



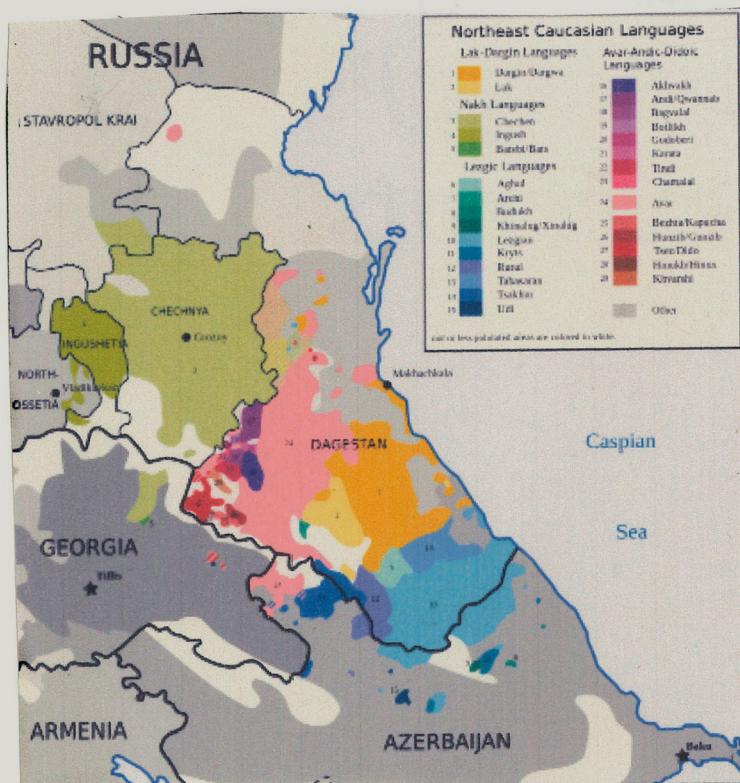






*Ketsh  
(Khinalig  
language)  
in excerpts*

Map of Northeast Caucasian languages including Khinalig (Ketsh) language



## Preface

This quotation book is made to introduce you to the Khinalig language, its origins, relations, transformations of its written form, digitalisation, and design. The language is old and is used mostly orally.

Being a subject of interest to linguists, the language gained its (as far as we know) first script in the 1950s. After that, with several transformations language got adapted to, first, written form and then made its way to the digital world.

This quick development is still not fully finished. The newest alphabet of the Khinalig language is based on Latin. Although the language exists now in UNICODE, few operating systems, fonts, and online tools support it.

Khinalig language has been researched from a linguistic aspect, in this booklet I want to bring attention to design challenges brought by digitalisation of a new script. Even though the Khinalig script is based on Latin, even a few different glyphs can create many accessibility issues.

# Chapter I

# Context

## Azerbaijani alphabets

In 1993 Abulfazl Bahadori published an article for Azerbaijan International magazine, telling the history of written Azerbaijani. The modern time Khinalig script development started in 20th century in Azerbaijan, which was a part of Soviet Union. Unlike neighboring Georgia and Armenia, Azerbaijani language historically did not have a script adapted for the specifics of the language.

FOOL ME ONCE,

SHAME ON ARABIC.

FOOL ME TWICE,

SHAME ON CYRILLIC.

FOOL ME THRICE,

SHAME ON LATIN:

AaaaaaaahhhhZERI!!!

THE STORY OF THE ALPHABET THAT COULD NOT DECIDE

AaaaaaaahhhhZERI!!!  
2009, screenprint,  
70 x 100 cm

## Alphabet in the Boiling Pot of Politics

Conservatively speaking, the Azerbaijani or Azeri alphabet to date has been altered four times—to Arabic after the Islamic conquest; to Latin (1928–1938); to Cyrillic (1939–1991) and to Latin again (1991 to present). On each occasion, the motivation for change was political. However, if we consider the replacement of a single letter in any of the phonetic alphabets (Cyrillic or Latin), then the Azeri alphabet has been changed at least ten times (Tables 2,3,4). Nor does this take into account the pre-Islamic scripts used by the Turkic nations and other ancestors of modern Azerbaijanis such as Caucasian Albanians. If those are added, then the historical figure would be raised to twelve or more, depending on how far back one digs in search of ancient scripts. (See next page bottom Table).

### ISLAM—the First Political Reason for Changing the Alphabet

For many centuries after the conquest of Islam, the only official written language in the conquered lands, including Azerbaijan, was Arabic as the Islamic caliphate had to create a lingua franca to unify their territory. When these nations began using their own languages for reading and writing, the Arabic alphabet was retained. The most valuable contribution that the Arabic alphabet made for the Turkic tribes and nations was to provide them with a more-or-less universal script (the Arabic letters generally do not express all the vowel sounds which is one of the most obvious differences between various dialects and closely-related Turkic languages). Hence, this common means of communication made the great poet and philosopher Fizuli as much Turkish (Ottoman) as he was Azerbaijani or the great thinker of Turkistan, Ali-Shir Navayi, as much understood in Tabriz as in Bukhara.

On the other hand, since the Middle Ages, it is precisely because the Arabic script does not express the vowels that it was so strongly criticized.<sup>1</sup> However, it wasn't until the 20th century that the Arabic alphabet was totally replaced by another script.

The first attempts to alter the Arabic script (1860–1870) were made by three individuals: Manif Pasha, a scholar in the Turkish court; Malkom Khan, an Iranian Armenian intellectual in the Russian Embassy in Tehran; and Akhundzadeh, the great Azerbaijani thinker, writer, and dramatist, who was the most active of all. All three were friends who wanted to westernize Muslim society. Akhundzadeh, an atheist, pushed for the reform to counter Islamic culture though none could ever have dared to suggest adoption of the Latin alphabet as it would have been blasphemous.<sup>2</sup> Instead, they pushed to eliminate the dots, express each vowel and make the writing smoother and more continuous. Akhundzadeh believed that one of the main reasons for “backwardness” among the Muslim world laid in their style of education which was based on the Arabic alphabet. As their reformist proposals were considered political and anti-Islamic both by Istanbul and Tehran, they were rejected.<sup>3</sup>

### Soviet Rule Bans the Arabic Alphabet

After the death of Akhundzadeh in 1878, the issue of “modernizing the alphabet” was forgotten for a while, at least in official circles. After the Revolution of 1917 and the fall of the Tsarist Empire, Azerbaijanis established their own independent Republic which survived from 1918 until 1920 during which time the

<sup>1</sup> Abu Reyan Biruni has emphasized the necessity of using “E’rab” signs for vowels in his Arabic script in his book, Al siqil—on Seeds and Praise—in Arabic.

<sup>2</sup> Algar Hamid, Malikum Khan, Akhundzadeh and the Proposed Reform of the Arabic Alphabet, Middle Eastern Studies, 5, 1969.

<sup>3</sup> Algar Hamid, 1969, Religions and State in Iran, 1785–1906: The Qajar Period, Berkeley and Los Angeles.

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<sup>4</sup> Modified Arabic script is still in regular use in Southern (Yemeni) Arabiabia.  
<sup>5</sup> Comparison to Latin was proposed in 1922, but it was not officially established till 1932.  
<sup>6</sup> Arab Standardization and its Bureau were established after the foundation of the League.

### **Sample 1: AN ANCIENT TURBIDIC LITHOGRAPH**

<sup>10</sup> Monument of "X. Orjans"; in Arshak-Yanikay series; 7-11th century AD.

внѣхъ земельъ и народъ вънутриъ земельъ.

Source: "YANALOG" No. 83-04/1992: Tchern. n. 2

\*The monument of "Kiltigin" devoted to the famous Turkic ruler, Prince Kiltigin (685-731 AD), is one of the Orkhon-Yenisey scripts which were found near the Orkhon river in Mongolia. Orkhon-Yenisey alphabet were used by the Turkic nations before they accepted Islam.

government continued publishing all its official correspondence in the Arabic alphabet and the issue of Latinization was officially never raised.

In 1920, the Bolsheviks toppled the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan. It was the "Soviet of Azerbaijan People's Commissars," set up by the Communists which in late 1921 organized the "New Alphabet Committee." This was before any change had taken place in Turkey regarding alphabet reform.

In 1926 the first Turkology Conference was held in Baku which provided the linguistic and scientific justification for the Latin script which was adopted finally in 1929 ("Old Latin" Table 2). For the Soviets, Latinizing the alphabet was a means of severing the Muslim population from their past and of preventing outside influence. This process was not confined to Azerbaijan but was carried out throughout the entire Turkic Muslim population of the Soviet Union. In 1928, the Republic of Turkey replaced the traditional Arabic alphabet with Latin. Although their motivations were similar to the Soviets—centralization, westernization and disassociation with the Islamic past—the modifications to the script were significant enough to make reading between the Latin scripts of the Soviet Republics and Turkey difficult. Whether this was intentional is not clear.

### **Stalin Rules Out Latin**

Although Lenin had called Latinization "the great revolution of the east," in 1939 the official *Literaturnaya Gazetta* disagreed and wrote "The Latin script does not provide all the necessary conditions for bringing the other people (nationalities) closer to the great Russian people's culture." Overnight, the Turkic populations of Soviet Union were forced to convert to a new alphabet--Cyrillic. This decision was so sudden that in Azerbaijan alone, certain characters were changed several times (Table 4).

Conversion to Cyrillic was carried out with two main goals: Russification and isolation between Turkic nations. The second goal was achieved by using different Cyrillic

**characters for the same sounds in various Turkic languages;** for example, the symbol “o” was used in Uzbek for the same sound that appeared as an “a” in Azeri, etc. The variety was sufficiently complex so that ordinary people of each nationality were not able to communicate in writing with each other.

