

Mountain Jews are one of the many ethnic groups that inhabit Azerbaijan. Today, Mountain Jews in Azerbaijan are mainly gathered in three locations: in Baku, Oghuz and the village of Qirmizi Qasaba. Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, is a very ethnically diverse city. In addition to Azeris and other Muslim minorities such as Lezgins, Talysh and Orthodox minorities such as Russians, there are also representatives of other Jewish branches living there: Ashkenazi Jews and Georgian Jews, with whom Mountain Jews jointly celebrate Jewish holidays and organise Jewish community life. Oghuz formerly known as the Jewish-Armenian settlement of Vartashen is a town where, in turn, Mountain Jews live among the Christian Udis and, before that, Armenians. A unique site, on the other hand, is the village of Qirmizi Qasaba which is 99% inhabited by Mountain Jews. Called the Caucasian Jerusalem, the village is located next to the village of Quba, inhabited mostly by Azerbaijanis, and the village of Qusar that is dominated by Lezgins. There are also other places in Azerbaijan where Mountain Jews live, but very few of them live there (Ganja, İsmayilli District). In addition, there is a diaspora of Mountain Jews in such countries as Russia (Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria, Chechnya), the United States, Canada, Austria, Germany and Israel. The uniqueness of the Jewish community from the Caucasus lies primarily in the specificity of its culture, traditions and customs, which have been influenced over many years by close interactions with different ethnic groups. Discussions concerning the place of Mountain Jews in multi-ethnic Azerbaijan and the specificity of their culture touch upon many aspects of their contemporary situation, but also their past. Also of interest are the ties that the Jewish community in Azerbaijan maintains with Israel through the Azerbaijani migrants living in the country and the role they play in the special contacts between Azerbaijan and Israel. The relationship between the two countries is described as a strategic partnership. At the same time, Azerbaijan defines itself as a multicultural state, devoid of the phenomenon of anti-Semitism. Apart from Turkey, Israel has become the most important partner for Azerbaijan, resulting in Israeli flags increasingly appearing in the streets alongside Turkish flags. The research purpose of the project is to analyse the contemporary cultural transformations of Azerbaijani Mountain Jews taking place through their social interactions with other ethnic groups in the multi-ethnic social system in Azerbaijan and with Mountain Jews living in Israel. The issue of Mountain Jews has already been the subject of research for historians, linguists, political scientists and cultural scientists, ethnographers. Despite the fact that there are few scientific publications on Mountain Jews from Azerbaijan, there are still many issues that have not been sufficiently clarified to the study of this ethnic group. There is a lack of detailed analysis of the social interaction between Mountain Jews and particular ethnic groups in Azerbaijan. Until then, the issue of the complex identity of the Jewish community, referred to the relationship with Muslim ethnic groups mainly the Tats. In my project, I consider regions inhabited not only by Muslim, but also Christian and other Jewish branches in Azerbaijan. In addition, it is important to look at new contemporary phenomena such as globalization, which facilitates contact with the Israeli community through the virtual world. It is also important here to draw attention to the case of the village of Qirmizi Qasaba, where most of the empty properties belong to migrants in Russia and Israel, who, despite living abroad for many years, return to the Jewish village every year for the holiday season and selected Jewish holidays, often financially supporting their relatives. The primary research material will consist of a) interviews with members of the community of Mountain Jews living in Azerbaijan in places such as Qirmizi Qasaba, Oghuz, Baku. Also included will be the community outside of Azerbaijan in Israel with representatives of local authorities, members of organisations working on behalf of Mountain Jews, clerics (rabbis), and researchers on this issue from Azerbaijan; b) existing data: documents, scientific and journalistic articles and selected monographs; visual materials: photographs, films and music; c) field notes on observations of daily life, celebrations and festivities, social relationships, formal/informal ties, networks created, social memoryscape; d) virtual communities (social networks, platforms, forums). The research results will be published in 2 scientific texts in high-scoring foreign journals and in the form of papers at 3 scientific conferences, one at home and two abroad. In addition, a podcast will be produced on the research conducted and the characteristics of the ethnic group.