

HISTORICAL AND ARCHEOLOGICAL SCIENCES

TRADITIONAL FAMILY INSTITUTIONS AMONG THE AZERBAIJANI PEOPLE IN THE 19th-20th CENTURIES: THE CASE OF ORDUBAD DISTRICT

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Abstract

No matter what time period you're talking about, the family is one of the most stable social institutions. It plays an important role in protecting and passing on centuries-old experiences and cultural traditions to future generations. The family was conservative, but they sometimes reflected changes in society. Because of this, they went through some changes of their own.

In Azerbaijan, many different peoples and ethnic groups have lived together and interacted for many centuries. Because of this, the family and domestic relations in Azerbaijan have developed into a strong system. But each area has its own unique local customs, traditions, and behaviors. These are shaped by the natural environment, geography, and the economy. They are also influenced by the socio-economic levels in each area. The Ordubad region is in the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan. It is a remarkable area because of its unique natural and geographical features. The materials from Ordubad are very important for scientists who study the history and cultural characteristics of traditional Azerbaijani families.

Keywords: Ceremonies of childbirth, Customs of Ordubad, Family forms, customs, Mourning rituals, Wedding customs.

Introduction

The family, regardless of the historical period, is one of the most stable social institutions in society, fulfilling essential social functions. It plays a crucial role in preserving centuries-old experiences and cultural traditions, passing them down to future generations. Although conservative, the family occasionally reflected societal changes and, consequently, experienced certain transformations themselves.

Family and family values have been held sacred by Azerbaijanis since ancient times, with their protection being seen as the primary responsibility of both the head of the family and each of its members. This commitment has allowed these values to endure the harsh challenges of centuries, allowing them to reach the present day with only minor changes. In Azerbaijan, where diverse peoples and ethnic groups have coexisted and interacted for many centuries, family and domestic relations have historically evolved into a cohesive system. However, each region and area is characterized by unique local customs, traditions, and behavioral norms shaped by the natural and geographical conditions, economic activities, and socio-economic levels specific to those locations. The Ordubad region, located in the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan, is a remarkable area known for its unique natural and geographical features. This region stands out due to the diverse economic activities of its residents, as well as its rich material and spiritual culture and distinct family and everyday traditions. The traditional Ordubad family has a rich and distinct system of customs, ceremonies, rites, and rituals that dates back to ancient times. Despite various ethnocultural influences throughout the development of historical and socio-economic relations, many of these customs have been preserved and continue to be practiced today. It's no coincidence that

many aspects of traditional family etiquette are still upheld in Ordubad today. For instance, children do not sit at the same table with adults, they stand up when adults or parents enter the room, and they wait for the head of the family to sit down before starting to eat. Additionally, husbands and wives refrain from calling each other by name in the presence of strangers. Thus, the materials from Ordubad hold significant scientific value for studying the history and ethnological traits of the traditional Azerbaijani family.

Historical forms of family and division of labor

In ethnological literature, there are various classifications based on family and marital relationships, parental and kinship ties, the size and ethnic or religious composition of the family, their place of residence, and whether or not children are present in the family, among other factors. One classification pertains to family structure. Based on literary sources and field data gathered from individual settlements, it is evident that during the 19th and 20th centuries, family structures in the region were predominantly small, consisting mainly of two generations: parents and their children. In rare cases, this list included, for example, the paternal grandparents, and his unmarried sister or brother. According to data from the 1870s, small families in the city of Ordubad mainly consisted of five to six people (Зелинский, 1880, p. 247-248). This figure should not be regarded as entirely reliable, as the calculations need to consider various factors that impact the statistics, such as the quality of medical care and high mortality rates from diseases and epidemics. In this context, a message from the Russian author I. I. Chopin is noteworthy. In 1829, there were 803 families and a total population of 3,444 people living in Ordubad (Шопен, 1852, p. 619-622). By 1873, the number of families had increased to 840, with a population of 3,491

(Зелинский, 1880, p. 248). This means that in 1829, the average number of individuals per registered family was 4.3, while in 1873, it was 4.2. Although the number of families or households has increased slightly over the past 45 years, the composition of families has remained largely the same. Small families, consisting of two generations, have maintained and carried on the traditions of larger families, creating a household. All members of these families, without exception, were expected to obey the head of the family—the father. In the past, both in the city of Ordubad and in its villages, there were not only smaller families but also **larger ones** that included representatives from three or more generations. Families of this nature have persisted, though in limited numbers, into recent years. For instance, during our visit to the remote village of Bist in the summer of 2024, and in Behrud, where we conducted research in 2025, we encountered large families that included members from three generations living together in a single household.

