages, have been exposed to both natural and external influences during these years. Based on historical sources, the demolition of the outer fortress wall due to economic demands of that time and natural circumstances also denotes the partial obliteration of the historical memory. This paper deals with the history of construction, various-year restoration, military significance, and usage purposes of the fortress walls. In addition, the main factors that led to the destruction of the fortress walls have been researched and their impacts on cultural tourism in modern times have been reviewed. The consequences of this investigation prove once again that those fortress walls maintaining our historical memory are essential stone chronicles contributing to the development of cultural tourism with regard to studying the past of the city and being recognized around the globe.

Key words: cultural heritage, Old city, fortress walls, cultural tourism, Baku.

Introduction. Azerbaijan is one of the countries of the East with the ancient history of statehood and culture. Remains of ancient cities, palaces, fortresses, monumental mosques, tombs, fortifications are obvious examples embodying this history. In addition to the past and culture of the people, those historical monuments are stone chronicles reflecting the socio-political events

of the era in which they were established, as well as the periods of progress and decline.

Our country is rich in historical monuments that have been handed down from generation to generation for centuries, proving to possess high culture and history with ancient roots. With its originality, grandeur, and inimitable beauty, Icherisheher, also known as the “museum under the open sky”, is one of those being considered the pearl of not only Azerbaijan’s culture but also of the mankind. This mysterious architectural gem, which is several centuries old and has been preserved to this day, has historically shaped the artistic and aesthetic image of the city.

The interpretation of the main material. According to the decision No. 280 of the Council of Ministers of the Azerbaijan SSR dated August 10, 1977, “On the declaration of “Icherisheher” in Baku, the historical parts of the cities of Shusha and Ordubad as historical-architectural reserves”, Icherisheher was granted the status of Historical-Architectural Reserve, and in 1985, it was replaced by the status of Icherisheher State Historical-Architectural Reserve [3, s. 20]. In order to protect the historical and architectural monuments of Azerbaijan, especially the Old City, and promote them to the international world, the relations between UNESCO and Azerbaijan were expanded, and the issue of strengthening mutual cooperation was discussed in detail in the meeting of Heydar Aliyev with the Director General of the organization, Federico Mayor, held in December 1993. As a result of hard work and endeavors, the National Leader succeeded in inscribing the Old City along with Maiden Tower and the Complex of the Shirvanshahs Palace on the World Heritage List as the first historical monument from Azerbaijan at the 24th session of UNESCO held in Cairns, Australia on December 2, 2000 [7].

The earthquake in Baku on November 25, 2000 did not bypass the Old City and seriously damaged this unique architectural gem. Due to the consequences of the earthquake, the illegal construction works caused by the lack of a unified system and control in the Old City, which pose a threat to the architectural monuments located in the Reserve, and the absence of a plan for the protection, restoration and further development of the Icherisheher, the Old City complex was included in the UNESCO List of World Heritage in Danger at the 27th session of the World Heritage Committee, consisting of representatives of 21 countries, on July 4, 2003. The Organization were satisfied with the urgent measures implemented on the basis of the decrees

and orders adopted by President Ilham Aliyev regarding the protection and restoration of the Old City, the efficient operation of the Administration, the drawing up of the master plan of the urban planning concept in the Old City, and the restoration and conservation works in accordance with the plan. Thus, the experts of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee appreciated all the implementations and as a result, at the 33rd session of UNESCO's World Heritage Committee held in Seville, Spain on June 22-30, 2009, the Old City was removed from the «black list», that is, the World Heritage List in Danger, and a decision was made to restore its previous status [8].

