

MISSION ATLAS PROJECT

Middle East

Azerbaijan

SnapShot

Country Name: Republic of Azerbaijan

Country Founded In: August 30,1991

Population: 7,911,974

Government Type: Republic

Geography: Eastern Europe, bordering the Caspian Sea, Between Iran and Russia

Number of People Groups: 37

Picture of Flag:



Religion Snapshot:

Major Religion and Percent of population: 93.4% Muslim (Mostly Sunni)

All Religions and % for each:

Muslims	83.7%
Shi'a	(75%)
Sunni	(25%)
Nonreligious	10.8%
Baha'is	0.02%
Jewish	0.37%
Christians	4.6%

Government interaction with religion:

Article 18 of Azerbaijan's constitution allows for freedom of religion and does not allow for the formation of a state religion. While freedom of religion exists, proselytizing by foreigners is prohibited. Attempts have been made by the country to limit the import of

religious literature and they have denied visas to some religious ministers from Western countries. There have also been some reports of religious persecution, where pastors or church members have been held by the police based on false charges.

Basic Facts

Demographics:

As of July 2005, the population of Azerbaijan was 7,911,974. The population growth rate is +0.59%.

Age structure stands 0-14 years 26.4%; 15-64 years 65.7%; 65+ years 7.8% (2005 est.)

The birth rate stands at 20.4 births per 1000 population and the death rate 9.86 deaths per 1000 population. Infant mortality rate is 81.74 deaths per 1000 live births.

Life expectancy is 59.24 years for males and 67.66 years for females.

Less than 0.1% of the adult population is infected with HIV/ AIDS.

The urban/rural division stands at 57.26% urban with a 1.4% urban growth rate.

The largest cities are *Baku* (1,946,000), *Kirovabad* (302,178), *Sumgait* (261,187), *Mingraur* (100,516), and *Seki* (69,885).

Encarta Encyclopedia: Johnstone and Mandryk
www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/aj.html

Language:

The official language of Azerbaijan is Azerbaijani, although Russian is used by many in business and government.

Society/ Culture:

Almost 37 people groups make up Azerbaijan.

The primary people divisions are:

Azeri (90.6%)

Dagestani (2.2%)

Russian (1.8%)

Armenian (1.5%)

Other (3.9%)

The people of Azerbaijan are a diverse group of people. Almost 37 people groups make up Azerbaijan, however, the majority of the population consists of the *Azeri* ethnic group. Much of the population is concentrated in a few urban centers. Although the country's culture and religion shows influence from Iran, the country is linguistically and ethnically Turkic. The official language is Azerbaijani, which is a Turkic language that belongs to the southern branch of Altaic languages. An estimated 38% also speak Russian fluently. Armenians living in *Nagorno-Karabakh* use Russian instead of Azerbaijani as their second language.

The people of Azerbaijan have a rich culture. They often have lavish celebrations and many enjoy music, poetry, and ancient crafts. *Mugman* is the classical music of Azerbaijan and usually contains *tahir* segments, which is a form of throat singing that resembles yodeling. The music is sung poetry, usually about divine love and it is often associated with Sufi Islam. This type of music is more free form and less rigid than the same type of music from other Central Asian and Eastern European countries. Also unique to Azerbaijan is a type of oriental saddle horse that was formed in the *Kazakh*, *Akstafa*, and *Tauz* regions of the country. Carpet weaving is an important tradition in the country. The patterns used are derived from modern life and works of classic Azerbaijan literature.

Several games are common in Azerbaijan. *Nard*, or backgammon is one of the most popular national games and is played by almost everybody in the country. In rural areas *gyulast*, wrestling, and *chovgan*, a type of polo, are also common. In Azerbaijan, a "cock-fight" is common during the spring, especially during *Novruz*. In this game, there are two teams, called "day" and "night." These teams attempt to stay within a circle, hopping on one leg, while the opposing team tries to knock them off balance or out of the circle. In another game, "seven beauties," seven girls are given hooks and different colors of threads and they must crochet stockings. The one who crochets the most qualitative stockings the fastest is the winner.

The traditional dish of Azerbaijan is called *plov*. There are over a hundred varieties of *plov*, and it is made with rice and different meats, vegetables, and fruit seasonings. Meat dishes in Azerbaijan are often flavored with chestnuts, dried apricots, raisins, and green herbs. Another favorite dish, especially in the northern and western parts of the country, is *khingal*. This is a flour dish with meat, fried onion, and dried cottage cheese. Those living in villages eat a white wheat bread that is baked in tandirs. They also eat *churek* and *lavash*, which are thin, baked pancakes. *Dolma*, ground lamb with rice and spices wrapped in grape leaves, is a common dish throughout the country. In the *Lankaran* region, chicken with nuts, onion, and jelly fried on a spit is common. *Dushpara* is a dish that is eaten in *Apsheron*. This dish small meat dumplings and *kutabs*, which are meat patties made in a thin dough. Soups are common first courses and are often made of meat balls, rice, peas, and potatoes, or sour milk and greenery. On holidays, cookies and pastries are made.

Azerbaijan has a large Muslim population, with an estimated 83.7% of the population calling themselves Muslims. About 75% of these Muslims are at least nominally Shia. The main Shia branch in Azerbaijan is that of the Jafarite rite. Iran and Azerbaijan are the only predominately Shiite Muslim countries in the world.

Although a large portion of the population professes to be Muslims, the degree of religious observance varies widely. Muslim identity in Azerbaijan tends to be based more on ethnicity and culture than on religion. Many do not know or observe the traditional precepts of Islam. Daily prayer and dietary restrictions are not followed by many. Ramadan is not followed strictly, especially by the younger Muslims. Folk Islam is very common and many people mix folk traditions from other religions, such as Zoroastrianism, in with what they know of Islam. Thousands make pilgrimages to holy sites of Muslim saints or martyrs or they venerate certain sacred places, trees, or rocks. One holiday, *Su Jeddin*, is a time where Azerbaijanis bath in certain hold streams in order to seek communion with ancestors. Oak and iron trees can not be cut down, as they are considered sacred, and some use the bark of an iron tree for spiritual protection or power. Many eat pork and drink alcohol and women are not usually veiled or segregated. Western dress is common among Muslim women in Azerbaijan and mini skirts are not uncommon.

Although Muslims in Azerbaijan are less restrictive than those in other Muslim countries, women still hold more traditional roles. In more rural areas, it is not acceptable for women to be unaccompanied in public, smoke in public, drive automobiles, or visit certain theaters and restaurants. Many women however work in jobs outside of the home and some have even gained leadership positions.

Christianity is the second largest religion in Azerbaijan. Article 18 of Azerbaijan's constitution allows for freedom of religion and does not allow for the formation of a state religion. While freedom of religion exists, proselytizing by foreigners is prohibited. Attempts have been made by the country to limit the import of religious literature and they have denied visas to some religious ministers from Western countries. There have also been some reports of religious persecution, where pastors or church members have been held by the police based on false charges. Christianity in Azerbaijan is made up mostly of Russian Orthodox and Armenian Apostolic groups.

The people in Azerbaijan who are Muslim celebrate several religious ceremonies. Most take part in a month of fasting called Ramazan, *Eid Al-Fitr*, or Ramadan. Many start the month by wearing new clothes and going to prayer. Children often receive gifts during this time. At the end of the month, they take part in a three-day feast. *Gurban Bayram*, which is the "feast of sacrifice," is also celebrated. This feast celebrates Abraham's sacrifice of a sheep in place of his son as ordered by Allah. Usually during this celebration, families slay a sheep and give some of the meat to the poor.

One of the most important holidays in Azerbaijan is *Novruz*. This is celebrated on the day of vernal equinox, between March 21- 22. This holiday is the symbol of nature renewal and fertility. People begin preparing for this holiday in advance by cleaning their homes, planting trees, making dresses, painting eggs, and cooking national pastries. Every home

must have “*semeni*,” which are sprouts of wheat. Four weeks before the holiday, children jump over small bonfires and candles are lit on Tuesdays. This is done as a tribute to fire worshiping. The evening before the holiday, families gather for a New Years feast. The festival lasts for days and at the end of the holiday, there is public dancing and other types of entertainment, such as folk bands and sporting events.

Other holidays that are celebrated are the New Year on January 1, January 20, which is Martyr’s Day, March 8, which is International Women’s Day, Victory Day on May 9, Day of the Republic on May 28, National Salvation Day on June 15, National Army Day on June 26, Independence Day on October 18, Constitution Day on November 12, National Revival Day on November 17, and the Day of Solidarity of the World Azeri, which is celebrated on December 31. This is the day Azerbaijanis broke down borders that separated them from those in Iran. Martyr’s Day marks “Black January” when Soviet troops killed more than 180 citizens in Baku in 1990. It is also a memorial to those killed in the Karabakh War. Republic Day recognizes the founding of the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan in 1918. National Salvation Day celebrates the day Parliament invited Heydar Aliyev to Baku to lead the country in 1993. National Revival Day recognizes the first uprising of the Popular Front against Moscow’s policies toward Azerbaijan and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

<http://en.wikipedia.org>

<http://foia.state.gov>

<http://www.gl.iit.edu/govdocs/azerbaijan>

<http://www.eurasianet.org/resource/azerbaijan/links/arts.shtml>

www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/aj.html

www.plasma.nationalgeographic.com/mapmachine/profiles/aj.html

<http://azerbaijan.tourism.az/Cerem.html>

Government:

Azerbaijan is a republic. President *Ilham Aliyev* has been chief of state since October 31, 2003 when he was elected by 76.8% of the popular vote. The president is elected by popular vote for a five year term and the next election is scheduled for October of 2008. The head of government is Prime Minister *Artur Rasizade* who has been in office since November 4, 2003 and First Deputy Prime minister *Abbas Abbasov* who has been in office since November 10, 2003. The head of government is appointed by the president and confirmed by the National Assembly. In the executive branch, there is a Council of Ministers that is appointed by the president and confirmed by the Supreme Assembly. The legislative branch is made up of a unicameral National Assembly, called the *Milli Mejlis*, which consists of 125 members who are elected by popular vote for five year terms. The Judicial Branch consists of a Supreme Court.

www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/print/aj.html

<http://www.country-studies.com/azerbaijan/government.html>

Economy:

The
Gross Domestic Product of Azerbaijan stood at \$30.01 billion in 2004. The country’s

main export is oil and the Apsheron peninsula is one of the richest oil regions of the world. The country has an abundance of oil reserves in the Caspian Sea and its largest offshore oil reserves are *Gunesli*, *Cirak*, *Azeri*, and *Kepez*. Oil production dropped in the 1990's through 1997, but picked back up under production sharing arrangements, or PSA's, with foreign corporations. Azerbaijan's industries include petroleum and natural gas, petroleum products, oilfield equipment, steel, iron ore, cement, chemicals and petrochemicals, and textiles. Azerbaijan has major hydroelectrical plants on the *Kura*, *Tertter*, and *Aras* rivers. During the late Soviet period, the power plants of Azerbaijan were a part of the Joint Transcaucasian Power Grid that provided power to Georgia and Armenia; however, Azerbaijan has cut off power to Armenia due to the conflict over *Nagorno-Karabakh*.

Agricultural products common to Azerbaijan include fruits, vegetables, grain, cotton, rice, grapes, tea, tobacco, cattle, pigs, sheep, and goats. The *Kura* River Valley is the area's main agricultural region and is the area where wheat, barley, corn, fruits, wine, grapes, potatoes, cotton, silk, and tobacco are produced. Tea and rice are grown in the subtropical *Lankaran* Lowland area. Widespread salt springs have also been beneficial to the country's economy as health resorts have begun to flourish.

Oil and gas makes up 90% of Azerbaijan's exports. Other exports include machinery, cotton, and foodstuffs. About 31.1% of Azerbaijan's exports go to Italy, 14.5% goes to Czech Republic, and 9.4% goes to Germany. Russia, Turkey, Georgia, and France also receive exports from Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan's major imports include oil products, metals, foodstuffs, chemicals, machinery, and equipment. 13.9% of Azerbaijan's imports come from the United Kingdom and 13.1% come from Russia. Azerbaijan receives about 11.5% of the country's imports from Turkey, 8% from Germany, 5.3% from the Netherlands, 5% from China, and 4.7% from the United States. Italy and Ukraine also send exports to Azerbaijan.

In 2002, almost 49% of Azerbaijan lived in poverty. Of the three former Soviet Transcaucasus republics, Azerbaijan's economic problems are the most severe. Health care in the country is a problem. During the Soviet Period, Azerbaijan had one of the least effective health care systems of all the Soviet Republics, and after independence the health care system continued to deteriorate. In 1991, the number of physicians per 1,000 people were about four and the number of hospital beds was estimated to be about ten per 1,000 people. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, there have been shortages of medicines and equipment and some rural clinics have been forced to close.

Air and water pollution are also problems in Azerbaijan. Some have reported *Baku* to have the most polluted air quality in the former Soviet Union. Oil leakages and the dumping of raw or inadequately treated sewage has polluted the Caspian Sea and reduced the availability of fish and caviar. The heavy use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers has caused extensive groundwater pollution. Scientists have linked this to birth defects and illnesses.

There are many development opportunities. Education in the country is not as good as in other areas. Problems include systematic malnutrition of students, the absence of food necessary for children in the kindergartens, and the shortage of text-books, furniture, and buildings. Hostels meant for students in technical secondary schools are occupied by refugees. People and funds are needed for construction of prefabricated small houses to be used as school buildings. Counselors are also needed, as many of the children of refugees are suffering from war related trauma. Counselors are needed for the adults as well.

Due to the poor healthcare in the country, health care workers are also needed. Workers and funds are needed to provide medicines and equipment to poorly equipped hospitals, as well as to provide training to doctors and nurses. There is also a need for a program to improve farming techniques, provide irrigated water, and improve leadership in villages. People are needed as veterinarians and to train veterinarians in the area in order to help with the low breeding rates and livestock mortality.

Mercycorps, along with other non-profit groups are working to help people in Azerbaijan with small businesses. People are needed to go to rural areas or to work with women to give them business skills and business education. Women are finding a way to use their skills in rug making and carpet weaving to make money. Other women are holding businesses raising chickens.

<http://azerbaijan.tourism.az/culture.html>

<http://www.mercycorps.org>

Johnstone, Patrick & Mandryk, Jason. *Operation World: 21st Century Edition*. Cumbria, CA: Paternoster Lifestyle, 2001.

www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/print/aj.html

<http://www.country-studies.com/azerbaijan>

<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook>

Literacy:

Azerbaijan has a total 97% literacy rate, with 99% of men and 96% of women above the age of 15 able to read and write.

www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/print/aj.html

Land/Geography:

Azerbaijan is in Eastern Europe or Southwestern Asia. It borders the Caspian Sea and lies between Iran and Russia. The country is slightly smaller than Maine. It borders the countries of Armenia, Georgia, Iran, Russia, and Turkey. The *Kura Araks* lowlands are flat and much of this area is below sea level. The Great Caucasus Mountains are in the northern part of the country and The *Karabakh* Upland is in the west. The capital, *Baku* is on the Apsheron Peninsula which extends into the Caspian Sea.

www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/print/aj.html

Brief History of Azerbaijan

50,000 BCE-2,000 BCE

Azerbaijan is a country with a rich and ancient history. It is one of the oldest places of civilizations in the world. The *Azykh* cave, which is located on the left bank of Guruchay River, has given the earliest habitation of man that has been found in the world. Other habitations that date back to the Stone Age have been found in Azerbaijan. It is believed that in the third millennium BC tribes were forming in Azerbaijan and by the first millennium BC the first political formations were arising in southern Azerbaijan. These states laid the foundation for the *Manna Kingdom*. By the 9th century BC *Manna* state had formed and a high economic and cultural level had developed. During this time, the pantheons of divinities were created.

Achaemenid Rule, ca. 550-331 BC

In the ninth century BC, the Scythians settled in Azerbaijan. During the 8th century BC, the Medes, who were related to the Persians, settled in the southern part of the country. Cyrus the Great led the Persians to overthrow the Medes around 550 B.C.

Cyrus the Great led this Persian dynasty called the *Archaemenid Dynasty* and by 539 B.C., Cyrus had added Babylonia, Palestine, Syria, and all Asia Minor to his empire. Cyrus' son, Cambyses, would later add Egypt to the empire in 525 B.C. Darius I became king in 522 B.C. and the empire prospered. Darius built roads, established shipping lanes, and introduced gold and silver coins. At its peak, around 500 B.C. the empire stretched from modern day Libya, east to modern day Pakistan, and from the Gulf of Oman in the south to the Aral Sea in the north.

Alexander the Great and the Sassanians, ca. 330 BC-700AD

The *Archaemenid Empire* declined during the mid 400 B.C. A series of powerless kings weakened the Empire and Alexander the Great conquered it in 331 B.C. Alexander's goal was to combine the Greek and Persian Empires into one great world empire, but he died in 323 B.C. without reaching his goal.

Alexander the Great's death in 323BC led to a struggle in which his generals fought for control of his empire. This quickly led to the deterioration of the Empire. The Scythians, who were nomadic warriors from the north, established the kingdom of *Parthia*. This kingdom included present day Iran and Azerbaijan. At the peak of their rule, the kingdom extended as far as India. In 224AD, Parthia fell to the Sassanians of Persia.

In A.D. 224, *Ardashir* led the Persians in the overthrow of the Parthians. *Ardashir* then founded the *Sassanid dynasty* that ruled the area for over 400 years. The *Sassanid* kings improved the dynasty's cities, roads, and irrigation systems. Their reign, however, was weakened due to frequent Roman invasions. Caucasian Albania, which included Azerbaijan went back and forth from Roman rule to Sassanian rule. The Kingdom of Caucasian Albania is where the first Christian communities in the region developed. By

the fourth century, Christianity was the primary religion in the area. *Sassanid* rule ended when Muslim invaders from Arabia conquered them.

Islamic Conquest, ca. 637-900AD

After the death of Mohammad, Islam spread the Middle East and Central Asia. Five years after the death of Mohammad, at the *Battle of Qadisiya* in 637AD, Arab Muslims defeated the Iranian Sassanians and began taking over the regions east of Iran. This raid brought local rulers under the control of the *Umayyad* caliphs.

