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THE ROLE OF NATURAL AND RECREATIONAL RESOURCES OF THE SOUTHERN SLOPE OF THE GREATER CAUCASUS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF ECOTOURISM

The nature of the Caucasus is extremely rich and unique. The Caucasian mountainous country combines a variety of natural conditions. The relief alternates with powerful alpine systems, areas with hilly relief, plateaus and lowlands. Climatic conditions vary from sharply continental to humid subtropical. On the territory of the Caucasus Mountains, you can find eternal snows and glaciers, coniferous, broad-leaved and subtropical forests give way to steppe and semi-desert spaces. Due to its unique natural conditions, the Caucasus has a high potential for recreational balneological resources. Historically, the Caucasus has taken a leading position in terms of the number of various resorts in various directions. The recreational resources of the Caucasus are represented by warmth, sea air, an abundance of sunlight (direct and reflected from the water surface), clean air with the smallest drops of sea salt and iodine, saturated with ozone and oxygen and, as a result, have healing properties for the cure of many diseases.

The southern slope of the Greater Caucasus is much shorter than the northern one and therefore drops abruptly to the south. The southern slope of the Greater Caucasus has the best conditions for the development of sanitary and resort facilities and many types of recreation and tourism. This is due to the favorable natural balneological and recreational resources, their diversity. The unique geographical position of the southern slope of the Greater Caucasus, the complexity of its geological and geomorphological structure, the richness of natural resources, as well as belonging to one of the most ancient centers of civilization in the world has led to the existence of a large number of rare ecotourism objects and thus created ample opportunities for the development of this modern, perspective and profitable sphere. The region, with its unique natural and historical features, is important for ecotourism. Natural monuments of ecotourism of the researched area attract attention with a variety of origins, rarity, aesthetics and exotic landscapes, and are also of particular interest for their rarity. In this respect, the study area has more ecotourism potential than other parts of the country.

Key words: tourist and recreational resources, natural monuments, Ilisu waterfall, historical monuments, mineral springs, medical tourism, speleotourism.

Мамедова Г.Г. Роль природних та рекреаційних ресурсів південного схилу Великого Кавказу в розвитку екотуризму

Природа Кавказу надзвичайно багата й унікальна. Кавказька гірська країна поєднує різноманітні природні умови. У рельєфі чергуються потужні високі гірські системи, ділянки з горбистим рельєфом, плоскогір'я та низовини. Кліматичні умови змінюються від різко континентального до вологого субтропічного клімату. На території Кавказьких гір можна знайти вічні сніги й льодовики, а хвойні, широколистяні та субтропічні ліси там змінюються степовими й напівпустельними просторами. Завдяки своїм унікальним природним умовам Кавказ має високий потенціал рекреаційних бальнеологічних ресурсів. Історично склалося так, що Кавказ займає лідируючу позицію за кількістю різноманітних курортів різних напрямів. Рекреаційні ресурси Кавказу представлені теплом, морським повітрям, великою кількістю сонячних променів (прямих і відбитих від водної поверхні), чистим повітрям із дрібними краплями морської солі та йоду, яке насичене озоном і киснем, через що має цілющі властивості для лікування багатьох хвороб.

Південний схил Великого Кавказу значно коротший за північний, а тому круто обривається на південь. Він має найкращі умови для розвитку санітарно-курортного господарства та багатьох видів відпочинку й туризму: сприятливі природні бальнеологічні та рекреаційні ресурси, їх різноманітність. Унікальне географічне положення південного схилу Великого Кавказу, складність



його геологічної та геоморфологічної будови, багатство природних багатств, а також приналежність до одного з найдавніших центрів цивілізації у світі зумовили існування великої кількості рідкісних об'єктів екотуризму та тим самим створили широкі можливості для розвитку цієї сучасної і прибуткової сфери. Регіон із його унікальними природними й історичними особливостями важливий для екотуризму. Природні пам'ятки екотуризму досліджуваної території привертають увагу різноманітністю походження, естетикою та екзотичними ландшафтами, а також становлять особливий інтерес завдяки своїй рідкості. Щодо цього досліджувана територія має більший потенціал для екотуризму, ніж інші частини країни.