An analysis of ethnographic materials reveals that in the 19th century, the city of Ordubad, along with several of its historical villages, was organized into distinct patronymic quarters. Families residing in these quarters typically belonged to the same generation and were often identified by the name of their generation or clan (Пашаев, 1998, p.116). Currently, the number of districts has risen to seven: Upper Ambaras, Lower Ambaras, Mingis, Sarshaher, Usturlanga, and Engich. This increase is primarily due to the city's physical growth and population surge. In the past, each quarter functioned as an independent unit in terms of economics, politics, and ideology. This was particularly noticeable during family ceremonies—primarily weddings and funerals—as well as in activities that required collective labor. Examples of such activities include building houses and additional structures, erecting outbuildings, breeding silkworms, and harvesting fruits and grapes. These jobs were performed voluntarily and without any compensation. The owner was willing to provide the workers only food, sweets, and drinks (Пашаев, 1998, p.117).

In the Ordubad family, a distinct division of labor has historically emerged. Men typically engaged in gardening, agriculture, cattle breeding, crafts, and trade. Meanwhile, women—primarily mothers—handled housekeeping duties, baking bread, harvesting, drying fruit, and raising children, especially girls. They instilled important moral qualities in their daughters from an early age, such as hard work, patience, and honesty (Зелинский, 1880, p.247). Family life in Ordubad is deeply enriched by a variety of rites, rituals, and significant ceremonial events. These traditions, which have developed over centuries, begin with the birth of a child. Customs surrounding family life include practices for "protecting" and educating children from the evil eye and harmful spirits, as well as wedding and mourning ceremonies. All of these stages of family life are largely governed by the customs and norms of Sharia.

Marriage and Wedding Customs

Marriage as a historical category at all stages of socio-economic development was considered the core of the institution of the family, the main condition for its creation. In the 19th – early 20th centuries, as in all of Azerbaijan, marriages in Ordubad were usually concluded for economic reasons and mainly between representatives of the same class or profession, as well as between persons who were related by blood. In rare instances, there have been marriages between members of wealthy families and individuals from the lower class. Historical and ethnographic literature, along with field research, indicates that Azerbaijan has traditionally recognized three primary forms of marital relationships: monogamous, polygamous, and temporary marriage (*sigha*). The first two types of marriage are considered permanent and are governed by Sharia law. Throughout all historical periods, including the present day, monogamous marriage has been the predominant form of marriage among the Ordubad inhabitants. Polygamous marriages remain rare and typically occur only among religious leaders and affluent individuals (Пашаев, 1998, p.28). This is based on Islamic doctrine, which states that a man has the right to marry up to four legal wives, provided he can support them and their children. However, in rare cases, polygamy is observed in low-income families. In most cases, this situation arose from a woman's inability to have children. However, there were also economic motivations involved, such as the desire to forge connections with an influential family to enhance one's wealth or the necessity of keeping an inheritance within the family. Similar marriage practices were also observed in Ordubad. In the 1950s and 1960s in the village of Khanaga, a man named Meshadi Kamil had four wives. However, cohabitation and divorce were uncommon in the Ordubad region and were viewed very negatively by the local population. There were many instances of marrying a woman whose husband had passed away, and this practice was not condemned by the community. This is illustrated by a saying from 92-year-old Mammadov Ali Mammad oghlu from the village of Veravid: "*Marry a woman whose husband has died but avoid marrying a woman who has divorced her husband.*"

Historically, Azerbaijan had marriage customs known as levirate and sororate. Levirate refers to a practice where a woman marries her deceased husband's brother, while sororate refers to a man marrying his deceased wife's sister. Scholars believe that these customs were often employed to prevent the dispersion or loss of family wealth. Though ethnographer A. Pashayev discussed the presence of comparable marriage customs in Ordubad at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries (Пашаев, 1998, p. 121), we were unable to gather any information about this during our field research. In Ordubad, as in other parts of Azerbaijan, the custom of "*beshikkertme*" (also known as "*gobekkesdi*") was historically widespread, and it still occurs in rare cases today. It is important to note that such marriages typically took place between families that were related or between close neighbors who had a daughter and a son born around the same time. When

the umbilical cord of these children was cut, their parents announced their intention for them to marry. From that moment, boy and girl were considered engaged. However, there were instances when these engagements were dissolved for various reasons before the young people reached marriageable age.

