

Review of: "The Evolution of Talysh Ethnic Identity: From Soviet Manipulation to Contemporary Reality"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

The article deals with a very topical issue: the Talysh question has been among the most vibrant problems of the Azerbaijan Republic. Besides, the Talyshis, living on both sides of the Aras River, represent a classic example of a divided people whose identity, during the last two centuries, has been influenced by different civilizational vectors – those of Iran and Russia (and currently, the Azerbaijan Republic).

From this point of view, the dynamics of development of different aspects of Talysh identity, presented in the article, seems to be of utmost importance.

Main trends are reflected correctly, with the right accents emphasized, and give a general idea of the identity development process.

Yet, some generalizations made by the author require more scrutiny and deeper understanding of the region and its peculiarities. For example, both the ethnic and religious identity issues have acquired new dimensions in recent years, connected with the active work of Turkish “emissaries” in Azerbaijan. The penetration and strengthening of Turkish business and capital in the Talysh-populated areas of the Azerbaijan Republic, popularization and sometimes harsh propaganda of Sunnism among the Shi’a Talyshis, sometimes resulting in conversion, etc. - all these reflect Baku’s purposeful state policy aimed at “neutralization of the Talysh factor”, and, in fact, at transformation of the Talysh identity.

One more remark: since the author, while bringing numerous parallels and discussing the relations of the Talyshis with other ethnic groups, touches upon quite specific fields and introduces special information (e.g., about “the Zaza people, sometimes identified with the Kurds,” etc.), he should give relevant academic references for further reading for each particular case, thus drastically enlarging the Bibliography.