

## Analysis of Ethnically Mixed Marriages among Lezgians (Based on Guba-Khachmaz Materials)

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### Abstract

This article studies ethnically mixed marriages among the Lezgians living in the Guba-Khachmaz region of Azerbaijan. It aims to examine the challenges faced by Lezgians in relation to language, religion, consent of their parents and other details when they marry representatives of other nationalities. For this purpose, a face-to-face survey was conducted in the villages of the Guba-Khachmaz region, and the collected materials were analyzed. The survey was conducted among Lezgian women and men married to representatives of other nationalities. The vast majority of the respondents who took part in the survey had complete secondary education and were educated mainly in the Azerbaijani stream.

The analysis of the collected data showed that a very large number of Lezgian women and men married representatives of the Azerbaijani nation. Indicators of identical socioeconomic standing and common cultural values can be considered the main factors. Most people do not select their spouse randomly; rather, they do it in accordance with criteria based on resemblance (Girard, 1964). In addition, the collected data shows that both women and men prefer to marry Muslims. Considering that the majority of respondents were women, and most of them married Azerbaijanis, it is not surprising that 74.4 percent of women use only Azerbaijani as the main language of communication in the family. Additionally, an interesting fact is that most of the men and women married according to the traditions of their own nation. The data analysis revealed that the parents approved of their children starting families with non-Lezgians. The existence of ethnically mixed marriages in their families and surroundings was the cause of this. It should be mentioned that the ethnically mixed families of the Lezgian in the Guba-Khachmaz region have not been studied in the context of Azerbaijan. For this reason, it is necessary to conduct a deeper investigation of ethnically mixed families in this region.

**Keywords:** mixed families, lezgians, relationship, Guba-Khachmaz region, marriages

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## Аналіз етнічно змішаних шлюбів серед лезгин (за Губа-Хачмазськими матеріалами)

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### Анотація

У статті досліджуються етнічно змішані шлюби серед лезгин, що проживають у Губа-Хачмазському районі Азербайджану. Вона має на меті вивчити проблеми, з якими стикаються лезгини щодо мови, релігії, згоди батьків та інших деталей, коли вони одружуються з представниками інших національностей. З цією метою в селах Губа-Хачмазського району було проведено фронтальне опитування та проаналізовано зібрані матеріали. Опитування проводилося серед лезгинських жінок і чоловіків, одружених з представниками інших національностей. Переважна більшість респондентів, які взяли участь в опитуванні, мали повну середню освіту і навчалися переважно в азербайджанському руслі.

Аналіз зібраних даних показав, що дуже велика кількість лезгинських жінок і чоловіків одружилися з представниками азербайджанської нації. Основними факторами можна вважати показники однакового соціально-економічного становища та спільні культурні цінності. Більшість людей не обирають чоловіка випадково; швидше, вони роблять це відповідно до критеріїв, заснованих на схожості (Girard, 1964). Крім того, зібрані дані показують, що і жінки, і чоловіки воліють одружуватися з мусульманами. Враховуючи, що більшість респондентів були жінки, і більшість з них одружилися з азербайджанцями, не дивно, що 74,4 відсотка жінок використовують тільки азербайджанську мову як основну мову спілкування в сім'ї. Крім того, цікавим фактом є те, що більшість чоловіків і жінок одружувалися за традиціями свого народу. Аналіз даних показав, що батьки схвалюють створення сімей своїх дітей з нелезгинцями. Причиною цього стало існування етнічно змішаних шлюбів у їхніх родин та оточенні. Слід зазначити, що етнічно змішані родини лезгин Губа-Хачмазського району в контексті Азербайджану не досліджувалися. З цієї причини необхідно провести більш глибоке дослідження етнічно змішаних сімей у цьому регіоні.

**Ключові слова:** змішані сім'ї, лезгини, спорідненість, Губа-Хачмазський регіон, шлюби

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**Introduction**

Ethnic mixed families are a means of integration into society. Inter-ethnic integration has common characteristics because of the interaction of ethnic groups that differ significantly from each other in terms of language and culture within a country (Aghayev, 2006). A significant increase in the number of inter-ethnic marriages means that cultural boundaries between two ethnic communities are erased and people no longer perceive each other as representatives of different ethnic groups" (Susokolov, 1987). The formation of ethnically mixed families is critical in the process of altering the ethnic composition of the population.