Ключові слова: туристично-рекреаційні ресурси, пам'ятники природи, водоспад Ілісу, історичні пам'ятники, мінеральні джерела, лікувальний туризм, спелеотуризм.

Formulation of the problem. According to the scheme of tectonic zoning of the territory of Azerbaijan, the research area is located inside the Spermato-Tufan and Zagatala-Govdagh structural zones (Кенгерли, 2005) in the region Zagatala-Lahij physical geographical province of the country, but according to its geomorphological zoning, it is located inside the administrative regions Balakan, Zagatala, Gakh, Sheki, Oguz and Gabala (Будагов, 1958) of the East Greater Caucasus geomorphological province of the Southern slope of the sub-province. Thus, the research area, due to physical geographical zoning inside the Southern slope of the Greater with the passage of a complex (Рустамов, 2005) geodynamic development path in the contact collision zone of the Eurasian and African-Arabian global lithosphere plates, makes an important contribution to the development of the ecotourism with its considerable diversity and richness of nature and natural resources. All these attract the attention and interest of tourists and the number of ecotourism objects in the area continues to grow year by year.

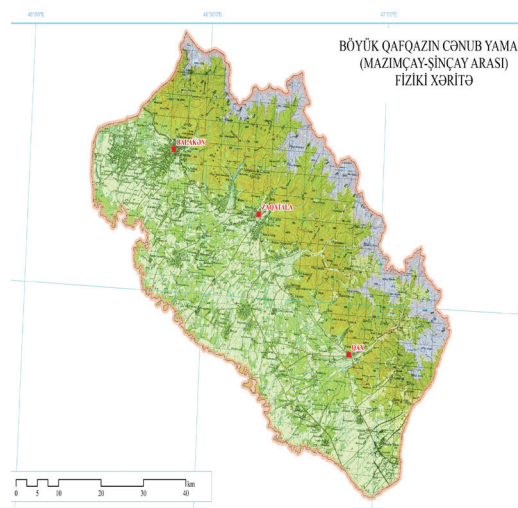
Analysis of recent research and publications. Research in these aspects was carried out on this territory by different authors in different years: A.M. Shikhlin'sky (1968), B.A. Budagov (1994), Sh.Y. Goychayli (1996), M.A. Museyibov (1998), Q.Sh. Mammadov (1998), M.C. Ismayilov (1999), G.Sh. Mammadov, M.Y. Khalilov (2002), V.S. Dargahov (2003), Sh.B. Khalilov (2006), M.K. Abadov (2014). H.B. Soltanova (2015) and others. However, there is still a great need to study the impact of the natural and recreational resources of the southern slope of the Greater Caucasus on the organization and development of ecotourism.

Statement of the task. Purpose of the article is to characterize the natural and recreational resources of the southern slope of the Greater Caucasus and determine their impact on the organization and development of ecotourism.

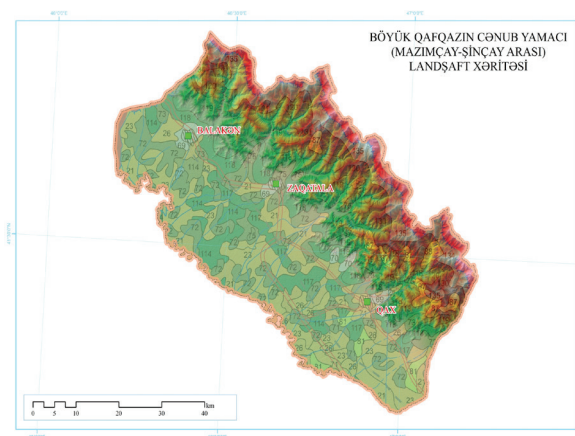
Statement of the main research material. It is one of the main attractions for local and foreign tourists at any time of the year with the richness and natural recreational resources of the region, mineral springs of different compositions, favourable climatic conditions for mountain resorts, clean and transparent air, mysterious mountain forests, natural landscapes, relief forms, various historical and cultural monuments and with the diversity, charming, and attraction of the flora and fauna created by people.

If we pay attention to the landscape map, which has been compiled by us, we will observe here the landscapes are in vertical form. From the plain-meadow landscapes of the province Ganikh-Ayrichay until the naval glacier landscapes formed at the high tops of the Greater Caucasus, all landscapes are repeated in vertical form. On the landscape map, we compiled there are more than 100 contours. These contours by systematizing are reflected in the legend of the map.

