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PARTICIPATION OF ETHNIC MINORITIES LIVING IN THE NORTH-WESTERN REGIONS OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN IN THE MIGRATION PROCESSES**Bayimkhanim A. Huseynova**Institute of Geography named after academican H.A. Aliyev ANAS, Baku, Azerbaijan
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Abstract. The primary purpose of the research paper of practical importance is to study the historical migration of ethnic minorities settling in the north-western zone of Azerbaijan to Azerbaijan and the reasons and consequences of their participation in modern migration processes. The migration of ethnic groups inhabiting the region was studied on the basis of historical materials, and in order to study the current situation, causes and directions of contemporary migration processes, we conducted the research in the several settlements, which are settled compactly by ethnic minorities, of the region. According to the results of the study, the role of socio-economic factors in the intensification of migration processes in recent years among the ethnic minorities living in the region has been significant. It was revealed that the ethnicity of the migrant is the determinant of the area to which they migrate. Additionally, the impact ways of the tendencies in the migration processes on the alterations of age composition were researched in the article. It was concluded that as a result of the mass migration young generation, the share of seniors has increased in society and the ageing processes of the population have accelerated.

Keywords: Azerbaijan, ethnic minorities, migration processes, able-bodied population, ageing of the population

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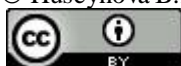
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УЧАСТИЕ ЭТНИЧЕСКИХ МЕНЬШИНСТВ, ПРОЖИВАЮЩИХ В СЕВЕРО-ЗАПАДНЫХ РАЙОНАХ АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНСКОЙ РЕСПУБЛИКИ, В МИГРАЦИОННЫХ ПРОЦЕССАХ**Баимханум Алирза Гусейнова**Институт географии имени академика Г.А. Алиева НАНА, Баку, Азербайджан
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Аннотация. Основной целью статьи, имеющей практическое значение, является исследование исторической миграции этнических групп, проживающих в северо-западной зоне Азербайджана, в Азербайджан, а также причин и последствий их участия в современной миграции. Миграция этнических меньшинств, населяющих регион, изучалась на основе исторических материалов, и для изучения современного положения, причин и направлений современных миграционных процессов нами были проведены исследования в нескольких населенных пунктах, компактно расселенных этническими меньшинствами области. По результатам исследования роль социально-экономических факторов в активизации миграционных процессов в последние годы среди этнических меньшинств, проживающих в регионе, значительна. Выявлено, что этническая принадлежность мигранта является определяющим

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фактором территории, в которую он мигрирует. Кроме того, в статье исследованы пути воздействия тенденций миграционных процессов на изменения возрастного состава. Сделан вывод о том, что в результате массовой миграции молодого поколения в обществе увеличилась доля пожилых людей и ускорились процессы старения населения.

Ключевые слова: Азербайджан, национальные меньшинства, миграционные процессы, трудоспособное население, старение населения

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Introduction

Azerbaijan is one of the areas where migration processes have always been intensive [1]. From 2007 onward, although the net migration rate has shown a positive trend for the country as a whole, there have been striking differences among its regions. The main focus of the paper is the Shaki-Zagatala economic region, located in the northwestern part of the country and lagging behind in terms of socioeconomic development. Historically, migration processes in the region (from medieval times to the 1990s) were mainly determined by political factors, whereas the role of socioeconomic factors in the migration processes started to increase in the mid-1990s. Among the political factors influencing migration, the major ones are these related to resettlement, changes in the political system, wars, and so on. Socioeconomic factors in question are primarily the ones connected with social welfare of the population, including the state of social infrastructure, economic indicators of the area, etc.

In the Shaki-Zagatala economic region, where 72% of the population resides in rural areas, the rural population is mainly engaged in agriculture. However, the lack of arable land resources in the region, mainly in the foothills and mountainous areas, the insufficient number of processing companies specializing in agricultural production, the poor employment opportunities, the region's demographic development lagging behind its economic development, have accelerated migration from the region. Thus, migration processes in the region originate in rural areas. The settlement of most of minority ethnic groups (87.6%) in rural areas have created conditions for their more active participation in migration processes. This, in turn, has led to negative trends in their demographics, including their number.

Migration of minority ethnic groups can result in a decrease in their number, aging of the population, loss of regional ethno-diversity, and even disappearance of such groups, with only a few thousand people finally left in the world and residing in certain areas, since ethnic minorities can only be protected when living compactly within a certain territory. From this point of view, the study of the history and modern migration of minority ethnic groups in the region distinguished by its ethnic diversity, including the study of the causes, directions, and consequences of the migration processes, appears to be of great scientific and practical importance.

The main purpose of the investigation is to research the participation of minority ethnic groups populating the north-western regions of Azerbaijan in historical and contemporary migration processes, to analyze the direction, course and causes of modern migration, and to study some demographic indicators influenced directly by migration processes.

Research methodology

The research was carried out with the use of historical, comparative analysis, mathematical-statistical and questionnaire methods.