Historically, marriage ceremonies were influenced by centuries-old traditions and Sharia norms. There were two primary forms of marriage: 1) marriage by mutual consent of both parties; and 2) marriage by abduction, which could occur either with or without the girl's consent. Ethnographic data indicate that bride kidnapping was not prevalent in the Ordubad region and occurred mostly by chance. The primary reason for this is the strong tradition of endogamous marriages within the local population, meaning that marriages typically occur between relatives, such as cousins. Parents were reluctant to marry their daughters not only to strangers but even to neighbors from nearby areas of the city. This attitude is reflected in a common saying: "It's a pity to give away a good daughter, but a bad one is shameful!" They say, "Do not marry a girl who is below the ark (*referring to the ark that passes through the village and divides it into two parts-N.C.*), and do not marry a girl who is above the ark." In today's world, such marital restrictions have largely vanished, allowing young people the opportunity to choose their partners more selectively.

Analysis of ethnographic materials from various settlements in Ordubad indicates that girls were often married at ages 12 to 14, or even younger (Иманзаде, 1958, p. 16). The optimal age for marriage among men was generally considered to be between 16 and 18 years. However, it is important to note that these age ranges were not strictly enforced. Marriages could take place at both younger and older ages. The wedding ceremony was, without a doubt, a significant and solemn occasion that marked the conclusion of family rituals. In many instances, weddings evolved from being simply family celebrations to becoming significant social events that brought together entire villages, cities, or whole region. In Ordubad, as is the case throughout Azerbaijan, the wedding process consists of several key stages, many of which have endured to the present day with only minor changes: pre-wedding, wedding, and post-wedding.

Based on the materials we gathered from various local areas in the region, it is evident that the pre-wedding stage began with the selection of a bride. The choice to marry off a son was primarily determined by the parents, with the father's decision being the most significant. They sought to gather as much information as possible about their prospective brides and to understand the opinions of the girls' parents regarding their intention to unite the families. This task was typically entrusted to close relatives of both families, often the boy's mother, sister, and aunt. Once the boy had developed an interest in a girl and was confident that her mother had no objections, a female relative—either the boy's mother, aunt, or sister—would visit the girl's house under some pretext. Since this attempt was made in secret, it was commonly referred to as "agyarama,"

meaning "to find out an opinion." The individuals involved spoke with the girl's mother, asking her to relay the information to the father or the head of the family (such as an elder brother). If the girl's father refused to give up his daughter, the discussion was considered closed, and it was decided not to share the matter further. This practice was known as "one stone down, one stone up." If the girl's family agreed, the date for the first official engagement would be established. On that day, a small delegation made up of the boy's family and close relatives would visit the girl's house. In Ordubad, this event was referred to as "saying yes," "giving consent," "taking a promise," "belge," and sometimes "nishan." At this stage of their acquaintance, the girl was presented with a gold ring adorned with red stones and a headscarf known as a "chagat." Beginning in the 1960s, the ring with red stones was replaced by a plain ring called a "barmagchig." Once a close relative of the girl announced her consent, the young man's sister opened the tray, placed the ring on the girl's finger, and covered her head with the headscarf. The girl's mother would give a gift to the person who presented the ring. After that, sweets from a tray would be distributed to the participants of the celebration, a practice known as "sweetening the mouth." Once consent had been obtained and the ceremony of "eating sweets" took place—specifically on the Saturday of the first week—a rite called "Saturday plate" or "light" was performed. During the "Saturday dish" ceremony, a mirror, a lamp, gold jewelry, clothes, and sweets were placed on display. On this evening, the young man's representative conducted a religious marriage registration (kebin), which symbolized the young man's entry into the girl's home. Notably, the ceremony was named the "Saturday dish" and took place on a Saturday. In the village of Duilun in Ordubad, there is a saying: "If there is a holiday on Saturday, it will feel like a holiday every day."