The historical background of the stone chronicles. There are 3 world, 28 nationally important architectural, 8 archeological and more than 500 locally significant monuments in the territory of Icherisheher, which is considered as the national wealth of the Azerbaijani people. Preserved as a «city within a city», Icherisheher is also home to residential buildings, hotels, restaurants and commercial facilities of various purposes. The buildings surrounded by defensive 12th-century walls are remarkable examples of a combination of Eastern and Western traditions. The living history of the people is engraved in the locally and internationally important historical-architectural monuments such as Maiden Tower (the 12th century), Shirvanshahs Palace Complex (the 15th century), Fortress walls, caravanserais, baths, mosques. The population of Icherisheher, which is the foundation of the city of Baku and is rich with examples of medieval architecture, covering an area of 22 ha, has been inhabited since the Bronze Age. The city's natural oil and salt reserves, as well as its location on the sea coast, have made the area more attractive for people. As a consequence of archeological excavations carried out in different years, material and cultural samples belonging to ancient times were discovered. The date of formation of the area as a settlement or fortification is not known precisely due to the incomplete investigation of the city with an internal neighborhood structure from an archaeological point of view.

After the collapse of the city of Shamakhi in the 12th century as a result of a terrible earthquake, the ruler of the Shirvanshahs (9th-16th centuries) Akhsitan I moved his residence to Baku which led to the beginning of a new stage in the development history of the city. During these years, which are regarded as the heyday of Baku, the city was fortified with defense structures and fortress walls were erected in the first half of the 12th century [4, s. 128]. Thus, the city was already surrounded by huge and strong

fortifications from the north, east and west sides in the Middle Ages. In the ode of Khagani Shirvani, a prominent poet-philosopher of that period, praising Akhsitan ibn Manuchohr, Baku surrounded by strong fortifications was compared to the city of Khorasan, Bastam, and was described as its impregnable fortress and the great city of the East. It is possible to find the information about the strong fortress walls of Baku city in the eulogy of Badir Shirvani, the poet laureate who lived and created in the palace of the Shirvanshahs at the end of the 14th century and the beginning of the 15th century, dedicated to Lala Adi, who was the shah's nanny [2, s. 97]. Along with these notes, the illustrations of travelers of various centuries and photos from the beginning of the 19th century clearly prove that Baku was once surrounded by two layers of fortress walls. These defensive walls, repaired and restored in different periods, were 1500 meters long in the Middle Ages, and only 500 meters of them have remained intact till modern times. The height of the Baku fortress walls, which are 3.5 meters wide, is 8-10 meters depending on the location.

In accordance with historical sources, the fortress wall of Baku was built during the reign of Shirvanshah Manuchohr III (1120-1160) at the beginning of the 12th century. Among the stone monuments preserved in the funds of the National Museum of History of Azerbaijan, a unique inscription of the 12th century (2x0.7m) of special historical significance visually confirms this information. This limestone inscription was discovered in 1954 during the partial collapse of one of the northern crescents in the fortress walls of Baku. This stone inscription, which reflects crucial historical information, also indicates the expansion of fortification construction works in Baku in the Middle Ages. After reading the three-line Arabic script on the stone inscription, it was determined that the Baku fortress wall was built in the first half of the 12th century by the order of Shirvanshah Manuchohr III (1120-1160): "City Tower building was ordered by magnificent melik, scientist, fair, triumphant, prosaic, mujahid (fighter), and the state of religion, the stronghold of Islam and Muslims, the largest Khagan, the Shirvanshah Abulhija Manouchehr bin..." [1, s. 112].

In addition, the authors of the next century mentioned in their works that Baku was surrounded by fortress walls. Abd-Ar-Rashid al-Bakuvi, a 15th-century Azerbaijani scholar, noted in 1403 that the city was surrounded by strong stone walls built on the coast from both sides. On the south side, that is, on the seaside, the wall was single-layered. The walls of the fortress were

protected by a deep and wide moat, which was filled with water annually through underground aqueducts coming from three sides in case of danger. In the Middle Ages, the fortress walls extended to the Caspian Sea. Certain tectonic processes resulted in the change of the appearance of the coast and lowering of the sea level, and a wide coastal area was created between the Baku fortress and the Caspian Sea. Later, Neftchiler avenue and Seaside Baku Boulevard were established in this area.