An illustration of the evidence of alphabet changes in Azerbaijan even on grave markers – here in Arabic and Cyrillic. (Sufi Hamid Cemetery, one hour south of Baku). Photo: Farid Mamedov

#### With Glasnost came Alphabetical Perestroika<sup>4</sup>

In 1985 with Gorbachev's nomination as the new leader of the Soviet Union, the new policy of Glasnost was announced. The first signs of this new political openness in Azerbaijan became evident by the enormous number of articles in Azeri newspapers criticizing the colonialist nature of the Cyrillic alphabet and the need to revive the old alphabet (Arabic). This movement was led by the famous poet and writer, Bakhtiyar Vahabzade, who in his long dramatic poem, “Iki Qorkhu” (Two Fears) describes how Stalin first used the Latin and then the Cyrillic alphabet to separate Azerbaijan from its thousand year old literature and southern brothers and sisters. Other pro-traditional alphabet articles followed.<sup>5</sup> Ziya Bunyadov, a famous Azerbaijani scholar, was the first to call for a return to the Latin alphabet in July 1989.<sup>6</sup> The issue soon divided Azerbaijani intellectuals into pro-Latinists and pro-Arabists. Heated discussions extended beyond geographical boundaries into Iran and Turkey and took on a political entity of their own. The days of Glasnost were over and the days of the “Great Game”<sup>7</sup> made the alphabet yet again a victim of political competition and purges.

#### The “Great Game” and the Azeri Alphabet

The alphabet was the main ingredient in the boiling pot of Turkish-Iranian politics. While the Latin alphabet came to symbolize a propensity for the West, secularism, and pro-

Turkism; the Arabic (Koranic) alphabet was clearly associated with the Islamic Republic of Iran and all its religious ramifications. Each competitor used different tactics to promote their own script. Iran began increasing the number of publications available to their own Azerbaijani populations. (Publication in Azeri had been forbidden in Iran during the Pahlavi era from 1925-79) except during the brief period from 1941 to 1946 when the country was occupied by Allied forces.<sup>8</sup>

Many Azeri publications of the Revolution (1979-81) did not survive under Islamic rule. In 1989, there was only one single Azeri publication, Varliq, produced quarterly, half in Persian, half in Azeri from the private resources of Dr. Javad Heyat. Varliq only had a circulation of 2,000 despite the fact that more than 20 million Azerbaijanis lived in Iran. However the Iranian government suddenly started devoting pages for Azeri in its official papers; even the publication of Azeri books was somehow encouraged.<sup>9</sup> Often these papers concerned Northern Azerbaijanis more than Iranian Azerbaijanis. A typical article would promote the Arabic alphabet reminding the reader that the revival of Islam in Azerbaijan demanded the revival of the Arabic alphabet.<sup>10</sup> The most convincing and scientific of these articles, however, was published in Varliq by Dr. Abbas-Ali Javadi in 1369-1370 (1992).

In any case, northern Azerbaijani intellectuals argued that they did not have a

<sup>4</sup> Glasnost—“political openness” and Perestroika—“restructuring” were two terms introduced by Gorbachev and which soon became part of the international vocabulary. In Azeri, they were called ashabkarlıq and yeniden qurma.

<sup>5</sup> Abbas-Ali Javadi, 1990. Alphabet Changes. Varliq. Winter (1369), pp. 24-29; Summer (1370) pp. 88-96; Autumn (1370) pp. 91-102.

<sup>6</sup> Audrey L. Alstadt. 1992. The Azerbaijani Turks: Power and

Identity under the Russian Rule. Hoover Institution Press. Stanford University, Stanford, CA, p. 209.

<sup>7</sup> The “Great Game” was a term used to refer to the political competition in the Middle East between Russia and Britain during the 19th century. Recently many journalists have used it to refer to the competition between Iran and Turkey over the former Soviet republics.

<sup>8</sup> Yarshater, Ehsan, Ed., 1992. Encyclopedia Iranica. Javadi, H. and

K. Burrill in “Azeri Literature in Iran.” Routledge & Kegan Paul London, p. 251.

<sup>9</sup> Official papers like Kayhane Hayati and Eto'la'at printed a few pages of Azeri in the Arabic alphabet. In Tabriz the new Azeri papers like Sahand and Ark have been published and İslami Birlik even includes a few pages in the Cyrillic alphabet.

<sup>10</sup> There are more or less similar articles on this topic in almost every issue of the journal, Vol. between 1990-1992.

role model for the Arabic alphabet as Iranian Azerbaijan did not provide them with a strong literary basis for revival of the Arabic alphabet. The monthly *Odlar Yurdu* published in Baku went so far as to argue that if the Iranian government established Azerbaijani schools where Azeri would be taught in Arabic alphabet, then the North would welcome this by adopting the Arabic alphabet instead of Latin. In itself, this was a very political argument. It was like saying, "You have no right to tell us what to do when your own Azeris don't even have a single school in their own mother tongue."

This, along with various other reasons, including the lack of expertise with the Arabic alphabet and its more tedious spelling and writing techniques made the Turkish position for the Latin script stronger. Turkey busily organized many linguistic seminars and conferences on the Turkic alphabet. The most well known conference, "The Common Alphabet of the Turkic Nations," was held in Ankara in October of 1990 and organized by the Turkish Language History Organization (Türkiye Dil Tarik Kurumu). In many of these seminars and conferences, the arguments set forth were extremely political: "A common alphabet is essential for bringing together all the Turks of the world." In other words, that which the Arabic alphabet had already done for many centuries was now expected from Latin. The phonetic nature of Latin made it too difficult to hide the differences between them as had been done with Arabic. This created another question of what would happen to all the sounds which existed in the Turkic languages other than those that existed in the Turkish language? The radical answer was "get rid of them, make them sound just like Turkish."

As one of the participants of the First International Congress of Azerbaijan Turkish Associations (Istanbul, November 1990), I was surprised that one of the leaders of the Motherland (Anaveten) party gave a "speech" basically declaring, "Your alphabet must be exactly the same as ours." That a major Turkish party leader was asking Azerbaijanis to copy

the Turkish Latin made the issue of alphabet so political it was hard to believe that there was any other motivation behind it.

It could be argued that Turkey won the "Great Game" of the alphabet. In May of 1990, the Republic Supreme Soviet of Azerbaijan established a commission to work on the Latinization 20 and on December 25, 1991, the National Council of the Republic of Azerbaijan officially replaced the Cyrillic script with a modified Latin alphabet (See table 2)

But the Latin alphabet which the Azerbaijanis adopted was not identical to the Turkish script. The new Azeri Latin now has three letters which do not exist in Turkish Latin - x (kh sound), upside down "e" (ae sound in "fat cat") and q, which express sounds particular to the Azeri language which do not exist in Turkish. Initially, a two-dotted (ä) was designed for expressing the vowel sound in the English word, "and". The idea was to make it look as similar to Turkish and European alphabet as possible as well as to be able to use foreign typewriters and ready-made software. It must also be mentioned that one of the criticisms against using the Arabic script was its cumbersome use of dots which made writing so tedious. But, because this sound is so frequent in Azeri, and the dots so cumbersome, six months later, they reverted to the up-side down "e" - a symbol that had become very familiar to their eye as it had been used both in the early Latin alphabet in 1928 and had even survived Cyrillication.

### Conclusion

Changing the alphabet so many times in Azerbaijan has had severe consequences on the accumulative wealth of knowledge and culture of the nation. It has hindered continuity of the literary development, isolating the people from centuries of knowledge, cultural insight and human wisdom. It has erected intellectual barriers between generations. Children often can't read their parents' writing much less that of their grandparents. And in some cases, brothers and sisters have even experienced this separation and isolation from one another.

XI  
**Alphabet change has created an incredible financial strain on the society. Who pays for all the street signs and government documents that must be transliterated much less the thousands of books which should be re-published?**

At different times in its history, alphabet changes have served to isolate Northern Azerbaijan from Southern Azerbaijan. If the Araz river was the "natural" border between the two Azerbaijani and if the barbed wires emphasized physical separation; then alphabet differences created a third boundary -- an invisible cultural one.

It has served to isolate Azerbaijan from related Turkic-speaking peoples and from the West. But perhaps, the greatest tragedy to what is nearly a century old process is that if alphabet change is carried out solely, or even, partially, for political purposes, the damage can be catastrophic, as future purges by the ruling politics will again and again make the "defenseless" alphabet--its victim.

by Abulfazl Bahadori

# Script iterations

Azerbaijani artist Farhad Farzali have depicted seven stages of Azerbaijani script during the 20th century.