Scientific literature on the topic covers some studies conducted by Azerbaijani scientists concerning the ethno-demographic situation, economic and historical-geographical research on minority ethnic groups and migration processes: G.J. Javadov (2000) conducted research on the features of historical development of ethnic and national groups living in the country, Sh.M. Muradov

(2013, 2021) – on the ethno-demographic situation in Azerbaijan in 1897–2012 and the demographic situation in the Republic of Azerbaijan in 1828–2020, Z.N. Eminov (2005) – on the changes in demographic indicators of the Azerbaijani population and their causes, H.M. Tahirova (2016) – on the features of migration processes in Azerbaijan, E.S. Badalov (2017) – on ethno-demographic conditions of the cities, R.N. Karimov (2017) – on the features of rural settlement in the region.

As to foreign scholars, I.P. Petrushevsky (1949) carried out research on the population of Azerbaijan in the 15th century, J.M. Clifton (2005), C. Tiesen (2005), C. Skutsch (2005), K. Clarck (2007) – on the linguistic features and settlement area of minority ethnic groups living in the territory of Azerbaijan, W.M. Schulze (2016) – on the linguistic and historical characteristics of the Udi people, and J.B. Minahan (2016) studied minority ethnic groups in the world.

Some of the abovementioned researchers analyzed general information about minority ethnic groups from a historical point of view, others – from a linguistic point of view, still others – from the perspective of demographic research. However, migration processes have been studied not with regard to particular ethnic groups, but in terms of the general population of a certain region or the country as a whole. This means that, although sufficient research has been done in Azerbaijan to study migration processes and changes in the national-ethnic composition of the population, other demographic indicators of ethnic groups living in the country, including their participation in migration processes, have not hitherto been studied. Thus, our research can be considered the first study on the participation of minority ethnic groups in the migration process in the north-western regions of Azerbaijan. The article deals with both historical migrations of ethnic minorities, covering the period from the 15th century to 1991, and modern migrations, starting from 1991 to these days.

In order to investigate the participation of minority ethnic groups in migration processes and the factors contributing to this, we visited some selected areas in the northwestern region of Azerbaijan that are densely populated by ethnic minorities. The field study lasted for 2 months (21 September – 21 November 2021) and was conducted in the villages of Amirvan, Gamarvan, Laza, Bayramkokhali, Shin, densely populated by the Lezgins; Yukhari Chardaglar, Danachi, Ashagi Chardaglar, Uzungazmalar, Jar, Kebeloba, Akhadara, and Mazykh villages, inhabited by the Avars; Yeni Suvagil, Galal, Garqay, Gozbarakh, Aghyazi, Uzumlu, Ashagi Malakh, Gum, Qashqachay, Lakit, Zarna, Chinarli, Lakit Malakh, Lakit Kotuklu, Saribas villages, inhabited by the Tsakhurs; Inghiloi-Kotuklu, Gakh Inghiloi, Gakhbash, Meshabash, Garamesha, Ketgushan, Khalaftala, Baghtala, Mosul villages, and Aliabad settlement, inhabited by the Inghiloi; Nij settlement, inhabited by the Udi people. The study involved 200 representatives of each minority ethnic group (the Avars, Inghiloi, Lezgins, Tsakhurs, Udis) covering different age groups (16–89 years). Three quarters of the respondents (750 people) were accounted for by people aged between 15 and 59.

In the course of research we used questionnaires covering the following questions: the age, sex, ethnicity, settlement, education, job, marital status, family composition, monthly income – to obtain general information about the respondent; housing and housing conditions, availability and the condition of social infrastructure, in what sector of the economy the respondent works – to obtain information about the current socioeconomic situations in the settlements; desire to migrate and the reason for that, country of preference, migrants in the family, age group, sex and marital status of the migrants, and other types of questions – to obtain information about the respondent's participation in the migration process.

As there are no official statistical materials reflecting migration processes of the ethnic minorities, the research database is based on the survey materials.

Results and discussion

The Shaki-Zagatala economic region covers almost one tenth of the country's territory, and 6.2% of the country's population is located in the north-west of Azerbaijan [7]. According to the materials of the 2009 census, the population of the region, where there were 336 rural and 14 urban

settlements, was represented by the Azerbaijanis (81.1% of the total population of the region), Avars (8.7%), Tsakhurs (2.2%), Inghiloi (1.3%), Lezgins (5.0%), Udi people (1.0%), and other nations (0.7%) [23]. The region consists of the Balakan, Gakh, Gabala, Oghuz, Shaki, and Zagatala administrative districts.