Although the area's natural recreation and resort resources are relatively used little, in comparison they are more promising than plains and foothills. The research area is known for its mineral springs in our republic. The gas composition of most mineral springs included in hydrogeological natural monuments is hydrocarbonate and hydrosulfite waters. The water of Oglanbulag, Gizilbulag, Mosku, Hamambulag (Gakh region), Bum (Gabala), Khalkhal, Boyukshor and Agbulag (Oguz) and other springs in the area is important for the treatment of nervous, skin, cardiovascular and muscular diseases. There are also many mineral springs with low flow rate in Balakan and Sheki regions. The temperature of most of the thermal springs here ranges from 30–31° to 40° and above (Abadov, 2014; Azərbaycanca turizm inkişafı və regional problemlər, 2011; Bilalov, Güllahyev, 2015: 395–400; Soltanova, 2015). This is more clearly seen from the table (table 1). These



Picture 1. Physical map the southern slope of the greater Caucasus (Mazimchay and Shinchay corridor)



Picture 2. Landscape map the southern slope of the greater Caucasus (Mazimchay and Shinchay corridor)

warm mineral waters, which have their source in the depths of majestic mountains and bare rocks, are very valuable as an effective means of treating a number of diseases. From the Hamamchay ravine to the “Uludag” tourism and recreation complex with suspension belts was brought the water of miraculous thermal springs for the cure of many diseases, and radon baths were built. Radon baths are mainly used as a means of treatment. Water-soluble radon sedative affects like as analgesic and anti-inflammatory effect, normalizes blood pressure, normalizes the activity of the endocrine and immune systems, helps to relieve spasms of the vascular and muscular systems, and stimulates regeneration processes. Radon baths are also

important in the treatment of people suffering from metabolic disorders, diabetes, gout and obesity. These baths have a good effect in the treatment of skin diseases, normalize the activity of the endocrine glands. Patients take radon baths easily and also alleviate the effects of other energy-active factors in balneological treatment. Radon bath has a positive effect on blood clotting systems and improves microcirculation.

The area where these springs are located is one of the places where the local population organizes picnics. The springs also have a miraculous effect in addition to the springs tell about the unusual landscape of the village. Abundant mineral water resources made it necessary to establish sanatori-



Table 1

Indicators of thermal springs

Nº	Region	Name of thermal water (spring)	t, °C	Gas composition
1	Gakh	Kumrukbulag (right and left bank)	26.5–30.5	H ₂ S
2	Gakh	Kumrukbulag	26	CH ₄
3	Gakh	Gurmukh	30.5	H ₂ S
4	Gakh	Gaynama	18.7	H ₂ S
5	Gakh	Oglanbulag № 1	38.4	H ₂ S
6	Gakh	Oglanbulag № 2	40	-
7	Gakh	Oglanbulag № 3	40	H ₂ S
8	Gakh	Gizbulag	38	CH ₄
9	Gakh	Mokhbulag	30–31	CH ₄
10	Zagatala	Jimjima	22	CH ₄

ums in the region. One of such medical institutions is “Shafa” medical boarding house, which operates near the village of Suskend, in the area where the “Gakh” mineral water spring originates. Most of the visitors to the boarding house prefer to be treated with Gakh mineral water. Also known as table water, this water is rich in various minerals and has great therapeutic value. The fact that the cool springs have different tastes and specific features always attracts tourists. Healing springs and rich mineral waters are valuable resources of the research area. Unfortunately, such mineral springs, which, like many of our material and spiritual resources, are the cure for a thousand ailments and flow into rivers day and night, are not sufficiently used in resort medical tourism.

Ilisu and Saribash villages of Gakh having a special place in a row of natural recreational in the ecotourism of the region especially stand out. In this regard, year after year is broaden the building of the Holiday houses and resort camps in the area, which attracts tourists attention with its greenery, high waterfalls and beautiful nature, mineral springs and favorable geographical location. It is possible to create a very beautiful tourism and recreation center, especially in the Tala part of Saribas village, located at an altitude of 1700 m above sea level. Surrounded by mountains on all sides, its charming beauty increases the importance of ecotourism in the area.