1992-present	1991-1992	1958-1991 (still used in Dagestan)	1939-1958
Dərse gedən bir uşaq Çıxdı buz üzətə qoçaq;	Därsä gedän bir uşaq Çıxdı buz üstä qoçaq;	Дерсә кедән бир ушаг Чылды буз үстө гочаг;	Дерсә кедән бир ушаг Чылды буз үстө гочаг;
Sürüldü birdən-birə, Düşdü üz üstə yera.	Sürüdü birdän-birä, Düşdü üz üstää yerä.	Сурушду бирдән-бира, Дүшдү үз үстө јера.	Сурушду бирдән-бира, Дүшдү үз үстө ёра.
Durdur uşaq neylədi? Buza belə söylədi:	Durdur uşaq neylädi? Buza belä söylädi:	Дурду ушаг нейлади? Буза беле сейлади:	Дурду ушаг нейлади? Буза беле сейлади:
"Sən ne yamansan, a buz! Adam uxansan, a buz!	"Sən nä yamansan, a buz! Adam ýyxansan, a buz!	"Сен не ямансан, а буз! Адам йыхансан, а буз!	"Сен не ямансан, а буз! Адам йыхансан, а буз!
Az qalib ömrün senin, Yaz gälär, artar qämri:	Az qalib ömrün sänin, Yaz gälär, artar qämín:	Аз галыб өмрүн сенин, Яз көлөр, артар ғемин:	Аз галыб өмрүн сенин, Яз көлөр, артар ғемин:
Əriyib suya döñərsən, Axib çaya gedərsən!"	Əriyib suya döñärsän, Axib çaya gedärsän!"	Әрийб сүя дөңөрсөн, Ахыб чая кедәрсөн!"	Әрийб сүя дөңөрсөн, Ахыб чая кедәрсөн!"
Dərse gedən bir uşaq Därsä gedän bir uşaq Dərse kədən bir uşag Dərse gedən sir uşaq Dərse qedən bir uşak Qاشوا زیب نندیگ مسیرد	Sürüldü birdən-birə, Sürüdü birdän-birä, Сурушду бирдән-бира, Süryüdü birden-bire, Suruşdu birden-bire, گۈرپىن-ئەرىپ سەپىرەن	Durdur uşaq neylədi? Durdur uşaq neylädi? Дурду ушаг нейлади? Дурду ушаг нейлади? Дурду uşaq nejlədi? گۈرپىن-ئەرىپ دەرەن	"Sən ne yamansan, a buz! "Sən nä yamansan, a buz! "Сен не ямансан, а буз! "Сен не ямансан, а буз! "Sen ne jamansan, a byz! "Sen ne jamansan, a byz!
Çıxdı buz üzətə qoçaq; Çıxdı buz üstə qoçaq; Чылды буз үстө гочаг; Чылды буз үстө гочаг; Çıxdı buz üzətə koçak; چىچۇق مەسىرو زۇپىلىخىد	Düşdü üz üstə yera. Düşdü üz üstä yerä. Дүшдү үз үстө ёра. Дүшдү үз үстө ёра. Düşdö üz üzətə jera. جىچۇق مەسىرو زۇپىلىخىد	Buza belə söylədi: Buza belä söylädi: Буза беле сейлади: Буза бела сейлади: Buza belə sejledi: بۇزا بېلە سەپىلەن	Adam uxansan, a buz! Adam uxansan, a buz! Адам йыхансан, а буз! Адам йыхансан, а буз! Adam jxansan, a byz! آزوب این اسنانماڭ من تىس

1933-1939

Dərse geden air uşaq  
Çəxdiş suz ystə qoçاق;

Syrysgdy airdan-aira,  
Dyşdy yz ystə jere.

Durdı uşaq nejledi?  
Buza bəla sejledi:

"Sen ne jamansan, a suz!  
Adam jıxanısan, a suz!

Az qalıb emryñ senin,  
Jaz geler, artar qemini:

Ərija suja denərsən,  
Axħxa caja gedərsən!"

1929-1933

Dərse qəden bir üzak  
Çıxdı byz usta koçak;

Surusdu birden-bira,  
Dusdu uz usta jera.

Dyrdy ysak nejledi?  
Byza bəla sejledi:

"Şen ne jamansan, a byz!  
Adam jıxanısan, a byz!

Az kələb emrən senin,  
Jaz qeler, artar kəmin:

Ərijb syja dənərsən,  
Axħb çaja qedərsən!"

until 1929 (still used in Iranian Azerbaijan)

قاشوا زىپ بندىگ مىزىد  
آغاچىق مەتسوا لوب ىيىچىچ

«ازىپ-ئەندرىپ و نىشۇرۇس  
لەرىپەتەتلىرىنى آزوا و دەشكەن

اىدىدىلىقنى قاتشاوا و درود  
بىندىلەخۇس مەلىپ ازوب

إِزُوبْ أَوْنَاسْنَا مَاهِيْ مَنْ نَسْ  
أَزُوبْ أَوْنَاسْنَا مَاهِيْ مَانَا

مەنەنەن نورمۇا بىشىلىق زا  
كىنچىق راتشا بىلگى زاي

مەنەنەن زۇرۇن دىرسەن سەتكەن را  
وَانْ مِزْدِيْگِ ایَّاج بېشىخا

Az qalib ömrün senin,  
Az qalib ömrün sənin,  
Az ramib emryñ senin,  
Az ramib emryñ sənin,  
Az qalib emryñ senin,  
Az kələb omrən senin,  
Az qalib omrən senin,  
Az qalib omrən senin,

Yaz geler, artar qemini:  
Yaz gölär, artar qämimin:  
Jaz keler, artar qemini:  
Jaz keler, artar qemini:  
Jaz qeler, artar qemini:  
Jaz qeler, artar qemini:  
لىچىق راتشا بىلگى زاي

Əriyb suya döñərsən,  
Əriyb suya döñərsən,  
Ərijb süja dənərsən,  
Ərijb süja dənərsən,  
Ərijb suja dənərsən,  
Ərijb suja dənərsən,  
Axħb çaya gedərsən!

Axħb çaya gedərsən!  
Axħb çaya gedərsən!  
Axħb çaja kedərsən!  
Axħb çaja kedərsən!  
Axħb çaja gedərsən!  
Axħb çaja gedərsən!  
اىچ بېشىخا

# Glyphs for the new alphabet

When we first started publishing Azerbaijan International in January 1993, we soon ran into problems printing the new Azeri Latin alphabet that had just been adopted in December 1991. The major culprit was that peculiar character that we dubbed "the upside-down 'e'" (the schwa) which does not exist on standard Latin-based computer keyboards. In fact, no language uses such a letter. Consequently, back in those early days, we soon discovered that if we wanted to publish anything in Azeri, we had to design our own fonts.

That troublesome upside-down "e" represents the /æ/ sound in the Azeri language. (In English, it's like the vowel sound in the words "fat cat.") The difficulty is that Azeri is the only language in the world that uses this letter. Curiously enough, this symbol was not included in the original alphabet that was adopted on December 25, 1991. At that time, the schwa sound was represented by an "a" with two dots (umlaut-ä). But since this sound is the most frequent in the entire language, the dotted "a" became very cumbersome. Not only was it awkward to write all those dots; it was slow and tedious and didn't appeal aesthetically, no matter whether the letter was written by hand or typed.

"What are you doing about the upside-down 'e' in the new script?" I asked.  
One paused, "Well, I don't have it on my computer yet, so I'm writing out all the instructional material by hand."

Another was managing quite fine, except for "the e" (as we soon came to call it). "I could work ten times faster if I could find a typeface with 'the e,'" he told me. At first he had tried using the symbol known as "partial differential" () on the standard keyboard. But it really didn't align well.

"It's obvious that the Azeri alphabet designers were really thinking with pen and pencil when they added these new characters. There's no problem to add a little tail or slash to an 's' or a 'c', or to omit a dot from an 'i' when it's done by hand - it's only a slight variation. But when it comes to computers, either the letter exists or it doesn't."

Technology always has its own limitations and parameters. It's not the first time technology has shaped the alphabet. The same story has been repeating itself since the origin of the alphabet. Greek and Latin were clearly determined by the hammer and chisel against marble - it's easier to carve straight lines in stone than rounded ones. That's why so many of our capitals are based on straight lines. The cursive Arabic was influenced by pen; cuneiform, by clay and sharp stick. Other alphabets were created by carving on bamboo. Simply today, the determining tools are fonts, computer keyboards, and satellite transmissions - the only difference being that they're a bit new and unfamiliar in the alphabet designers' hands."

In the end, alphabets are really all about communication, not isolation. They're simply codes to represent speech and provide a means to express ideas beyond time and space. Azerbaijanis don't need to 're-invent the wheel'. A whole vast world is out there ready to propel them into the 21st century if they can only find creative ways to fit their own unique language and circumstances into it.

## Azerbaijani's extended Latin

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# Chapter II

# Khinallig language

## About Khinalig

Who are Khinalig people? What is this language? Is there a language like it?

Khinalig or Ketsh is spoken only in the village of Khinalig, located on a mountain 2300 meters high above sea level. The neighboring villages also speak their own language, but it is unrelated to Khinalig.

Only around 2000 people live in the village and actively use the language.

There are no close relatives to this language, it forms a separate branch in the Northeast Caucasian language family tree.

The name of the village, just like most of the Azerbaijani toponyms does not have a universal transliteration to English.

Khinalig is an exonym, villagers call the village Ket, and themselves Ketsh. To avoid confusion, I will further use the name Khinalig.

## The name

*The turkic name Khinalig was given to the village in accordance with the color of the mountain in front of it at sunrise. It began to be used approximately after the 50-60s of the 19th century. According to the researchers, oikonym is derived from the word "xeni" and the suffix "-lik" which means the concept of belonging in the Azerbaijani language, and means "those from Xeni, people from Xeni".*

*From ancient times until now, Khinalig village and its people call themselves Ketsh people (Kadid or kettid), and their village Ketsh or Ketish. Ketsh can be translated as a place where many kettids live. The meaning of these words is "holy".*

*They say that immediately that village of Ketsh was located on the shoulder of Ketsh Mountain. By the will of Allah there was an earthquake. Not a single Ketsh house stood on its feet; they all fell. People's roofs were crushed. The dying man died, the living one screamed. Ketch-mountain was shaking like a wet dog. He threw stones like rain at people. There was no place for man anywhere. The one who stayed crossed the river and climbed up a small hill. The people, like a herd, stood on the top all night. This is how Khinalig arose.*

Traditionally, the name 'Khinalug' is related to the Arabic > Azeri word for henna (*hinnā'* > *xena*). Under this name, the village has first been mentioned by Yakūt al-Ḥamāwī, a 13th century Turkish-Arabic geographer. The term also appears in the name of Muhammad Ḥinalugī (1456) who prepared a 'family tree' of local rulers. The name is later documented as *Chanaluk* by Johan(n) Gustav Gerber 1728 (*Beschreibung Derer auf der West Seiten der Kaspischen Seen zwischen Astrachan und dem Flusse Kura befindlichen Provincen* . . ., p. 31). All this gives us roughly 1100 AD as the *ante quem* for the foundation of Khinalug.