The primary settlement areas with regard to the minority ethnic groups can be presented as follows. Sharif, Yeni Sharif, Ayritala, Rochahmed, Katekh, Dardoggaz, and other villages of the Balakan district, as well as Danachi, Akhakh dara, Zilban, Mazikh, Jar, Kebeloba and many more villages of the Zagatala district are primarily populated by the Avars. The number of Tsakhurs is relatively higher in Yeni Suvagil, Gozbarakh, Azgilli, Mamrukh, Alasgar, and other villages of the Zagatala district, as well as in Saribash, Gum, Chinarli, Lakit, Lakit Malakh, Gashgachay, Lakit Kotuklu, and other villages of the Gakh district. In the case of Inghiloi, it is necessary to differentiate between the Muslim Inghiloi and the Christian ones: the former reside in Ititala village of the Balakan district, Aliabad town and Mosul village of the Zagatala district, whereas Gakh Inghiloi, Meshabash, Gakhbash, Inghiloi Kotuklu, and other villages of the Gakh district are populated by the latter. Interestingly, the Udi people primarily live in Nij town of the Gabala district. The Lezgins, who live in almost all districts of the region, primarily reside in the following districts: the Shaki district (Shin, Shorsu, Ashagi Dashagil, and other villages), Gabala and Filfili districts (Gamarvan, Amirvan, Bilikh, Sileyli, and other villages), and the Oghuz district (Top, Zarrab, and other villages) (Fig. 2).

In 2009, although almost two-fifths (18.6%) of the region's population was represented by the minority ethnic groups, for the country as a whole this figure was only 8.4%. However, these indicators have not remained stable in both the country and the economic region, altering as a result of the migration processes that have arisen due to socio-economic and related reasons.

Historical migration of the Avars. Historically, the Avars resided in the Northern Caucasus region, located between the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea. The ancient villages inhabited by the Avars were mainly built in the middle mountainous area [18]. The primary reason for such settlement was the suitability of this area for cattle breeding and its being protected from outside attacks.

There are various ideas about the migration of the Avars to Dagestan. A.A. Bakikhanov writes that the Avars living in the Argan region migrated from Khorasan [3]. Another supporter of this idea is Z.M. Bunyadov, who also emphasizes that the Argan region is the same territory as the Avar Khanate. According to S. Tolstov [26], the Avars once lived in the south-eastern part of the Caspian Sea, namely in Khorasan, then migrated to the North Caucasus and founded the Avar Khanate. However, according to the questionnaire materials, the Avar people consider themselves to be ancient residents of the Caucasus region. As our investigation shows, the mentioned Avar Khanate was constituted by Turkic-speaking tribes, whereas the Avars are Caucasian-speaking people [17; 25].

There are discussions on when the Avars first migrated to Azerbaijan. It is argued by some scholars, basing their opinion on certain sources, that owing to the shortage of arable land in Dagestan, they had to migrate to Azerbaijan in the 17th and 18th centuries. However, their migration to Azerbaijan began in the 18th century [20]. According to M.H. Baharli, their migration to north-western regions of Azerbaijan occurred in the 15th century [2]. The last mass migration of the Avars to Azerbaijan, mainly to the territory of the present-day Balakan, Jar, Mukhakh, Tala, Chardaglar, and other areas, dates back to the reign of Shah Abbas I, the fifth ruler of the Safavid state. It is also possible to see that the Avars lived in the territory of Azerbaijan in the 17th-18th centuries from the tombstones located in the village of Mazykh, where we carried out the investigation.

Although there is no accurate information about the number of Avars in old sources, it is known that in 1886 there were over 40 thousand of them in the Zagatala region [8]. However, this figure dropped significantly to just slightly over 30 thousand (31,670 people) in the census materials of 1897 and showed twofold decrease (to 19,060) in the 1926 census materials. The

number of Avars in 1939 was 15.7 thousand, in 1959 – 17.3 thousand, in 1970 – 30.7 thousand, in 1979 – 36 thousand, in 1989 – 42.8 thousand, in 1999 – 50.3 thousand, and in 2009 – 49.5 thousand. On the whole, there can be distinguished two periods with regard to the number of Avars: **1897–1939** can be considered the period of decrease in the number of Avars, while **1939–1999** – the period of increase. Although some groups of the Avars migrated to the territory of Dagestan from time to time, the decrease was mainly caused by the fact that the majority of Avars were registered as Lezgins during the 1939 census. This is because, unequivocally, the Dagestani people were known as the Lezgins [15]. In the following censuses, the Avars and Lezgins were counted as different ethnics. Throughout the 20th century, their numbers fluctuated due to migration and misrepresentation of ethnic composition in the census materials.

Historical migration of Inghilois. The Inghilois, who are considered to be ancient residents of the Caucasus region, populate Georgia, Turkey, and north-western Azerbaijan, especially the territory of the Balakan, Gakh, and Zagatala districts [11]. There are several theories about the origin of the Inghilois. One of them is that they are Muslimised Georgians. A convincing argument in favor of this theory is that they speak a subdialect of Georgian [5]. The Inghilois were presented as Georgians converted to Islam in the second half of the 19th century [27]. G.A. Geybullayev took a completely different approach to the issue and linked the ethnonym ‘Inghiloi’ with the name of the ‘Gel’ tribe (an ancient ethnos of Caucasian Albania): in the researcher’s opinion, they are descendants of the Gel tribe [9]. The same argument was promoted by Sh. Hajiali. From his point of view, the Gel tribe, the ancient ancestors of the modern Inghilois, was one of the many Albanian tribes that created and developed the ancient Albanian state and culture [11]. From this, we can conclude that the settlement of these areas by the Inghilois dates back to the 4th century BC.