Following the restoration of the fortress walls in the 1950s, 25 of the 70 semicircular towers and one square-shaped tower, also called donjon («donjon» is a French word translated as «defense fortress»), have remained. 13 of its constellations, repeated every 12-15 meters, are located on the north and east side of the city, and 12 are on the west side [4, s. 128]. The quadrangular fortress constellation, i.e. donjon, was built in the 15th century in order to further strengthen the defense of the city and resist the enemy. Although the Baku donjon is a separate defense structure, it is not in the center of the city, but it was built in the row of walls to strengthen the fortress wall, which shows its uniqueness and necessity for the city. The height of the fortress, which is an integral part of the defense system, is 16 meters, and the wall thickness is 2 meters. In the Medieval Era, this quadrangular fortress was used as an armory both during peace and war. Rectangular-shaped loopholes in the walls and turrets were opened, and at first archers, and then shooters, fired from here.

Interesting information about the Baku fortress can be found in the historical sources of the 16th century. According to the description of Hasan Rumlu, the historian of that period, the Gilzbash army sent here in 1501 under the command of Muhammad bey Ustajli and Ilyas bey Khunuslu under the command of Shah Ismail to capture the impregnable Baku fortress was amazed by the high and strong walls of the fortress, similar to the legendary wall of Alexander the Great. During the Safavid-Ottoman wars in the second half of the 16th century, the city of Baku was captured by the Ottoman army in 1578. The fortress walls were damaged by wars and were restored by the order of the Ottoman ruler Mustafa Pasha. During the next Safavid-Ottoman wars that took place in 1603-1612, the city came under the control of the Safavids again in 1607. It is possible to consider this period, that is, the years of the reign of Shah Abbas I, as a new stage in the history of the Baku fortress. During the Shah's reign, in 1608-1609, the fortress walls were fundamentally restored, and the outer fortress walls were constructed on the instructions of Zulfugar Khan, who was appointed to the position of «Amir-ul-umara» in the

Shirvan province and who worked as a skilled diplomat in the Safavid state [5, s.80]. An Arabic inscription dated 1017 (AD 1608-1609) on the Paired Fortress Gates (Gosha Gala Gapisi) informs about this restoration and construction works.

As can be seen from the archival photographs, the inner fortress wall was higher than the outer wall. This way of construction of the outer fortress wall was probably to create the illusion of a more easily breached wall. At the same time, only the top of the outer fortress wall was completed with serrated projections (merlons) in order to maintain a more spectacular view of the city from afar. Such tooth-shaped protrusions were not found on the first, that is, the inner wall of the fortress. Most likely, these protrusions were removed by the Russian military garrison at the beginning of the 19th century in order to place artillery installations to repel the attacks of the Persian cavalry [9]. In the 1950s, such protrusions were added to the inner fortress wall to restore the image of the demolished outer fortress wall.

In the 17th century, Baku had already become a large trade and port city of Shirvan, where merchants, artists, and travelers all over the world visited. The fortress walls and gates of Baku were included in the works and descriptions of many famous travelers of that time. The fortress wall, which extends into the Caspian Sea and has not reached our time, could be obviously seen in the gravure made in 1630 by the German artist traveler Engelbert Kaempfer, who is considered to have depicted Baku for the first time. Another prominent Turkish traveler of the century, geographer Evliya Çelebi, described Baku in his writings as a square-shaped fortification located on a high hill on the Caspian coast, surrounded by fortress walls on three sides and with three gates [5, s. 81].

Due to the political situation at the beginning of the 18th century, the fortress walls were damaged and substantially restored in certain periods. The plan named «Situation plan of the Baku fortress» obtained from the central military-historical state archive of Moscow indicates both the fortress walls and the city buildings. After the city was captured by the Russians in 1723, bastions were built in six additional places at the ends of the outer walls, increasing the functionality of this fortress. In the plan of 1738, it is shown that these bastions were strengthened to the fortress walls of Baku between 1723 and 1738.