# Khinalig, Azerbaijani, Russian?

Table 2: Physical and Functional Domains of Language Use

	Physical Domains	Functional Domains
Khinalug only	home village streets village teahouse village store village mill village mosque village weddings & funerals	work in village unofficial occasions (outside home & work) arguing cursing
Khinalug / Azerbaijani	village clinic (with local doctor) village post office village house of culture <sup>†</sup> village school (outside of class)	counting things
Azerbaijani only	village school (in class) weddings & funerals outside village	work outside village official occasions (outside home & work) speaking to non-Khinalug guests in the village reading writing letters writing official papers singing telling stories to children
Russian / Azerbaijani	none	listening to radio watching television <sup>‡</sup>

<sup>†</sup> Young people speak Azerbaijani in the house of culture; older people speak Khinalug.

<sup>‡</sup> None of the women claimed to know Russian well enough to fully understand news broadcasts in Russian. Instead, they said that when they listen to Russian-language programming, someone who understands Russian explains to them what is said.

# Language specifics

The phonetic system of the Khinalig language consists of 59 consonants and 18 vowels. The language has a complex morphological structure, featuring 14 cases typical for Nakh-Dagestanian languages.

Singular nouns have four agreement classes, while plural nouns have personal and impersonal classes. Khinalig verbs exhibit a developed conjugation system with morphological tense marking and agreement with nouns in class and number, and there are several imperative moods.

The language has four genders: masculine, feminine, animate, and inanimate. Khinalig also has endings that indicate case, number, possession, tense, possessiveness, and quantity.

## Class MASC – human males:

- 4.1 aba ‘grandfather’
- 4.2 bāg ‘bridegroom’
- 4.3 ši ‘son’

## Class FEM - human females:

- 4.4 äjä ‘grandmother’
- 4.5 dädä ‘mother’
- 4.6 riši ‘daughter’

## Class AN – animate nonhumans:

- 4.10 gra ‘wolf’
- 4.11 hilam ‘donkey’
- 4.12 ķakid ‘partridge’
- 4.13 mokx ‘worm’

## Class INAN - other nouns (inanimate, nonhuman):

- 4.14 çiza ‘fear’
- 4.15 ula ‘smell’
- 4.16 fikir ‘thought’
- 4.17 ķaka ‘bite’ (noun)

Table 4.5 Noun Conjugations

Case	Nouns ending with a low vowel	Nouns ending with a high vowel	Nouns ending with a consonant
	'mother'	'neighbor'	'rock'
Nominative	Dada	qonşu	kaçün
Ergative	Dädi	qonşuyi	kaçüni
Genitive 1	Dädi	qonşuyi	kaçüni
Genitive 2	Däde	qonşuyi	kaçüni
Dative	Dädu	qonşu	kaçunu
Comitative	Dädäşkili	qonşuškili	kaçunuşkili
General Locative			kaçunür
General Ablative			kaçunülli
Orientalic locative	Dädäx	qonşux	kaçunüx
Possessive Locative	Dädäş	qonşuš	kaçunüš
Orientalic Ablative	Dädäxilli	qonşušxilli	kaçunüxilli
Possessive Ablative	Dädäşilli	qonşušilli	kaçunüšilli
Comparative 1	dädäq	qonşuq	kaçunuq
Comparative 2	dädäqilli	qonşuqilli	kaçunuqilli

Table 4.7 Class M and Class F Plural Declension

Class M and F	Mothers	Grandfathers
Nominative	Dädäd	abad
Ergative	Dädädi	abadi
Genitive 1	Dädädi	abadi
Genitive 2	Dädädi	abadi
Dative	Dädädu	abadu
Comitative	Dädädişkilli	abadişkilli
Ablative	Dädädilli	abadilli
Orientalic Locative	Dädädix	abadix
Orientalic Ablative	Dädädixilli	abadixilli
Possessive	Dädädiş	abadiş
Locative	Dädädişilli	abadişilli
Possessive	Dädädişilli	abadişilli
Ablative		
Comparative 2	dädädiqilli	Abadilli

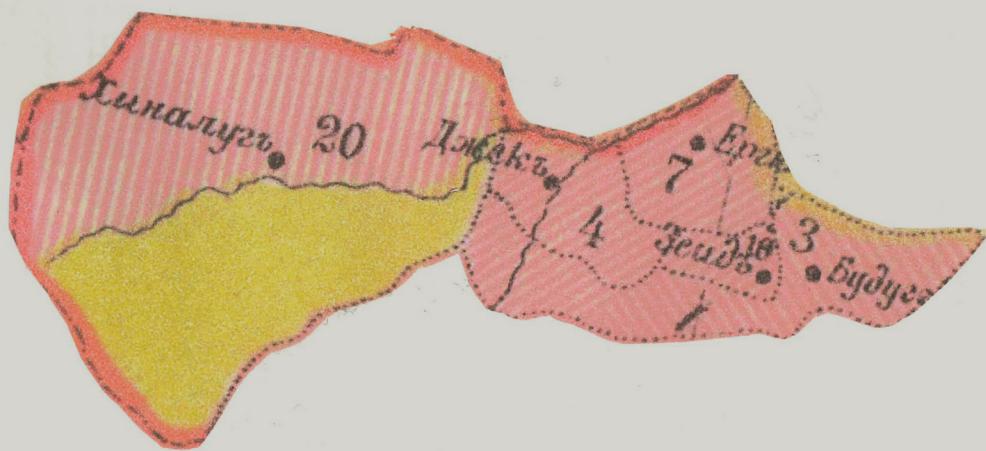
# Education

Nowadays Ketsh language is taught in primary school of Khinalig from first to fourth grade. A coursebook for learning the language was developed by Khinalig teachers together with a ministry of education.

## Kêtşî Mîzî Əlifbâ

A	a	ank	q	qırab
B	be	bii	qe	qam
C	ce	cinə	el	ligild
Ç	çe	çağız	em	mida
C	ce	cuva	en	nukur
D	ce	cə	o	odul
E	de	dədə	ö	ördəg
Ə	e	eng	pe	pixra
F	ə	əjə	pe	peyram
G	fe	ficə	pi	pi
G	ge	gada	er	rişı
G	ğe	çuğab	se	soa
H	ge	kığ	se	şuloz
H	he	ħalam	še	şosu
H	he	ħayəl	te	ṭekər
H	he	yəhiz	te	toz
X	xe	xidil	te	top
X	xe	ħu,	u	ung
I	i	inka	ü	üs
I	i	iji	ve	vaz
J	je	bija	ye	yık
K	ke	kukaz	ze	ziyant
K	ke	kiza	ze	zoa
K	ke	kaz	že	žoa
Q	qe	qasol		

# Chapter III Influences, Origin and Geneaology

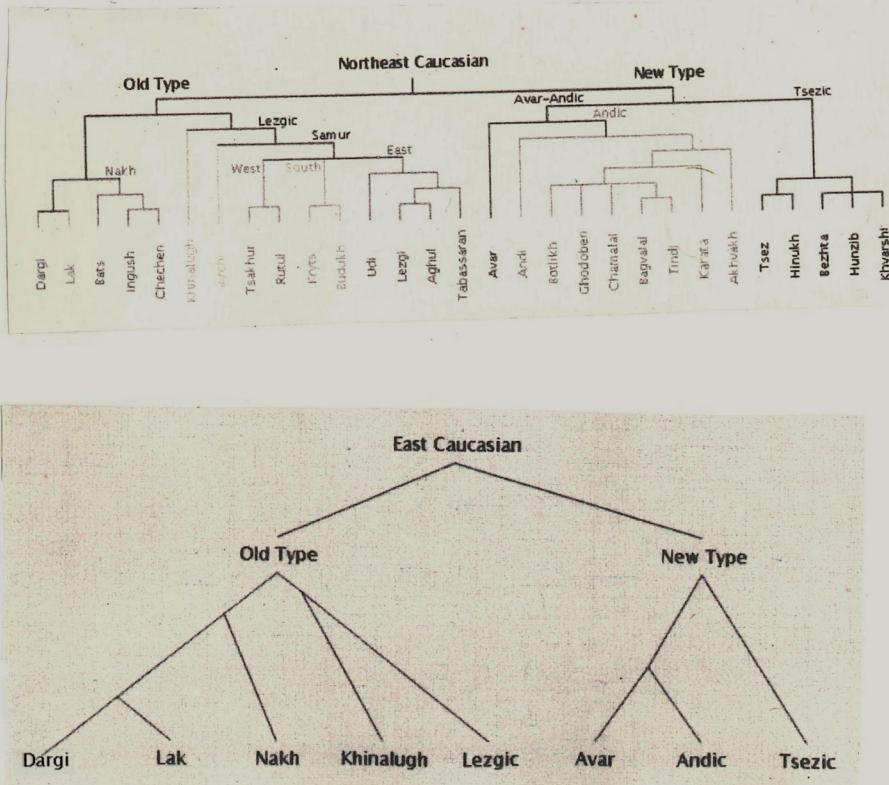




*The location of Khinalug (Shah-Dagh-Region) © Wolfgang Schulze*

# Genealogy

According to the most recent linguistic conclusion, Khinalig language has separated from the proto-language some thousand years ago and have developed independantly from the other Caucasus languages. Now it is considered as a separate branch of the Nakh-Dagestan language tree.