The Muslim Inghilois call themselves Inghilois, while Christian Inghilois call themselves Georgians. Consequently, they are referred to as ‘Inghilois’ in some sources and as ‘Georgians’ – in others, which makes it impossible to determine the exact number of this ethnic group.

There was a remarkable increase in the number of Inghilois in the 1897 census, manifested in the Zagatala region and other provinces where they lived. This figure rose to 9.5 thousand in 1926 and to 10.2 thousand in 1939. Conversely, it declined to 9.5 thousand in 1959, then swelling to 13.6 thousand in 1970. Over a nine-year period between 1970 and 1979 this figure dropped from 13.6 thousand to 11.4 thousand, and continued its fall to 10.3 thousand in 1989. Despite going up to 12.3 thousand in 1999, it then showed a considerable decline to 7,545 in 2009 [15]. The increase in the number of Inghilois was connected to the ever-increasing natural growth rate, also common to other parts of the country between 1926 and 1939. However, in 1939–1959, as a consequence of the Second World War, all demographic indicators, including the migration balance, showed negative trends, and this situation, in turn, paved the way for a reduction of the population, including the Inghilois. Despite the significant increase in 1970, this figure reached its nadir in 2009. The major cause behind that was migration and the resulting decline in natural increase, which can be seen in the statistics for Alibayli, Gakh Inghiloi, Kichik Alatamir, and other villages of the Gakh district.

Historical migration of Lezgins. The Lezgins are considered one of the tribes that make up Caucasian Albania. Some sources even claim that they were spread over large areas between the Caspian Sea and the Mediterranean. At the moment, they primarily reside compactly in the Dagestan Republic of the Russian Federation and the Shaki-Zagatala and Guba-Khachmaz economic regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Historically, Lezgins living in Dagestan often migrated to the northern regions of Azerbaijan. They started to live permanently in the territory of Azerbaijan in the 19th century, which was connected with the name of Gamarvar village of the Gabala district. Undoubtedly, a large number of pastures in the village and its proximity to Dagestan played a significant role in the choice of this village for the Lezgins. There were constant disputes over the pastures used by both Azerbaijani and nomadic Lezgins. For this reason, the Lezgins using these pastures appealed to the head of the Main

Department for 'Mountain Peoples' (A. Komarov), who decided in favor of the Lezgins and allowed them to settle in the area. As a result, some nomadic Lezgins settled down in the pastures and named the area 'Komarovvan' in honor of Komarov (later, the name of the village was changed to 'Gamarvan' [19]). After that event, the Lezgins began to settle in other areas of the Gabala district.

In the 1926 census, the number of Lezgins in the Nukha county rose to 2,874 and in the Zagatala district – to 679 people. Subsequent censuses (1939, 1959) recorded a significant increase in the size of this ethnic group. In 1939, the census materials showed that there were 6,248 Lezgins in the Balakan region, 2,112 – in Gabala, 1,685 – in Zagatala, 3,170 – in Gakh, 2,401 – in Oguz, 4,430 – in Shaki. However, the large number of Lezgins in the Balakan, Gakh, and Zagatala districts was not due to their migration to these areas, but due to the registration of Avars living in Balakan and some Tsakhurs living in Gakh and Zagatala as Lezgins during the census [15].

In the decades that followed, the number of Lezgins rose consecutively: to 11,795 in 1959; to 15,363 in 1970; to 22,730 in 1979; to 26,959 in 1989; to 27,616 in 1999; and to 28,397 in 2009. In 1970–1989 the Lezgin population grew in all administrative districts primarily due to natural increase, while in Gabala the increment rate was especially rapid owing to the combination of two factors – natural increase and migration. At present, the Lezgins reside in all administrative districts of the region, with the Gabala district particularly distinguished by the numerical advantage of this ethnic group.

Historical migration of Udi people. There are two groups of ideas about the origin of the Udis. According to the first point of view, the Udi people are descended from the Uti, one of the 26 tribes of ancient Caucasian Albania. The first person to put forward this idea was Petrushevsky. According to him, the Udi people living in the village of Nij (currently a small town) and Oghuz district are descendants of ancient Albanian tribes. Evidence of this is the etymological similarity of the names 'udi' and 'uti' [21]. Although this view is supported by many, there is another opinion, expressed by G. Geybullayev who, based on Strabo's statement that 'the Albanians and Utis lived side by side in the southwest of the Caspian Sea', claims that they are descendants of Dagestani-speaking tribes, not Albanians [10]. Additionally, Movses Kaghankatvatsi emphasizes that they came to Albania [16]. The same opinion was expressed by I. Aliyev, according to whom the Utis moved to the north before Christ and settled in Albania. E. Eichwald, who studied the Udi language, considered the Udis to be a Finno-Ugric tribe and stated that they came from the north of the Caucasus [13]. As the obtained information shows, the Udis have an old history of settlement in Azerbaijan, especially in the study area, and they are considered to be ancient residents of this area.