The eastern lands of Northern Azerbaijan were included in the Shamakhi governorate, which was formed according to the December 1846 adminis-

trative reform of the Tsarist government. As a result of the earthquake that occurred in 1859, the city of Shamakhi was heavily destroyed, the center of the governorate was moved to Baku. The construction of civilian buildings around the fortress walls began to speed up even more after the city of Baku became the center of the governorate. At the time in question, there were warehouses and bridges used by various companies mainly for economic purposes on the narrow coastline. This situation, that arose on the coast, which was divided into two parts, called Alexandrovsky in the west, and Petrovsky in the east, prevented the construction of a single coastal street. In this regard, the military governor of Baku and the head of the civil division, Lieutenant-General M.P. Kolyubakin applied to the government for the demolition of the old fortress wall that separated the city from the seashore, and at his request, in 1865, permission was granted to dismantle the seaside fortress wall. City Municipality Administration earned 40,000 gold coins (44,000 manats) by selling the remaining stones from the demolition of the fortress wall on the seashore to residents [6]. The first engineering works carried out on the coastline were associated with the name of the Azerbaijani architect Gasim Bey Hajibababeyov (1811-1874). Based on his project, a water pipeline was built here in 1867, fountains were installed, new commercial places, residential houses were established, and already at the beginning of the 20th century, the construction of the seaside boulevard began.

The second half of the 19th century was a period characterized by the rapid expansion of the city of Baku and the development of the urban economy. The ever-increasing population of the city resulted in the reduction of residential areas and the need to expand the territory within the fortress walls. In addition to the mentioned economic reasons, the fact that the fortress walls have become extremely old and lost their military significance leads to raising the issue of dismantling the outer wall. In 1868, for the purpose of beautifying and further expanding the city, the military governor of Baku, Lieutenant-General Mikhail Petrovich Kolyubakin, applied to the Caucasus Military District with a petition to abolish the Baku fortress as a military defense fortification, demolish the fortress wall and fill the ditches. The application was considered in Petersburg, and on August 1, 1870, the Minister of War reported that the Emperor authorized the filling of the moat, the demolition of the relatively low-built outer fortress wall, and the preservation of the higher inner wall as a historical monument [6].

At the end of the 70s of the century, the City Municipality was established and the fortress wall was removed from the command of the military commandant and given to its management. Many parts of the fortress walls of the city were half-demolished, and in some areas they were in danger of being completely blown away by strong winds. In order to check the walls, a commission consisting of provincial and city architects, a representative of the Baku city government, the head of the Baku city Police Department and the head of the Baku Artillery Department was established at the suggestion of the governor V.M. Posenin. During the inspection, it was found that the fortress walls were eroded over time, and were falling apart from both the inside and the outside. After long discussions, the issue of maintaining or demolishing the castle walls was entrusted to the city government. In June 1882, the petition of the City Duma regarding the demolition of the first (outer) fortress wall was considered by the Supreme Military Administration, and on April 2, 1883, permission was granted to demolish the outer fortress wall [6].

The demolition of the outer fortress wall started from Mikhailovskaya Street, near the Shamakhi Gate, and continued to the part where Taghiyev's house is located (the area where Yukhari (Upper) or Taghiyev Gate is located, opposite to Sabir Garden). When the outer fortress wall was dismantled in such a phased manner, the remaining stones were used to restore the inner fortress wall. The stones left from the demolished fortress wall were also utilized in the construction of other buildings in the city. Thus, the demolition process of the outer fortress wall, which began in 1883, was completed in 1888.

Based on the historical sources, there were five entrance gates placed in different directions of Baku in the fortress wall in the Middle Ages. Two of those gates, the Shamakhi or Paired Fortress Gates on the north side of the city and the Salyan gate on the west, are open to the land. In the Middle Ages, these gates served as a basic communication means with the land, and caravans coming from the north, that is, from Shamakhi, passed through the Salyan gates to the south - to Iran [4, s.129]. On the fortress wall, there were also three gates of the city opening to the sea. In addition to these, passages were opened in the inner fortress wall to communicate with the bastions, and in the plan of 1738 it was called a «secret gate or exit». After the Baku fortress was removed from the list of military fortresses and the use of the fortress walls for defensive purposes was stopped, due to the increase in the popula-

tion of Baku, several more passages and gates were constructed here for the convenience of the residents.