Between the seventh and ninth centuries, most of Central Asia was converted from Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and folk religions to Sunni Islam. Semi-independent states began to emerge throughout the empire by the middle of the ninth century as the *Abbasid* rule began to deteriorate. One of the best known dynasties during this time was that of the *Samanid*. During this time, Iranian Muslim scholarship, Shia Islam, dominated the area. This dynasty lasted until the middle of the tenth century when Turkish tribes from the north and the *Ghaznavids* from the south took on the faltering *Samanid Dynasty*.

Seljuk Turks, the Mongols, and the Safavid Dynasty ca. 900-1400AD

By the mid eleventh century, *Oghuz* tribes under the *Seljuk Turkic Dynasty* from Turkestan conquered most of the area. The *Seljaks* brought the Turkish language and customs to Azerbaijan. As the original Persian population became fused with the Turkic language, a distinct Azerbaijani language developed. By the thirteenth century, many of the basic characteristics of the people of Azerbaijan had been established.

The Turks ruled the area until 1220, when *Hulegu Khan* brought the Mongols to the area. The Mongols attacked the country, killing thousands and destroying the cities. *Hulegu* ruled Persia and Azerbaijan from his capital in the city of *Tabriz*. By the end of the fourteenth century, another Mongol *Timur* or *Tamarlane*, invaded Azerbaijan. Around the same time, Azerbaijani rule was growing stronger under the *Shirvan Dynasty*. *Shirvan shah Ibrahim I ibn Sultan Muhammad* submitted to the leadership of *Timur* for a time. The Mongols remained in control of the region until the 1400's when they began fighting among themselves and lost control of the area.

By the sixteenth century, the *Azerbaijani Safavid Dynasty* gained control of Persia. The *Safavids* were of Persian descent and the family leader, *Ismail*, was crowned king in 1501. The greatest king of this dynasty was *Shah Abbas*, who ruled from 1587-1629. It was under his leadership that the dynasty was able to keep the Ottoman Turks from Central Asia and the Uzbek tribes from Turkestan from gaining control of Azerbaijan during the eighteenth century.

Russian control of Azerbaijan and Soviet Rule, ca. 1800-1991

During the eighteenth century, the *Safavid Dynasty* underwent a period of feudal fragmentation and divided into independent khanates. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, control of Azerbaijan was determined primarily by two treaties. The *treaty of Gulistan*, signed in 1813, divided Azerbaijan along the *Araz River*. According to the *Treaty of Turkmenchay*, which was signed in 1828, Russia was given control of the *Nakhichevan khanates*, which is the area along the present-day border between Armenia and Turkey, in the region of the *Talysh Mountains*. According to these two treaties, Northern Azerbaijan fell under Russian control and Southern Azerbaijan was controlled by Persia. This treaty established Azerbaijan's present frontiers and was the end of the last native dynasties of local Azerbaijani khans.

In 1848-1849, the world's first oil well was drilled south of *Baku*. During the 1870's Azerbaijan experienced a period of unprecedented prosperity its oil fields were exploited. *Baku* became the center of oil extraction and refinery. It produced more than half of the world's and about 95% of Russia's oil extraction totals. Alfred Nobel and his brothers ran an oil company and established the Nobel Prize.

The daily life of Azerbaijan was not affected much by Russian control, however, there was an influx of Russians into *Baku*, which increased Russian influence in the area. The population of Baku increased from about 13,000 people in the 1860's to about 215,000 people by 1913. Over one third of these people were ethnic Russians. In 1905, tension arose between the Azerbaijani's, Armenians, and the Russians. *Baku* became the largest city in the Caucasus region.

During the last years of World War 1, *Baku* became the target of operations for the armies in the region. The city passed from Russian control to Ottoman Turkish control, and then into British hands. After the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, Russian Azerbaijan joined with Armenia and Georgia to form the *Anti-Bolshevik Transcaucasian Federation*.

At the end of World War 1, Tsarist rule in Russia collapsed and the federation seized the opportunity to declare independence. On May 28, 1918, Azerbaijan declared its independence and established the *Independent Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan*. This was the first Muslim Republic in the world and lasted for two years, until it was invaded by Red Army forces in 1920.

Red Army forces faced little opposition when they invaded Azerbaijan because the Azerbaijanis were occupied in trying to suppress the separatism among the Armenians that formed the majority in the *Nagorno-Karabakh* area, which is in south central Azerbaijan. The *Baku* oil fields were seized in April of 1920 and Azerbaijan was declared a Soviet Socialist Republic.

In September of 1920, Azerbaijan signed a treaty with Russia that unified the military forces and economy of the two countries. In 1922, Azerbaijan became a member of the *Transcaucasian Soviet Federated Republic*, and in 1936 the new *Stalin Constitution* abolished the TSFSR and the country became a full republic of the Soviet Union. After World War 2, Azerbaijan was used as a base for Communist rebels in Iran.

In the middle of 1920, the Red Army occupied an Azerbaijani enclave between Armenia and northwestern Iran called *Nakhichevan*. It was declared a Soviet socialist Republic with close ties to Azerbaijan and in 1921 *The Russo-Turkish Treaty of Moscow* and the *Treaty of Kars* were signed, confirming the area's ties to Azerbaijan.

In 1924, *Nakhichevan* was designated an autonomous republic of Azerbaijan. In 1938, Soviet officials expelled Azerbaijanis with Iranian passports from the republic and during World War 2, they occupied the northern part of Iran. The Soviet army withdrew from Iran in 1946, and the Iranian government began suppressing the Azerbaijani culture. Contact between Azerbaijanis north and south of the Iranian- Soviet border was very limited.

During Stalin's control of the Soviet Union, from 1926-1953, Azerbaijan, along with other Soviet Republics, suffered much. Forced collectivization and purges hurt the culture and economy of the country. Industrialization and literacy, however, increased in the area. After Stalin, Azerbaijan faced less intrusive control by Moscow. The 1980's saw a wave of violence. On February 20, 1988, the *National Council of Nagorno-Karabakh* voted to unite the region with Armenia. This resulted in more than 100 Armenians being massacred by the Azerbaijanis in the city of *Sumgait*, north of *Baku*.

A similar attack against Azerbaijanis occurred in a predominantly Armenian town. In 1989, Azerbaijanis rioted along the Iranian border and destroyed border checkpoints and crossed into Iranian provinces that had large populations of Azerbaijani majorities. In January of 1990, Azerbaijanis used violence against the Armenian residents of Baku and other large cities. In response to this violence, Moscow sent forces to suppress the riots and between 120-190 Azerbaijanis were killed. On August 30, 1991, Azerbaijan declared independence from the USSR.

Nagorno-Karabakh, ca. 1988-current

The major domestic issue in Azerbaijan is the dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh. Nagorno-Karabakh is a predominately ethnic Armenian region within Azerbaijan and has been fought over since 1988, when Armenian demonstrations in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh arose against Azerbaijani rule. Due to increased violence, Moscow sent troops to the region and forcibly occupied *Baku* in 1990. Moscow supported the Azerbaijani militia until September of 1991, when it declared it would no longer support Azerbaijani military action in *Nagorno-Karabakh*. As Soviet involvement decreased, Armenian militants increased their use of violence. In December of 1991 Armenians in *Nagorno-Karabakh* approved the creation of an independent state.

It is estimated that more than 30,000 people were killed from 1992-1994. In May of 1992, Armenian and Karabakhi armies captured *Susha*, the capital of *Nagorno-Karabakh*, as well as *Lachin*. This linked *Nagorno-Karabakh* to Armenia and by October of 1993, Armenian and Karakhi armies were successful in occupying almost all of *Nagorno-Karabakh*. As these forces occupied the area, hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis were forced to flee to other parts of Azerbaijan. Another source suggests that almost a million Azerbaijanis were made refugees due to this conflict.

In 1993, the United Nations Security Council called for the cessation of hostilities and deployed a peacekeeping force to the region. In September of 1993, Turkey increased its armies along the Armenian border and issued a warning, insisting that Armenia withdraw its troops from Azerbaijan.

Iran also supported Azerbaijan. Iran helped to maintain camps in southwestern Azerbaijan and helped to house and feed almost 20,000 Azerbaijanis who fled from fighting. They also proposed a security zone along the border of Iran and Azerbaijan which would protect Azerbaijanis by Iranian armies. Although the UN called for an immediate withdrawal of all ethnic Armenian forces from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, the fighting did not end until May of 1994 when Russia called for a cease fire. Since the 1994 cease fire, there have been over 100 deaths each year due to sniper fire and land mine incidents.

The *Minsk Group* has been working since 1992 to resolve the issue. The group is currently chaired by Russia, France, and the United States and has representatives from several European countries, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Turkey. Officials from Iran and Kazakhstan were also involved in the process of trying to work out an agreement. Either Azerbaijan or Armenia has rejected the three different proposals presented by the *Minsk Group*. A peaceful solution has yet to be developed over *Nagorno- Karabakh*.

Independence, ca. 1991- current

On August 30, 1991, Azerbaijan declared independence from the USSR and became a member of the *Commonwealth of Independent States*. *Ayaz Mutalibov*, who was the former First Secretary of the Azerbaijani Communist Party, became the country's first president. *Mutalibov* resigned from office after a massacre of Azerbaijanis in *Nogorno-Karabakh* in March of 1992. The attack left many civilians dead. He was returned to power that May, but a week in June, *Abulfaz Elchibey*, who was the leader of the Popular Front party, was elected president. However, parliament kicked him out of office a year later as the result of a military mutiny. He was forced to flee to his native province of *Nakhchivan*.

Heydar Aliyev, who was the former leader of the Azerbaijani Communist Party from 1969- 1982, became the acting president and was later confirmed as president by an election in October of 1993. He was elected with only token opposition to a five year term and was reelected in 1998 to another five year term. After the 1995 elections, which the international community saw as corrupt, a new parliament was elected and filled primarily with members of *Aliyev's* party. They approved constitutional changes which gave *Aliyev* more power. In August of 2003, the president appointed his son, *Ilham Aliyev*, as the country's prime minister. *Ilham Aliyev* was elected as president on October 15, 2003.

Azerbaijan's oil has been of great benefit to the country's economy. In 1994, the country established the Azerbaijani International Operating Company under the "contract of the century." This contract joined a consortium of oil companies for the exploration and

exploitation of three offshore oil fields. In September of 2002, a 1,100 mile pipeline was begun that would link *Baku*, *Tblisi*, and *Ceyhan*. This pipeline, when completed, will provide an oil route through Georgia and Turkey. The first section of this pipeline opened in May of 2005.

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http://www.cac-biodiversity.org/aze/aze_history.htm
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<http://www.historyofnations.net/asia/azerbaijan.html>
<http://www.russiannewsnetwork.com/azerbaijan.html>
<http://www.akif.a11.net/history.html>
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Christian History

Azerbaijan's second largest official religion is Christianity. Christianity first came to Azerbaijan in the first century AD as the mission of *St. Eliseus* reached Caucasus Albania. One of the oldest Christian churches in the Caucasus is the Caucasus Albanian Church of *Kish*, which was founded in the *Sheki region* of Azerbaijan.

Christianity spread in this area in two different stages. The Apostolic stage happened from the first through the third century and the *Greekophil* began in the fourth century and lasted until the sixth century. By the third century, the *Apostolic Autocephalous Church* was established and religious life grew.

In the areas north of the Araz River, which runs through Azerbaijan, Christianity became the main religion. Christianity gained state recognition in the fifth century when *St. Grigor* baptized *Urnayr*, the king of the region.

Before the Arab invasion, the Albanian Church, along with the Georgian Church, accepted the *dyophysite doctrine* which said that Jesus Christ had two natures. In order for the Arab Caliphate to create a barrier to Byzantine influence, the Caliphate, with the help of the Armenian Church, steered the Albanian Church towards monophysitism, a doctrine that taught that in Jesus, there was only one nature, which was His divine nature.

After establishing this pronouncement, the Church was brought under the control of the monophysite Armenian Gregorian Church. This began the process of the Gregorianization of the Albanians living in the mountains. After the invasion of the

Arabs in the eighth century, most in Azerbaijan converted to Islam. Only a small minority retained their former religion.

The *Albanian Apostolic Church* was able to retain their Christianity until 1836, when the Russians, supported by the Armenian Church, abolished the Albanian patriarchate. In the nineteenth century, many Christians were given Russian protection to settle in Azerbaijan. These Christians were Orthodox Russians, Armenians, and Protestants.

Article 18 of Azerbaijan's constitution allows for freedom of religion and does not allow for the formation of a state religion. While freedom of religion exists, proselytizing by foreigners is prohibited. Attempts have been made by the country to limit the import of religious literature and they have denied visas to some religious ministers from Western countries. There has also been some reports of religious persecution, where pastors or church members have been held by the police based on false charges. Christianity in Azerbaijan is made up mostly of Russian Orthodox and Armenian Apostolic groups.

Non-Christian Religions

Buddhism, Hindu, Baha'i, and Zoroastrian

Due to its location and proximity to the Silk Road, Azerbaijan saw many religions pass through. By the beginning of the second century, the Kushan Empire reached its greatest geographic and cultural peak. It became a center of literature and art and also became a center of trade, especially in silk. It became part of a trade route into East Asia. *Kanishka*, who was the leader during this time was considered Kushans greatest ruler. During his reign, Mahayana Buddhism, reached its peak in this area.

Many believe Zoroaster, the founder of the Zoroastrian religion, was born in Azerbaijan in the seventh century B.C. During this time, a continuing flame from methane gases could be seen on a slope near *Baku*. During the Arab invasion, many Zoroastrians fled persecution and were forced to move to India, where they became known as Parsis. Until the Bolshevik period, Zoroastrian pilgrims from India and Iran returned to Azerbaijan to visit the sacred sites such as the *Ateshgah Temple of Surakhany*, near *Baku*. Parts of the Zoroastrian religion can be seen in the culture of Azerbaijan today. The celebration of *Navroz* on March 21 is observed by many and marks the beginning of the Zoroastrian New Year.

The Baha'i faith also has a history in Azerbaijan. In 1847, the Iranian Shah, *Mohammad Kadar* sent the *Bab* to the *Mahku* fortress in Southern Azerbaijan. From that time on, the Baha'i faith spread to Southern Azerbaijan. In an attempt to stop the spread of the Baha'i religion, Bab was sent to a castle and later he was sentenced to death on charges of heresy. On July 9, 1850, Bab was executed with one of his followers in *Tebriz*. Around the same time, more than 20,000 of his followers were slaughtered. During the lifetime of *Baha'u'llah*, the Baha'i faith had many followers in Northern Azerbaijan, especially in *Ordubad, Baku, Balakhani, Ganja, Barda, Goychay, Salyan, Neftchala, Shaki, and Shamakhy*.

The Baha'i community did not face persecution before, nor during the first years of Soviet rule. In 1937, however, Baha'i clergy began being persecuted. About 40 Baha'i communities were banned and many were arrested. Of those arrested, many were punished outside of court and some were executed or exiled to Siberia.

In 1993, Ministry of Justice granted permission for the legal functioning of the Baha'i Community of *Baku*, and in 2002, the community was registered with the State Committee of the Azerbaijani Republic for Working with Religious Organizations. Later that year, the Baha'i community in *Sumgayit* was also registered. Today, Azerbaijan has about_ people practicing the Baha'i faith. There are Baha'i spiritual centers in *Baku*, *Sumgayit*, and *Balakhani*. The communities are made up of various ethnicities, including Azerbaijanis, Russians, Jews, and Tartars.

Islam

After the death of Mohammad, Islam spread the Middle East and Central Asia. Five years after the death of Mohammad, at the *Battle of Qadisiya* in 637AD, Arab Muslims defeated the Iranian *Sassanians* and began taking over the regions east of Iran. This raid brought local rulers under the control of the Umayyad caliphs. Between the seventh and ninth centuries, most of Central Asia was converted from Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and folk religions to Sunni Islam. The *Abbasid Dynasty* grew stronger and was able to subdue the Arab invaders by the middle of the eight century.

Semi-independent states began to emerge throughout the empire by the middle of the ninth century as the *Abbasid* rule began to deteriorate. One of the best known dynasties during this time was that of the *Samanid*. During this time, Iranian Muslim scholarship, Shia Islam, dominated the area. *Bukhara* was the capital during this time.

This dynasty lasted until the middle of the tenth century when Turkish tribes from the north and the *Ghaznavids* from the south took on the faltering Samanid Dynasty. Rule changed hands many times over the next centuries, but Islam remained the predominate and almost the only acceptable religion of the area until the Russian conquest.

During the sixteenth century, the first shah of the *Safavid Dynasty* established Shia Islam as Azerbaijan's state religion. Although Shia was the state religion, many Azerbaijanis were dedicated to Sunni Islam. The *Safavid* court was influenced by both Sunni and Shia branches of Islam. These two branches of Islam came into conflict in Azerbaijan, as well as other countries, and the enforcement of Shia Islam in Azerbaijan brought conflict between Safavid rulers of Azerbaijan and the Sunnis in the neighboring Ottoman Empire.

During the nineteenth century, many Sunni Muslims fled from Russian controlled Azerbaijan due to fighting with coreligionists in the Ottoman Empire. As the Sunnis left, the Shia population became the majority in the country. During the late nineteenth century, Azerbaijani nationalism began to emphasize a common Turkic heritage. This led to a decrease in the conflict between Sunni and Shia Muslims.

During the Soviet Era, Islam was limited in the country. In many places, mosques and madrassahs were closed and religious festivals were banned. During the 1920's and 1930's, Muslims experienced harsh anti-Islamic attacks. In addition to bans on festivals and meetings, many were killed. Muslims were forced to go underground and secretly practiced their religion, or they were forced to practice their religion under the close scrutiny of the Soviet government.

At the beginning of Soviet rule, about 2,000 mosques were active in Azerbaijan, however, by the 1930's most were closed. In the 1940's, Islam became more accepted and some mosques were allowed to reopen, however, Islam was strictly controlled by the Kremlin. By the 1980's only two large mosques and five smaller mosques held services in *Baku*. In addition to these mosques, there were only eleven other mosques operating in the country. After independence, the number of mosques increased greatly. In 1991, a Muslim seminary was built. By 1994 there were about 200 mosques that were officially functioning.