The number of Udi people in the world is estimated at 10,000. About 4,000 of them have settled in Azerbaijan, about 4,000 – in Russia, and the rest – in Ukraine, Armenia, and Georgia. However, they reside compactly only in Nij town in the Gabala district. The majority of the population of this settlement was made up by the Udi people, while the remaining population was accounted for by the Lezgins and Azerbaijanis.

In 1897 the number of Udi people was over 7,000 in the Nukha county alone. The 1926 census showed a remarkable drop – to 2,441 people in the whole country. In 1939 the Udis were counted among the Lezgins. In 1970 their number in the republic rose to 3,202, and in 1979 the indicator almost doubled, reaching 5,879 people. Of these, 4,819 fell to the Gabala, 514 – to the Oghuz, and the rest – to the other districts. In the year 1989, the number of Udis reached 6,120 across the country, with 5,487 people of these living in the Shaki-Zagatala region. However, in 1999 the indicator declined to 4,100 for the country, including 4,075 for the region. In the year 2009, it decreased to under 4,000 (3,774) people.

The Udi people primarily reside in the Oghuz district of Azerbaijan and in Nij settlement of the Gabala district. In 1920–1922, a group of Udi people migrated to the Georgian village of Oktomberi, for which reason, there was recorded a sharp decline in their number in the 1926 census. It is even

enunciated that this village was founded by the Udi who migrated from the Vartashen (present Oghuz) district [25]. At the moment, there are only 74 Udi people in this district. The departure of the Udi people living compactly in Azerbaijan may lead to their disappearance as ethnoses.

Historical migration of Tsakhurs. Information about the Tsakhurs, one of the ancient peoples of the Caucasus, is found in 7th-century Georgian sources. After the Arab conquest they converted to Islam. In the former times, Tsakhur village was used as a place of residence, then, in the 17th century, this territory was transferred to the Ilisu Sultanate [14]. Migration of the Tsakhurs to the territory of Azerbaijan commenced from this period. They mainly settled in the Gakh and Zagatala districts of the region. With the passing of time, some of them mingled with Azerbaijanis, and, as a result, the Tsakhur-speaking population of Saribash, Ilisu and other villages in the region began to speak Azerbaijani in the second half of the 19th century [12]. These days, the majority of those who speak this language belong to the older generation. According to the 1926 census, there were 15,552 Tsakhur people living in Azerbaijan, including 15,217 of them – in the Zagatala district. In 1959, their number in the country was less than 3,000. This was due to the fact that some of them were registered as Lezgians. In 1970 there were 5,697 Tsakhurs in the Zagatala region, in 1979 – 7,728 people, in 1989 – 13,152, in 1999 – 15,726, and in 2009 – 12,246 people. The sharp decline in the number of Tsakhurs in 1999–2009 was due to migration of some of them to Dagestan.

The principal causes of contemporary migration of ethnic minorities. In 1990, the level of emigration from Azerbaijan reached a maximum level (–53.6 thousand people). In other words, the coming collapse of the USSR and arising national conflicts created a ‘domino effect’ in the republic. Thus, in 1991 the change in the political structure affected the economic and demographic situation. The closure of a number of enterprises that could provide employment for the population resulted in the emigration of both rural and urban population. Among the migrants, there were numerous representatives of ethnic minorities. The negative trend in the country’s migration balance lasted until 2007, when it was replaced by positive figures. However, the same cannot be said about the Shaki-Zagatala economic region.

According to the statistical materials, there was a mild fluctuation in the number of Avars, Tsakhurs, Inghilois across the Shaki-Zagalata region, whereas the number of Udi people showed a considerable decrease. From 1999 to 2009, the percentage of Azerbaijanis among the total population, including in both rural and urban areas of the region increased significantly (Fig. 1).