The engagement marked the conclusion of a marriage contract that followed the norms of Sharia law. Neither the groom nor the bride took part in drafting the contract, but their official consent was necessary. At this ceremony, they were represented by their trusted individuals or parents. The registration of the marriage also included the "Mehr," which was an essential part of the marriage contract. The Mehr specified the amount (money, grain, cattle, etc.) that the husband had to pay in the event of a divorce.

After the engagement ceremony, the young man assumed the role of "groom" in the girl's household, while the girl became the "bride" in the young man's household. Their parents were now considered relatives. The new family relationships established between the young man and the girl came with their own unique characteristics and terminology. The young man's parents were now referred to as his father-in-law and mother-in-law. His sister became her sister-in-law, and his brother was now her brother-in-law. His brother's wife was referred to as "gulbaj," and his uncle's wife was called "amijan." The engaged girl was now regarded as a bride by the young man's parents. Similarly, the girl's father and mother were called the young man's father-in-law and mother-in-law. Her brother

was now his brother-in-law, her sister became his sister-in-law, and her sister's husband was also his brother-in-law (Пашаев, 1998, p.124-125). The time between engagement and marriage can vary significantly. Depending on the financial situation of both parties and their readiness for the wedding, this period can sometimes last up to two years. Once everything has been settled, the men from the boy's family, along with several elders, visit the girl's family for a council. During this meeting, they determine the wedding date and discuss the list and quantity of food that needs to be sent to the girl's household. As a result, preparations for the wedding begin at the boy's house, while the girl's family starts preparing the dowry.

In an average Ordubad family, the dowry of a girl typically included a set of four blankets (consisting of wool mattresses and bedspreads), two pillows, a *mafrash* (a special woven item used for storing and carrying household goods), a chest, a *janamaz* (a set of prayer accessories), a box for the Koran, and various containers. In recent years, the dowry list has significantly expanded and been updated (Пашаев, 1998, p. 126). Notably, several lemon trees have been added to this list. One of the key events during the preparation for the wedding is the ceremony of cutting the bride's dress, commonly known as "*parcha bichdi*," "*paltar bichdi*," or "*paltar kesdi*." This ceremony, referred to as "*parcha bichdi*," is conducted by the bride's representative's '*ianga*' at the bride's family's house, with the participation of women from both families. For example,

Today is the tenth, *hakhyshta*¹;
Dress of gold threads, *hakhyshta*,
I will sacrifice myself for my brother, *hakhyshta*;
Today is his wedding, *hakhyshta*;
Or
My dear, let it be clear to you, *hakhyshta*;
Let the moon be bright, *hakhyshta*;
Two wishing to be together have met, *hakhyshta*;
Congratulations, *hakhyshta*.

The day before the wedding, the groom's family sent henna to the bride's family. That evening, young girls from the village and surrounding areas, along with the bride's close friends, gathered at the bride's house for a celebration known as "*gyz bashy*." During this ceremony, henna, soaked in a clear liquid, was applied to the bride's head, hands, and feet. During the ceremony, the participants played music, sang songs, and engaged in various games while dressed in men's clothing. After these festivities, the wedding ceremony itself took place. Due to agricultural commitments, weddings were typically held either before the Novruz holiday, which marks the beginning of spring work, or in the fall, after the harvest. These celebrations usually concluded on Good Friday of that week. Since Muharram is considered a "month of mourning" in the Muslim calendar, weddings are not held during this time. To accommodate wedding ceremonies, a special tent is set up in the courtyard of the groom's house. Individuals known as *Toybashi* or *Toybei* are appointed to oversee the feast, conduct the wedding, and ensure order. In Ordubad, unlike in other regions of Azerbaijan, weddings traditionally take place simultaneously in the homes of