Conclusion. Icherisheher has been placed in the forefront among the historical and cultural monuments contributing to the development of cultural tourism in Azerbaijan. In addition to being rich in historical and architectural monuments, Icherisheher has always been of the main attention to tourists traveling the country as a place where ancient and modern architectural styles meet. The fortress walls are stone chronicles playing an exceptional role in providing those tourists with detailed information about the history of the country, especially the Old City. During the inspection conducted by the commission established for the purpose of examining these walls, it was found that the fortress walls were eroded, some parts were half-destroyed, some were in danger of being blown away by the wind, and in general, they had already lost its military significance, too. Although these mentioned reasons are the natural factors influencing the demolition of the outer fortress wall, the economic conditions of the time also played a significant role in this issue. In the 19th century, the development of the urban economy of Baku, the increase in the number of the city's population led to a decrease in residential areas. This, in turn, revealed the need to expand the territory within the fortress walls. The stated natural and economic causes resulted in the complete demolition of the outer fortress wall and restoration of the inner fortress wall as a historical monument at the end of the 19th century. Destruction of the outer fortress wall means not only the removal of stones, but also the erasure of certain pages from our historical memory. Over the centuries, the works carried out in the direction of the improvement of the cities did not pass without affecting the historical and cultural monuments, and in certain years they did not bypass the Old City either. By adapting to modern standards, presenting antiquity as innovation without making profound changes, and restoring and preserving examples of cultural heritage in this way should become one of the vital requirements and priorities of the modern times.

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Ayşən Hüseynova (Azərbaycan)

İÇƏRİŞƏHƏRİN QALA DİVARLARI: DAYANIQLIQ RƏMZİ

Dünyanın mədəniyyət xəzinəsinə daxil olmuş İçərişəhərin qədim tarixini orada yerləşən tarixi mədəniyyət abidələrindən daha çox əhatə olunduğu qala divarları əks etdirir. Əsrlər boyu mühüm tarixi hadisələrin şahidi olmuş qala divarları bu illər ərzində həm təbii, həm də xarici təsirlərə məruz qalmışdır. Tarixi mənbələrə əsasən dövrün iqtisadi tələblərinə və yaranmış təbii şərait ilə əlaqədar olaraq xarici qala divarının sökülməsi, həmçinin, tarixi yaddaşın qismən silinməsi deməkdir. Məqalədə qala divarlarının inşa olunma tarixi, müxtəlif illər ərzində bərpası, hərbi əhəmiyyəti, istifadə məqsədlərindən bəhs olunmuşdur. Bununla yanaşı xarici qala divarının dağıdılmasına səbəb olan əsas faktorlar araşdırılmış və müasir dövrdə mədəni turizmə təsirləri nəzərdən keçirilmişdir. Tədqiqatın nəticələri tarixi yaddaşımızı özündə qoruyub saxlamış qala divarlarının şəhərin keçmişinin öyrənilməsi və beynəlxalq səviyyədə tanınması baxımından mədəni turizmin inkişafına töhfə verən əhəmiyyətli daş salnamələr olduğunu bir daha sübuta yetirmişdir.

Açar sözlər: mədəni irs, İçərişəhər, qala divarları, mədəni turizm, Bakı.

Айшан Гусейнова (Азербайджан)

КРЕПОСТНЫЕ СТЕНЫ ИЧЕРИШЕХЕР: СИМВОЛ СТОЙКОСТИ

Крепостные стены, окружающие Ичеришехер (Старый город), являясь частью Мировой сокровищницы культуры, отражают древнюю историю города больше, чем расположенные там иные исторические и

культурные памятники. Подвергаясь как естественным, так и внешним воздействиям, на протяжении веков эти укрепления становились свидетелями важнейших исторических событий. К сожалению, снос внешней крепостной стены, несмотря на все объективные причины своего времени, как экономического, так и бытового характера, одновременно стал и причиной утери части исторического наследия. Статья посвящена истории строительства крепостных стен, их реставрации в разные годы, их военному значению и целям использования. Кроме того, были исследованы основные факторы, которые привели к разрушению крепостных стен, а также была сделана попытка изучить их влияние на культурный туризм в современное время. Результаты исследования еще раз подтверждают, что крепостные стены, как древние каменные летописи, отражающие нашу историческую память, представляют собой ценный источник по изучению прошлого города, его популяризации в современном мире, и что самое важное, способствуют развитию культурного туризма.

Ключевые слова: культурное наследие, Старый город, крепостные стены, культурный туризм, Баку.