The importance of preserves and relaxation parks in the row of the natural recreational resources is undeniable. In the region “Zagatala State Preserve”, “Ilisu State Preserve”, “Zagatala Central Culture and Relaxation Park”, “Green Park”, “Heydar Park”, “Park named by after Zarifa

Aliyeva”, “Dada Gorgud Square” are the favorite relaxation places of population. The Culture and Recreation Park named by after Heydar Aliyev, which is laid out in Balakan, in 2008, is also distinguished (Bilalov, Gülalıyev, 2015: 395–400; Soltanova, 2015).

The Ganig-Ayrichay valley has an exceptional importance for animal hunting and fishing in the region. Also, the Ilisu boarding house has all conditions, which meet modern standards in terms of reception and accommodation of tourists. There are also extensive opportunities for the production of porcelain dishes and products, the development of network art, jewelry, national clothing and the production of the rare household items in Ilisu. In addition to this, local artisan women weave original patterned carpets and woollen socks in Sari-bash and Jalayir villages. The local residents of the village of Gakhbash produce wine at home.

In the row of the protection of the ecosystems of the research area the importance of the preserves and prohibitions is also great. Taking into account Ilisu region has unique historical-geographical features according to the Resolution № 100 of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan is created the state historical-cultural preserve on the southern slope of the Greater Caucasus (Gakh region), at an absolute height of 700–2100 m between Zagatala and Ismayilli preserves for the purpose of protection of about 300 species of plants, 90 types of wood and shrubs, a number of endemic and endangered plant and animal species in area of 9.2 thousand hectares. In 2003 according to the Resolution on the 31-th of March of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan the territory of the preserve was

expanded and now the area of the preserve delivered to 17381,5 hectares (Abadov, 2014).

Inside the Ilisu State Preserve the development of a network of specially protected natural areas of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the protection of the richness of biological resources in the area, in order to the providing of the integrity of the ecosystem in the same area, in summer pastures bordered with Ilisu State Nature Preserve and on Acinohur plain for the purpose the protection of fauna and restoration of extinct animal species, according to the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan № 84, dated June 16, 2003, Gakh State Nature Preserve has been created on an area of 36,836 hectares (https://az.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qax_Dövlət_Təbiət_Yasaqlığı).

In order to protect, the typical natural complexes of the southern micro-slopes in the central part of the Greater Caucasus Mountains, especially the endangered fauna and flora, in 1929 in the Zagatala and Balakan regions at an altitude of 650–3646 (Guton peak) m, covering 23844 ha The Zagatala State Nature Preserve has been created. By the Decision № 370 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated October 17, 2008, due to Zagatala and Balakan forest protection and to the lands of restoration enterprises, the area has been expanded to 47,349 hectares due (Soltanova, 2015).

The continuous increase in the number of people wishing to come to our Republic as tourists, characterized by especially the Sheki-Zagatala economic-geographical region has high potential for tourism development.

Recently, the construction activities carried out in the research area have been created all conditions that meet all the requirements of international tourism. There have been created all conditions for individual, family and collective vacationers in tourism and recreation objects such as Ilisu boarding house, “Green Park”, “Markhal”, “Narin Gala” and “Galasan-Gorasan”, “Ulu Dag”, “Sangar Gala”, “Gafgaz” (Caucasus), “El” hotels.

Markhal recreation zone stands out as a resting-place. The tourism recreation object, which surrounding the 4 ha space, consisting of 3 resting-buildings, attracting to itself millions tourists, is situated in the Kish village. In recent years in consequence of expansion work has the ability to receive more than 1000 tourists at the same time. In the structure of modern standards meeting

complex you can taste national and foreign kitchens meals at the restaurants such as “Ipak” (Silk) restaurant, “Nukha” restaurant, “Lobby Bar”, “Lake Café”, “Fireplace room” restaurants. Also in a two-story treatment Spa complex the numbers of diseases (allergies, asthma, colds, stress, eczema, thyroid gland, etc.) are treated.