The main disadvantage in blended families is cultural, religious and linguistic diversity. Ethnic mixed marriages lead to changes in the ethno-demographic structure of society. In such families, the cultural values belonging to both parties are mixed and serve as a tool in the process of convergence of cultures. Even though there is often territorial diversity, language, and religious diversity, such families existed with representatives of other nationalities. Most of the Lezgians living in Azerbaijan start families with Azerbaijanis.

**Literature review**

Many studies on mixed families state that ethnically mixed marriages create conditions for the decline of ethnic consciousness (Suleymanov, 2010). According to Barth (1969), intermarriage may significantly impact the borders and identity of ethnic minority groups since marriage is seen to be a means of passing down cultural traditions and beliefs to the next generation. Asanova (2007) distinguishes the problems faced by the ethnic family as social-domestic, social-psychological, fertility and planning problems, stability problems, family upbringing problems. In ethnically mixed families, it is important which of the husband and wife belongs to the ethnic majority, so that in such families, the powers of the husband and wife in determining the language of communication within the family, choosing the language of education of the children, and choosing the names of the children are not the same, and in such matters, the party belonging to the ethnic majority decides mainly (Kutyavina, & Malysheva, 2010). However, in the scientific literature, there are also those who state that the existence of ethnically mixed families is a very important process in terms of bringing the cultures of different

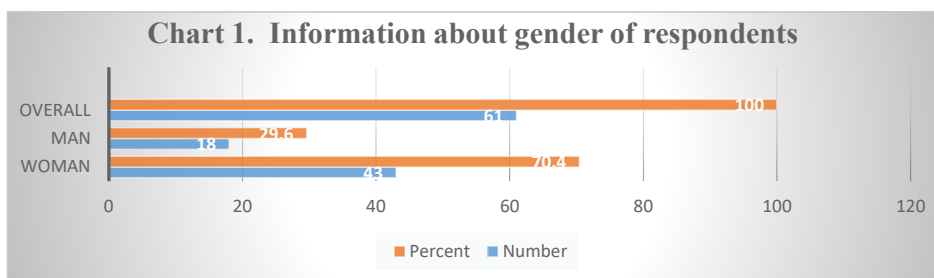
peoples and nations closer to each other and valuing each other (Soliz, Cronan, Bergquist, Nuru, & Rittenour, 2017). As mentioned by Merton (1941), the large number of inter-ethnic marriages reduces the probability of violent conflicts between these social groups. The growth in the number and proportion of multi-ethnic marriages indicates the health of society (Topilin, 1995). In Azerbaijan, the mentioned topic has not become a special research object, and it can be said that there is a huge gap in this topic.

**Methodology**

In order to collect more information about ethnically mixed families, and at the same time to study the characteristics of such families, a face-to-face survey was conducted in the villages of Guba-Khachmaz region where mostly mixed families live. It should be noted that mixed families (mainly with Azerbaijanis) live in Khural, Suvacal, Yukhari Lagar, Balagusal, Badirgala, Lekargishlaq villages of Gusar region. It was also investigated where mixed families live in the villages of Gullar, Samur settlement and Shirvanli of Gusar region. In addition, Lezgians live in a mixed state with Azerbaijanis in Nabran, Tel villages, which are part of Nabran territorial unit of Khachmaz region, Gusarchay, Niyaz village, Magsudkend village, which are part of Susaygishlaq territorial unit. In the villages of Kurkun and Qeshresh in Guba region, Lezgians and Azerbaijanis live in a mixed state as well.

The small number of male respondents among the residents of the villages with mixed families selected for the survey suggests that in mixed marriages, mostly Lezgian women married non-Lezgian people. Lezgian women married Azerbaijanis and representatives of other Dagestani peoples, and men mainly married Russians when they migrated to Russia.