# Are Caucasian languages similar?

Nichols 1997 and Schulze 1997). In fact, the alleged relationship between West and East Caucasian still is nothing but a guess, which — en plus — does hardly ever consider the many observations that speak against such a hypothesis. One of the main points is that there is substantial evidence

1998). Admittedly, there exists a considerable number of lexical ‘look-alikes’ present in both language families, but it would — at least for the time being — be more wise to treat them in terms of lexical diffusion and borrowing.

spoken by some 1.500 people in the village of Khinalug (see below) is generally considered as the most deviating East Caucasian language. Its position within the East Caucasian language family still is mysterious. Erckert-

generally accepted by the wider linguistic community. The term “Caucasian Languages” only refers to the geographic proximity of the language families. In addition, none of

# Influences from bigger languages

## Vocabulary [ edit | edit code ]

The Khinalug language is strongly influenced by the Azerbaijani language . Lexical **Azerbaijanisms** permeate almost all lexical-thematic groups (cf. names of body parts: *agzy* "mouth", *dirsaq* "elbow", *koksu* "chest", *chigin* "shoulder", etc.). Arabic - Persian lexical units ( *dars* "lesson", *dushman* "enemy", *masalla* "task", *mahasul* "harvest", *gomush* "buffalo", etc.) also penetrated through Azerbaijani mediation, as did borrowings from the Russian language , mainly dating back to the Soviet era .

Almost all Caucasian languages have

been significantly influenced by Russian since Czarist times, while the impact of  
Georgian, Azeri, and, to a lesser extent, also Arabic, Iranian, and Turkish has remained  
restricted to certain geographic areas. The lexical influence is easiest to detect through the  
borrowings from Russian, Turkish (Azeri) and Arabic into Xinaliq.

# Family tree influences

The unique position of Khinalug is also documented by the fact that parts of its vocabulary do not reflect the standard East Caucasian paradigm.

	Mon.	Tues.	Wednes.	Thurs.	Fri.	Satur.	Sun.
Chechen	oršuot	śinara	qaara	year	peraska	šuot	k'irinde
Awar	itní	talat	arba <sup>r</sup>	xamiz	ruzman	šamat <sup>r</sup>	hat'an
Lak	itni	t:alat	arwa <sup>r</sup>	xamis	nūzmār	x:ullun	alha <sup>r</sup> t
Lezgi	islen	salasa	arbe	xemis	žūmā	kiš	hăd
Tsakhur	etnayin	dalat:in	arba, wajär	dalat:i ?	?	siftin	wajär, bazar
Udi	p'a <sup>r</sup> šamat <sup>r</sup>	xibšamat <sup>r</sup>	biq'šamat <sup>r</sup>	qošamat <sup>r</sup>	parask'i	šamat'gi	be <sup>r</sup> i'nji
Kryts	itney	salasa	arba <sup>r</sup>	xamis	žumga	šembi	bazar
Budukh	dušamba	sešänbä	čaršamba	žumaxšami	žüm'a	šembi	bazar
Khinalug	käk q'a	k'uškäk q'a	lək:a q'andä q'a	inäl q'a	inad q'a	c'indi q'a	bazar, zuli

Table 1: *Name of days in selected East Caucasian languages*

	Irou	Gold	Silver	Copper	Bronze
Chechen	ečig	deši	deti	c'asta	warg'
Awar	max	mesed	farac	pax	mazgar
Tsez	ger	mesed	ukru	yey	q'azan
Lak	max, daru	musi	arcu	duwši	čarwit
Lezgi	raq'	q:izil	gumiš	c:ør	kešpir
Udi	zido	q'əzəl (Old Udi daizde)	gümüş	mis, pilinž	birinž
Kryts	dämar, iläng	Gəzəl	ğ"amiš	mis	bürinž
Budukh	demir	Gəzəl	gümüş	mis	burunž
Khinalug	ura	q:əzəl	nuk'ra	mis	bürünž

Table 2: *Names for metals in selected East Caucasian languages*

# Origin

Khinalig people have migrated to their current settlement – the trace of this event can be found in the local myths. But where did they come from? Researchers have three hypotheses.

Accordingly, the foundation of the village is directly related to a catastrophe that seems to have been massively stored in the collective memory. The main point is that the original village is said to have been located on the slopes of the 'Ketsh' mountain. The name of this mountain is preserved in the native name of the 'new' village and of the Khinalugs themselves, namely *kats* (Khinalug) and *käť:id* 'Khinalug person' (also compare *käť:idi mic* 'the Khinalug language').

The two sources agree in describing Khinalug as a place of migration. This assumption is corroborated by the fact that the language Khinalug cannot be directly related to the adjacent languages Kryts and Budukh, that is to Southern Samur. In fact, the term Shah-Dagh languages occasionally in use reflects nothing but an areal classification.

Unfortunately, the original meaning of the stem *käť:-* remains obscure. The fact that it is augmented by a native word formation element does not necessarily suggest that we have to deal with an original Khinalug term.

## Hypothesis 1: Abkhazia

we may think of the Keč Mountain in Central Abkhazia near the village of Džerda in the Očamčir region. The Keč mountain forms the foothills of the Panaiv mountain chain. The village of Džerda is famous for its holy place called *keč-naxa*. The hypothetical correspondence *käts* = *keč* would suggest that the Khinalugs once have migrated from Abkhazia into their present location.

However, we do not have substantial data corroborating the hypothesis that Khinalug once had intensive contact with West Caucasian. Still, there is some evidence that the migration had started somewhere in the west of present-day Khinalug. Two words seem to be key-terms in this respect: Khinalug *mädá* ~ *mda* ‘mountain’ is difficult to separate from Georgian *mta* ‘mountain’. Tentative EC cognates are Chechen *lam*, Ingush *lóm*, Bats *lam*

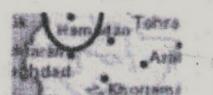


## Hypothesis 2: Iran

there also is the possibility to think of another 'homeland': According to the second source, the Khinalugs had passed the river *damdam* before founding the new settlement.

However, it should be recalled that the name *damdam* itself is not confirmed by the overall geographical sources. Instead, we might think of the name of the river Damdam in Southwestern Iran (in Ostān-e Khūzestān).

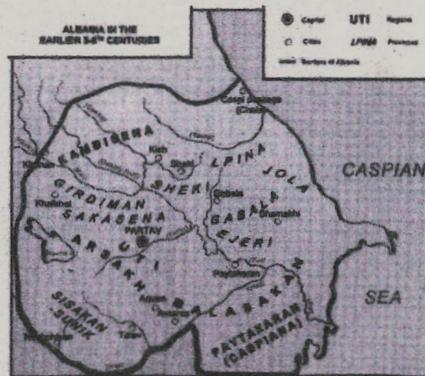
according to which the Khinalugs claim to be descendants of the Καδούσιοι / Cadusii of Classical sources. These were dwelling "between the Albanians in the North and the Mardi in the East" (Strabo 11,6,1; 7,1), that is in Northern/Central Media around the Parachoatras Mountain Range



# Hypothesis 3: Descendants of Caucasian Albania

The assumption that Khinalug once was part of the Caucasian Albanian kingdom, however, could not be corroborated: The stone inscription from the Khinalug Pir most likely stems from early Islamic times (hence after 700 AD). In ad-

According to hypotheses put forward and disseminated especially by the late Khinalug school teacher Rahim Alkhaz, Khinalug once was a part of the Christian Kingdom of Caucasian Albania. This kingdom existed from roughly 300 AD to 700 AD in Northern Azerbaijan (see Bais 2001) for details). The language used in religious service and obviously as some kind of state language was Caucasian Albanian proper or Old Udi (see Alek-sidze et al. (forthcoming)). Local Khinalugs maintain that their language comes close to Udi, saying that they even (in parts) understand Udi. It comes clear that the alleged commonalities of Khinalug and Udi mainly reflect the Azeri loan layer present in both languages, to which some few non-Azeri common terms can be added. These commonalities, however, cannot justify the assumption that Khinalug had once been identical with Caucasian Albanian. Local Khinalugs often try to prove their tradition by referring to an inscription, carved into a stone that later had been used when building the walls of a Pir (a Khinalug holy place). This inscription



## Stones with inscriptions



*"A building that sits at the very top of this hill is the oldest mosque in the village. But long before it was a mosque, it housed other deities and had other worship-pers. According to current local theory, this building that has its origin somewhere between 9th and 11th century, but there are inscribed stones used in it that came from much earlier times. Indeed, there are a couple of stones that have intriguing carvings that nobody seems to have researched. Despite the emergence of Xinaliq into the tourist sphere in recent times, Mr. Bedelov claims ethnic groups are largely neglected by the academics in this country and certainly the government. Although the history of ancient scripts in this area from 4th to 8th AD seem well researched, there is a lack of anything beyond."*

Wolfgang Schulze has been interested in decrypting the mysterious inscriptions on the Pir (holy place) building stones. People in Khinalig believed these inscriptions are related to their relation to the Kingdom of Caucasian Albania.