A pine forest type recreation complex attracts attention, which is located Near the village Kish of Shaki, at an altitude of 1000 meters above sea level. In the forest at 21 comfortable cottages, which has been equipped with modern equipment and having perfect conditions, it is intended the ideal rest of our guests. Also inside of the rest recreation centre there is a restaurant and kid`s amusement park. The guests also might be acquainted with historical tower walls, “Galarsan, Gorarsan” (come and see) Tower and Kish Albanian temple.

The 7 story-building, which constructed in the style of national architecture near the historical monument of XVIII century “Sangar gala” (Entrenchment tower), “Sangar bulagi” (Entrenchment spring) together with its an eye-catching exterior and interior design hotel garden, a bar and a common lounge offers accommodation.

The Sangar Castle Resort with 5 stars in Ilisu village for its view reminds an ancient tower. It has been created conditions that meet all standards in every number of 39 rooms operating in hotel.

“Uludag” tourism and recreation complex consists of luxury and semi-luxury cottages and covers 4 ha territory on the shore Kurmukhchay, at the foot of mountain Yarpizbasan near to the vicinity of Ram-rama watrefall in Ilisu village. At the complex free tourist routes are planned to the Sumu Castle, to the ruins of ancient Albanian temples, to the temple of St. George, to the ancient mosque and etc. places. From here can be seen the ruins of the Shamil Castle and Sari-bash Tower.

The area is very rich with its natural monuments. Here you can come across scenic rocks, waterfalls, a lot of huge and old trees, the species of plants and animals of rare and endangered.

The oldest and largest trees in the area of “Gosha Ziyarat Piri” (Double Holy Shrine) are a 300-year-old dagdagan, in front of Shaki Khan Palace a pair of 350-year-old eastern plane trees, in front of Sheki bus station, 500-year-old eastern plane tree, 900-year-old eastern plane tree of “Babartma shrine” near the village Babartma, plane tree, a 1,000-year-old eastern plane tree in



the village of Gudula, is a 1,000-year-old “voting poplar” near the Sheki city (Bilalov, Gülahıyev, 2015: 395–400; Soltanova, 2015).

In the region also a transport sector in tourism services is developing. Within the framework of the Regional Socio-Economic Development Program, roads are being improved, infrastructure is being reconstructed, and road, rail and air transport services are being provided.

The area is known for its clean and healing air, attractive mountains, rich flora and fauna, as well as picturesque forests. Due to the fact that the studied area is located in a large area in the heart of the Greater Caucasus Mountains, in an attractive and picturesque area, about 20% of its territory is covered with forests.

The location of a large water system such as Katekh, Kish, Shin, Damiraparan, Gurmuk, Mazim, Mukhakh and Balakanchay and the Ganikh-Ay-richay artesian basin in the region make it more efficient to use these rivers for economic purposes, including tourism and recreation. In the mountainous area, floods, intensive erosion processes and high denudation create favourable conditions for the formation of unique waterfalls and thresholds in the rivers. The following are examples of waterfalls from the natural monuments of tourism and recreation importance in the research area.

The Lakit-Mamirli waterfall



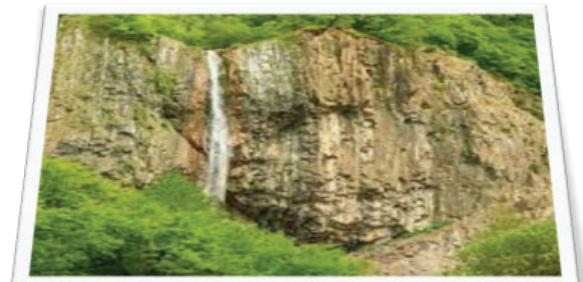
It is located at a height of 550 m above sea level in the depth of a dense forest on the left bank of the river of the same name near the village of Lakit-Kotuklu, 3–4 km from Gakh region. The waterfall is 15 m high and 30 m wide. Because of the dense forest around it, it never gets sunlight and is always cool. The waterfall was registered as the Gakh Natural Monument by the decision of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan № 190 dated August 5, 2006 and is protected by the state (Sputnik, 2016).

The Katekh waterfall



The waterfall, located in Mazykh village and Gabizdere in Balakan region, is 3648 m (Guton) above sea level. The waterfall, which originates from the main watershed, is located on the left tributary of the Ganikh River, the Katekh River. The location of the waterfall is in the territory of Zagatala Reserve. Its height is 14 m. The landscape and nature of the place where the waterfall falls are amazing. Although it is 5 times lower in height than Afurja (Guba) waterfall, it is rich in water.