Today, Azerbaijan has a large Muslim population, with an estimated 83.7% of the population calling themselves Muslims. About 75% of these Muslims are at least nominally Shia. The main Shia branch in Azerbaijan is that of the Jafarite rite. Iran and Azerbaijan are the only predominately Shiite Muslim countries in the world.

Although a large portion of the population professes to be Muslims, the degree of religious observance varies widely. Many do not know or observe the traditional precepts of Islam. Daily prayer and dietary restrictions are not followed by many. Ramadan is not followed strictly, especially by the younger Muslims. Folk Islam is very common and many people mix folk traditions from other religions, such as Zoroastrianism, in with what they know of Islam. Thousands make pilgrimages to holy sites of Muslim saints or martyrs or they venerate certain sacred places, trees, or rocks.

One holiday, *Su Jeddin*, is a time where Azerbaijanis bath in certain cold streams in order to seek communion with ancestors. Oak and iron trees can not be cut down, as they are considered sacred, and some use the bark of an iron tree for spiritual protection or power. Many eat pork and drink alcohol and women are not usually veiled or segregated. Western dress is common among Muslim women in Azerbaijan and mini skirts are not uncommon.

There is some concern with Muslim fundamentalist in Azerbaijan. One sect, the *Vahabi* sect, has become a concern to the government. The deputy minister of Azerbaijan says that 300 Azeri citizens have been trained at *Vahabi* centers in *Dagestan* over the past years. There are an estimated 7,000 people who are a part of this sect and they are known to associate with many of the 5,000 refugees from *Chechnya*. There are several *Vahabi* mosques in *Baku* and there are also major *Vahabi* centers that are active in the northern regions of Azerbaijan.

The leading Shiite mosque in *Baku* is the *Taza-Pir* mosque and the leading mosque for the Sunnis is the *Azhdarbek mosque*. In other parts of the country, Sunnis and Shiites

often share the same mosques and sometimes join in the same religious ceremonies. Shiites dominate the cities, and they are found more in the eastern, southern, and western districts of the country. The central and northern districts tend to be more Sunni and Sunnis are the majority in the cities of *Kuba*, *Nukha*, and *Shemakha*.

Judaism

About 16,000 people make up the Jewish community in Azerbaijan. Unlike other areas that are predominately Muslim, the Jews in Azerbaijan do not face persecution. On the contrary, many Jews are well respected. Many of the Jews in *Baku* are related to the mountain Jews, which are thought to have originally come from Iran and settled in the mountains of *Kuba*. The earliest synagogue in Azerbaijan dates back to the nineteenth century and is still active in *Kuba*.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, European Jews had left the less tolerant places in Russia and moved to *Baku*. By 1913, the Jewish community was the fourth largest ethnic group in the city. As the Jewish community in *Baku* increased, so did their influence. At one point, they made up over a third of the city's lawyers. Today, three Jewish synagogues are open in *Baku* and Jewish public organizations are operating. Many have left *Baku* after the country's independence.

Atheism/ Non-religious

In 2000, there were an estimated 36,023 atheists in Azerbaijan. Another 838,405 claimed to be non-religious. In all, the non-religious command some 11.31 % of the people but the group is losing -.07% annually. Still, the non-religious report almost three times the number of followers as do all branches of Christianity.

Christian cults and sects

On December 22, 1999, the Jehovah's Witness were notified of their official registration as a religion by the Ministry of justice. There are approximately 450 Jehovah's Witnesses in the country. While they are officially registered with the government, there have been reports of continued harassment at their meetings.

Catholics/ Orthodox Churches

Roman Catholic

In 1997, Polish priest Father Jersey Pilus, arrived in Baku and found only 30 Catholics. In 1995, there were an estimated 8,000 Catholics in the entire country. There had been a Catholic parish during the Communist revolution, but the church had been destroyed in the 1950's.

The previous priest, Father Stefan Demurov, is believed to have died after being sent to a concentration camp in Siberia. Since the arrival of Pilus, about 20 have converted to

Catholicism. John Paul the II visited Azerbaijan in 2002 and has also established the Catholic Mission of Baku.

The current leader of this is Slovak Father Joseph Pravada. Today, there are seven registered Catholic congregations with about 4,360 members. These are mostly made up of Ukrainians and Armenians.

Orthodox

More than 90% of Azerbaijani's Christians are Orthodox.

The *Armenian Apostolic Church* is the largest church in Azerbaijan. There are 14 congregations made up of about 126,374 members.

The *Russian Orthodox Church* has around 9 registered congregations in Azerbaijan, with some 68,182 members.

The *Georgian Orthodox Church* has decreased greatly since 1995.

The *Russian Orthodox Church* traces its roots back to 988. Russia adopted Christianity as the official religion when *Prince Vladimir of Kiev* became a Christian in 988. The ceremony for Prince Vladimir was based upon Byzantine rites and this would serve as a model for the rise of the Russian Orthodox Church.

The Church traces its apostolic succession through the Patriarch of Constantinople. At the Council of Florence in 1439, leaders of the Catholic and Orthodox Church agreed to reunify the two branches of Christianity. The Russian people rejected the concessions to the Catholics and Metropolitan Isidore was kicked out of his position in the church. The Russian Orthodox Church today remains separate from the Vatican. In 1448, the Russian Orthodox Church separated from the Patriarchate of Constantinople and installed Metropolitan Jonas who was given the title of Metropolitan of Moscow and all of Rus.

Patriarch Nikon, in 1652 attempted to centralize the power that had been distributed locally while conforming Russian Orthodox rite and rituals to those of the Greek Orthodox Church. An example of this conformation was the insistence that Russians cross themselves with three fingers instead of two. People saw these changes as heresy and this led to Nikon's loss of power. One leader, Tsar Aleksey, however, maintained Nikon's changes and persecuted those who opposed Nikon's changes. They were persecuted until Peter the Great's reign, which allowed people to practice their own style of Orthodoxy.

The Russian Orthodox Church grew during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In 1686, the Metropolia of Kiev was moved from Constantinople to Moscow, which brought millions of followers under the authority of the Russian Orthodox Patriarch. Missionaries were sent across Siberia and into Alaska and the United States. In 1721, Peter the Great established the Holy and Supreme Synod to govern the church instead of leaving the

authority with one person. Things remained this way until after the Russian Revolution in 1917. During this time, bishops elected a new patriarch. By 1914, there were 55,173 Russian Orthodox Churches, 29,593 chapels, and 112,629 priests in Russia.

The church had to coexist with a secular government and followers were often disadvantaged and persecuted. During the 1920's and 1930's, many churches were converted into secular buildings and over 50,000 priests were sent to Labor camps or executed. Several seminaries were reopened in 1944, but relations between the Church and government got worse after Stalin's death. People were kept from many jobs due to their faith. University students were forced to take courses in Scientific Atheism.

In 1988, the Russian Orthodox Church celebrated its millennial anniversary. This became a turning point for the Russian Orthodox Church. The government changed from trying to work against religion to trying to use religion to gain support.

Russian Orthodoxy was introduced to Tajikistan in the middle of the nineteenth century by the Russians. As a result, many see Christianity as the religion of the Russians. During Stalin's reign, many minorities in the former Soviet Union were deported to Central Asia. This brought Protestants and Roman Catholics to the area for the first time. Local Christians never developed a vision to reach out to other Muslim groups, so there were very few indigenous believers in Tajikistan.

Russian Orthodox Churches have several unique features. The interiors are highly decorative, often decorated with frescos of saints or scenes that reach up to the domes. There is usually an icon of Christ in the main dome. There are often no pews and churches are lit with candles instead of electric lights. Worshippers often buy candles and place them on stands, a ritual that signifies asking a saint for a favor or for honoring a dead loved one. Colors, especially on the domes, have significance. Black represents submission, green represent the Trinity, blue represents the spirit of God, and Gold represents Jesus. Domes which are often very colorful are designed to look like candles from a distance. The number of domes is also significant on a church. One dome represents Jesus, three indicates the Trinity, and five indicated Jesus and the four evangelists. The crosses on top of the domes have a crescent shape with horns upturned as part of the base. This represents an anchor, signifying that the church is a ship of faith in the sea of vanity. Many churches are not built symmetrically, believing that symmetry is the enemy of beauty.

Protestants/ Evangelicals/ Pentecostals

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There are several protestant groups in Azerbaijan.

The Seventh-day Adventists have been in the country for almost 100 years. They have been registered as a legal religious community for over thirty years. Today, there are only about 100 members of the Seventh Day Adventist Church in Azerbaijan.

The Baptists in Azerbaijan number around 700- 1,000 people in around 6 Baptist congregations. These churches are mostly made up of Russians, with some Ukrainians and Azeris. The Baptist union of Azerbaijan claims to have 3,000 members which make up 22 churches in the country.

The *Ichthus Fellowship* has about 100 members and is made up mostly of Azeri war refugees.

The *Word of Life Church* is an independent church that reports some 5 congregations with over 700 followers

The *independent Pentecostal Church* formerly consisted of mostly Russians; however, many Azeris now attend the church. There are about 400 members of this congregation.

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People Groups in Azerbaijan

24038

Armenian (262,196)

The Armenians of Azerbaijan are also known as the *Armiane*, *Ermeni*, *Ermini*, *Hai*, and *Western Armenian*. The Armenians use the Armenian language. Armenians come from

the Trans-Caucasus Mountains of Armenia. They are an ancient people from the Caucasus with a 3,000 year history that has been researched and detailed.

They have a deep tie to Christianity, since 303 when they became the first nation to declare it as the state religion, though many are Muslim. The Armenians have struggled to remain both Christian and free, defending against Turks, Mongols, Persians, Soviets, and Kurds, and so on. The Diaspora of Armenians has a varied and broken connection to this republic. Before leaving Armenia, they experienced much suffering. In the first part of this century, almost half of the people in Armenia were slaughtered by the Turks. In Azerbaijan, they are mostly found in the *Nagorno-Karabakh* region. Other groups of Armenians are found in *Baku*.

The Armenians in Azerbaijan are primarily Orthodox Christians, with 98.5% of those claiming Christianity being a part of the Orthodox Church. In Azerbaijan, they are about 84.13% Christian adherent; however the percentage of evangelical believers is only around 1.5%. They have the Bible, Christian radio, audio recordings, the God's story video, and the Jesus Film available in their language. About 15.87 % are non-religious. 8% are atheist. There are multiple groups working among these people.

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Assyrian (1,300)

Assyrians are part of the Arab world Affinity block and the Assyrian/ Aramaic people cluster. They are also known as the *Aisor*, *Chaldean*, *Eastern Syriac*, *Southern Assyrian*, *Suret*, *Swadaya*, *Syriac*, *Syrian Aramaic*, and the *Urmi people*. They came to Russia and the Soviet Union in three main waves. In 1828 many Assyrians were put under Russian sovereignty by a treaty so thousands of relatives crossed the border to join their families.

As a result of the repression and violence during and after World War I Assyrians fled to Russia. The third wave came after World War II, when many Assyrians found refuge in the Soviet Union, this time mainly in the cities. "In recent years, the Assyrians have tended to assimilate with Armenians, but their cultural and ethnic identity, strengthened through centuries of hardships, found new expression under Glasnost."

There are five doctrinally divided groups of Assyrian Christians: the Chaldeans, the Church of the East, the Maronites, the Syriac Orthodox, and the Syriac Catholic. In Moscow, there is a community of Assyrians and a new Church of the East to serve their religious needs. The bishop serves all of Russia, Georgia, Ukraine, and other former USSR states.

In the Assyrian community, traditionally the church elders were the leaders of the community, and gave help to those that needed it. The long history of the Assyrian church is being lost on generations that are illiterate and disconnected from their past. The Assyrian church teaches Assyrian language classes since much of the surrounding world uses the Arabic language or Russian in this case. Assyrian sounds much like Hebrew. They are not Arabs but are the descendents of the Arab world.

The Assyrian people speak Assyrian or Neo-Aramaic. They have the Bible or portions of the Bible, gospel audio recordings and the Jesus Film available in their language. In Azerbaijan, they are 97% Christian with about 2% of these being evangelical.

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24039

Avar (51,464)

The *Avar* are also called *Batlux*, *Dangestani*, *Daghestani*, and *Maarulal*. They are one of the major *Daghestani* ethnic groups in the former Soviet Union. They are made up of a complex mix of related, but distinct ethnic groups. They are mostly found in the *Dagestan*, in the North Caucasus Mountain region of Russia and are one of the largest people groups in that region.

They controlled much of the river valley and plateau area in the highlands. They are also found in Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and the Ukraine. In Azerbaijan, the mostly live in the northern *Belokansky* and *Zakatal'sky* districts. They speak the Avar language, which is part of the northeast Caucasic linguistic family. Since many of them live in isolated mountain areas, dialects between groups are often incomprehensible to others groups.

The *Avars* have a family centered lifestyle. Girls marry near the age of 15 to the preference of her parents. Divorce is possible for both whereas in years past only men had this possibility.

They were farmers on the collected lands of the Soviets but this did not change their community values. Only a small percentage of their land is arable, and they have created terraces to maintain the land. They fish in the Caspian, and herd sheep as other sources of food. Their homes are built on the mountain slopes. Most are of stone and are two or three stories.

In Azerbaijan, they are 99% Sunni Muslims, many of the Shafi School. Many attend mosques regularly, pray daily, and carryout common Muslim practices. The percentage of Christian adherents and evangelicals is unknown. In some areas, the Georgian

Orthodox Christianity was introduced between the 5th and 12th centuries. Avar Christians are largely Nestorian. They have the Bible or portions of the Bible, Gospel audio and the Jesus Film in their language. There are no known groups working among them. There are about 650,000 people in the Avar people cluster, and among those, there are only about 30 known believers.

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24040

Azerbaijani, North (8,324,832)

The Azerbaijani, also known as the *Azeri*, are of the Turkic affinity block. They are also called *Azeri Turk*, *Turkmen*, and *South Azerbaijani*. The name is derived from words meaning “fire” and “guardian” and points to the sacred oil fires that were lit by fire worshippers in their homeland. They are found throughout the former Soviet Union, with a largest population found in Azerbaijan.

This group speaks Northern Azerbaijani. The two main language subgroups are North Azerbaijani, and South Azerbaijani. The differences in the two are in the sound and grammar. The language was written in fourteenth century. The Azeri language is of the southwestern branch of the Turkic language group.

This group of people has experienced many invasions. They were first captured by the Persians in the sixth century but were overtaken by the Turks the eleventh century. Russia took over the area in the beginning of the nineteenth century. In Azerbaijan some of the Azeri are rural farmers, while others live in the cities and work as technicians and engineers. In some places they work as industrious workers in larger cities and towns. Some work in lower skilled jobs. They also used to be known for their rug weaving.

The clan structure was common in the Azeri tradition. A clan, called *hoj*, would carry the name of a common ancestor. Landless peasants made up the lowest class, called *tavyrga*. Marriage to first cousins was encouraged before the Soviet era. After which there were unions outside the extended family. It was common that forty members of the extended family live in the same house, called a *gazma*. The clan works the land for the mutual survival of its members. Marriage outside the family is not allowed before the Soviet period. This has changed over the past decade; however, they still encourage marriage within the family or clan in order to protect their culture. Although many are Muslims, having more than one wife is only acceptable in cases of infertility.

The diet of the Azeri has consisted of rice pilaf, boiled and grilled meats like goat, beef,

and lamb. A traditional yogurt soup is called dovga. The traditional mutton stew is called bozartma. Tea and wine are traditional and popular drinks.

The Northern Azerbaijani are mostly Shiite Muslims; however some are Sunni Muslims of the Hanafite branch. They practice Islam; however, the Azeri women tend to be less restricted than the women of other Muslim groups. Many of the women work outside of the home and are allowed to be in leadership positions. They have the Bible, the God's Story video, Christian audio recordings, and the Jesus Film in their language. In Azerbaijan, they are 85.82% Muslim, 14.06% non-religious, and less than 0.02% evangelical.

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24040

Azerbaijani, South (8,324,832)

The Azerbaijani, also known as the Azeri, are of the Turkic affinity block. They are also called Azeri Turk, Turkmen, and South Azerbaijani. The southern Azerbaijani are also known as the *Afshar* and the *Shachsewenen* people. The name is derived from words meaning "fire" and "guardian" and points to the sacred oil fires that were lit by fire worshippers in their homeland. They are found in Iraq, Iran, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Jordan, and Turkey, with a largest population found in Iran. This group speaks Northern Azerbaijani. The two main language subgroups are North Azerbaijani, and South Azerbaijani. The differences in the two are in the sound and grammar. The language was written in fourteenth century. The Azeri language is of the southwestern branch of the Turkic language group.

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The clan structure was common in the Azeri tradition. A clan, called *hoj*, would carry the name of a common ancestor. Landless peasants made up the lowest class, called *tavyrga*. Marriage to first cousins was encouraged before the Soviet era. After which there were unions outside the extended family. It was common that forty members of the extended family live in the same house, called a *gazma*. The clan works the land for the mutual survival of its members. Marriage outside the family is not allowed before the Soviet period. This has changed over the past decade; however, they still encourage marriage within the family or clan in order to protect their culture. Although many are Muslims, having more than one wife is only acceptable in cases of infertility.

The diet of the Azeri has consisted of rice pilaf, boiled and grilled meats like goat, beef, and lamb. A traditional yogurt soup is called *dovga*. The traditional mutton stew is called *bozartma*. Tea and wine are traditional and popular drinks.

The Southern Azerbaijani are mostly Shiite Muslims; however some are Sunni Muslims of the Hanafite branch. They practice Islam, however, the Azeri women tend to be less restricted than the women of other Muslim groups. Many of the women work outside of the home and are allowed to be in leadership positions. They have the Bible, the God's Story video, Christian audio recordings, and the Jesus Film in their language. In Azerbaijan, they are 90% Muslim and 9.99% non-religious. There are no known evangelicals among them.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

<http://www.janzteam.com/OSTEUROPE/en/cauc4.htm>

<http://www.geocities.com/ayafe/azhistory.html>

http://www.adoptapeople.com/Profiles/p_code/1019.htm

Minahan, James B. *One Europe, Many Nations: A Historical Dictionary of European National Groups*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000.