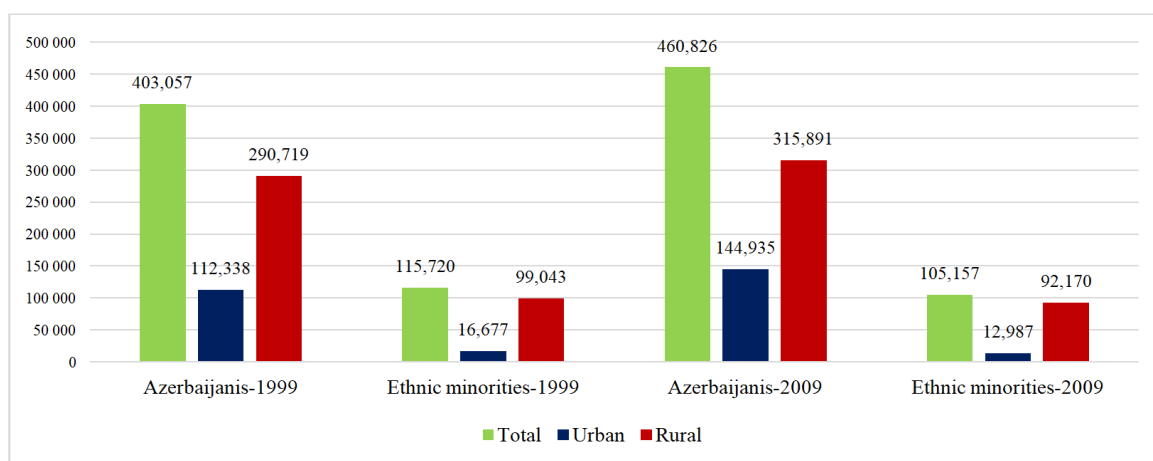


Fig. 1. Changes in the number of ethnic minority groups in urban and rural settlements in 1999–2009 (persons)
 Рис. 1. Изменение численности национальных меньшинств в городских и сельских поселениях в 1999–2009 гг.

This was related to the decrease in the number of ethnic minorities. The initial reasons for this decline were as follows: the fact that they registered themselves as Azerbaijani, speaking in the Azerbaijani language; migration processes; declining interest among the younger generation in

learning the language and acquiring other ethnic characteristics of minority ethnic groups; assimilation, and other processes. The national composition of the population in censuses conducted in Azerbaijan is generally determined by the mother tongue. The fact that minority ethnic groups do not prefer using their own language is one of the essential indicators of their decline. Thus, the language of minority ethnic groups is used only by representatives of the older generation, while the younger generation hardly uses this language. As our survey evidently showed, the reason why younger generation do not use any of these languages and identify themselves as Azerbaijani in the census materials is their desire to be representatives of a large community rather than a small one. The reduction in the share of minority ethnic groups in the region is likely to lead to the loss of ethnic diversity.

According to table 1, the number of ethnic minorities decreased in both rural and urban areas in the Balakan, Gakh, and Oghuz districts. Although there was a decrease in both general and urban population in the Shaki and Zagatala districts, rural areas demonstrated a marginal growth, which was due to natural increase. A slightly different situation was recorded in the Gabala district. This area, distinguished by the number of Lezgins and Udi people, saw a decrease in the number of ethnic groups in rural areas and an increase of up to 3 times in urban areas [22; 23].

Table 1

Changes in the number of ethnic minority groups by administrative districts of the region in 1999–2009, [22, 23], (persons)

Изменение численности национальных меньшинств по административным районам области в 1999–2009 гг., [22, 23]

Administrative districts	Total		Urban		Rural	
	1999	2009	1999	2009	1999	2009
Balakan	27058	24478	1840	1359	25218	23119
Gakh	11806	9313	1082	748	10724	8565
Gabala	18183	19985	2134	6294	16049	13691
Oghuz	6753	5988	1260	738	5493	5205
Shaki	8491	7641	2642	1776	5849	5865
Zagatala	43429	37752	7719	2027	35710	35725
Total	115720	105157	16677	12987	99043	92170

Although part of this growth was owing to natural increase, it was mainly caused by changes in the status of settlement. With the granting of the settlement status to the village of Nij in 2005, the Udis, ancient inhabitants of the village with a population of more than 3,000, were counted as urban population in 2009, which resulted in a significant increase in the number of ethnic minorities in urban areas as presented in the 2009 census. The number of ethnic minorities in the economic region, as well as in its districts (with the exception of the Gabala district) decreased during the decade 1999-2009. The assimilation of minority ethnic groups, problems with numerical errors during registration, and the migration processes resulted in a decline in the number of ethnic minorities. However, it can be concluded from the results of the questionnaire that, while the drop in the number of Udi people was directly connected to the migration processes, in the case of the Lezgins, Tsakhurs and Avars there were several factors: registration of ethnic minorities as Azerbaijani, registration of born children as Azerbaijani if one of the child's parents was Azerbaijani, and migration processes. As to the Inghilois, there was found an interesting difference between Christian and Muslim ones: reduction in the number of Christian Inghilois was directly connected to the emigration of the population, while in the case of Muslim Inghilois, the role of the assimilation process was as important as the role of migration. Due to the lack of official statistics on the migration of ethnic minorities, it is impossible to provide accurate data on the number of migrants. However, it is possible to trace how migration was changing based on the dynamics in the number of ethnic minorities, changes in sex-age composition, and survey materials.

Table 2

The natural increase and migration balance of the economic region in 1999–2009, (thousand people)
 Естественный прирост и миграционное сальдо экономического района в 1999–2009 гг., (тыс. чел.)