both the groom and the bride, lasting for 2 to 3 days. The wedding at the girl's house was modest, while the one at the guy's house was more lavish and formal. Ordubad weddings featured a variety of collective dances and songs. In fact, up to 60 types of "*yally*" were known in this region, including *Kochari*, *Tello*, *Gopu*, *Tanzarek*, *Uchayag*, *Dordayag*, *Iravani*, *Sharur*, and *Sari gelin*, among others. Between 10 to 20 women participated in these dances at the same time. The dances featured two groups standing opposite each other. The leaders of each group took turns singing songs, while the rest of the participants repeated the refrain "*hakhyshta*," clapped their hands, and occasionally performed solo or paired dances, such as "*Mirzayi*," "*Tabrizi*," and "*Ordubadi*," among others. The traditional "*mugham trio*" was often invited from Nakhchivan or Aylis to perform at weddings. During the celebration, the groom would stay in a separate room with his groomsmen, away from the guests and relatives. It was not until the final day of the wedding, with the consent of the elders, that the groom and his family would join the guests. They would then participate in the *yalli* of *bei*, a collective round dance, alongside their friends in response to requests from the wedding attendees. After the musicians performed the traditional *bey-tarif*, which praises the groom, they left the celebration. On the final evening of the wedding, a henna ceremony took place at the bride's house. The henna, sent by the groom, was used to decorate the hands of the bride's friends and guests. Some of the henna was also returned to the groom's house (Пашаев, 1998, p.126). The following day was the ceremony known as "*bringing the bride*." Before the ceremony began, women from the groom's family came to decorate the bride. This event was referred to as "*decorating the bride*" or "*plucking the eyebrows*." During the ceremony, attendees enjoyed playing music, singing songs, and dancing while praising both the groom and the bride. In the evening, the men from the groom's house set out to fetch the bride. As they approached the bride's house accompanied by music, the musicians from bride's family gave way them and they continued to play and sing.

When the bride was brought out of the house, several candles were lit and placed on a tray, and a sieve was set on top of the tray. The bride, after tying a red scarf around her head, stepped onto the sieve. The young man's sister cut seven types of silk fabric with scissors and draped them over the bride's head, symbolizing that in her husband's home, "the bride's tongue will be short." The bride's son-in-law then tied a piece of red fabric around her waist. During this ritual, relatives shared their wishes for the bride to have a "strong waist" (signifying good health) and for the family to grow. After that, the brother-in-law would place money on the bride's head as much as he could afford. Following this, the son-in-law placed money on the bride's head, based on his means. The sum of money, referred to as "*milk money*," was given to the bride's mother. Following this, one of the bride's relatives, such as her father or uncle, offered a blessing to the bride. Afterward, two trusted individuals, one holding a mirror and the other a lit lamp, assisted in lowering the bride from

¹Hakhyshta means "let's loose the soil".

the grate. They held her arm and guided her out of the house. The mirror and lamp symbolized the hope that the bride's journey would be bright and clear. Typically, the bride was transported on a horse or in a carriage, and in wealthier families, she would travel in a coach. If the groom's house was nearby, she would walk, accompanied by music and dancing along the way. When the wedding procession reached the groom's house, a ceremony took place in the courtyard to welcome the bride. As part of this ceremony, a ram was slaughtered at her feet. The wedding guests, primarily young people, climbed onto the roof of the house and showered the bride with chopped apples, coins, dried fruits, and sweets. The coins symbolized fertility, while the apples were believed to be a remedy for "a thousand and one diseases." When the bride entered her husband's house, she was welcomed at the threshold with a piece of bread and a tray of honey. She dipped the bread in the honey and placed it on her tongue, a ritual believed to bring sweetness and prosperity to the home.

After this, the bride was led to a room that had been specially prepared for her. As per tradition, she was required to stand for a moment ('diz direi'), and before sitting, she had to receive a gift from her father-in-law and mother-in-law. After promising various gifts—such as rings, a carpet, a cow, and a beehive—the bride took her seat. If there was a fountain or spring in the yard, it would be said: "Let this fountain be yours," symbolizing a wish for her life to be fluid and pure like water. A tea table was prepared for the representatives who accompanied the bride, and sweet tea was served for her. After she took a sip of tea, the guests also enjoyed their tea before leaving. The bride's representatives, who accompanied her, congratulated the groom's parents in a tradition known as "khatirjamlyk." The groom's family prepared eggs for this occasion, and they also made sweets called "chirov," which were presented to both the groom and the bride.