24060

Budug (5,733)

The *Budug* are of the Caucasus people cluster. They are mostly found in Azerbaijan, in the *Quba* region. Many live in the villages of *Gunei-Budad*, *Dali-Kaya-Heshlag*, *Kara-Gez* (the *Konahkent District*), *Ag-yaze*, *Kara-Dagie*, *Läzgi-Digäh* and *Dovmal* (the *Hachkhass District*) villages. They live in a very remote area of the Caucasus and are cut off from the plain settlements for several months at a time during the winter months. They associate closely with the *Kryz*, the *Khinalugs*, the *Azerbaijanis*, and the *Lezgis*. They are also known as *Budukh* and *Yergyuch*. They speak *budad mez*, which is a Lezgin subgroup of the Caucasian (Dagestan) languages. The written language is based on Azeri.

Most of the *Budug* people have occupations in agriculture and cattle breeding. Many raise sheep. Agriculture is less important to the Budug because only rye and barley can be grown well. Most are Sunni Muslims, with about 99.91% of the claiming to be Muslims. There are few Christians among them and they are believed to only be about 0.03% evangelical. There are no known groups working among them and no Christian resources available to them in their language. Grain must be imported from the villages in the lower mountains and plains and the Budug have close trading relationships with the surrounding people of northern Azerbaijan and southern Dagestan. The Budug trade felt, cheese, and oil for grain fruits, textiles, and household utensils.

In recent year, there has been a growing gulf between the older and younger generations. Younger generations tend to embrace the customs and celebrations from the Soviet era. Many celebrations among the young involve excessive drinking of alcohol. A marriage across tribes has increased, further weakening the traditions among the Budug.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>
<http://www.eki.ee/books/redbook/budukhs.shtml>

24061

Byelorussian (5,308)

The Byelorussian are of the Eastern Slav people cluster. They are found throughout the former Soviet Union. They are also known as *White Russians*, *Baltorusins*, *Baltorussians*, *Belorussians*, *Belarusins*, *Baltorusians*, *Belorus*, *Beloruthenians*, *White Ruthenians*, and *Krivichis*. They speak the Belarusan, which has four basic dialects. In some places, the Byelorussians depend on lumbering and growing potatoes to support themselves.

The Belarusians are made up of several groups that evolved into this ethnicity. Some of these groups are the *Krivichi*, *Radzimichi*, *Dregovich*, and *Viatic* people. Among the Russian people, they are sometimes looked down on and simply categorized as Russians. Throughout their history, the Belarusins have suffered a lot. Under Stalin's rule, about 15% of their population was deported to concentration camps, where most of them died. Another 5% of their population died of starvation after the state took their produce. During World War II, three out of every four Belarusian towns were completely destroyed. The Germans killed more than a million Belarusians and deported tens of thousands more for forced labor. Stalin, after Russia regained the area of Belarus in 1944, continued killing and persecuting the Belarusins. The Belarusians were also negatively affected by the Chernobyl nuclear accident in 1986. The reactor was located northern Ukraine, however, radiation spread widely and more than 2,000,000 people were exposed. Epidemiologists began detecting unusually high rates of cancer and Neurological disorders in the Belarusian people by 1991.

The Belarusians have had to fight to maintain their culture. Aside from persecution and genocide, they have struggled to maintain their identity. In 1986 a group of students organized the Talaka Historical- Cultural Association in order to bring about a Belarusian national revival. They emphasized their ties to Poland and Lithuania and pulled away from their ties with Russia. In 1991 Belarus was recognized as an independent nation within the commonwealth.

Their primary religion is Russian Orthodoxy and they are 75% Christian adherent. The number of evangelicals in Azerbaijan is about 1.10%. They have the Bible or portions of the Bible, Gospel audio recordings, Christian Radio Broadcasting and the Jesus Film available to them in their language.

Olson, James. *An Ethnohistorical Dictionary of the Russian and Soviet Empires*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>
<http://www.peopleteams.org/teambelarus/default.htm>
<http://www.russiatoday.ru/en/profile/people/nat/897.html>

24062

Chechen (106)

The *Chechen's* are of the Caucasus people cluster. They are also called the *Nokhichi* or the *Shishan* people. They are found throughout Central Asia and part of the former Soviet Union. Many Chechens live in the southern region of Russia between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. They speak the *Chechen language*, which is also known as *Nokhchin*, and *Nokshin Muott*.

There has been conflict between Chechens and the Russian government for most of the Twentieth Century. They are known to be a strong people and have a history of fighting for their independence. During World War II, they fought with the Red Army, however, from 1944-1957 Russia deported somewhere between a quarter and half of the Chechen population to Siberia and Central Asia from their Chechen homeland. They lost much of the productive farm land during that era. They also suffered deeply with the loss of their economic resources and civil rights. Many returned in 1968 but they returned to closed Mosques and repressive religious atmosphere. Muslim missionaries only stepped up the work during this period. When the Chechen Republic declared independence in 1991 the Russian government came in to control the situation. This invasion has resulted in a ruining of relations and the land since then. In Russia, they are considered the Mafia of Russia and are generally feared and disliked by Russians.

Chechen society is generally patriarchal, with relaxation having come with the twentieth century. Women are often allowed to work outside of the home. It is not uncommon for Chechens to marry outside of their clan and marriage between blood relatives within three generations is forbidden. The groom to be's family pays the brides family a dowry to guarantee against divorce. In the past, the wife was not allowed to eat with her husband or speak to his relatives. She was to show absolute submission. Chechens have a variety of occupations and tend to be at all income levels. Many are farmers and grow grains, fruits, and vegetables. Others work in oil refineries or raise fine-fleeced sheep.

They are the most devout of the Muslims in the Russian federation. There may be a growing Christian population. Ancient church ruins make it clear that there used to be some Christians among the Chechens, however, since the seventeenth century, Chechens have been known to be Muslims.

Today the Chechens are primarily Sunni Muslims. About 90% of the Chechens in Azerbaijan are Muslims. The number of Christian adherents and evangelicals are is unknown. They have portions of the Bible, radio broadcasts, and the Jesus Film available in their language.

Olson, James. *An Ethnohistorical Dictionary of the Russian and Soviet Empires*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

http://www.adoptapeople.com/Profiles/p_code/982.htm

<http://archives.tconline.org/news/lastfrontier/Chechen.html>

<http://www.peopleteams.org/chechen/>

<http://www.russiatoday.ru/en/profile/people/nat/1472.html>

24063

Dargin (954)

The *Dargin* people are of the Caucasus people cluster. They are also called *Darghinian* and *Dargwa*. They are mostly found in the mountainous south of the Dagestan Republic in southern Russia, however, smaller groups are found scattered throughout Kazakhstan, Armenia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. The Dargin people are made up of four smaller groups and are comprised of more than 360,000 people. They speak Dargwa. Traditionally they were highland agriculturists and traders. They have been able to maintain their traditional extended family structures, village assembly, and council of elders. They are originally from the North East Caucasus area.

The Dargins are Sunni Muslims. Islam entered the Dargin people in the eighth century; however, they did not completely accept Islam until the fifteenth century. In Azerbaijan, they are less than 1% Christian adherent. They have the Jesus film and portions of Scripture available to them in their language.

http://www.mirfocus.com/pages/ppl_dr.html

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

<http://languageserver.uni-graz.at/ls/lang?id=3065>

http://www.kafkas.org.tr/english/bgkafkas/Ethnicgeography_Dargin.htm

24064

Georgian (16,560)

The *Georgian* people are of the Caucasus people cluster. They are also called *Adjari*, *Adzhar*, *Gruzin*, *Imerxey Georgian*, and *Western Georgian*. They are mostly found in Europe, Central Asia, and the former Soviet Union. The *Adjari* are a separate ethnic group and speak a Georgian that is heavily influenced by Turkish. *Gruzin* is the Russian word for the Georgians. Within the Georgian people there are subgroups that are distinct in religion and location in the Caucasus. They speak Georgian a language in the Caucasus language family which has had its own script since pre-Christian times.

The Georgians, who live on the Black Sea, trace their ancestry back to *Japheth*, Noah's son. They are known for their horsemanship and in 79AD were said to have performed before the Roman Emperor Vespasian. They tend to be very nationalistic and many take pride in their "native son" Joseph Stalin. They are also known to be resourceful and ambitious. They were considered the "black sheep" of the Soviet Union.

Due to the location of Georgia, being sandwiched between the West and the East, it has been invaded numerous times, impacting the people in the culture and livelihood. Georgia became a Christian state in the fourth century and was a strong influence in the area until Islam became too aggressive to contain. The Arab-Georgian conflicts lasted from the seventh through the ninth century.

By 1008 there was a united Georgian kingdom which had a Golden Age in the twelfth century. The Golden Horde engulfed the entire country in the thirteenth century. The tie to Byzantium has kept Georgia in contact with Christians, but the disruptions of the invaders, then the fall of Constantinople pushed Georgia into stagnation. The state

disintegrated into three kingdoms, and fell further with the Turkish-Persian Wars. Russia influenced the Georgina people, later taking them into the Russian Empire and Soviet Union.

Internal strife in the Caucasus through most of the twentieth century was coupled with harsh purges by the Soviet leaders. Industrialization and urbanization expanded rapidly and the Georgian Communist Party pressed for nationalist policies. Under Gorbachev, Georgian nationalism grew into reforms and a national revival. The Georgina Orthodox Church and nationalist groups pushed for moral regeneration and independence. Georgia declared independence in April, 1991, but by the end of 1992 civil war erupted. In 1995, a popular election restored progression by electing Eduard Shevardnadze as President. He held office until legislative election manipulation in Nov. 2003 led to his resignation. Mikheil Saakashvili was elected president in early 2004. Since the independence of Georgia, many Georgians considered moving back under the Georgian government's active immigration policy.

The Georgian population in Azerbaijan is primarily Christian. In Azerbaijan, they are estimated to be about 75% Christian adherent, but the percentage that are evangelical is estimated to be around 0.50%. They are about 20% non-religious. They have the Bible, Jesus Film, Gospel audio recordings, and Christian radio broadcasting in their Georgian language.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

<http://www.janzteam.com/OSTEUROPE/en/cauc3.htm>

http://www.nupi.no/cgi-win/Russland/etnisk_b.exe?Gruzian

<http://www.imb.org/centralasia/pray/Adjari.html>

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/gg.html>

00000

German (800)

These ancestral Germans moved to the Volga valley in Russia in July 1763 when Catherine II, the Russian Empress invited them to settle there. The situation in Germany at that time was bad. There was religious persecution, poverty was extreme following the Seven Years War and there were high taxes. An invitation to leave was welcomed by many. When they settled they were expected to farm the land only in the Volga region. The government paid for a church within each colony, but required it to be repaid for the cost. Four years later there was a set of detail instructions and regulations for them to follow.

By 1890's there were almost 1.8 million German inhabitants in Russia. The Volga region had run out of land and so the newer immigrants were sent to Siberia. When the Germany declared War in 1914, hostility towards the Germans in Russia grew and the passage of the Laws of Liquidation formally gave threat to the Russian Germans. The laws were not enacted but served to keep the Germans in submission. The first relocation of the Volga Germans took place in July of 1915, when they were sent to Eastern Russia. In the communities of the Germans, of which 76% were Lutherans, the religious

solidarity was seen as a threat when the Bolsheviks took over in 1917. The Volga-Germans were severely persecuted. A labor commune of Volga Germans was established on October 19, 1918. Males in these camps had a very low survival rate. By 1919, pastors were sent to slave camps because they were considered propagandists against the Russian government.

Between 1921 and 1922, widespread famine wiped out one-third of those Germans still in the Volga Region. On December 19, 1924, the Volga German ASSR was established but later closed on August 28, 1941. The city of Engels was the capital of the Volga-German ASSR. In the 1930's, collectivization began and private property was removed. Nearly all the clergy were killed and the churches were beyond repair. With World War II the condition of the Volga Germans only worsened as they were considered enemies of the state. Along with the closing of the Volga-German ASSR, the Decree of Banishment forced a mass evacuation. The young men were sent to the Russian Army and young women became domestic servants in the big cities. Everyone else was banished.

In September 1955, amnesty was given to the remaining Volga Germans but they were asked not to return to their original settlements. In August 1964, the U.S.S.R. admitted guilt in charging innocent people and urged Soviets to give assistance to Russian Germans. In January 1965, the Decree of 1941 was voided. Afterwards, many Volga Germans attempted to return to their former cities and found they were unwelcome. They settled in the Ural Mountains, Siberia, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan. Others immigrated to the United States and Canada. The Law/Right of Return was used by many people of German ancestries who wanted to return to Germany but were living in Eastern Europe.

They are 78% adherent to Christianity, with about 20% being evangelical. They are about 22% non-religious. They have the Bible, Gospel audio recording, Christian radio broadcasting, and the Jesus film available in Standard German.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Volga_Germans
<http://www.lhm.org/LID/lidhist.htm> see article
<http://www.joshuaproject.net>
<http://www.volgagermans.net/>
<http://www.grhs.com/archive/reviews/volga.html>
<http://www.irex.uz/?id=publications&file=art006>

24081

Irani (1,234)

The Irani people of Azerbaijan are of the Persian people cluster. They are also called *Baghdadi*, *Balochi*, *Ebhele*, *Farsi*, *Parsiwan*, *Persian*, and *Qazilbash*. They speak Western Farsi, an Indo-Iranian language. Farsi is an Indo-Iranian language and is one of the oldest languages still in use today.

The Irani people descend from the Persian groups that settled in Iran around 1000 BC. The Persians became the rulers of the Achaemenid dynasty during the sixth century BC. The Persians were ruled by many dynasties over the centuries. Some of the ethnic

Persians were the Sassanids, the Buwayhids, and the Samanids. Unethnic Persians that ruled were the Seleucids, Seljuk Turks, Mongols, and the Safavids.

Many are farmers; however some rely on crafts such as hand woven items, rugs, and pottery to make a living. Irani society is both patriarchal, which means male-dominated, and patrilineal, which means they trace ancestral descent through the male lineage. Irani women are generally submissive to their husbands in public, however, in private are given more freedom in the decision making. The men are responsible for defending family honor, especially concerning the purity of their daughters and sisters. Marriages are often arranged and marriages between cousins are preferred.

In more urban areas, the Persians are divided into five social classes. Former villagers who came into the towns make up the lowest group and are often unskilled laborers who live on the outskirts of towns. Real estate investors, merchants, and other businessmen make up the higher class. The ulama is the social class that is made up of priests and clergymen.

Until the Arab invasion, the Persian people were primarily Zoroastrian. Zoroastria stresses the struggle between the forces of good and evil. In the sixteenth century, Shia Islam became the national religion of Islam. Most Persians today are of the Ithna Ashari branch of Shia Islam. In Azerbaijan, they are about 90% Muslim. There are few, if any, know Christian adherents or evangelicals among the Irani of Azerbaijan. The Bible, Jesus Film, God Story Video, Christian radio, audio recordings, and web recordings have been translated into their language.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

24065

Jew, Bukharic, Central Asian (35,136)

The *Bukharic* Jew people group is sometimes considered the Central Asian Jew people group. The Central Asian Jew is also sometimes called Sarikoli, Sarykloy, Tadziki, and Tajiki. They have a strong sense of Jewish identity; however the Jews of Asia have a distinct lifestyle. Most of these Jews are Ashkenazim which are descendents of the Jews who inhabited the Germanic region of Europe. They speak Eastern Yiddish, a German dialect that is mixed with Hebrew. In Azerbaijan, they are mostly found in Kuba and Baku.

Jews have lived in the area that is now Central Asia since the middle Ages. In the past, they tended to associate with the general population where they lived and they adopted many local customs. Ashkenazic Jews came to Central Asia after the Second World War, mostly working as engineers and specialists occupations. In Azerbaijan, they tend to live in the larger cities.

The Soviet era was particularly hard for Jews in Russia, with synagogues shut down and religion repressed; some were imprisoned by the State. They were at times compared to Nazis in the media. A movement for Jewish rights was bolstered by the Six-Day War and

many began applying for entry into Israel in the 1970's. Under Gorbachev more freedom was attained and in the early 1990's ten's of thousands of Jews were emigrating annually. Approximately one million fled after the fall of communism.

In the past, the Bukharan Jews worked as peddlers, shoemakers, barbers, factory workers, and collective farmers. Today they continue working in these traditional occupations and are also working as engineers, doctors, teachers, and musicians. In addition, women often dance at Jewish and Muslim weddings. In the past, these people faced a lot of persecution, especially from the predominant Muslim population. They were often forced to live in mahallas, which were isolated parts of cities, and were required to wear signs on their clothing marking them as Jews. They also had to pay special taxes that other groups did not have to pay. In the past ten years, however, they have gained more freedom.

The Bukharan Jews are indigenous to Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. They settled mostly in Bukhara, which is how they derived their name "Bukharan." These people claim to be descendants from the ten tribes of Israel who were forced to Persia in the fifth century. Traditionally, these families were patriarchal and patrilineal and households were made up of extended families. Nuclear families, however, are becoming more common. In the past, Bukharan Jews only married other Bukharan Jews. Ashkenazic Jews in larger cities, however, are now intermarrying with Muslims. Traditionally a matchmaker was sent to the parents of the bride and a dowry and bride price was agreed upon.

Jews in the cities tend to not adhere strictly to Jewish practices; however, the Bukharic Jews tend to hold tightly to their traditions and religion. They follow the Law of Moses and have strict laws concerning diet, circumcision, and the Sabbath. There are few, if any, known Christians among the Bukharic Jews in Azerbaijan and up to 20% claim to be non-religious. They have the Bible, Jesus film, Christian radio broadcasting, and Gospel audio recordings in their language.