N=61 respondents participated in the survey conducted for the purpose of statistical analysis of mixed families. Surveys were conducted mainly in Samur settlement, Ghullar, Gileh-oba, Chipir villages of Gusar district, Yalama-Nabran, Orta-oba, Magsudkend and Yagub-oba villages of the Khachmaz region, where the most mixed families live. It should be noted that n=29 people out of n=61 who participated in the survey were residents of Magsudkand village. In total, n=18 people (29.6 %) of n=61 respondents were men, 43 people (70.4 %) were women (Chart 1).



### Data Analysis and Discussion

As mentioned above, many respondents (47.6 %) were representatives of mixed families living in Magsudkend village. Only one person from each family

was involved in the survey. Respondents participating in the survey were classified into five groups based on age groups (Table 1).

**Table 1.**

#### Distribution of respondents by age group

Age group	woman		man		overall	
	number	%	number	%	number	%
18-29	9	20.9	-	-	9	14.75
30-39	13	30.3	4	22.2	17	27.9
40-49	2	4.6	1	5.6	3	4.91
50-59	12	27.9	6	33.3	18	29.5
60 and above	7	16.3	7	38.9	14	22.95
overall	43	100	18	100	61	100

As can be seen from the table, the respondents in the age group 30-39 and 50-59 took part in the survey. In the 30-39 age group, 22.2 % were male respondents, and 30.3 % were female respondents. Among the male respondents, those in the 18-29 age group did not participate at all. The least represented age group among the respondents was the 40-49 age group, with only 4.6 % of the total number of females and 5.6 % of male respondents. Among the male respondents who participated, those who were in the age group of 60 and older, and among the women, the respondents who were in the age group of 30-39 and 50-59 were the majority.

The survey was conducted among citizens of Azerbaijan, including Lezgians who are citizens of the

Russian Federation but moved to start a family with a citizen of this country. It should be noted that among the residents living in the surveyed villages, more Lezgian women married representatives of other nationalities than men. For this reason, the number of male respondents participating in the survey is low.

In mixed families, the main issue was that the woman knew or learned the language of the man she married. First, they both had to know the same language for common communication. But after getting married, the woman had to learn and speak the language of the man.

N=33 of the respondents married with representatives of other nationalities have full secondary education. 69.7 % of them are women and 30.3 % are men (Table 2).

**Table 2.**

#### Information about respondents' education

Respondents' education	woman		man		overall	
	number	%	number	%	number	%
Primary	3	6.9	3	16.7	6	9.8
Secondary	23	53.5	10	55.6	33	55.0
secondary vocational-professional	13	30.2	2	11.1	15	24.6
higher	4	9.3	3	16.7	7	11.5
overall	43	100	18	100	61	100

Among the representatives of mixed families surveyed, only n=4 out of n=43 women (9.3 %) had higher education. 6.9 % of other female respondents had only secondary education, 53.5 % had complete secondary education, and 30.2 % had secondary specialized education. Among the male respondents, 55.6 % had complete secondary education. Of the 18 male respondents who took part in the survey, 16.7 % had incomplete secondary education, 11.1 % had secondary specialized education, and 16.7 % had higher education. Among the female respondents with higher

education, 2 persons are 30-39 years old, 1 person is 50-59 years old, and 1 person is in the age group of 60 and above, and among the male respondents, 1 person is in the 30-39 age group, 1 person is in the 50-59 age group, and 1 and the person belonged to the age group of 60 and older.

Regarding the language of education in secondary school, n=48 people (78.7 %) studied in the Azerbaijani stream. N=33 of them were women and 15 were men (Table 3). N=13 people (21.3 %) graduated from the Russian stream.

Table 3.

## Language of education of the respondents

Stream of education	woman		man		overall	
	number	%	number	%	number	%
azerbaijani	33	76.7	15	83.3	48	78.7
russian	10	23.3	3	16.7	13	21.3
overall	43	100	18	100	61	100

It should be mentioned that most of the Lezgians studying in the Russian department are citizens of the Russian Federation. As can be seen from the table, 23.3 % of the female respondents who took part in the survey studied in the Russian stream, but only n=3 of the n=18 male respondents (16.7 %) studied in the Russian stream.