The Ilisu waterfall



It is also located in the village of Ilisu, Gakh region, at an altitude of 1,200 meters above sea level, known as Ram-rama. Locals consider the 25-meter-high waterfall, located in the Ilisu State Reserve, a hidden treasure. Located 2 km from Ilisu village in the direction of Hamamchay gorge, the waterfall is clear and is one of the interesting natural exotic objects that attract tourists to the region.

The “Yeddi gozal” (Seven pretties) waterfall. The waterfall is the one of the popular tourism places of Gabala is situated 6 kilometr from the Vandam village and 3 kilometr from the way on Puskan. The waterfall, which flows from the high tops of the Greater Caucasus always is dark and cool, because is situated inside tight forest,

which doesn't get the sunshine. If there are no seven waterfalls, but there are seven stairs and it can be done to climb to the mountain. At the end of the Autumn, in Winter and at the beginning of the Spring due to the ice covering round the waterfall, it attracts thousands of local and foreign tourists.

The Muchug waterfall. The unique waterfall, which is situated in the Shahdag National Park – in the village Laza of Gabala gives its originate from the snow and rain waters of the massive of Gotur mountain. With the 96 m height waterfall is located on the left tributary of Damiraparan river. Along the going way it is not impossible to see the Zayli waterfall and the cave, which is shelter for wild animals. The name of the waterfall Muchug is related with the name of Muchug village, situated near the waterfall.

The Gochyatag waterfall



One of the other famous waterfalls of the research area is Gochyatag waterfall located near Ilisu village of Gakh region, on Hamamchay river. The waterfall, which is about 35 meters high and 1 meter wide, is abundant throughout the year. In winter, it becomes even more attractive by closing the ice. Gochyatag is the name of a nearby mountain, and Sugovushan is the name given to another small river that joins a nearby river.

The research area is very rich in defense monuments of great strategic importance. More than 60 national historical monuments have been registered in the Gakh region alone. Numerous mounds found in the area prove that the area was inhabited from the Bronze Age. The Lakit temple, Gum temple, Ulu bridge, Ulu mosque, Sumug fortress, etc. were found here. The monuments are living pages of the historical past of the area. The following are examples of such monuments.

1. The Sumug Castle



Sumug Castle, built in the XVII–XVIII centuries, located at an altitude of 1400–1600 meters above sea level, 12 kilometers northwest of the city of Gakh, is one of the most important historical and architectural monuments in the country. The monument is a rectangular defense tower, which aims to protect against the enemy, which narrows from the bottom to the top.

2. The Great Wall of the Sassanid period – the remains of an ancient historical monument on the Baku-Balakan highway in the village of Katekh, Balakan region. The walls are 1.5 meters wide and 4–5 meters high. It was built in the V–VII centuries by the order of the Sassanid rulers after the occupation of Azerbaijan by the Sassanids. The main purpose of the construction of the monument was to prevent the country from sudden attacks by mountaineers.

3. The Ulu Bridge



The Great Bridge of the XVII–XVIII centuries, one of the ancient historical and architectural monuments of local importance with original features in the territory of Gakh region, was built on the road to the village of Ilisu, on the Kurmuk River. The locals call the bridge



Ulu, which means the largest bridge of this type.

4. The Darvaz Temple – the ancient temple is located on the left bank of the Ganig (Alazan River), in the center of the plain in the middle of the Tugay forest. The temple is located in the Darvaz district, 15–16 km south of the center of Balakan region, near the Gajarchol plain.

5. The Gum (sand) Temple – an ancient Albanian temple with three-sided and domes of the IV–V centuries, located in the village of Gum of Gakh region, the ancient Albanian temple is called the Sand Basilica in the scientific literature, because it was built on the type of basilica in Byzantine architecture (in Latin, basilevs means ruler, but basilica means the house of the ruler). Gum Albanian temple, which is a magnificent building, amazes those who see it. The monument is 25 meters long and 20 meters wide. Blue and dark green limestone were used in the construction of a historical architectural monument of national importance.