On the morning following the wedding, the ceremony of "removing the veil" took place. In addition to guests from the groom's family, the bride's relatives were also invited. Five plates of porridge with honey and rice with milk were set on the table, which is known as the "toy becha." The bride's representatives placed a red veil on her head and presented her to the guests. This stage was referred to as the "maiden's wedding" in the groom's home. At the request of the guests, the newlyweds were introduced and seated together under a veil. During this time, a young boy was given two rolling pins. During the ceremony, he would remove the bride's veil with a rolling pin and then toss it onto a fruit-bearing tree. After this act, the ceremony concluded, and the bride was recognized as a full member of the family. Participants from both sides offered their congratulations and blessings. It is important to note that only women took part in the "duwaggapma" ceremony.

Customs, rituals, and ceremonies of childbirth

Traditionally, having children has been viewed as a woman's primary responsibility. A childless home was often likened to a "mill without water," and a woman without children was believed to have incurred God's wrath, committing a serious sin. From the very

first days after the wedding, the couple prayed for the bride to conceive a child. If there were any concerns about infertility, they turned to a variety of magical practices, rites, and rituals. Mullahs, fortune tellers, sorcerers, midwives, and healers all played an active role in these efforts. The Ordubad people provided alms to the poor and took women to sacred places, such as feasts and hearths, where they offered sacrifices, expressed their wishes, and prayed. To celebrate, they would visit the renowned "Asabi-Kaf" and Mount Bilge. When a bride became pregnant, it was met with joy within the family. She was surrounded by special care, and both her mother and mother-in-law would sew clothes for the future child and prepare a cradle along with a complete cradle set. The birth of a boy is a significant event, as he is seen as the continuer of the clan and the family, as well as the master of his father's house. The birth occurs in the presence of experienced midwives, who oversee the bride until the child is born. In appreciation for their assistance, she receives various gifts from the child's parents, grandparents, and other relatives.

Difficult births were believed to be caused by the "intervention of a bad mother." This evil force allegedly drains the woman's strength, frightens her, destroys her liver, and can lead to severe complications that may result in death. To drive away the "bad mother," men fired guns, made noise, and used daggers to disturb running water, while women placed a piece of raw meat on the back of a pregnant woman and gently slapped her cheeks to wake her up. The first 40 days after birth were considered a very challenging and crucial period for both the mother and child. During this time, the "bad mother" and other evil spirits could pose a threat to their well-being. To prevent potential harm, they engaged in various rites and rituals. One of the simplest practices involved piercing the clothes of the woman who had given birth, as well as the clothing of the child, with a needle or pin. Additionally, they would place metal objects such as a knife, dagger, scissors, or other tools under the pillow of the new mother. According to their beliefs, a "bad mother," who was thought to be afraid of metal objects, could not cause harm in this situation.

To prevent the 'bad woman' from entering the room of a woman in labor, the midwife or one of the women in the house would scratch the wall or floor with the dagger, skewer, or knife that had been used to cut the baby's umbilical cord. This action created a "barrier" around the woman in labor. The object used for this purpose would then be placed next to the woman in labor (Qeybullaev, 1994, p.275). In addition, a metal object, such as a knife, scissors, or a bread knife, was placed under the baby's head. Often, a special prayer was written on paper, and an amulet known as "sheva" was sewn onto a hat or shirt. Incense was commonly burned in the room as well. Overall, the practice of using metal as a talisman against "dark forces" is documented among various peoples in Azerbaijan and the Caucasus region (Смирнова, 1968, p. 68). Strangers, particularly women who had experienced multiple losses and were childless, were not permitted into the room where the child was. Anyone entering the house was greeted by a child at the threshold,

which served to protect them from potential harm(Гулиев, 1986, p.29).