As it was emphasized, the male and female respondents who took part in the survey were Lezgians by nationality. As a result of the analysis of the answers to the survey, it was found that most of both groups

of respondents have married representatives of the Azerbaijani people. Thus, n=39 of the n=43 women who took part in the survey married Azerbaijani men. N=14 out of n=18 male respondents were married to Azerbaijani women. Among the other nationalities that the female respondents are married to are Rutul, Tat, Avar and Dargin ethnic groups. The women with whom the male respondents married are representatives of the Russian (2 people), Kurdish and Tabasaran nationalities (Table 4).

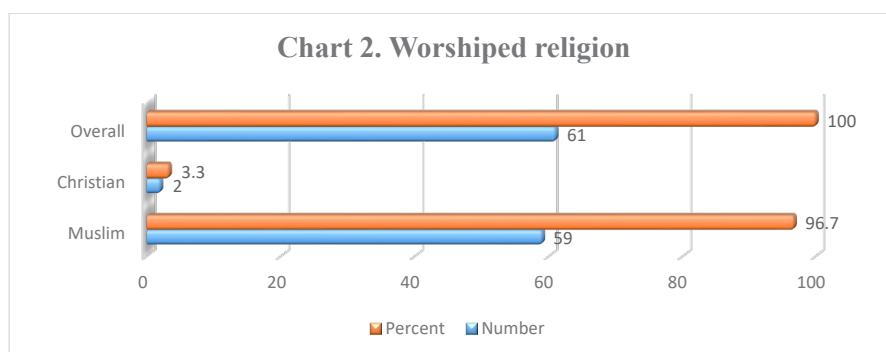
Table 4.

## Nationality of respondents' spouses

Nationality	woman		man		overall	
	number	%	number	%	number	%
azerbaijan	39	90.7	14	77.8	53	86.9
russian	-	-	2	11.1	2	3.3
kurdish	-	-	1	5.6	1	1.6
rutul	1	2.3	-	-	1	1.6
tat	1	2.3	-	-	1	1.6
avar	1	2.3	-	-	1	1.6
dargin	1	2.3	-	-	1	1.6
tabasaran	-	-	1	5.6	1	1.6
overall	43	100	18	100	61	100

If we compare the language studied by the respondents in high school and the nationality of their spouses, we will see that the language of education does not play any role here. Thus, out of n=33 female respondents who studied in the Azerbaijani stream, n=31 married an Azerbaijani, n=1 married a rutul, and n=1 married a tat. In addition, n=8 of the n=10 female respondents who studied in the Russian stream got married to Azerbaijanis, and the remaining two married Avars and Dargins. Of the n=15 male respondents who studied in the Azerbaijani stream, n=12 married an

Azerbaijani woman, n=1 Russian, n=1 Kurdish and n=1 Tabasaran. Out of n=3 men who studied in the Russian stream, n=2 married Azerbaijanis, and n=1 married a Russian. The reason why Lezgian people marry Azerbaijanis is because they have lived together with these people for a long time. It should be noted that, as can be seen from the table, in terms of religious belief, n=2 people (3.3 %) worship the Christian religion among the married persons of the male respondents (Chart 2). The remaining respondents reported that 96.7 % of their spouses are Muslim.



What language was spoken in households of mixed ethnicities was one of the questions posed to the respondents throughout the survey. The study of the data reveals that the language of communication in the home for the female respondents is primarily that of the married man. N=32 of the ladies stated that only Azerbaijani is spoken at home. Only one of the Lezgian women who responded who is married to an Azerbaijani

man stated that they use all three languages - Azerbaijani, Russian, and Lezgian - for communication at home. Four respondents said they use both Azerbaijani and Lezgian, and three respondents - two of whom are married to Azerbaijani men and one of whom is married to a rutul-said they use only Lezgian. One of the female responders, whose home communications were solely in Russian, was wed to a Dargin (Table 5).

Table 5.