6. Mosque with minaret – the mosque, built in 1867–1877 in the center of Balakan region, was built of baked bricks separately from the main building. The area is 1025 m² and the height is 45 m. On the north-western facade of the mosque, inscriptions in Arabic are embossed in 4 places.

7. The Kish Albanian temple



The Albanian temple is located in the Maflar neighborhood of Sheki's Kish village, is the first Christian church built not only in Caucasian Albania, but in the Caucasus as a whole. The Kish Albanian temple was constructed on the foundation of the Moon Temple, which was widespread in Caucasian Albania in the first prose of our era.

This monument, built of limestone, is also the first domed, hall-type temple in the Caucasus in the early Middle Ages. The temple was included in the list of monuments of world importance by the decision of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan № 132 dated August 2, 2001.

8. The Lakit Temple – a world-famous historical architectural monument is created on the basis of the ancient Zoroastrian temple, which dates back to the IV–VI centuries, was the basis for the formation of the South Caucasus tetraconch. The ancient Albanian temple, located 1 km from the village of Lakit in the Gakh region, it is assumed to have been converted into a church in the IV century during the reign of the Albanian ruler Momun Vachaga III. The scientific research and restoration of the temple dates back to the 40s of the XX century.

9. The Nokho Cave is an Iron Age cave, is located 18 km north from the region centre of the district center in a place called Gubek Rock. It is impossible to enter the cave because the front of the cave is steep sloping. It is possible to descend to the only cave on the rock with climbing equipment.

10. The Pari Castle it is one of the magnificent objects built in the direction of the bed of the Humbul River, in front of the mountain pass (Hun pass) in the V–VI centuries at the same time as the Great Wall to protect against the attack of Hun tribes (Soltanova, 2015; <https://sheki.heritage.org.az/heritage/205>; http://www.azerbaijans.com/content_1507_az.html; https://azertag.az/xeber/Qax_abiderleri_Sumuk_kimi_mohkem_Sumuq_qala-189383; https://az.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qum_bazilikas%C4%B1; https://az.wikipedia.org/wiki/L%C9%99kit_m%C9%99b%C9%99di).

Along with other ecotourism facilities, foreign tourists attracted to the research area can get acquainted with Sheki Silk Factory, Zagatala tobacco, hazelnut refineries plants, rose oil factory, hand-woven carpet workshops. The region's unique cuisine and national cuisine also attract tourists to the area. Thus, foreign tourists are offered special national dishes (especially Sheki piti, Ilisu surhu) in the resorts operating in the region.

It is also possible to create and develop winter tourism (mountaineering, skiing), spelotourism, trophy, ecotourism, rural tourism, adventure, ornithology.

thology, hunting, medical, recreational tourism in the area rich in promising resources.

Conclusions from the conducted research.

From the above, we conclude that the richness of the area in terms of tourism and recreation resources creates ample opportunities for the development of ecotourism. The southern slope of the Greater Caucasus is one of the regions in our country rich in ecotourism resources. Its natural landscapes, various man-made historical and cultural monuments are one of the main attractions for tourists today with their wonder and charm. By using the region's natural and recreational resources in a planned and purposeful way, it is possible to create a rich tourism and recreation complex in the region. So that, in the future, to build medical sanatorium complexes on the basis of thermal and mineral waters of the research area, "Oglanbulag", "Gizbulag", "Jimjimax" and others in the region. The use of mineral waters for this purpose, the organization of excursions to ancient historical and architectural monuments and the attraction of foreign tourists through festivals and folklore festivals, as well as the investment of foreign and local businessmen in the development of ecotourism in the region should be considered a priority.

The fact that the studied area has favorable opportunities for the development of resort tourism and ecotourism will increase the flow of tourists to the region in connection with the future development of the Great Silk Road. In recent years, the majority of tourists visiting the country are attracted to the tourist facilities on the Silk Road. Also, the number of foreign tourists visiting historical and cultural monuments is very high, and this trend will continue to grow in the future. Here given that tourism and recreation resources can play an important role in the development of ecotourism, special attention should be paid to their comprehensive research. Thus, the research of ecotourism-important natural-recreational resources of the research area, along with their scientific importance, is of great practical importance.

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