The completion of the first forty days of a child's life, marked by the first bath, was a significant event for the Ordubad family. This occasion was celebrated with a ritual known as "forty keys." During this ritual, a copper bowl was filled with water sourced from the sacred mountain Bilge. Following the reading of a special verse from the Holy Quran, the baby was bathed in this blessed water, accompanied by a prayer. To commemorate the event, a variety of dishes and sweets were prepared, and festivities were organized for family and friends(Пашаев, 1998, p.136).Although the naming of a child was not marked by any special ceremony, it was regarded as one of the most memorable days for an Ordubad family. The naming ceremony typically took place on the seventh day after the child's birth and was thus called "yeddi-yeddi." This event also transformed into a festive gathering for women. There was a tradition of naming boys after their grandfathers, uncles, or sometimes fathers, primarily to honor and preserve the memory of the family's patriarch. Additionally, the eruption of a child's first tooth was regarded as a significant milestone for the family. To celebrate this event, a dish called hadik, made from a harvest of seven different legumes, was prepared and distributed to all neighbors and relatives. When returning the hadik bowls, it was customary to place a small gift inside each bowl. People would applaud and express their hopes for the child's speedy growth of new teeth. Another significant event in the life of a family, common across all regions of Azerbaijan, is circumcision. This procedure is typically performed on boys before they reach the age of 5 or 6. In the past, this work was performed by highly respected folk healers known as 'dallek' in the villages of Ordubad. Notably, in the Ordubad region, several dalleks gained fame, including Mirfuti, Mashadi Habib, Zohrab, Ibrahim, Mamedtagi, Gurban, Akhmed, and others. During the circumcision ceremony, the child was given to a close family member known as the "kirwa." The kirwa was regarded almost as a second father to the child and was bestowed with special respect and honor. In some cases, the role of kirwa was passed down through generations, meaning that everyone recognized which lineage the kirwa of the family's children belonged to. The presence of numerous poems and rhymes about kirwa and kirvelik demonstrates that this institution held significant importance in the family life of the people of Ordubad. Close neighbors, relatives, and musicians were invited to the ceremony, referred to as a "small wedding" or "circumcision wedding." During the event, guests were offered a variety of dishes and drinks. Each guest presented gifts to the child and expressed their good wishes with phrases like, "May he grow up healthy," "Let's celebrate his big wedding one day," and "Blessings upon him."

In Ordubad, mourning ceremonies have their own distinct characteristics. From the first day, women gather in the home of the deceased to express their grief, while also preparing the "mourning tray." Meanwhile, the men take care of all necessary funeral arrangements. The mourners find solace in the fact that the peace of the household remains undisturbed during

the funeral. According to local informants, these traditions have been maintained to this day, even amidst a significant decline in the village population in recent years.

Conclusion

The traditional family structure and everyday life of the people in Ordubad exhibit several unique features alongside the general characteristics common to Azerbaijan. These distinctions have undoubtedly been shaped by the region's specific natural and geographical conditions, the nature of economic activities, and serve as an indicator of the economic status of various social strata within the population. The preservation of large families and endogamous marriages has continued in recent years, reflecting a conservative approach to childbirth and child-rearing, as well as inheritance and its distribution. This is further supported by the ethnographic materials we collected from individual villages in Ordubad. In recent decades, changes in family life have been observed in Ordubad, similar to those seen throughout Azerbaijan. Information gathered from informants indicates that the influence of social institutions, such as "eldership," on both society and family life is gradually diminishing. People are increasingly attempting to solve their personal problems independently. The former closeness among relatives and neighbors is now less apparent. Most significantly, divorces, once rare, are becoming more common and have emerged as a significant concern for the Ordubad community. The traditional conservatism in relationships among men and women, as well as between parents and children, is fading. It is evident that many customs and traditions associated with birth, child-rearing, weddings, and marriage are gradually disappearing. Additionally, most young people from Ordubad now travel to Baku or neighboring countries, both seasonally and for permanent residence, in order to address their family's social issues. This trend, observed throughout Azerbaijan, is on the rise, and it's noteworthy that parents do not intervene in this situation. Currently, in both the city of Ordubad and its surrounding villages, many houses are abandoned, with only elderly residents remaining in some of them. The only good thing for these people is that they can talk to their kids on the phone or visit their parents or grandparents in the village for a little while during the summer holidays.

We can see that the traditional Ordubad family keeps its conservative appearance, but it is still changing because of globalization, cultural mixing, social programs on TV, and social media. Older people often can't fight these trends, so they have to accept them. The traditional Ordubad family is based on some important beliefs. They have always respected and followed moral values. These values have been around for many years. These beliefs are still important to the Ordubad family today.

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