Administrative units	1999–2009		
	Natural increase	Total increase	Migration balance
Balakan	6,6	6,6	0,0
Gakh	4,1	2,1	–2,0
Gabala	12,3	12,4	0,1
Oghuz	4,4	4,1	–0,3
Shaki	16,6	14,7	–1,9
Zagatala	9,5	12,2	2,7
By region	53,5	52,1	–1,4

The Shaki-Zagatala economic region is characterized by intensive migration. According to table 2, there was an increase in emigration rates in all districts except for the Gabala and Zagatala. The Shaki and Gakh districts showed particularly high numbers of emigrants, those being even higher than the figures for the region as a whole. It is a fact that, along with the Azerbaijanis, the number of representatives of the ethnic minorities was rather high among the migrants. Living in relatively unfavorable conditions, including remoteness from the capital city, from major highways and railroads, the scarcity of arable lands for agricultural activities, and other challenges, have played a pivotal role in the intensification of the migration processes.

The direction of the contemporary migration. The lack of business opportunities in rural areas as opposed to urban ones made the former the starting point of migration processes [4]. In the Shaki-Zagatala economic region, agriculture cannot play the role of economic base of rural areas. Therefore, the rural population is growing at a slow pace, and, as a consequence, the emigration from this region rises gradually.

The area is one of the primary agricultural zones of the country, and the share of cereals, fruits, and berries in agriculture is comparatively large. However, in some villages, the main source of income for the population is nut and nut products, which causes the population to migrate in search of better-paid jobs. The reduction of rainfall in the hot season and drying of the rivers owing to the climate change in recent years has led to withering of chestnut and walnut trees in some of the villages, water shortage, and many more climate-related issues, which made rain-fed cultivation impossible. This situation also accelerates the migration of villagers earning their livelihood from agriculture (Gum, Chinarli, Uzumlu and other villages).

As to the ethnicity of the emigrants, while the Lezgins, Avars, and Tsakhurs opt for migrating to the Russian Federation and Baku city, the preferable destination for the Inghilois (especially Christian Inghilois) is Georgia. The fundamental reason is that the Lezgins and other ethnic groups know Russian, their relatives and friends live in Dagestan, while the Inghilois know Georgian. Many Christian Inghiloi women prefer migrating to Germany, where they are generally engaged in babysitting. The Udi people migrate to Russia for business and study-related purposes. Therefore, they use Russian as their second language. Knowledge of Russian allows them to find better-paid jobs in Russia, and for this reason, they prefer to learn Russian [6]. Overall, compared to neighbouring countries, the percentage of people migrating to Russia is higher, which is mainly due to the high level of language skills and employment opportunities (Fig. 3) [24].

Result of the migration. Intensification of migration processes, distortion of the age structure of the population, decrease in marriages as a result of the younger generation's migration, declining natural increase and consequent decrease in the share of the younger population, increase in the able-bodied population, accompanied by the rising unemployment, and increase in the share of the seniors – all these processes have led to demographic problems.

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Fig. 2. Modern settlement area of the ethnic minorities and the main directions of modern migration in the study area (based on survey materials)

Рис. 2. Современный ареал расселения этнических меньшинств и основные направления современной миграции на территории исследования (по материалам опроса)

Looking at the changes in the age structure of the minority ethnic groups in 1999–2009, we can see the following: the share of those in the 0–4 age group decreased by about 4% for the Avars and by about 3% for the Sakhurs and Udi people, while for the country's total population there was observed 1.2% decrease (Fig. 3). This tendency indicates that the natural increase rate of these ethnic groups has decreased compared to the national average. The diagrams show that the share of those aged 25–44 for the Avars, Tsakhurs, and Udi people was relatively lower compared to the previous census, which is explained by migration of this age group to Baku or other countries for business-related purposes. This is confirmed by the survey materials, according to which the vast majority of migrants belonged to this age group. The share of men among migrants was higher than that of women. However, some respondents state that migrants also take their family members with them when migrating, which seriously affects the natural increase of the population, the level of marriages, and other demographic indicators.