<http://www.adoptapeople.com/Profiles/clusters/8095.htm>

<http://www.peopleteams.org/forzionsake/upgs.htm>

http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/Human_Rights/sjmove.html

<http://www.wzo.org.il/en/resources/view.asp?id=1547&subject=131>

<http://www.blossomingrose.org/chernobyl/howmany.htm>

http://www.nupi.no/cgi-win/Russland/etnisk_b.exe?Jewish

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

24069

Kazakh (1,911)

The *Kazakh* are a Turkic people. They are also known as Hazake, Mazax, Qazaq, or Qazaqi people. They are the second largest Muslim group within Central Asia. While most live in Kazakhstan, they are also found in Mongolia, Ukraine, Russia, China, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkey, Tajikistan, Iran, Germany, Belarus, and with smaller populations in a few other countries. They speak Kazakh which belongs to the Turkic branch of the Ural-Altai language family. Their written language is based on the Arabic alphabet.

As clans joined together for protection, the Kazak became a distinct ethnic group in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. During the nineteenth century, Russia claimed Kazakhstan, and during the Russian Civil War, during the 1920's-1930's, about half of the Kazak population was killed. During this time, many fled to parts of China and Mongolia. Since the 1960's, however, many have returned to Kazakhstan.

They used to be nomadic shepherds; however, they lost much of their land during the Soviet rule and were forced to do collective farming. They lived in yurts, dome shaped tents. Many times, poor, individual families cannot survive without living with a clan. In cities, outside of Afghanistan, western dress is common among the Kazak, however, within Afghanistan, the Kazaks dress more like other groups within their region. A common sport among the Kazakhs is a sport called "girl chasing" in which a young man and a young woman on separate horses, chases the man and if she catches him, lashes him lightly with a whip.

Kazakh society is both patriarchal, which means male-dominated, and patrilineal, which means they trace ancestral descent through the male lineage. In some places, however, this gradually changing and shifting legal authority over to the heads of collective farms. This has caused a breakdown in the overall traditional family structure. The nuclear family, which generally consists of a man, his parents, his wife or wives, and their children, is the most important unit within the Kazakh society. Traditionally, feudal lords and tribal chiefs practiced polygamy and marriages were arranged. Richer men could marry up to four wives, while the poorer could not afford the bride price to even marry. This changed, however, and families began exchanging their daughters as each other's daughter-in-law without asking for gifts. When a girl marries, she becomes part of the husband's immediate family.

The Kazaks are known as warm-hearted, sincere, and hospitable people. In some places, a guest will be presented with a sheep's head. As a sign of appreciation, the guest cuts a slice off the right cheek and puts it back on the plate. They are known for their handmade embroideries, which usually consist of flower and animal horn patterns on black, red, and purple velveteen. They have a rich heritage of literature which has been handed down orally. Some play a two stringed instrument called a Combra.

The Kazakh people of Azerbaijan are mostly Sunni Muslims; however, many combine the Islamic practices with their traditional folk religions, which involves worship of spirits and fire, animism, and ancestor worship. Many consult Shamans, priests, to cure the sick, communicate with spirits, and manipulate the spirits to control events. In Azerbaijan, they claim to be about 70% Muslim and 29.9% non-religious. There are few, if any, Christians among the Kazakhs in Azerbaijan. There are Bibles, Jesus Films, Christian audio resources, and radio broadcasts available in their language.

<http://www.pcgn.org.uk/Uzbekistan%20-%202001.pdf>

<http://www.joshuaproject.net> <http://www.chsource.org/Kazak.htm>

<http://www.china.org.cn/e-groups/shaoshu/shao-2-kazak.htm>

24070

Khinalug, Ketch Khalkh (2,017)

The *Khinalug* people are of the Caucasus people cluster. They are also known as the *Ketch Khalkh* people. They call themselves *ketch halh*, which means “people of the village Ketch” or *kajttiodur*, which means, “the inhabitants of one village.” They are found in Azerbaijan, mostly in the Quba region. Their language is *Khinalugh*, which is the most divergent Lezgian language. It is not a written language. This language is used in everyday family communication, while Azerbaijani is used as their literary language. These people are believed to be 100% Muslim. There are no known believers among them and no known groups working with them. They have no resources available to them in their language.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

http://www.ethnologue.org/14/show_language.asp?code=KJJ

<http://languageserver.uni-graz.at/ls/desc?id=22&type=r>

24071

Kryz, Dzhek (8,280)

The *Kryz* are of the Caucasus people cluster. They are also called the *Dzhek* and *Katsy* people. They are mostly found in the *Kuba* and *Khachmassk* regions of Azerbaijan. The villages where they are mostly found are *Kryz* (Karat), *Alik* (Ealig), *Dzhek* (Deg), *Haput* (Hafid) and *Ergyuch* (Yergüd). These are among the most remote villages in the Caucasus region. Their name comes from the word *Kryz*, which is the name of a town, *Kryz*, in the Kuba district. They speak *Kryzic*, which is of the *Shahdag* subgroup of Southeast or *Lezgian-Samur* group of the *Dagestan* languages. Most are bilingual in the Azerbaijani language.

In the past, *Kryz* society was based on kinship relations and the society was endogamous. Towards the end of the 19th century, as capitalism and economic inequality grew, *Kryz* clans began to disintegrate, however marriages within the clan and local villages were still the norm. Marriages among cousins were common. By the 20th century, the Azerbaijani culture had a strong influence on the *Kryz* and by the beginning of the Soviet period; the only thing distinguishing the *Kryz* from other groups was their language. Throughout the century, however, the language became less common and is now only spoken within the village, usually by older people.

The 1950's and 1960's brought considerable change to the *Kryz*. A new generation, exposed to Soviet education, grew up and was more Soviet in life and thought. Leisure activities began to include the cinema and libraries and marriage rites and ceremonies were changed. European dress replaced more traditional dress, especially men's clothing. Furniture and household items that once made at home began to be bought in shops and handicrafts lost their importance. Alcoholism increased drastically. Their primary occupation is cattle-breeding, however, there are many involved in agriculture. Their primary trades are carpet weaving and the making of mats and patterned woolen items.

The Kryz are believed to be 100% Muslim, mostly Sunnis. They still practice pagan traditions with Islamic overtones, such as rain sorcery and work-rites. There are no known Christians among them and no known groups working among them.

<http://www.eki.ee/books/redbook/kryz.shtml>

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

46631

Kurmanji, Northern Kurd (23,122)

The *Kurds* are divided into the Northern and Southern Kurds. The Northern Kurds are also called the *Turkish Kurd*, *Yazidi*, *Yezidi*, and *Kermanji*. Large numbers of Kurds came to the Caucasus region during the 19th and 20th centuries seeking refuge from the wars between Ottoman Turkey and Tsarist Russia. Many live in cities and have a higher standard of living than those in Turkey. In Azerbaijan, they live mostly in the Caucasus Mountains near the cities of Lacin and Stepanakert. Others live in the northwestern part of Naxcivan. They usually do not face discrimination and many even hold high political offices throughout Central Asia. They are literate in Kurmanji, which is published. There are radio broadcasts in Kurmanji as well. The Urfi dialect is used.

Kurds in some areas, especially southern Kurds, are very poor. They have no politically recognized homeland, which has sometimes led them to be called “the Orphans of the Universe,” however they have a strong ethnic identity. They are the largest ethnic group in the world without a country of their own. They are from an area sometimes called Kurdistan, which refers to a region covering southeastern Turkey, northeastern Syria, northern Iraq, and western Iran.

The Kurds have a rich history and consider themselves to be decedents of the Medes, which are mentioned in the Old Testament. Two of the most famous Kurds are King Darius, mentioned in the Old Testament book of Daniel, and Saladin, who retook Jerusalem in 1187 from the Crusaders. Like Saladin, the people in general, resist subjugation by other nations. They were conquered by the Arabs in the 7th century and have desired independence from their various rulers since that time.

The Kurds are often persecuted in Turkey and Iran. In Turkey, where almost half of all the Kurds live, the government has continued to refuse to recognize them as a separate ethnic group. In addition, until recent times, they made it illegal to speak Kurdish in public. The Iranian government has a history of persecuting this group, as does the Iraqi government. In Iraq, Kurdish villages have been destroyed, they were assaulted by chemical weapons, and many were forced into detention camps. They have fled to areas surrounding their former localities, seeking refuge. Currently Kurds campaign for an independent nation.

Today, most make a living by farming and raising livestock. Some live in permanent homes, however, some are still semi-nomadic. They move to the mountains during the summer and travel to the plains during the winter months. The Kurds are diverse and

have differing tribal associations, lifestyles, and religious practices depending on where they live. The Kurds are tribal people. In the absence of a national Kurdish state and government, individual tribes are the highest source of authority for the people. In Kurd society, there is a clear division of labor by age and sex. Marriages are usually arranged and it is not uncommon for first cousins to marry. Upon marriage, the wife usually moves into the husband's household. Family is very important to the Kurds. Men are the ones who make the decisions and women are under the authority and protection of the men. A woman's honor is very important, so she must dress very modestly. Kurds value family loyalty and honor.

Traditionally, Kurds practiced a religion called *Yazdanism*, then later practiced Zoroastrianism. Today the Kurds are primarily Sunni Muslims. Kurd minorities have been associated with the secret and unorthodox sects of Islam. They are about 70% Muslim and 20% non-religious. There are few, if any known Christians among the Kurds in Azerbaijan. They have the Bible, Christian radio broadcasting, Gospel audio recordings and the Jesus film available in the Kurdi language.

http://www.adoptapeople.com/Profiles/p_code/77.htm
<http://www.xs4all.nl/~tank/kurdish/htdocs/index.html>
<http://www.ibtnet.org/pdf/kurdish.pdf>
<http://www.perspectives.org/students/ip/kurds/>
<http://www.eki.ee/books/redbook/maps/bigmap4.gif>
<http://www.eki.ee/books/redbook/kurds.shtml>
<http://www.joshuaproject.net>
<http://www.xs4all.nl/~tank/kurdish/htdocs/facts/society.html>
<http://mm.iteams.org/asia/kurds.php>

24073

Lak (1,273)

The *Lak* are of the *Lori-Bakhtiari* people cluster, which is a part of the Indo- Iranian affinity block. They are from the *Dagestan Republic* in what they call Lakstan. Many Lak live in the basins of the upper Kazikumukh, Tleusarakh, and Khatar Rivers in the former Soviet Union. They live in the high mountain passes that make them isolated in the winter. They also live throughout Central Asia. They are also called Kumux and Laki.

They are related to the Dargins. In the Lak language there are five dialects: Kumuk, Vikhli, Ashtikuli, Vitskh, and Balkar-Calakan. Before the nineteenth century, the Lak wrote in Arabic, however, in 1928 they were forced by the Russians to use the Latin script. Ten years later, the Cyrillic alphabet replaced the Latin alphabet and Russian words replaced the Arabic and Persian works. Today the Cyrillic alphabet is used in literature. About 95% of the Lak speak their language but they are multilingual.

Traditionally they were shepherds, raising sheep and goats. They practiced transhumant shepherding, which required them to move their livestock from mountain to lowland areas as the seasons changed. In areas where they continue to shepherd, the men raise and

tend to the livestock, while the women are responsible for the farming. They depend on meat and milk for food, but also grow peas, barley, wheat, and potatoes.

Many were also local craftsmen. They continue to be known for their jewelry and coppersmiths. Today they also work as merchants and make saddles and harnesses. Some work as masons, candy makers, and tinsmiths. Women work in rug weaving, spinning, and making ceramics. They have a history of emigrating to neighboring areas for economic reasons. In Russia, they assimilated into Russian culture and became one of the most multilingual groups in the former Soviet Union.

Family is important to the Lak people. They used to live in extended family units called Takhums. These were made up of several families, descending from a common male ancestor. Marriages were often arranged and kept within the takhum. The eldest women often played a major role in arranging these marriages. A bride price is a custom that still exists today, but it is more of a symbolic transaction than a financial one.

The Lak were exposed to Christianity by the Armenians and Georgians in the sixth century, but they converted to Islam in the eighth century. They are believed to be the first people in the Dagestan area of Russia to encounter Islam. They are Shafi Sunni Muslims and about 99.20% claim to be Muslims. They are less than 1% evangelical. There are Bible portions and the Jesus film in the Lak language. There is almost no Christian witness among them.

http://www.adoptapeople.com/Profiles/p_code5/980.htm

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

http://www.nupi.no/cgi-win/Russland/etnisk_b.exe?Laksian

Olson, James. *An Ethnohistorical Dictionary of the Russian and Soviet Empires*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994.

Minahan, James. *One Europe, Many Nations: A Historical Dictionary of European National Groups*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000.

24076

Lezghian (364,211)

The *Lezghian* people are of the Caucasus people cluster. They are also called *Lezghi* people. Lezgin homeland is in Dagestan and Azerbaijan. In Azerbaijan, they are found mostly in the Greater Caucasus Mountains, near the city of Kuba. The Lezgins are believed to be the descendents of merging *Alty*, *Akhty*, and *Rutul peoples*. They are bilingual in Azeri. Their neighbors are the Aguls, Azeri, Rutuls, Tabasarans, and Tsakhurs. They resisted Russification and have strong traditional culture. Most marry within their own clan. In their homeland, they are geographically isolated and remain among the least educated in the former Soviet Union.

Many have retained their traditional rural lifestyle. They raise sheep and goats in highland areas and cattle in lower land areas. Weaving, pottery, making rugs, and gold and silversmithing are also ways of earning income for them. Lezghian women have become known for their woven carpets. Their economy is dependent on food processing,

leather working, and textile production. Making weapons and jewelry has become a source of income for those living around Baku.

They are primarily Sunni Muslims, having been fully converted to Islam in the 19th century. In some areas, they are Shiites Muslims. In Azerbaijan, they are 99% Muslim. In Russia, they are known as one of the more devout Muslim groups. In Azerbaijan, they are less than 1% Christian adherent. They have portions of the Bible, the Jesus film, and Christian Audio Recordings in the Legzi language.

Minahan, James. *One Europe, Many Nations: A Historical Dictionary of European National Groups*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

http://www.nupi.no/cgi-win/Russland/etnisk_b.exe?Lezgin

http://www.adoptapeople.com/Profiles/p_code/1939.htm

Olson, James. *An Ethnohistorical Dictionary of the Russian and Soviet Empires*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994.

00000

Moldavian (2,100)

The Moldavian are of the Romanian people cluster. The largest groups of them are found in Moldova, the Ukraine, and Russia. The Moldavians are those descendents from the territory occupied by current Moldova, but their exact ancestry is still debated. They are also referred to as the Moldavians. They speak Romanian and most today use a Cyrillic script.

Their homeland was established in the 14th Century and in the following centuries experienced wars over that territory. The Ottomans, Poles, Russians, and Habsburgs were all interested in this land. The Russians and Turks fought over the area in the 18th Century and the Russian empire conquered the people. Consequently, around 100,000 Moldavians moved into Russia. After the Russian revolution, Moldova became a Romanian province when it entered into a union with Romania. In 1924, a Moldovan ASSR was proclaimed to counter the Romanian claims and create a Communist buffer. After 1939, the larger Moldovan area was overtaken and harshly “Russified,” including the relocation of 100,000 Moldavians. A short period of Axis occupation only exacerbated the situation later, when Romania itself was taken over in 1944. National communists later replaced Stalinism in the area. Brezhnev banned Moldovan Romanian cultural contacts by 1970. In 1989, the Latin script was reintroduced and Moldovan language was declared the same as Romanian. In 1990 the Moldovan SSR changed its name to Moldova. They declared independence on August 27, 1991 and in December 1991 Moldova joined the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). There has not been a significant migration of Moldavians to Moldova. The Moldovans remain the second poorest of the European nations after Albania.

There are some differences between Moldovans and Romanians but they are very similar in culture and language. The term Moldovan is used to distinguish a person using the Romanian language that lives in the Bessarabia region formerly controlled by the Soviet Union. They are 82% Christian adherent, likely of the Romanian Orthodox Church, and are about 3% evangelical. About 18% are non-religious. They have the Bible, the Jesus

film, Gospel audio recordings, and both Christian radio and audio recordings in the Romanian language.

One Europe, Many Nations: A Historical Dictionary of European National Groups by James B. Minahan (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000) 465-471.

Olson, James. *An Ethnohistorical Dictionary of the Russian and Soviet Empires*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

http://www.nupi.no/cgi-win/Russland/etnisk_b.exe?Moldavian

24077

Mordvinian (848)

The *Mordvinian* are also called the *Mordva*, *Erzya*, or *Moksha*. They are mostly found in the Middle Volga region and in the Mordvinian Autonomous Republic parts of Russia. They are part of the Finnish groups of people. They speak *Erzya*, which is in the Finnic group of the Uralian branch of the Uralic- Altaic family.

They are almost all bilingual and the population of this people group is decreasing, as many are assimilating into the cultures they live in. They are primarily Orthodox Christians. Approximately 65% of the population is Christian adherent and they are less than 1% evangelical. In Azerbaijan, they are about 35% non-religious. They have the Jesus Film and portions of Scripture in their language.

<http://www.peoplesgroups.org/MapSearch.aspx?country=Tajikistan>

Olson, James. *An Ethnohistorical Dictionary of the Russian and Soviet Empires*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

24078

Mussulman Tat (23,353)

The *Tatians* are an Indo-Iranian group that speak the *Tati* language, but many are bilingual in Azeri. Since there is no Tati alphabet, their written and literary language is Azeri. They are found in Iran and Azerbaijan. In Azerbaijan, they live in the mountain valleys of the north and northeastern parts of the country. A large group of them also lives in Baku. They are a part of the three distinct religious groups that are categorized as “tat” people. These three groups include the Jewish Tat, also known as the “Mountain Jews,” the Christian Tat, and the Muslim Tat. This group part of the Muslim Tat community. They were originally called “tats” by the Turks in order to designate settled groups of non-Turkic origin.

They are believed to be original to the Caucasus but have blended their cultures with the Azeri people over time. There is considerable similarity of their national identity with the Azerbaijani people excluding their language. The craftsmanship of the Tats is well known. The raising of livestock and cultivation of crops is their main source of sustaining themselves. The mountainous region and mild climate are fairly good for wine production and the Soviets exploited this fact. The Soviets changed their lifestyles some

through their programs but some of their former lifestyle has been recovered. They have been able to maintain some of their culture as they are only allowed to marry within their tribe. School emphasizes religion and traditional values and classes are often segregated by sex.