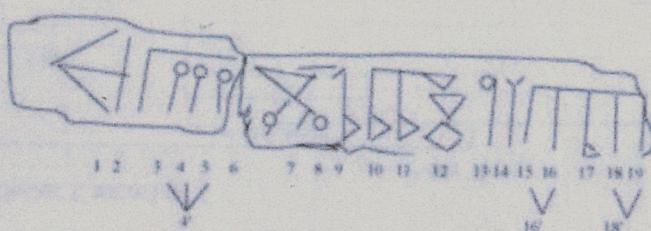


is said to be written with Caucasian Albanian characters:

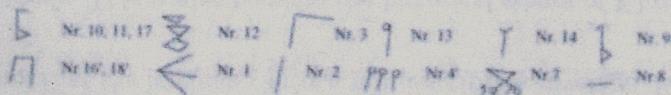


*The Khinalug stone inscription (Photo: Xeyraddin Cabbarov 2007)*

Taking its current layer as the original one, the inscription reads as follows:

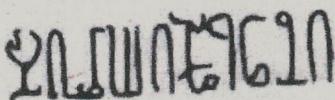


At the very utmost, we have to deal with 19 characters (12 types). The shape of the individual characters, however, hardly matches what is known for the 'standard' Caucasian Albanian script. The following signs can be isolated:



Nr. 9 has a match in Caucasian Albanian **ꝝ** (/m/), and Nr. 8 corresponds to the Armenian/Caucasian Albanian abbreviation mark. From this we can infer that we have to deal with a Christian inscription, with **ꝝ**, perhaps denoting a word for God or Christ. It is much too early to draw further conclusions, still it should be added that the shape of the characters has certain correspondences in the (by itself nonetheless doubtful)

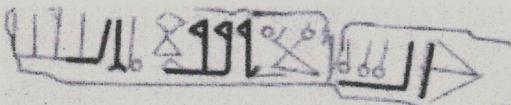
'Derbent Inscription', compare:



*The Stone Inscription from Derbent (see Murav'ev 1981: 282)*

Khin 16', 18' correspond to D 2,5,10; Khin 13 = D 9; Khin 10,11,17 = D 8. D 2,5,10 can safely be read as <o/a> (D 6 is <<sup>i</sup>>, D 7 is <l>, D 1 probably = <d>). Hence, the final sequence reads <m\*o\*a> or <m\*a\*a>. Khin 2 (= Khin 14?) probably is <i>, whereas the nature of Khin 10,11,17 remains obscure (Derbent suggests that we have to deal with a vowel (<...l.mo>), but this would give us an awkward sequence <...mio/aVo/a> for Khin).

However, if we turn around the inscription, we arrive at a very different picture:



Here, we can tentatively read the Arabic word for Allah (marked by strong lines) as well as two versions of the Arabic article *al-*. Hence, if ever the inscription is authentic, we should — for the time being — at two hypotheses: a) It represents a pre-Islamic tradition in Khinalug, which, however, is not necessarily related to the language Khinalug; b) It stems from an early Islamic tradition, having no relation to Khinalug as a language.

# Chapter IV

# Writing systems

# Writing systems

Khinalig language only gained its consistent script in 2013, after several iterations.

Most of the indigenous Caucasian languages have never had their own writing. As a

matter of fact, no more than twelve of these languages adopted a written standard during

Soviet times.

Many attempts to provide orthographies for unwritten vernacular languages of the

Caucasus have been made in the recent past, partly with emphasis on language

maintenance; however, none of them has received official status so far. Since the second

half of the twentieth century there have been several attempts to create a writing system

for Xinaliq based on the Cyrillic and Latin alphabets.

# Khinalig script

## I

In the “Grammar of the Khinalig Language” (1959), a cyrillic script was introduced. Some consonants were designated by ligatures of two, three and even four letters.

## II

Second alphabet has been proposed in 1972, it used Latin script and ligatures (54 consonants and 9 vowels).

## III

In 2007, linguists from Moscow State University and the teachers of the Khinalig secondary school adopted the Khinalig alphabet based on the Latin script. Some booklets were published in this alphabet, but the villagers did not accept this script positively due to the large number of digraphs.

## IV

In 2013, scientists from the University of Frankfurt compiled a new version of the Khinalig alphabet. It is used in the village nowadays and is considered successful.

# Language

Together with Type.today I have introduced Khinalig language to designers. The text until the end of the chapter is cited from this article.

*"Linguists have repeatedly attempted to come up with an alphabet to represent all 77 sounds of Khinalig, 59 consonants and 18 vowels, as accurately as possible. The language was first mentioned in the 1887 book *Der Kaukasus und seine Völker* (Caucasus and its Folks) by Roderich von Erckert. Erckert classifies it as one of the Dargin languages but does not mention anything about the local writing system. Soviet linguists later defined it as an unwritten language."*

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Der Kaukasus und seine Völker.

Felsstücke, wobei der Ort Krys rechts als Felsennest in 2000 Meter Höhe deutlich sichtbar wurde. Gegen Abend erreichte man Chinalug in beinahe 2200 Meter Meereshöhe, in der Nähe des Zusammenflusses zweier Gewässer gelegen, längs deren südlicherem ein Gebirgspfad stromaufwärts bis zu dem Hauptgebirgspasse Salawat (Ssalawat), d. h. „bete“, in 3300 Meter Höhe liegt. Dieser steile und enge Pfad führt auf der Grenze von Chinalugen und Tat, dann eine kurze Strecke durch das Gebiet von Kürinern in das der transkaukasischen Aderbeidshan-Tataren. Chinalug ist wie Dshek, Krys und Buduch eine enge Steinwüste zu nennen, die Häuser sind durchweg aus flachen, unregelmässigen, an Ort und Stelle sich vorfindenden kleinen Steinen erbaut, haben nur sehr kleine Fensteröffnungen, bilden aber eine recht bedeutende Ortschaft, in welcher allein fast der ganze Stammwohnt, der nur geringe Vorwerke an Weide- und Schutzplätzen in einzelnen Gehöften noch besitzt.

# Cyrillic script

In 1949, the village was visited by linguist Yunus Desheriyev. Ten years later he published the book based on the results of this expedition, Khinalig Language Grammar. He told about 19 grammatical cases and four genders as well as suggested using a Cyrillic-based alphabet. Desheriyev used digraphs, trigraphs, and tetragraphs to record unique Khinalig phonemes.

ші	шів, св, чів, тів, шв, шв	шш, чч, тт, тіті, тт
	хъв	
	гів, кв, ків	кк
	къв кхв	къ, к

## Cyrillic script v2

In 1972, another linguist Alexander Kirbik published the book *Grammar Fragments of the Khinalig Language*. He proposed using a Latin-based alphabet of 63 letters. However, this alphabet proved to be too complicated and didn't catch on in the village.

Words in Khinalig translated into Russian (meaning to cover, to comfort, to stretch, to loose, to explain and to open respectively).

k'x̚v̚i+k̚ui	- "покрыть"
sátshax+k̚ui	- "успокоить"
vix̚é +k̚ui	- "вытянуть"
dugún+k̚ui	- "терять"
baṣtá+k̚ui	- "объяснить"
xt̚smíṣ+k̚ui	- "открыть"

# Rahim Alxas

*In the late 20th century, poet and local school director Rahim Alxas adapted the Lezgin Cyrillic alphabet to the needs of recording the Khinalig language. He used this alphabet to write his books and develop textbooks.*

Пальгиз унгъ йаш атти, гъаръ елму юетгни!  
 Путор шикил атти къула альмим!  
 Ве йикѣ йаш атторын лап гъинайга ки,  
 Хъакинторын чайманы ва губл ачмишкуи.  
 Альки вы къахкетмав, пальгиз унгъ йаш къоа,  
 Ви калла саъвиччин лай цор тохункъоа.  
 Къальфлатир ансиккуи, къиргетти вахтмав,  
 Альки гъульнари вахт, шоъгърасти вахтмав!  
 Аччакуи юеттакъи камалых къат-къат,  
 Камалу ехтирам сацыхкир хъайят.  
 Хъайяла вахт ве аьсил шорчынкъагъиди,  
 Виши бар дайторын джинсу яа даъхли?  
 Гъаным ки, чихики аттижмас къайда,  
 Быйи цуувышыллы охур яа файда?  
 Латтыр джабъаидир ви асланичинн,  
 Гъульнари баламав ви, гъар таък ичин!  
 Съадайт гъакъыллы юетмишкоар гъакъкъу,  
 Альдайбили гахыр, хъурмайткаа халкъу.  
 Мыкъыр са айсанай зыкыршини ви,  
 Гъуцарыш ынхъвалым гъеч къурхынкъакуи:  
 Ви цууву лайигъкуи далыг чиохъ, лайкиш,  
 Ахыр ираянкуи ох хажалатиш.  
 Ай ши, е джугъабу тюп чакын, гъальбаст!  
 Файда тонда коари быйи насыхъыт!  
 Даҳетмас шоъгъратир ве лайагъыт иъоа,

# Alphabets of the 21st century

In 2007, a group of linguists from Moscow State University led by Alexander Kibrik teamed up with Khinalig school teachers to develop yet another version of the alphabet. This was, as in Kibrik's Grammar, an alphabet using the Latin script, but Moscow scientists decided to introduce digraphs instead of ligatures that had been proposed earlier. The team even came up with a Khinalig keyboard layout, but the village residents found this alphabet inconvenient.