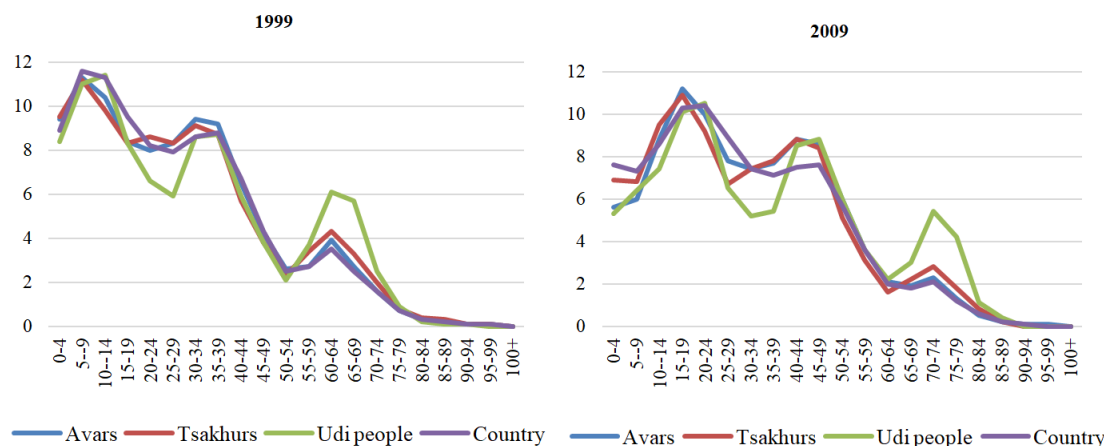


Fig. 3. Dynamics of age demographics for the Avar, Tsakhur and Udi people and across the country in 1999–2009, %
Рис. 3. Динамика возрастной демографии аварцев, цахуров и удинцев и страны в 1999–2009 гг., %

Table 3 clearly shows that migration processes and the natural population increase resulted in a decrease in the share of people under working age: it dropped by more than 10% for both the Avars and Udi people, and by less than 9% for the Tsakhurs. As a result, the share of the working-age population in both the total population of the country and in the minority ethnic groups has increased, which has led to employment problems. On the other hand, although the share of the older population of other minorities decreased, the number of Udis has increased by about 3%. This indicates that migration of the Udi people was more intensive and the natural increase rate was comparatively lower. A decrease in the share of the working-age population accelerates the aging of the population in total.

Table 3

Dynamics of the able-bodied population, young population, and seniors among the Avars, Tsakurs, Udi people, and across the country, 1999–2009, %
Динамика численности трудоспособного населения, населения младшего и старшего возраста по аварцам, цакурам, удидам и стране в 1999–2009 гг., %

Ethnic groups	Younger than able-bodied population		Able-bodied population		Older than able-bodied population	
	1999	2009	1999	2009	1999	2009
Avars	32,8	20,4	58,0	70,5	9,2	9,1
Tsakhurs	32,0	23,2	57,0	66,7	11,0	10,1
Udi people	32,6	19,0	53,0	63,7	14,4	17,3
By country	33,9	23,5	57,4	67,9	8,7	8,6

Table 4

Aging of the population by minority ethnic groups (65 years old and over) [22; 23], %
Старение населения по этническим меньшинствам (65 лет и старше) [22; 23], %

Population groups	Avars		Tsakhurs		Udi people		Country	
	1999	2009	1999	2009	1999	2009	1999	2009
Total	5,8	6,4	7,1	7,9	9,6	14,1	5,5	6,0
Male	2,3	2,7	3,1	3,5	4,2	6,1	2,2	2,5
Female	3,5	3,7	4,0	4,4	5,4	8,0	3,3	3,5

Table 4, representing aging of the population, shows that this indicator increased by 0.5% for the country as a whole, by 0.6% – for the Avars, by 0.8% – for the Tsakhurs, and by 4.5% – for the Udi people. This demonstrates that migration among the Udi population has been more intensive and the natural increase rate has declined significantly. Generally speaking, the primary cause of the increase in the proportion of the elderly was the decrease in the number of people aged 0–4, 20–24, and 30–39.

Conclusions

As our investigation shows, the Inghilois and Udi people are historical inhabitants of the the Shaki-Zagatala economic region, while the Avars, Tsakhurs, and Lezgians migrated to the study area in the 15th – 18th centuries.

Although the total population of the region increased in 1999–2009, the number of ethnic minorities in both urban and rural areas declined slightly. This decline can be seen in all administrative districts of the region, except for the Gabala region, where reside the Lezgians and Udi people. The increase in Gabala was due to the Lezgians, the main minority ethnic group in the area, whose natural increase rate was relatively higher. The primary reasons for the drop in the number of other minorities were as follows: the registration of some of them as Azerbaijanis in the census because they did not prefer using their native languages, migration, assimilation, and other processes.

The main migration destination for the minority ethnic groups within the country is Baku city. As to migration outside the country, there are noted the following preferences by different ethnic

groups: the Lezgins prefer to move to Russia; Christian Inghiloi opt for migrating to Georgia, while Christian Inghiloi women show a tendency to choose Germany; Muslim Inghiloi prefer Russia; the main destination country for the Avars and Udi people is also the Russian Federation.

Intensification of migration processes has led to the distortion of the age structure of the population, an increase in the share of the elderly, resulting in ethno-demographic problems such as reduction of the working-age population. Thus, the share of the working-age population among the Tsakhurs, Avars and Udi people showed a decline, as a result, the share of older population underwent an upward trend. This situation, in turn, caused difficulties in providing employment for the population. At the same time, the declining percentage of the working-age population accelerated the aging of the population.

In order to tackle the described negative situation in the territory under study and to prevent mass migration of the population, it is necessary to establish a network of industrial facilities engaged in processing and production of local agricultural products, to develop ethno-tourism as a special type of tourism, and to attract representatives of minority ethnic groups in these sectors.

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