The common bond of Islam has held the Tats close to the Azeri, lending to the assimilation of the former into the latter. About 90% of the Mussulman Tat in Azerbaijan are Shia Muslims and another 9% are Sunni Muslims. Only about 1% of these people are Christian adherent, most of these being Orthodox Christians. There is no Gospel information in the Tatian language but the Bible, Jesus film, gospel audio recordings are in the Azeri language which most are bilingual in.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

<http://www.eki.ee/books/redbook/tats.shtml>

http://www.hfe.org/_old/prayer/caucasus/caucus5.htm

24080

Ossete (2,547)

The *Ossete* are of the Caucasus people cluster. They are also called *Allagir*, *Iron*, *Tagaur*, *Western Ossete*, and *Western Ossetian*. They are mostly found in Georgia and Russia, however are also found in the areas of the former Soviet Union. They speak Osetin, which is an Indo-European language of the Iranian group. They use a Cyrillic script. It is influenced by Turkic languages. They are involved in dairy farming, cattle breeding, and timber harvesting. The production of hydroelectric power and metal casting is important in their economy.

The Alans are their ancestors. They call themselves the Iristi. Their presence in the Caucasus is due to invaders like the Huns, Arabs and Georgians. Their intermarriage of the tribes has led to divisions into three subgroups, the Irons, Tuallags and the Digors. The Iron and Digors are mainly in Russia and the Tuallag are in Georgia.

They adopted Christianity in the 4th -5th centuries, with Russian orthodoxy influencing them in the 18th century. Kabardian mediation in the 17th century led to the introduction of Islam. Some Ossetians remained Christians and enjoyed the Russian protection against the Kabards, while other converted to Islam. These Christians settled Vladdikavkaz in response to the protection and expansion of Russia in the Caucasus. Ossetes generally favored the Russians to their Muslim neighbors. Tensions were high during World War I and after the Bolshevik Revolution groups tried to meet in concilliary meetings to work out the future. The Civil War hit the area in the middle of 1918. Ossetians were among those that were arrested and executed by the Bolsheviks and Muslims. In 1924 North Ossentia was created as an autonomous region. It was occupied by Germans in World War II. The Ossetians did not cooperate with the Nazis, but the Muslim Digors were deported with other Muslims to Central Asia by Stalin (Stalin's mother was Ossentian). In 1957 some Digors returned to Ossentia, but many remained in various parts of Central Asia. The 1980's sparked a nationalist movement. After the collapse of the USSR,

Ossetians fought the Ingush in their villages over the right to Vladikavkaz. Ethnic tension remains.

In Azerbaijan, their primary religion is Islam, with about 40% claiming to be Muslims. The New Testament, Christian radio broadcasting, the Jesus Film, and Gospel audio recordings are available in the Ossetin language. They are 35% Christian adherent, most of those being Orthodox Christians. Less than 1% of them are evangelical. Another 24% is non-religious.

http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=oss

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

<http://www.ibtnet.org/pdf/ossetic.pdf>

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24082

Polish (833)

The Polish are among the Western Slav people cluster. Until the late 18th century the Polish people lived in their independent state, but when Prussia, Russia and Austria-Hungary partitioned the Polish homeland for themselves. In Post-WWI, a new Poland was created and Poles moved into these new areas of Lithuania, Ukraine, and Belarus. After the 1939 repartitioning of Poland by Russia and Germany, nearly two million Poles ended up living in Soviet Union. There were many Poles deported by Stalin into Siberia and Central Asia and half a million of those deported died during transit. The rest of the Poles were subject to the cruelties of Nazi occupation.

In some places, young couples live with a set of parents during the first few years of marriage. Families normally have one or two children, but rural families have three to four. Though nuclear families are the norm, single parent households are on the rise. Traditionally, fathers are stern while mothers serve as mediators between him and the children. While both parents normally are employed, the children take on tasks such as cooking, cleaning, etc.

Religion is a major component of Polish life. They are primarily Roman Catholic and live in relational community based on their past and present as Catholics. Catholicism is important to their identity as Poles.

Before Poland became Christian under the reign of *Prince Mieczyslaw* during 962 to 992, Christians from Moravia had already come into the country. However, no organized church existed. When *Mieczyslaw* married the Catholic daughter of the Bohemian prince, he embraced Christianity. In order for the priesthood to be independent of Germany, *Boleslaw the Great* (992 to 1025), established protection and patronage to the priests. The pope promptly appointed Bishops. In 1006, the Benedictines migrated to Poland.

Between 1025-34, a revolution occurred against the church and its ministers. Nevertheless, *Casimir I* restored Christianity by building churches and convents. By 1079, the Church had grown in stature. They stood up to the corrupt king gaining esteem and influence in the political realm that continues today. The following years brought continued growth in political matters. Over the next one hundred years, debates raged between the state, the pope, and the church over power and rules.

During the 14th century, bishops were elected by the State. Much of this influence came from German missionaries moving eastward. Battles were conducted during the Reformation over the church and state influence. For instance, in 1518, Lutheranism spread to Poland. In addition, Calvinism came in 1548. The debates included arguments over celibacy, Mass in the vernacular, and communion. However, in 1587, Catholicism was given official recognition while Protestants were restricted.

Jesuits came to Poland to open schools. The 1700s brought oppression on Protestants who were considered heretics. Over the years, the laws were loosened on toleration of Protestants. Because of World War II, Poland was transformed into a single religious state. Communism had little effect on the Catholic Church's efforts. After years of Catholic influence, the state-sponsored atheistic propaganda only served to bond most to the church's appealing message.

Today, the people are tied to the Church leadership through love and confidence. The Catholic Church continues to dominate political aspects of Poland. Without question, Poland is one of the most strongly dominated Roman Catholic countries in the world. The highlight of the Catholic Church in Poland was the election of Karol Cardinal Wojtyla who became Pope John Paul II in 1978. In Poland, Protestant beliefs are allowed, but evangelicals are discriminated against and considered sectarian by established denominations. The percentage of Christian adherents among the Polish in Azerbaijan is about 91% with less than 1% being evangelical. They have the Bible, the Jesus film, Christian radio broadcasting, and Gospel audio recordings.

<http://www.teamwarsaw.blogspot.com/>

<http://www.worldmap.org/php/country>

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

http://www.nupi.no/cgi-win/Russland/etnisk_b.exe?Pole

Olson, James. *An Ethnohistorical Dictionary of the Russian and Soviet Empires*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994.

24083

Romanian (1,475)

The Romanian people are found throughout the world. They are also called Istrio-Romanian and Oltenia. Their primary language is Romanian. In 1944 the Soviets invaded Romania and it remained Communist, depended on the USSR for economic and political support. Anti-Soviets were removed from Romania. Russia and Romania struggled back and forth for power over the country and people. Violence marked the end of the Ceausescu regime and economic stability was not fully restored. Political ties with

Europe were developed in the 1990's. The new millennia included positive political development towards democracy for Romania.

They are primarily Orthodox Christians. In Azerbaijan, they are about 80% Christian adherent and 4% evangelical. They have the Bible, the Jesus film, Christian radio broadcasting, God's Story Video, and Gospel audio recordings in Romanian.

<http://www.romania.org/romania/history3.html>

<http://www.answers.com/topic/romania>

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

998

Russian (163,000)

The Russian people are also called Russ, Olossu, and Eluosi. They are the descendants of eastern Slavic origins. Russians include those who have intermarried with the following groups but consider themselves Russian: Menshcheryaks, Polekh, Goryuns, Starozhily (old inhabitants), Bukhtarmans, Polyaks, Semeikis, Kerzhaks, Urals, Kamchadals, Zatundren, Sayans, Karyms, Kolymchans, Yakutyans, Markovs, Russkoustins, Pomors. Their primary language is Russian.

The Russian state was formed in 1521 but the Rus' of Kiev are well known for their leaders Prince Vladimir who converted to Byzantine Orthodox Christianity in 988. The Kievan Rus were isolated from the Catholic West because of this decision, and the Mongol invasion of the 13th century held Russia in a developmental lurch for two centuries. The Mongol control forced many Rus' into the West, creating Byelorussians and Ukrainians emerged as well. Moscow replaced Kiev as the most powerful Russian city as Ivan I became Prince of Muscovy and the collector of tribute to the Mongols. Muscovy gained strength and the people of Russia expanded as the Mongol rule faded.

In 1453 Moscow was declared the Third Rome by the Russian Orthodox leaders. In 1480, tribute payment ceased and by 1500 much of the ethnic Russian territory was under Muscovy control. Ivan the IV annexed the Volga River basing and Central Asian lands and Cossacks settled into these areas, as well as the frontiers of Siberia. More expansion led to wars with Poland, and conflicts with China. Peter the Great led Russians into Western empowerment, but through oppressive means. He took control of the northern Baltic area after defeating the Swedish King Charles XII. Under Peter the Great, the Russian Orthodox Church became controlled by the government. Russia expanded into Crimea and the Black Sea with Catherine II at the head of the Empire. Russian relations with the Ottoman Empire had weakened Turkey until they were not a threat any longer. Expansion into the Caucasus and into Alaska came in early 19th century. Russia became larger than its original ethnic Russia. Russification programs ensued under the leadership of Nicholas I and Alexander II. Central Asia was taken in the 1860's, and Far Eastern relations forced the sale of Alaska to the United States to pay for work in the Far East. World War I and the defeats Russia suffered created ground for the Bolshevik revolution and the end of the Romanov's 300-year dynasty. Civil infighting led the Russians to choose between the new Red Army and old leadership calling themselves White Army.

This ended in 1920 with foreign intervention. Lenin's death in 1924 left the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic in the hands of Joseph Stalin.

Stalin and the Russian people dominated the government and anyone thought to be opposed to Stalin and his policies were executed. The failed alliance with Germany in World War II, forced Stalin into the court of the allies. The Russian losses of 20 million in this war, along with the suppression of the people suspected of working with the Nazis, was a great loss to the Russian people. The state emerged from the war as a superpower. The lands that Russia held prior to WWI were regained in the aftermath of the second war. The peoples of these nations were forced into collectives and many were deported to slave or work camps in Siberia and Central Asia. The USSR used this slave labor for its heavy industries as it attempted to build huge military stores. Stalin's death ended some oppression of the peoples of the USSR. The Russian people and the Soviet Man became the ideal to which all peoples were to adhere. Soviet Russification led to many new generations of people that call themselves Russian who are of other ethnic descent. Russians felt that the Soviet shadow obscured what it meant to be Russian. Nationalism surfaced during the Gorbachev era with three separate movements that reacted to the West and to Soviet policies. The Russian people have suffered much repression and loss of birth rates due to the environmental pollution by the industrial, petroleum, and nuclear waste created in the Soviet era. Many of the Russians in Tajikistan reside near the border of Afghanistan. They have remained in the country and are a part of protecting the border from drugs and terrorists.

The Russian people in Azerbaijan are 58% Christian adherent, most being Russian Orthodox. They are less than 1% evangelical. 42% claim to be non-religious. They have the Bible, Gospel audio recordings, Christian radio broadcasting, the God's Story Video, and the Jesus film in Russian.

<http://www.nationmaster.com/country/rs>
<http://www.ahart4russia.com/Ekaterinburg.htm>
<http://www.eglobalaccess.com/carrie/uzbek/culture.htm>
<http://www.peopleteams.org/stavteam/default.htm>
<http://www.hope4ufa.com/>
http://www.nupi.no/cgi-win/Russland/etnisk_b.exe?Russian
<http://www.pcn.org.uk/Uzbekistan%20-%202001.pdf>
<http://www.russianservice.com/regions.asp?Main=Uzbekistan>
<http://www.joshuaproject.net>
http://www.stopvaw.org/printview/Ethnic_minorities4.html
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00000

Rutul (100)

The Rutul are part of the Caucasus people cluster. They are also known as the Lezghi, Rutal, and Mukhad people. Their self designation is mjukhadar, which means "an inhabitant of the Mjukhad village." In Azerbaijan, this village is known as Rutal, which is how the people got their name. Traditionally, they are from the valleys of the Samur River in southern Dagestan. In Azerbaijan, they are mostly found in the villages of Shin

and Kainar. Most of the Rutul speak Rutuly, which is in the Dagestanian group of the Northeast Caucasian language family. This is not a literary language and the dialects are not very different. Russian is widespread and many speak Azerbaijani.

The Rutul are among the aborigines of Dagestan. They are anthropologically and ethnoculturally related to the Lezgian people.

The Rutul village consists of clans called “tukhum” which are made up of families of common ancestry. The center of the settlement is likely a mosque or clubhouse building. Traditionally, the houses did not have windows, but had light holes, however, most modern buildings have windows. Modern homes are often decorated with thick wool or felt carpets. They live as agriculturalists, and livestock breeders. They tend to breed sheep and cattle and their main crops include wheat, rye, barley, millet, and spelt. Their crafts include pottery, leatherwork, weaving, and woolen knitting. Their diet is balanced with meat, dairy, grain, and vegetables.

Rutul families are patriarchal and women are usually fully subordinate to men. In the past, marriages were arranged by the parents and a matchmaker was often called upon as a mediator. Grooms were chosen by his family wealth, the social status of his clan, his diligence, and his health. Many traditions are disappearing; however, some have been preserved. Old wedding customs are still common and funerals are still conducted according to the rules laid out by Islamic law. While the clans still exist, most now live in nuclear families.

The Rutul people were Christians until the 8th century, when the Arab conquest brought Islam to the area. Today, the Rutul are Sunni Muslims, with animist and occult practices mixed in. They are believed by some to be almost 100% Shafi'ite Muslim, however, others estimate them to be only 85% Muslim and 15% non-religious. Some of their ancient beliefs included a nature cult, hunting and fertility cults, and animal worship. Magic was performed to summons rain and the sun. They also continue to recognize a pagan god, bynysh. There are few, if any, known believers among them and there are currently no known agencies working with these people. They do not have any Christian resources available to them in their language.

http://www.nupi.no/cgi-win/Russland/etnisk_b.exe?Rutultsi

<http://www.eki.ee/books/redbook/rutuls.shtml>

http://www.adoptapeople.com/Profiles/p_code5/975.htm

24086

Shachsewenen

The *Shachsewenen* ascend from the Turkic people and belong to the Azerbaijani people cluster. Their language is Southern Azerbaijani however, most are bilingual. These people are sometimes called the Afshar, Afshari, or the Southern Azerbaijani. They are found in Azerbaijan and Afghanistan. It is unknown how many of them reside in Azerbaijan. They are primarily Sunni Muslim. Currently about 0.04% of them claim to be

born again believers. There are only portions of the bible translated in their language; however there are radio broadcasts being put out in their language.

www.joshuaproject.net
www.realafghan.com/history/language.htm

24087

Tabasaran (318)

The *Tabasaran* people are of the Caucasus people cluster. They are mostly found in the northeastern part of Dagestan in Russia, however small groups of them can be found in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and the Ukraine. They are also known as the Ghumghum, Tabassaran, Tabasarantsy, and Tabasaran Zhvi people.

They are referred to in the Primitive Christian Church and in Armenian historical documents in the 5th and 7th centuries. The Tabasaran adopted Islam in the 8th and 9th centuries. A nation state emerged in the 12th century, but it became part of the Khanate of Derbent between the 13th and 15th centuries. Foreign invaders that threatened their existence include the Arabian Caliphs, Mongol-Tatars, and Turkish sultans. In the 1800's the Russians exerted reign over them. Until the Russian Revolution, they were usually classified as Lezgins, which was a general term describing all the ethnic groups in what is now Dagestan. They speak Tabassaran and use a Cyrillic alphabet. It is considered one of the world's hardest languages and has 36 cases.

Tabasaran economy is based on herding cattle and sheep and carpet making. In some areas they are able to raise barley, corn, wheat, rye and soybeans. The landscape determines their economic means, while they are skilled in wood and stone carving and weaving. With capitalism came the demise of their families and their local lifestyle. Under the Soviet economy machinery was introduced in cultivating crops and people were deported from their settlements to farm large areas in the plains. Despite these changes, the Tabasarans mainly live in their ancient regions and attend to a rural life.

Capitalism brought many changes to the Tabasarn people. The patriarchal clan began to disintegrate and the clan was replaced by family units. Social and family relations began to be regulated by customary and Islamic law. While there were changes, endogamy prevailed and marriages between cousins were not uncommon. Boys tended to marry around age 16 and girls married around the age of 14. Traditions around marriages and funerals were maintained. The elderly were and continue to be the mainstays of tradition. The elderly have a big influence on the raising of children, which is a way to pass traditions and wisdom to the future generations.

They are primarily Sunni Muslims of the Shafi School. Among some of the Tabasarans, heathen traditions have been incorporated into their Muslim practices. Some of these practices are the celebrations of sowing and plowing and the worship of old trees. In some places, they are very devout Muslims and tend to be influenced by Islamic fundamentalism. In some places, due bad treatment by the government, they have

become anti-Communist, anti-Russian, and anti-Christian. The number of Christian adherents and evangelicals among them is unknown. There are Bible portions, the Jesus film, and Christian audio recordings in Tabassaran.

http://www.ksafe.com/profiles/p_code5/1606.html

<http://www.eki.ee/books/redbook/tabasarans.shtml>

<http://www.tabasaran.com/relig.htm>

http://www.hfe.org/_old/prayer/caucasus/caucus5.htm

<http://www.redeemercommunity.org/Mission%20Files/BLTC%20Newsletter%20Feb05.pdf>

<http://www.eki.ee/books/redbook/tabasarans.shtml>

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Olson, James. *An Ethnohistorical Dictionary of the Russian and Soviet Empires*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

24088

Tajik (742)

The *Tajiks* are of the Indo- Iranian affinity block. They are found throughout Eastern Europe and Central Asia, however, the largest populations of them are found in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Afghanistan. They are believed to be the original Persian population of Afghanistan and Turkmenistan. The Tajiks are also known as the Afghani Tajik, the Persian Tajik, Tadzhi, and Tadhiki. Their primary language is Tajiki.

