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**DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL TIES BETWEEN AZERBAIJAN  
REPUBLIC AND NORWAY KINGDOM AS A FACTOR  
IN STRENGTHENING POLITICAL RELATIONS**

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**Abstract.** This article aims to discuss the importance of culture in business, taking into consideration Norway Kingdom and Azerbaijan Republic. Each country has its own cultural backgrounds. It has own standards of thinking, being and acting, and these cultural differences strongly influence the business world. The purpose of this paper is to present some cultural differences between countries highlighting the Norwegian and Azerbaijani art examples. This article gives a short overview to provide an understanding on how cultural similarities, cultural differences and international relations are important in the mentioned countries. The overall Azerbaijan-Norwegian cooperation covers wide areas such as energy and gas-oil, energy, clean technologies, health, local governance, culture and business. Over the centuries, cultural influences have crossed the North Sea and Caspian Sea in both directions. This partnership is founded on mutual interests and respect.

**Keywords:** Norway; Azerbaijan; culture; history; relationships; ties; music; SKRUK; concerts.

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**Introduction**

Since the beginning of the 1990s Azerbaijan and Norway have developed an increasingly strong relationship. Diplomatic relations between the two countries were established on 5 June 1992. The Norwegian Embassy in Baku was opened in June 1998. The cooperation between some Norwegian and Azerbaijani scouts started in 2007, and every year since then they have organized common events in Norway or in Azerbaijan.

If we look from the point of the history of cultural relations between Azerbaijan Republic and Norway Kingdom we can mention that these ties developed yet from old time. The roots of these ties even are referred and assumed with the connection of the Viking's period. It is very interesting that the contemporary and prominent Norwegian explored Thor Heyerdahl proposed this assumption. From this point of view we can say the beginning of the modern period of the cultural ties between Azerbaijan and Norway was founded just by Thor Heyerdahl who carried out researches in Azerbaijan.

**Thor Heyerdahl**

Thor Heyerdahl came to Azerbaijan in the years 1981-1994. He was at the expeditions in Azerbaijan in the place called "Go-

bustan" and in some other regions of Azerbaijan. Thor Heyerdahl wrote in his book "With the research of Odin" and showed interesting facts that of the necessary historical roots of the Vikings who lived in the VI-VII centuries B.C. should be investigated just in Azerbaijan. Referring to the ancient drawings on the rocks of Gobustan he discovered and found out similar features with the very drawings between English culture and Scandinavian people.

According to the scientist's opinion and to this mind in the Vikings period Norwegian ships sailed to the Caspian sea from East to Constantinople (Istanbul ) by the Mediterranean Sea. According to Thor Heyerdahl's satisfaction a number of contemporary European tribes and peoples, such as the ancestors who lived in Scandinavia. They lived in Gobustan at times but later according to the unknown purposes they moved to Europe.

The scientist's new proposals and proof inform the existence of ethnic ,biological, anthropological ,historical and cultural relationship between contemporary Azerbaijani people and Scandinavian people.

Azerbaijan has had great sympathy to Norwegian people in different periods. And the Azerbaijanis have had much knowledge



about this country of Scandinavia. When we speak about Norway most of us imagine in our minds severe rocky mountains, brave fighters the Vikings running quickly over the mountains, brave explorers F. Nansen and R. Omundsen, famous skiers bobsledders, the heroes by the brilliant writers like H. Ibsen and K. Hamsun.

### **Music relations**

The most capable creative person of Norway music culture E. Grieg based on the folklore the works written Fortepiano concert, "Peer Günt" suite (based on Henrik Ibsen's drama) numerous vocal and instrumental works. These works take an important place at the concert programs of Azerbaijani musicians and over the world in educating music. Of course mentioning among Norway's and Azerbaijan's close communication in the sphere of culture are the reciprocal visits and performances singing of choirs, dance ensembles, delegations of friendship towns and countries. Azerbaijan introduces itself in Norway through many cultural events, including the celebration of its Independence Day (May 17<sup>th</sup>).