## Основные соответствия

Символы	Значение	Клавиши
ә	знак для а-умляут, принятый в совр. азербайджанской и в хинаултской графике (вместо упраздненного ѫ)	<u>Shift</u> + E
ö ü (ä)	передние гласные	<u>Shift</u> + OUA
ı	знак для [ы], принятый в совр. азербайджанской графике	<u>Shift</u> + Y
ı	знак для [ы], который мы использовали, чтобы отличать і от ı под ударением	<u>Shift</u> + I
ç ş ž	шипящие	<u>Shift</u> + CSZ
ğ	звонкий увулярный фрикативный	<u>Shift</u> + G
ť	звонкий ларингал	<u>Shift</u> + <
'	абруптивность	' (апостроф)
,	гортанская смычка (упразднена)	<u>Shift</u> + >
,	отсутствие палатализации	<u>Shift</u> + \
~	знак ударения	~ там, где тильда (~) ~
h	придыхательность [МФА]	H + <u>Shift</u>

# Modern script

*Five years later, Elnur Mammadov, a student at Goethe University Frankfurt who was born and raised in Khinalig village, and professor Monika Rind-Pawlowski developed an alternative alphabet. In their project, they built on the research of Khinalig phonetics conducted by Kirbik's team.*

*The Mammadov and Rind-Pawlowski alphabet is now used on the village road signage for navigation and in school textbooks. It is also used by an online Khinalig translation service.*

*IV Bölme*

Bokku



Bokku Azərbaycanı ən qadim  
şəhərdiriziş sajime hanam  
hine paytaxtma. Xəzər dəryahı  
buğrun tui də çxi şəhər Abşeron  
yarınmadar yerleşmişkoarma.  
Həmisi Azərbaycanış "Odalar Yurdu"  
çitarma. Nədmi Bokku katkorun  
başa kuitoma ki. Çina kire ulkaş  
"Odalar Yurdu" çiriği? Kire ulkar  
har tel: ham qiyir ham daryahır  
neft, qaz qalırvтарма. Yuvari mida  
ciri ciga san-qat qaz qalırvakuiye  
yutvartma. Tək yuvari midar vaa, ulke  
cürəbəcüre cigəbiririn hamisi yuvi  
čicerbrim tüljma. Həsim yuvi čicebrism sajim Katşır tui ca həmisi yutvartma.  
İqlimi qı faravalış asılı yönündə Katşır tui ca həmisi yutvartma.  
Neft Azərbaycanı şan-söhratma. Boeyinzi hasim sa cuğab tuidərmə. "Əgər  
neft sahqi, Bokku hine tacma". Asiya ya Avrope ulküdə neft sanayar dalığ kiri  
mühəndisir Bokku ali məktəbirdirri hazır kitarsama.  
Bokkus kulakirdarı şəhərim çitarma. Amma Abşeroni bağırdır zeytun. Badam,  
püsta, innab, iydaçını nadırı bitkidim qalırvakuiye. Bokkui bağırdır nüzüçini kinaz  
hanam ancırışilli məşhurjma.

# Chapter IV

# Design, digitalisation, accessibility

## Lost in transliteration

So many script changes creates a problem for accumulation of written material. The works written using another alphabet become inaccessible for generations who never studied it.

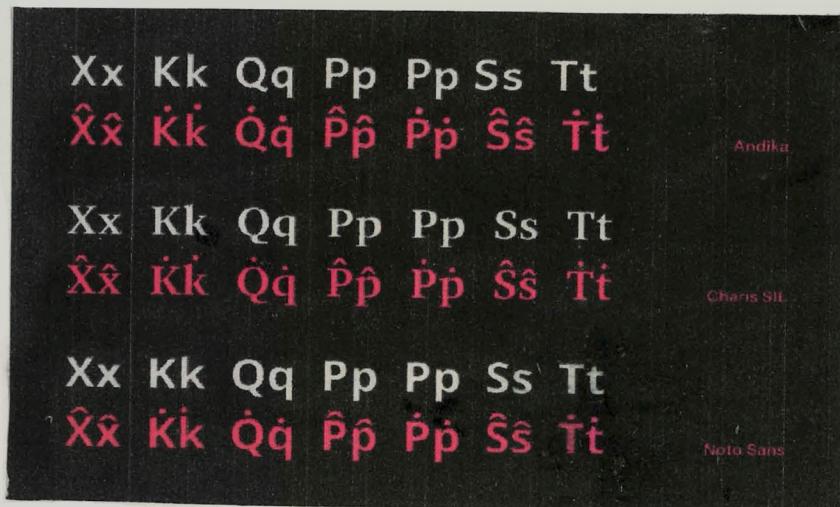
There are not so many written knowledge in Khinalig language, so each book can be transliterated to the newest alphabet iteration.

Another problem is the accessibility of the script. Although all the characters can be found in UNICODE, Khinalig language is not available as a separate keyboard for phone or laptop, moreover, some glyphs are not supported by some operated systems. On top of all that, there is only a handful of fonts that support all glyphs present in Khinalig. Even if villagers have interest to create new projects, facing these difficulties can stop them.

## Problems

All characters of the modern Khinalug alphabet exist in Unicode, however, **Tt** with a dot above and **Pp** with a dot above are only used in Gaelic, **Ss** with a circumflex—in Esperanto, and **Xx** with a circumflex—in Aleut and Haida languages. As type designers rarely address support for these languages, the full range of Khinalug alphabet letters is only present in typefaces featuring all IPA characters. One can find such typefaces, for example, in the collections of SIL, a non-profit organisation that works to preserve dying languages (Charis, Andika), Typotheque (Lava, November, October), Google Fonts (Noto).

Since on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter diacritics in the letters **Xx** with a circumflex and **Pp** with a circumflex shift downward or to the right, Khinalug won't work for posting on social media.



# Khinalig's Latin

The difference between Latin and Khinalig's extended Latin is just several diacritical marks. If you are a type designer please consider adding them to your font.

ç

â

â

ä

â

ç

ö

â

â

â

â

â

# How type designers and data encoders digitize and make endangered languages more accessible to their communities?

*Why might designers be interested in working with small languages?*

Most often, people who design fonts supporting small languages are native speakers of those languages. For them, preserving their own culture is of primary importance. If a well-known studio commissions a font with such language support, it becomes an opportunity for the designer to share their culture with a broader audience.

For designers who are not native speakers of small languages but create fonts supporting them, this work can be a great challenge. Working with each new language is a continuous research. The designer needs to find out if the language has diacritics that are not part of the alphabet but are used in some cases, whether the native speakers had unique writing tools that could have influenced the construction of the letters, and if there are any kerning pairs absent in other languages, etc.

*We know that type designers often work with scripts and languages. Are there other, less obvious design disciplines that can also contribute to the preservation, accessibility, and dissemination of languages?*

All designers work with scripts and languages. A graphic designer might create a poster with an alphabet and a short phrasebook; a packaging designer might remind the manager to add text in a minority language. A UI/UX designer, working on an English-language product for a region with its own language (or script), can study the average word length (or the script's specifics) and account for localization in the design.

It would be great if corporations helped in the preservation and dissemination of languages more than they do now. They could commission fonts from native designers or buy their ready-made fonts and help polish them. This approach works well in other areas — for example, Netflix has a cartoon about Native Americans, and thanks to it, my 18-month-old son, who lives in Georgia (country, not the state), knows a few words in the Chumash language. That made me explore the language myself and share my knowledge to those around me.

*Type.today features a column about small and endangered languages and scripts. What motivated you to create this column?*

Our fonts support a vast number of languages, but most of our audience is not even aware of their existence. Meanwhile, the speakers of these languages have very interesting cultures, and their alphabets may contain unique characters. It was important for us to show that, for example, Cyrillic is not only the Bulgarian, Russian, and Ukrainian alphabets, and Latin script is not only for English and Romance languages but also, for example, for Vietnamese.

*Finally, what advice would you give to designers who are just starting to work with new languages if they are not native speakers?*

We are often asked about this, so type.today co-founder Ilya Ruderman has formulated four pieces of advice. First, find a native speaker (it would be perfect if they are a designer) and ask them tons of questions about the structure of the letters. Second, find the most famous texts in the language you are working with and test your font on them. Third, show your tests to the native speaker you found. And fourth, question all your decisions.

# What can one do as a designer for a community with a unique language?

Only several people involved with bookmaking in Khinalig know what a font is. But how is the situation in Azerbaijan? I asked Tural Alisoy, a creator of TAFT Type Foundry about this.

*How did you start working on Azerbaijani fonts? Did you have an education or a circle of people doing similar work?*

First of all, thank you for the interview. Regarding the question, when I worked as a graphic designer, I struggled with the absence of letters like “Əə, Ğğ, İı” and sometimes “ç, ş, ö, ü” in the fonts I used. This issue mostly revolved around the “Əə” letter. Its improper design complicated things a lot. Later, my friend Elnur Mehdi, who inspired me to learn type design, started collecting fonts that supported only the “Əə” letters on a website. At that time, I didn’t know Elnur, but the “Ə” letter became a bridge for me to learn font design. :) He shared tutorials showing how to properly design the “Əə” letter using programs like “FontLab Studio”. These tutorials provided information about font terminology. Thanks to Elnur’s lessons, I was able to easily modify the fonts I used. Over time, I took this further and in 2017, I created my first single-size font called “Khojasan,” followed by the font “Balakhani.” Thus, I started creating fonts

filled with mistakes until I learned the craft. In short, with every new font I created, I saw and corrected the mistakes I had made before. This continues today. I make revisions to the more professional fonts I have created. Whenever possible, I study and research proper letter design. I love this work. Now, I only do graphic work for my own projects. I accept orders only for fonts and logos.

*What is the biggest problem when creating a font for the Azerbaijani language?*

In fact, there is no problem. We use the Latin-based Azerbaijani alphabet. We simply do not use the letter “W” and additionally use “Ç, Ə, Ğ, İ, ı, Ö, Ş, Ü”. The problem is just that there are very few active type designers. In Azerbaijan, I can confidently say that I am the only one continuously doing this work.