The Tajiks are known as proud, hardworking, gracious, and hospitable. They have a rich tradition and have passed down a heritage of folklore, folksongs, and folk dances through each generation. Buzkashi, or “goat pulling,” is their national sport. In Buzkashi, men of horses pick up and drag a goat carcass to a certain place on a field, sometimes miles away. The Tajik place a lot of emphasis on etiquette. The young must greet the elders. When friends and relatives meet, they shake hands and pat each other’s beards. Men will often bow with their right hand over their check, and women, with both arms across her chest. They never remove their hats while talking to another, unless a very serious situation is being discussed. They often go out of their way to greet and help strangers, however in recent times, some have become a little more cautious.

The Tajiks that live in the more rural areas work as migrant farmers and herdsmen. They farm wheat, barley, and grain. Some live a semi-nomadic life. These Tajiks will often plant their crops in the spring, take their herds to highland grazing grounds during the summer, then return to harvest their crops in the fall. When working in the fields, men wear turbans over colorful caps. Rural women tend to wear veils. The Tajiks living in more urban areas often work as skilled artists or traders. Women in the urban areas wear shawls. Many Tajik houses are square, with flat roofs. Many have moved to the cities and will work on farms during the summer, then return to the cities for the rest of the year. This has caused job instability and tension has developed between the Uzbeks and Tajiks, as they often compete for jobs.

It is common among Tajiks for three generations to live in one house. In many homes, senior family members, guests, and juniors sleep on different sides of the same room. In

Tajik society, women do not receive an inheritance and they are under the authority of their father, or if married their husband and father-in-law. Traditionally marriages were arranged and one could not intermarry. Today, it is not uncommon for Tajiks to intermarry with Uzbeks and Pashtuns, so they're features are not always easy to recognize. Tajiks have seen centuries of war and tribal conflicts.

In Azerbaijan, the Tajiks are 90% Muslims and 10% non-religious. In most places, they are very devout and are known to be strong in their faith and adhere closely to its beliefs. Islam is seen in every part of their lives. Although devout Muslims, some spiritism and folk Islam is seen among the Tajiks. There are few, if any, Christians among the Tajiks in Azerbaijan. They have the Bible, the Jesus Film, the God's Story Video, and Radio Broadcasts available in their language.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

<http://www.china.org.cn/e-groups/shaoshu/shao-2-tajik.htm> <http://www.chsource.org/Tajik.htm>

<http://www.imb.org/centralasia/pray.htm>

<http://www.russianservice.com/regions.asp?Main=Uzbekistan>

<http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/ins/uzbeki95.pdf> [www.gl.iit.edu/govdocs/afghanistan/People in Afgh.](http://www.gl.iit.edu/govdocs/afghanistan/People%20in%20Afgh)

24089

Talysh, Lenkoran (102,010)

The *Talysh* are of the Iranian-Median affinity block. They are also called the Lerik and the Lenkoran people. Subgroups of the Talysh people include Harzani, Kajali, Karingani, and the Takistani. These are mostly found in Iran. Another group of them is found in southeastern Azerbaijan. In Azerbaijan, they live in the southernmost tip of the country, along the Iranian border. They mainly live in the districts of Lenkoran and Astarin, with some being found in Lerik and Massallin. Until recently, the Talysh were not able to communicate across the border, and they evolved into two separate groups. One part of the Talysh lives in the mountains, and the other lives along the subtropical coastal lowlands and the Mugani Steppe. They call themselves the Talushon. The Talysh speak Talysh, which is an Indo-Iranian language. They have no written language, but in the past they used the Arabic alphabet. Most Talysh are also fluent in either Russian or Farsi.

The Talysh are believed to have been in the southwest Caspian Sea area for thousands of years. During the middle Ages, they fell under Turkish rule, however, they were able to gain independence in the 1600's. They remained independent until the early 1800's, when they fell under Soviet rule.

In general, the lives of the Talysh have been strongly influenced by the Azerbaijanis. They have, however, been able to maintain some of their own culture. Their food and clothing is unique to them. The clothes worn by the women on the rice paddies, which is usually an outfit of shorts and a shirt, is a characteristic of the Talysh. A food that is characteristically Talysh is Kizme, which is thick boiled rice that is eaten instead of bread. They have also maintained their architecture, building barns on stilts with reed roofs, and pillared porches.

The lives of the different subgroups are significantly different due to the varied environments. Most, regardless of the region, are farmers. Depending on the area, their major crops are rice, wheat, barley, tea, citrus fruits, garlic, onions, pumpkins, melons, peas, or grapes. Those who are not farmers, tend to be skilled craftsmen. They make silk, rugs, felt, tin, shoes, and jewelry. Others make a living by bee-keeping and silk work breeding. In the past, many found employment in the oil industry and Caspian fisheries.

Family among the Talysh is important. Although men are allowed to marry more than one wife, according to Islamic law, most marry only one woman. Couples often marry young, with the groom being between the ages of 15-20 and the bride being between the ages of 12-16. The groom's family is expected to pay a bride price, called a kebin. Men will sometimes "kidnap" his future bride and marry her in order to avoid paying a bride price. While women used to wear more traditional Muslim clothing, many are adopting Western style clothing.

The Talysh are thought to be 100% Muslim, mostly of the Shiite branch. While Islam is their primary religion, their practices are strongly influenced by pre-Islamic religions. Trees and groves are given great reverence and they believe in both good and evil spirits. One of the most dangerous spirits they acknowledge is the spirit "Alazhan" or the "Red Woman." She is believed to attack women and newborn babies during and after childbirth. There are no known Christians among them and there are no Christian resources available to them in their heart language.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

24090

Tatar (31,845)

The *Tatar* people are of the Ural Siberian people cluster and the Turkic affinity block. They are found in all of the former Soviet Union and in places in Turkey and China. Their main population is found around the Volga region of Russia. They are also known as the *Dada*, *Dadan*, *Kazan Tatar*, *Tatar*, *Tata'er*, *Tura*, and *Turkish Tatar*. They speak Tatar, which belongs to the Turkic language family of the Altaic language system. About thirty percent of the Tatar speak Russian.

The Tatar people survived Mongolian invasion in the thirteenth century as well as the Russian conquest in the sixteenth century. By the nineteenth century, their cities were among the great cultural centers in the Islamic world. It was in the nineteenth century that the Tatar dispersed to Central Asian countries. The Tatar are very diverse. Some have blue eyes and blond hair, while others have Mongoloid features. They often have little facial hair.

Most of the Tatar people have lost their tribal structure. They've become settled and are mostly peasants and merchants. In Russia, some work in manufacturing industries and petroleum refineries. Others work on community farms. In more urban areas of Russia, they live like the other Russians. Many have small families and couples live apart from

their families after they marry. Those living in more rural areas are more traditional. They live in homes with three generations living under the same roof.

The father is the head of the household for the Tatar people. He is responsible for the family income and strenuous labor. Women are usually responsible for household duties like cooking, cleaning, and carrying water. Sometimes they also take care of livestock. Marriages are monogamous and intermarriage between the Tatar and other ethnic groups is acceptable. Marriages between cousins do happen, but they are uncommon. During the wedding ceremony, the newlyweds drink sugar water from the same cup as a symbol of a sweet life together. Sometimes the groom moves in with the wife's family, and does not return to his own family until the first child is born. Several ceremonies are held for children. Three days after a baby is born, the baby receives a religious blessing. Seven weeks later, the child's cradle rites are performed. In many places, forty days after the child's birth, the child is bathed in water that is taken from 40 different places. This is a ceremony intended to bring good health to the child. The child is usually given an Islamic name, with the surname of the father or grandfather.

The culture of the Tatars is rich. They play music on instruments such as the Kuni, which is a wooden flute, the Kebisi, a type of harmonica, and a two-stringed violin. Men dance in a way that involves a lot of squatting, kicking, and leaping. A game that is common among them is called the "jumping walk" contest. In this game, people race holding an egg on a spoon in their mouths.

The Tatar are in Azerbaijan are 83% Muslim, however, most are not devout. Another 15.5% of the Tatars in Azerbaijan claim to be non-religious. Folk Islamic practices are common, such as the belief in supernatural powers like the "evil eye." Many, in other areas of the world, eat pork, which is forbidden in Islam and many do not take part in Islamic fasts. In some places, however, they celebrate festivals, such as the Saban Festival, or the "rites of spring," which have their origins in shamanism. Many are suspicious of Christianity due to the Russian Orthodox Church's attempt to convert them through coercion. In Azerbaijan, the Tatar are about 1.50% Christian adherent, with few, if any, known evangelicals. They have portions of Scripture, the Jesus Film, the God's Story Video, and Radio Broadcasts available in their language.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

<http://realafghan.com/history/language.htm>

<http://www.china.org.cn/e-groups/shaoshu/shao-2-Tatar.htm> <http://www.chsource.org/Tatar.htm>

24091

Tsakhur (14,861)

The *Tsakhur* are a people of Caucasus Mountains, inhabiting the Rutul district and the bordering districts of *Kakh*, *Zakataly* and *Belokany* in Azerbaijan. There are 12 Tsakhur villages in Dagestan. The 4 largest are Tsakhur, Gelmets, Kurdul and Mikikh. There are seven in Azerbaijan. Tsakhurs also live in 11 other villages in Azerbaijan that are shared with other people groups. About two-thirds of the Tsakhur live in northern Azerbaijan. Their self-designation is *iyhjby* or *lighy*. The name Tsakhur comes from the name of their

largest village, Tshaikhi. Their language is called tshajhna-miz, which comes from the Lezgi-Samur people group. While this language used a Latin alphabet in the 1930's, the language has not been a written language since the 1940's. Most are fluent in Azerbaijani.

Regional travel was once only possible in the summer months but since highways were built allows for greater access. Since contact with the world was limited, they had close ties with their neighbors, the Rutuls and the Azerbaijanis. They breed livestock, do migrant work, and raise some crops for their livelihood. Some of their crops include maize, barleycorn, wheat, rice, and millet and their livestock include cattle, sheep, and domestic fowl. Some of their crafts include knitting and rug making.

Historically, they may have come from Armenia and Georgia but until the 19th century not much written about them. They were among those impacted by the Arab, Mongol, Turkish, and Russian conquests of the region during the last millennia. It is believed by some that they may have been from Dagestan, but in the thirteenth century, many moved to northern Azerbaijan. In 1803, the Tsakhur were subjected to Russian rule. In the decades following they fought with then against the Russians and were deported to Azerbaijan in 1852 for disloyalty. They were allowed to return to their homeland in the next decade

Culturally, the Tsakhur are patriarchal and headed by village elders. Each community elected a village representative that became a part of a union. In time this group became a hereditary aristocracy. Still the community retained the strict unity where endogamy within the village persisted. This has helped them retain their identity in alien cultures. Under Russian unification their lifestyle changed some, so that they use more manufactured goods, and live in multi-storey buildings. Women do not wear the traditional chukha, instead wear a scarf on their head. Russification is apparent in family and community relationships/practices. Traditional dishes are still prepared. Diet consists of meat, dairy products, and grain with some fruit and vegetables. Alcohol and tea were adopted in the 20th century.

Today, most Taakhur live in nuclear families, made up of the father, mother, and their unmarried children. Men and women are free to choose their own marriage partner, but they are encouraged to marry a person from an equally honorable family. Matchmakers are still called upon in choosing the right partner. Weddings last two to five days and are big events that involve all of the couple's relatives and those living in the village.

Religiously, the Tsakhur are Sunni Muslims that still hold to traditional pagan practices. They are about 99.975 Muslim. There are only a few Christians that make up 0.03% of the population. There are no Christian resources available to them in their heart language. There seems to be a desire to make Tsakhur into a written language again, which may be the door for linguists to translate the Bible. Russian predominates as the literary language of this people. Azeri is also used by many if not most Tsakhur.

24092

Turk (20,170)

The *Turk* people are of the Turkish people cluster. They are found in over 45 countries of the world. They are also called Anatolian, Baharlu Turk, Meskhetian Turk, Ottoman Turk, Rumelian Turk, and Urum. They are originally from Meskheti, which lies along the borders of Georgia and Turkey. During the Ottoman Empire, Turkish settlers moved into Meskheti, which resulted in a mix of the Turk and Meskheti populations. The Russians call them the Meskhetian Turki, which means "Turks from Turkey." In 1944, Stalin forced them from their homeland in Georgia to the southeastern part of Uzbekistan. He considered them a problem because they had strong ties to Turkey and seemed to be resistant to Soviet assimilation. Stalin may have seen them as a threat, although they showed no signs of disloyalty. Contrary to this possible belief, more than 20,000 Meskhetian Turks died fighting Nazi forces in the Red Army. Another 20,000 or so fought with the Red Army against enemy forces. About 15,000 of them died of starvation or cold in their deportation to Central Asia.

In 1989, there was an outbreak of ethnic violence in the Ferghana Valley and many Meskhetian Turks were forced to be uprooted again. They scattered across Central Asia, Russia, Turkey, Tajikistan, Ukraine, and Azerbaijan. Many feel they were unjustly removed from their homeland. Many want to return to Georgia, however, their government won't allow them to return unless they take on Georgian names and consider themselves Georgians.

Traditionally they were farmers who used sophisticated agricultural techniques. They used wood and ceramic conduits for crop irrigation. They grew fruits and vegetables. They also raised cattle. They lost many of their agricultural practices in their move to Central Asia.

Family is important to the Meskhetian Turks. They have maintained their marriage traditions. The marriages are arranged and the girl's father receives a bride price. After the matchmaking is conducted, the families celebrate with a banquet. Weddings always take place on a Friday. The day before the wedding, a mullah confirms the wedding in the presence of two witnesses. The wedding is celebrated with colorful costumes and decorations. After the celebration, the newly married couple lives in a new home which is made especially for the new family.

The Meskhetian Turks are considered to be all Sunni Muslims of the Hanafite school. In Azerbaijan, they are 98% Muslim and 2% non-religious. They are considered to be devout Muslims, however they also hold to some folk practices. One of these practices is lighting a fire over a grave and praying for the dead. They also celebrate rituals and festivals that are centered around agriculture. They also hold to some of their beliefs in magic and sorcery. Some still try to bring rain with magic. Another practice is the use of "moon water," which is water that is left outside under a clear sky for the night, for healing. There are few, if any, known Christians among them. They have the Bible, the

Jesus Film, God's Story Video, Christian audio recordings, and Christian radio broadcasts in their language.

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24093

Udin, Udi (4,458)

These Albanians are the descendants of the Caucasian Albanians of Aghbania. They were one of the Ibero-Caucasian peoples that populate modern Dagestan and Azerbaijan. The ancient tribes of the Albanians were the Caspians, Hers, Gels, Gargars, and Uties. They are also called Alban and Urum. They are found mostly in Azerbaijan, but smaller groups of them are found in Georgia, Turkmenistan, and Russia. In Azerbaijan, they mostly live in the northern part of the country, in the village of Nidzh. About 35 Udi families live in Oghuz. This is on the road from Sheki in the West to Qabala in the East.

Their primary language is Udi, which belongs to the Lezgian group of the North-East Caucasian languages. This language is similar to an ancient language that was used in the 6th century, based on the Georgian alphabet.

The Udi people are believed to be the last offspring of one of the ethnic groups that once made up the Early Christian Kingdom of Alwan, or Caucasus Albania. Christianity was adopted at the end of the 4th century and the Albanian Church was born. Later many of the Albanians were included in the Azerbaijan territory. Christians in Azerbaijan desire to reorganize themselves as a community. They desire to restore the Udi language to use in the churches again. These Udians in Azerbaijan want to reconnect with the Udians in Russia so that they may document former customs, etc.

The Udians are similar to the Azerbaijanis in lifestyle and customs. Most have occupations in agriculture, horticulture, and cattle-breeding. Some of the Udians work in industries or make a living by carpet weaving. They are known for making clothing, and skin and leather footwear.

The Udians are 90% Christian adherent, most of them being Orthodox Christians. Others are of the Georgian Church. Another 10% of them are Muslims. There are no known evangelicals among them. They have portions of the Bible available to them in their language.

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24094

Ukrainian (33,968)

The Ukrainian people are of the Eastern Slav people cluster. They are found in almost 40 countries of the world, however, the largest groups of them are found in Russia and the Ukraine. Massive resettlements of Ukrainians dating from the end of the nineteenth century brought many Ukrainians to Central Asia. They've mostly settled in larger towns. They speak Ukrainian, which borrows from Polish. Ukrainian is an eastern Slavic language and is very close to the 9th century Slavonic used before the Slavonic from Bulgaria arrived with Christianity in the 10th century. In the latter half of the 19th century this language was banned, but has persevered and is becoming more widespread. It became the official language of the Ukraine in 1990. Many have intermarried with Russians, which has complicated their ethnic composition.

Peasant dishes made up of grains and staple vegetables, potatoes, cabbage, beets and mushrooms, make up the average diet. Meat is normally fried, boiled, or stewed. Cherries and plums are used to sweeten desserts and are sometime baked into sweet breads. The sacred dish in the country is "*Salo*," pig fat. This goes back for centuries, it has the same love that the French have for wine. Borscht, a beet and mixed vegetable broth, is the national soup and is normally served with cream.

In some places, alcohol is an immense problem and plays a major role in Ukrainian society. Ukrainians consume an enormous amount of spirits. It affects the whole of the society, from the workforce, lifespan, and the complete moral atmosphere of the country. Unlike in the past when Vodka was one of the only spirits one could purchase, Ukrainians in their homeland and many other places now have the complete gamut of alcohol including beer, wine, brandy, and rum. It is estimated that there are nearly 1 million confirmed chronic alcoholics or potential alcoholics in Ukraine.

The factors that contribute to the level of consumption are the lack of economic opportunity, demoralism, and no faith in professed ideals. "Alcohol is an anesthetic that helps to survive the operation called life," as quoted by Bernard Shaw. Traditionally, drinking for the average Ukrainian is a ritual and is a part of any social event or family occasion. Generally when family or friends get together, a bottle of vodka comes out. It is considered poor manners to refuse to drink when everyone is partaking, it is seen as an affront and a show of no respect for those around. Among the Ukrainians, education is greatly valued. Most of all children receive a high school education and many of those go on to attend the university or some other form of higher education. Kiev University in Ukraine is recognized as one of the top schools in the world.