Language of communication in the family

Gender	only lezgian	only azerb.	lezgian, russian, azerb.	only russian	azerb., lezgian	russian, azerb.	russian, lezgian	overall
woman	3 (7 %)	32 (74.4 %)	1 (2.3 %)	3 (7 %)	4 (9.3 %)	-	-	43 (100 %)
man	2 (11.1 %)	4 (22.2 %)	2 (11.1 %)	1 (5.6 %)	5 (27.8 %)	1 (5.6 %)	3 (16.7 %)	18 (100 %)

Only two of the n=18 male respondents who married non-Lezgians utilize Lezgian as the primary language of communication at home, as shown in the table, while n=5 of the male respondents specifically said that their family speaks both Azerbaijani and Lezgian. Azerbaijani, Lezgian, and Russian were cited by n=2 men as their native tongues. There were other individuals who did not speak Lezgian at all; one claimed to speak Azerbaijani and Russian at home; the other claimed to

speak only Russian. In addition, three men mentioned that they communicate using both Lezgian and Russian languages.

The "option of tradition during the wedding ceremony" was one of the survey's questions, and one of the n=18 male respondents who took part in the survey stressed that the wedding ceremony was held only in accordance with Lezgian customs. Despite the fact that the majority of the men who responded wed Azerbaijanis,

there were also some Russian, Kurdish, and Tabasaran couples. When asked about his preference for tradition, only one male respondent said that he married according to both Russian and Lezgian customs. Azerbaijani

customs accounted for n=13 of the female respondents' marriages, Lezgian customs for n=26, Azerbaijani and Lezgian customs for n=1, and Dargin customs for n=1 (Table 6).

**Table 6.**

**Wedding traditions**

Selected traditions	woman		man	
	number	%	number	%
azerbaijani	13	30.3	-	-
lezgians	26	60.5	17	94.4
dargin	1	2.3	-	-
both lezgians and azerbaijani	1	2.3	-	-
both lezgians and russian	-	-	1	5.6
overall	43	100	18	100

It is worth noting that in the surveyed locations, both male and female respondents stated that there are a sufficient number of persons in their family and surroundings who have married other nationalities. As a result, n=28 of the n=43 female respondents reported

having relatives or friends who had started a family with non-Lezgian persons. Simultaneously, n=10 of the n=18 male respondents claimed that there are individuals in their families who married non-Lezgians (Table 7).

**Table 7.**

**Information about marriages with other nationalities in the family and surroundings**

	Yes	No	Overall
woman	28 (65.1 %)	15 (34.9 %)	43 (100 %)
man	10 (55.6 %)	8 (44.4 %)	18 (100 %)

In terms of parental approval, the majority of respondents stated that their parents had no objections to their marrying members of different nations. One of the male respondents who married a Kurdish stated that he married without the agreement of his parents. Another n=17 male respondents indicated

that their parents gave them permission. N=40 female respondents answered that they married mostly with their parents' permission. Three persons declared that they did not have their parents' approval and thus married their loved ones without their parents' consent (Table 8).

**Table 8.**

**Parental agreement**

Agreement	woman	man
Yes	40	17
No	3	1

### Conclusion

As it can be seen from the study, there are no difficulties for the Lezgians to live in a mixed state with representatives of other nationalities and start a family. In such families, both parties respect each other's customs and traditions and compromise with each other in terms of language. Research shows that mostly women must learn their husband's language. The vast majority of Lezgian women who participated in the survey got married to Azerbaijanis, which made it necessary for them to speak this language as a language of communication in the family. We can observe this from the results of the survey. Since the majority of the women studied in the Azerbaijani stream and were familiar with the language, there was no difficulties with communication in family. It should be noted that most of the male respondents who participated in the survey were married to Azerbaijanis. The fact that parents do not object to their children marrying representatives of other nationalities is also one of the issues that

attract attention. The main effect is that the Lezgian lived in good relations with the Azerbaijanis and other nationalities for a long time. The fact that most of the respondents of both genders who attended in the survey are over 50 years old allows us to say that there were enough Lezgian mixed marriages in Azerbaijan during the years of Russian rule.

While the majority of the Lezgian women who participated in the survey claimed to have married according to Lezgian customs, yet many of them stressed that their spouses' traditions were followed. This could be because man and woman weddings are combined rather than being performed separately. Considering that most of the women married Azerbaijanis and the fact that Azerbaijanis and Lezgians lived in the same area for a long time led to certain similarities in customs and traditions. Additionally, the presence of mixed marriages in the family, relatives and neighbors of most of the respondents may also create conditions for them to marry representatives of other nationalities.

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