*Have you changed the Azerbaijani (Azeri) script many times and thought about making a font for the old versions as well?*

First, let’s correct the word “Azeri.” Our language is called Azerbaijani or Azerbaijani language. The word “Azeri” is

somehow associated with the whole country, which is not entirely accurate. In Azerbaijan, besides the majority being Azerbaijani Turks, there are over 16 (the biggest groups are Lezgins, Talysh, Russians, Ukrainians, Avars, Turks, Tatars, Tat and Judeo-Tats, Tsakhurs, Udins, Khinalig, Georgians, Jews, Kurds, Armenian) ethnic and national minorities. The main official language is Azerbaijani, followed by Russian and English.

Regarding your question, I always strive to include Cyrillic, Hebrew, and Greek alphabets in my fonts. This already includes the Armenian, Georgian, Khinalig, Qriz, and Vietnamese alphabets.

I pay attention to including the Khinalig alphabet in my recently updated fonts because there is a need for it. I read about the Khinalig alphabet on the type.today website, thanks to you. I knew about the Khinalig village, but I didn't know they had their own language; I thought they spoke Azerbaijani or Lezgin. There are very few fonts that support the alphabet of a language spoken by over 2,000 people. As an Azerbaijani type designer, I already include the Khinalig alphabet in all my fonts. By the way, the people from Qriz village face the same problem with their alphabet accessibility as the Khinalug people. This issue also persists with typing on phones. In addition to the Latin alphabet, I have also added the ancient Caucasian Albanian script

to my TA Typefire font for the first time. This happened in 2020, thanks to Cavid Ağa, whose research articles on this language inspired me to create this alphabet. I am currently working on updating my Typefire font, and the next version will be even better. In general, I have a great interest in scripts and want to create scripts I haven't done yet, including Arabic, Hangul, Thai, and other languages. By the way, I have submitted my font called Moderustic to Google Fonts, and it will be available there soon. It includes Khinalig, Bulgarian, Serbian, and other localizations. I am developing and will continue to develop that font.

*Azerbaijani is an extension of the Latin script, but I still don't see many type designers adding glyphs that support Azerbaijani. How can this situation change?*

You are right. Unfortunately, as I mentioned, there are very few or no type designers. There are hobbyists who add missing glyphs to existing fonts, but this is not stable. Designers like Kenan Nasibov and Leyla Bagirzadeh are somewhat active. Rizvan Bagirli, Knyaz Yaqublu, and Murad Asadov engaged in type design for a short period. Designers like Mübariz Yusifzadeh and Mehman Mammadov know typography well. Unfortunately, the font field is the weakest in Azerbaijani graphic design. I don't know how it is in other countries, but here, to make a profit, you have to work continuously to make a profit, and we have a word like

this, "tutuzdurmaq" (to make a quick buck). We have to make a lot of money to make a quick buck. For example, Kanan's fonts are more suitable for logos and wordmarks. My font TA Modern Times is by far my most successful and widely used font. I prefer to create family fonts. Perhaps the development of this field depends on all of us. The more value we give to this topic, the more people will be interested.

*Share your general thoughts about the design scene in Azerbaijan, official design rules, typography in the city, official documents, etc.*

We have some very good designers. I know people who organize design festivals, forums, and competitions. There are books written by Rasul Hasan on the history of design in Azerbaijan and its fundamentals, and Rizvan Bagirli has written books on typography, grids, and composition. The adherence of companies to their official design guidelines is at an average level. It is easy to find state institutions that do not use fonts correctly. To mention a small detail, they use fonts that do not properly support the letter "ə". This is also the case in certain retail establishments. If the font does not support the schwa (Əə), they will use it without paying attention. There are even people who think that the letter W is similar to the Cyrillic letter "И" and use it as "Ş", which does not indicate the correct spelling or pronunciation of the word.. Such cases have become

common. Naturally, efforts to combat this are increasing. People who notice and understand these issues are publicizing and criticizing them. Additionally, the thing I pay most attention to in our old movies is the fonts. When we were part of the Soviet empire, we used the Cyrillic alphabet, and we had good designs, so it didn't cause much trouble. However, after gaining independence and changing the script, this process became increasingly complicated, and only now are we starting to pay attention to the details again. I very much want to see type design develop. Whenever possible, I try to write tutorials and articles on these topics.

*Please check Tural's work on  
[www.taft.work](http://www.taft.work)*

# Chapter IV

# Extra materials

[1]

ƏN ÇOX İŞLƏNƏN SÖZ VƏ İFADƏLƏR  
 EVERYDAY WORDS AND EXPRESSIONS  
 ƏN İXER ÇIKIRI CUĞABIRDIR

bəli	xeyir
yes.	no
ə	va'a

Azərbaycan dilində olan salamlaşmaq formalı Xinalıqlılara da xasdır. Yəni Xinalıq dilində başqa bir salamlaşmaq forması möveud deyil.

Xinalıq people usually greet each other with the phrases loaned from Azerbaijani. There is no greeting phrase specific to Xinalıq language.

Çöldə mizir tui salam lərivaldır kətiş mižum aidjma. Yəni Kətiş mizir cürə sa salam lərivaldır attijimə.

Sabahın xeyir!

Good morning!

 Sabahın xeyir!

Vaxtın xeyir!

Good afternoon!

Vaxtın xeyir!

Axşamın xeyir!

Good evening!

Axşamın xeyir!

Salam!

Hello!

Salam!

Necəsiniz?

How are you?

Vi əm aftə?

Sağ ol, yaxşıyam. Bəs siz?

Fine, thank you. And you?

Sağ ol, zi ksan atmə. Vi əm aftə?

Sağ ol, mən də yaxşıyam.

I am fine, too, thank you.

Sağ ol, zm ksan atmə.

Ən çox işlənən söz və ifadələr  
*Everyday words and expressions*  
 Ən ixtər çıxarıcı cuğabirdür

Pis deyiləm.

*Not bad.*

**Çir afferimə.**

Belo də.

*So-so.*

**Hasımmə.**

Azərbaycan dilindən fəqli olaraq Xinalıq dilində "siz" sözü (zur) ancaq cəm formasında işlənir. Buna görədə Xinalıq dilində gələn adamların qadın və ya kişi olmasından asılı olamayaraq "son" (vi) deyə müraciət olunur.

*Other than in Azerbaijani, Xinalıq people do not use the 2nd person plural to address to a single person in a polite way. They use 2nd person singular to address to any man or woman. Azerbaijani "siz" reflects the polite form and is translated as singular form throughout this book.*

Azərbaycan mizişilli cürə qiyə Xinalıq miziş "zur" cuğab ancaq ixtər hədmə torun istatmışkitarma. Se görə Xinalıq miziş kakui hədməniş pütkidə yaxud pəpaxkiduvalışlı asılı yonda "vi" liyə müraciət kitarma.

Xoş gəlmisiniz!

*Welcome!*

**Xoş kağı / kaziği!**

Siz hardansınız ?

*Where are you from?*

**Vi telli?**

Sizinlə tanış olmağa şadam.

*I am glad to meet you.*

**Vi as muşuqvalıx şad atmə.**

<sup>1</sup> Kişi üçün/ *For a man:* kağı. Qadın üçün/ *For a woman:* kaziği.

Ön çok işlenen suallar  
 Interrogative words and expressions  
 Ön ixersorşunda sualdır

Bu kişi kimdir? <i>Who is this man?</i> <b>Du hıqlı kla</b>	Bu qadın kimdir? <i>Who is this woman?</i> <b>Də xinimkır kla?</b>
Orada kimdir? <i>Who's there?</i> <b>Hinel türdür kla?</b>	O kimdir? <i>Who is he? / Who is she?</i> <b>Hu kla? / Ha kla?</b>
Onlar kimdir? <i>Who are they?</i> <b>Hoz kla?</b>	Siz kimsiniz? <i>Who are you?</i> <b>Vı kla?</b>
Bəs siz kimsiniz? <i>And who are you?</i> <b>Bəs vı kla?</b>	Adınız nədir? <i>What's your name?</i> <b>Vi ʐu yaza?</b>
Necəsiniz? / Necəsan? <i>How are you?</i> <b>Çim aʃa</b>	İşləriniz necədir? <i>How are things going?</i> <b>Dalıqardır ڦım at?</b>
Bu nədir? <i>What is this?</i> <b>Də yaza?</b>	O nədir? <i>What is that?</i> <b>Ha yaza?</b>
Bu kimindir? <i>Whose is this?</i> <b>Də kişejil?</b>	Bunlar kimindir? <i>Whose are these?</i> <b>Cit kişejit?</b>
Men na etməliyəm? <i>What should I do?</i> <b>Ya ya kına</b>	Siza na lazımdır? <i>What do you need?</i> <b>Uxur ya yet?</b>
Siz nə isteyirsiniz? <i>What do you want?</i> <b>Suru ya yükqoşa?</b>	İsteyirsiniz? <i>Do you want?</i> <b>Yukoağtu?</b>

## Conclusion

The language accessibility was one of the motivations for me to start this project. I remember first time seeing how villagers manually attach the ^ to a letter p and thought about this issue. Linguistically Khinalig is a point of interest of many researchers but what happens with the typed language beyond UNICODE?

Language has never been the target of my research, but it is something that distinguishes this mountainous isolated culture the most. The language brought attention of the researchers to the village, and with this project will hopefully introduce it to artists and designers.

Please check references for further information.

With all the best intentions and efforts, there is only so much work that outsiders can do when it comes to language maintenance; ultimately, it is up to the people of the community to preserve their language. If the community members are encouraged to be involved, the chances of Xinaliq language survival increase significantly. The hope is that