Many of the Ukrainians are Orthodox Christians. According to some, the Apostle Andrew sailed through the Black Sea and landed in the area that is known as the Ukraine

and preached the Gospel to the tribe's people. The late 10th century saw the arrival of Christianity in the Ukraine with the baptism of Prince Vladimir. In 988 the Prince accepted Christianity as the religion of the territory and had everyone baptized.

A split in the Church, the Roman Church from the Orthodox Church, occurred in 1054. The Orthodox Church later split into three segments, all having some relation to the Moscow controlled Russian Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism. In 1596 a number of Ukrainian Bishops seeking to achieve for their brethren a level of recognition similar to that of the Catholics, brought their church into full union with the Pope. Although they were in union with the Pope, they were allowed to maintain their distinct liturgy and rites. The Soviets, in their attempt to crush the Ukrainians spirits, destroyed hundreds of churches in the 1930's.

This union and the New Economic Policy eventually produced regrettable consequences for Ukraine. Beginning in the late 1920s, Joseph Stalin sensing nationalistic ideas developing in Ukraine and deciding to show the rest of the empire what happens to problem children brutally reversed both trends. Peasant landholdings were forcibly collectivized and crops were extorted to support industrialization. The resulting artificial famine in 1932 and 1933 cost the lives of an estimated 5 million to 7 million Ukrainians. In the mid-1930s Stalin initiated mass arrests and executions of his opponents or possible opponents, resulting in the devastation of Ukraine's intelligentsia by the end of the decade. Meanwhile, in Galicia an extreme form of nationalism, embodied in the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), developed and called for independence at any cost. In the latter half of the decade he smashed the Ukrainian intelligence agency and went after the Ukrainian Orthodox Church destroying over 250 buildings. Stalin sought the complete helplessness and hopelessness of the people, even to the point of wanting to deport the whole country.

Having a reputation as a known rebellious region, Ukraine suffered more than the average under the Russians. The first war and the famine were over. As the world approached another World War, the Ukrainians first greeted the Germans as liberators perhaps partly as a result of the 7 million persons Stalin had murdered through the "famine." The tactics of the Nazis quickly transformed this hope. The war, along with the famine, took over half of the male and a quarter of the female population. Six million Ukrainians died in the fighting of WWII.

Many of the Ukrainian people are Orthodox Christians. In Azerbaijan, they are 70% Christian adherent. Among the 70% that are Christian adherent, 74% are Orthodox Christians, 20% Roman Catholic, 4% Protestant, and 1.5% Independent. Many, about 30%, are also non-religious. The Bible, God Story Video, Jesus Film, audio recordings, and Christian broadcasting have been translated into their language.

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42245

Uzbek, Southern (1,592)

The *Uzbeks*, literally meaning “master of oneself,” are a Turkic people group. They are also known as the *Southern Uzbek*, *Uzbek*, *Afghan Uzbek*, *Kypchak*, and *TUNA*, which stands for the Uzbeks of Northern Afghanistan. The northern Uzbeks are usually the Uzbeks that are north of Afghanistan. Those in Afghanistan and Pakistan are usually called Southern Uzbeks. They are found throughout Central Asia, with almost 20 million of them residing in Uzbekistan. Afghanistan has the second largest population of Uzbeks and Tajikistan has the third largest population. They have broad, flat faces, and usually have lighter skin than the Pashtuns. They speak Southern Uzbek, which is a Turkic language of the Altaic language family. It is closely related to the Uighur language. Most Uzbeks are bilingual, with many speaking Russian.

The Uzbeks are believed to be descendants of Central Asian Turks who aided Genghis Khan. The unity of the Turks and Mongols eventually faded and different kingdoms formed. The Uzbeks descended from these kingdoms.

Most Uzbeks used to be semi-nomadic farmers, however today, many are farmers or live and work in larger towns. In some places, noodles are a staple food and are used for two common dishes, Ash, which is noodles mixed with yogurt, and Ashak which is an Uzbek style of Ravioli. Bread and tea is almost always part of an Uzbek meal. It is common for Uzbeks to eat with their fingers.

Family is very important to Uzbeks. Uzbek families are patriarchal, with the male ruling over several generations. They often live with extended families, with three generations under one roof. Unlike other groups, marriage between siblings or between other close relatives is forbidden. Most marriages are arranged and it is not uncommon for them to marry Uighurs or Tartars. It is very uncommon to see a single adult in Uzbek society. Daughters must marry in order of age. Women are expected to have their first baby within the first year of marriage. Traditionally, the groom’s family had to offer gifts to the bride’s family and cover the cost of the wedding feasts. The ceremony would take place at the house of the bride, then after the ceremony, she would be taken to the groom’s home. Sometimes, friends and family would take the bride after the ceremony, and the husband would have to offer gifts to “redeem” her.

Uzbeks often live in villages headed by an elder. Several villages make up an elat, which is governed by a council of elders. Age and respect for elders is very important in Uzbek culture. The oldest person is the one who prays at meals and breaks the bread. There are different ways of addressing people according to their age.

Many Uzbek men enjoy playing Buzkashi, which is a game like polo where teams on horseback try to put a headless carcass in the goal. Singing and dancing is also an

important part of Uzbek culture. Most dances are solo dances, with the dancer turning circles while waving her arms. They also have a unique tambourine dance. The Uzbeks love poetry and are taught to recite poems from an early age.

The Uzbeks are Sunni Muslim, most of the Hanafite branch. Islam is an important part of the everyday life of an Uzbek, however, there are still some traditional beliefs mixed in with their practice of Islam. The Uzbeks in Azerbaijan are 80% Muslim and 20% non-religious. There are few, if any, know evangelicals among them. Portions of Scripture, the Jesus Film, God's Story Video, Christian radio broadcasts, and Christian audio recordings are all available in their language.

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Missiological Implications

1. *Evangelical Christians must seek ways to improve the perception Azerbaijani people hold concerning Christians.* Changing his false perception is one of the most serious challenges facing those seeking to work with the people of Azerbaijan.. Many equate Christianity with Russian Orthodoxy and Russian oppression and do not want anything to do with Christianity.

Most Muslims believe that Christians have perverted historical data as well as their Scriptures, with a bias against Islam. Both Muslim men and women view Christian women as undesirable. Many Muslims see them as disrespectful to their husbands, immodest, treated badly by Christian men, and sexually loose. In addition, women without children are seen as not truly feminine.

For the most, Muslims think all Americans are Christians. Furthermore, all Americans are like those represented by television shows like Bay Watch, MTV, or the new reality shows. To be Christian in this country, is usually assumed to be Orthodox. If a person asks if you are a Christian, it is better to ask them what they mean when they say "Christian." This will likely open a door to explain what it really means to be a follower of Christ.

The first step to removing this barrier, or any other, is prayer. The battle is a spiritual one, so missionaries need prayer to face it. Second, to help dispel these misconceptions, it is important for missionaries to live an incarnational life-style. Unbelievers must have contact with strong Christian families. Christians must live open and transparent lives before their unbelieving friends and neighbors. The

more contact a Christian has with an unbeliever, the better the opportunity to share what devoted followers of Christ should look like. A Christian should study the culture and know what is offensive and avoid those behaviors.

Because of the western stereotype, many Muslims do not expect Christians to be able to meet the cultural requirements for decency. It is hard to get an accurate feel for what really is acceptable. For example, one may be told that a certain way of dressing is an acceptable way of dressing in public, however when pressed, the Muslim may say, "It is okay for YOU to wear that, but I never would." Therefore, Christians cannot assume that a certain behavior or dress is acceptable just because they are told by the locals that it is. All situations and behaviors must be analyzed before accepting them as suitable. Since acceptable practices vary from culture to culture, it is best for missionaries to find a local mentor to help them. Any time a question arises, ask the mentor what he or she would do and why. This will help decrease costly mistakes.

2. *Evangelical Christians must demonstrate to the Azerbaijan people the characteristics of reliability and trustworthiness.* The people of Azerbaijan have a history of people betraying and oppressing them. In addition, many equate Christianity with Russian Orthodoxy and Russian oppression. For this reason, the message of Jesus Christ must be spread through relationships that are built on trust and understanding. This trust will help in tearing down barriers that are established through the stereotypes.
3. *Evangelical Christians should seek to understand and implement the local customs to the extent these customs do not violate biblical truth.* If a person converts to Christianity, it is important that he/she respect local customs, or Christians will lose even more respect. For example, it may not be wise to encourage a Muslim woman who has become a believer to stop veiling. Since veiling is not in opposition to the teachings of the Bible, to encourage her to stop, would just be to make her more western and not more Christian. If the woman does unveil and her husband and family are not believers, the situation creates a lot of problems and confirms that Christian women disrespect their husbands. The women can be seen as morally loose and in rebellion. This is not the message Christians want to give. A new convert's testimony will have no value if the first sign of his or her faith is perceived as rebellion and immorality.
4. *Evangelical Christians must help Azerbaijan believers develop the methods of relationship evangelism and Christians from outside must develop these skills in Azerbaijan also.* Christians must know and understand the individual with whom they are trying to develop a relationship. Muslims in Azerbaijan, even within the same people group, can be very different; therefore it is important not to generalize. In order to avoid this error, each individual must be understood.

Christians should spend time asking open ended questions in order to learn of their background. This approach will allow believers to address the person's needs, hopes, and fears in a specific ways. Ask what they believe and why. Try to understand how their family and relationships are affected by their faith. Understand their struggles and show genuine concern. Care about them as people and friends, and not just a project or someone to convert. Since many will be suspicious about the motives of an Evangelical Christian or an American, it is important to show concern for them as people.

If a Christian says or implies that he or she is there to convert the Muslim or a person from any other background, or that he or she is there to "save their soul", the person will likely be defensive. It is better to acknowledge the differences of religion and use common ground to develop trust. It is important for Christians to be honest in acknowledging that they are followers of Christ, but not to go on to say that they are there to change the person's religion. While this is the hope of many missionaries, it is better to say that the reason for being there is because they are committed followers of God and they believe God has brought them to the place they are serving to love and help the people of that country. This will help lower the defense of the community in which the missionary serves, but only if those words are followed by loving and helpful actions.

5. *Evangelical Christians should learn to respect Islam and Muslim peoples and demonstrate this respect in all relationships—especially in evangelistic endeavors.* In discussing religion, it is important to remember that it is better to loose the battle in order to win the war. Muslims as well as Orthodox Christians can have a great sense of pride in themselves as well as their religion, and to damage this could be detrimental to the relationship a Christian is trying to establish. When having theological discussions, do not focus on the difference between the religions or quickly raise issues that would cause an argument. For example, referring to Jesus as the Messiah or the Spirit of God would be acceptable to a Muslim since those are titles the Quran gives Him, however referring to Him as the Son of God would be considered blasphemy and the Muslim would be offended. Starting with common ground will help to develop understanding and trust in a non-threatening way.

Another important thing to remember is to not demean Islam, Mohammed, or the *Quran* in any way. This holds true for the Orthodox faith and the things they hold sacred. Doing either of these would lose the respect of the person you are trying to build a relationship with. It is okay to admit that you do not agree with the views of the other religion, but to do something such as calling Mohammed a pedophile or the anti-Christ, as some public figures have done, will quickly shut the door to further communication. Demeaning their prophet or Holy book in any way will anger them and possibly get the missionary kicked out of the country or imprisoned.

6. *Evangelical Christians should help develop contextualized approaches to evangelizing Muslim women in Azerbaijan as these women have a different status than women in many other Muslim countries.* Field missionaries suggest that only 6 out of 200 believers in the Muslim world are women. In order to balance out the proportion of men to women, Christians must begin an effort to reach entire families.

In Azerbaijan, it takes women to reach women, however, just targeting Muslim women would one reverse the problem. Entire families need to be reached and discipled. While Azerbaijan is less strict in the way women are treated, it is still more appropriate for men to work with men and women to work with women. Missionaries need to work as families to model Christian families for non-believers and new believers. They need to see what a Christian husband looks like and how he honors and protects his wife and family. They need to see how a Christian wife acts and speaks respectfully to her husband. They even need to see how a Christian child respects the parents and how he or she is brought up.

A Christian family will stand out in Azerbaijan, and will gain much respect. As an unbelieving man is exposed to a Christian family and strong marriage, he will see a beautiful picture of Christ and the church in the wife's voluntary submission to a loving husband, who constantly lays down his life for her needs and desires. For a Muslim, this will not only be a picture of the Gospel, but will also show him that he has nothing to fear in the liberation of women in Christ. Unbelievers do notice that Christian marriages are different than their own, so living out a strong marriage in front of them can be a powerful witness. If God is in a home, He will shine through even when the family is simply going about their daily lives. Harold R. Cook says, "When a couple goes out to the mission field, its witness to Christ and the Christian life is more than that of two individuals. Something else has been added. It is their joint witness as a Christian family. Here is a place where one and one equals more than two."

With a few exceptions, Muslim women do not want to hear that Christians have come to free them from their lives that are perceived by Westerners as horrible. C.M. Amal suggests that people change their focus from thinking of challenges facing Muslim women to those facing women in today's Muslim world. Both Muslim and Christian women are concerned about the things that make up daily life. Muslim women think, act, and react like women. Women, Muslim, Christian, or other, face the same problems, only in a different setting. It is where and how the solutions are looked for that has more relevance to religion.

Of women surveyed by Debi Bartlotti, three common emotions arose repeatedly. The first is a sense of powerlessness. In reaction, some women look to the darker side of Islam, go to shrines, and buy amulets. They seek to gain power by pronouncing curses. The second common emotion that comes up is fear. Muslim women fear gossip, slander, shame, and dishonor. In addition, women in Folk

Islam settings fear evil spirits, the evil eye, and death. The third common emotion is a lack of identity.

A Christian worker in Azerbaijan must be careful not to further isolate the women that she is trying to serve. Sometimes, going to a woman's house for a long visit can create gossip, and hurt the woman's honor. In areas where this is a possibility, it is best to ask the women to set boundaries for you. Let her decide when, where, and for how long you meet. Respect a sudden change in plan. If a missionary senses that the woman is uncomfortable, she should mention this to the woman and consider leaving. Share about religious things only with permission and be careful when giving them religious materials to keep. If religious materials are found by a husband or other family member, this could bring the woman danger or end the missionary's privilege to have contact with the woman. Further, it is the task of Christian women to take the Gospel to Muslim women. There are very few circumstances where it would be appropriate for a man to speak alone to a woman about spiritual issues. A man speaking with a woman about such matters could dishonor both him and the Muslim woman and possibly put them in danger. Azerbaijan, especially in the cities, may be more lenient on this issue, however, when working with a devout Muslim, it is best to avoid long conversations with the opposite sex.

In developing a clear understanding of Muslim women and how they see themselves, Christians can begin forming relationships that will lead to an opportunity to share the gospel. Muslim women need to hear how they are viewed in God's eyes. As mentioned earlier, Muslim women are given the idea that their bodies are polluted and polluting. How refreshing it is for them to hear that Jesus, a respected prophet in Islam, did not view women in that way. Jesus, in Luke 8 reaches his hand to a woman who had been bleeding for twelve years. In fact, Jesus treats women with great care and respect. His story begins with the faith of a woman. As Jesus ministers, He talks with and commends the faith and actions of the women He encounters. He defend them and offers them relationship and undeserved forgiveness. God left His throne in Heaven, becoming the person of Jesus Christ and served women. The widow of Nain, the Samaritan woman at the well, Peter's mother-in-law, the woman caught in adultery, Jairus's daughter, the woman with a hemorrhage of blood, and the Syro-phoenecian woman are just some of the women Jesus saw fit to love and serve. In addition, the God who created woman, and her body, looked upon it and said it was good, with all its functions.

7. *Evangelical Christians should seek ways to provide for converts so as to address the understandable fears believers face in Azerbaijan.* This fear is a critical hindrance in work among Muslims in Azerbaijan. This fear can be with either the worker or the Muslim. Conversion to Christianity in Azerbaijan is not as serious a matter as such a conversion is in many other Muslim countries. Among more devout Muslims, however, conversion is a huge step that could have severe

consequences. In some areas, if someone even thinks a Muslim is considering changing religions, it could mean death or expulsion from the family.

Families will kill other family members who turn from Islam to save the honor of the family. Proselytizing is not legal in Azerbaijan and some are facing persecution for doing so. If one person gets caught, it is possible that the entire group that person is associated with will face consequences. For this reason, a missionary must be very careful in meeting with Muslims so as not to endanger them. For a Muslim to be persecuted because he or she converted to Christianity and is standing firm in their faith is one thing; to be persecuted because of contact with a missionary is another. As much as possible, evangelism and discipleship needs to be done through national believers. It is not wise for missionaries to attend the church services of the local believers.

8. *Evangelical Christians should work through the train of hospitality in Azerbaijan.* Hospitality is another key aspect in working among Muslims. It is a common element among Muslims worldwide, whether in the Middle East or Indonesia. Usually this task falls on the woman of the house. It is important for women to observe and follow the customs of hospitality appropriate for that culture in order to build relationships with Muslims. Not knowing and practicing the customs of hospitality can lead to an appearance of being rude or cold, which could possibly shut the door to further meetings with neighbors and friends.
9. *Evangelical Christians should seek and seize the many opportunities for humanitarian services in Azerbaijan.* Many development and aid workers are needed. Humanitarian service gives a person legitimate access to the country. In order to maintain Christianity's reputation, however, it is imperative that the person do what they say they are there to do. A person can not go as a "missionary." They must go as a Christian who is called by God to help the people of Azerbaijan in whatever way they say they are going to help and they must work with integrity towards that job. To implement Christians love in tangible ways opens paths to witness.
10. *Evangelical Christians must seek ways and means to gain entrance to the country and then use these opportunities for sharing the Good News.* Several considerations infuse the effort to enter Azerbaijan. A letter of invitation from a contact in the country is necessary to enter Azerbaijan. Also, Americans of Armenian ancestry have had some difficulty getting visas because the Government says it cannot guarantee their safety. Those seeking to enter Azerbaijan must demonstrate a valid reason for the entrance.

<http://www.opendoors.org>

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Pictures

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