Based on Azerbaijan – Norway cultural ties in the second of the XX century the prominent Azerbaijan musicians and artists visit to Norway their performances at the exhibitions and the concerts are unforgettable facts. The famous Norwegian conductor Odd Grunner gave a concert in Baku in 1964. Azerbaijani musicians gave concerts in Norway in 1971. Norwegian composers and musicians made performances in Baku several times. All these activities caused good relations in music field and proved that in music. Azerbaijan and Norway cultural ties were realized yet in the Soviet period in the forms of creative cooperation. Also Azerbaijanian students who study in the most beautiful city of Norway- Bergen (Grieg Academy) successfully take part in Bergen International Festival (Festspillene i Bergen).

After the talks held between the Azerbaijani officials and Norway delegation, the strategic body of scientific researchments in Azerbaijan, carrying out the function of the state adviser on political researchments, rep-

resentatives of Norway Research Council met the members of the presidium of the National Academy of sciences of Azerbaijan. After an exchange of view on cooperation in the field of science a memorandum of mutual understanding was signed. The followings were included in the memorandum. Both sides should carry out researches together in different fields. The results of the researches should be published in Azerbaijan and Norway scientific media.

### **Science relationships**

To inform each other regularly about the fields and programs which shows mutual interests. The scientists of both countries made projects came to an agreement to help each other to make projects which they were interested in. Connected with the 80<sup>th</sup> birthday anniversary of the greatest researcher and explorer Thor Heyerdahl which was held in Norway in 1994 sponsored by State Oil Company, the book "The explorer Thor Heyerdahl" has been presented in Azerbaijan. Some copies of the memory book were presented to Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences, Baku State University and Azerbaijan Pedagogical State University. The explorer's meeting with the representatives on the cultural field was interesting. Being continued of this work in 2012 an exhibition was organized at the National museum of history of Azerbaijan devoted to the world famous Norwegian scientist –explorer Thor Heyerdahl entitled "Thor Heyerdahl – the Kon – Tiki man".

The poster which reflected Thor Heyerdahl's life and social scientific activity, equipments used during the expeditions and short films were shown there. In addition the photos and videos of the "Karvansara-Azerbaijan yesterday and today" which was held in the city of Stavanger in 2006 were presented at the exhibition too. This exhibition played an important role in the development of Norway – Azerbaijan cultural relations.

One of the organizations active Azerbaijan diaspora which works in Norway is the Organization of Youth Azerbaijan (NAYO) was formed in 2005. The main purpose of this organization is to help the Azerbaijanis



living in Norway to be integrated to Norwegian public make them be organized, protect their rights, do work in the field of settling social problems.

### **“The land we come from”**

Talking about Norway and Azerbaijan musical instruments especially it is necessary to mention projects they made together. The splendid of these projects is “The land we come from” SKRUK project. This project was realized in by the mutual cooperation Azerbaijan musicians. SKRUK Norwegian chorus, Kirkelig Kultursveerksted. Norwegian company and Norwegian Humanitarian enterprise working with refugees in Azerbaijan in January 1994. This large – volumed project has attracted attention as a project which strengthens Azerbaijan and Norway music instruments and wins high ratings. Here the main purpose is well-known and famous chorus of Norway SKRUK and Azerbaijan folk songs performed by Azerbaijani singers in Norwegian language and to be written in CD.

Forming projects, orchestral design, project coordination belong to the popular Azerbaijan composer Galib Gasan Mamedov who lives and works in Norway Kingdom. Galib Gasan Mamedov and genealogist Bjorn Vegge, the famous conductor of SKRUK church choir Per Oddvar Hildre, poet Eric Hillestad began the project of "Landet vi kommer fra" to 1995/6 year. They visit together Azerbaijan, interested on history of this country and saw very old Caucasian Alban's churches. It was very interesting research period for this people. Then the project manager composer Galib Gasan Mamedov came to the recording studio of Rafiq Babayev for continuation of the project and arranged. Azerbaijan musicians Siyavush Kerimi and Rashad Hashimov became working for the arrangements there. The soloists are Brilliant Dadashova and Ilgar Muradov. Azerbaijan music instruments tar, saz, ud, kamancha, tutak, balaban, garmon, naghara were given in the music numbers. Norwegian musician Bjørn Holum (bass) performed the solo part. In this project Norwegian and Azerbaijan musicians have come together

and connected the two different music tradition in accordian. The performing of Azerbaijan well-known folk songs such as "Ay beri bakh", "Chal oyna", "Aman nene", "Susen sünbül", "Lachin", "Sari gelin" in the Norwegian language really made and extraordinary impression.

### **Folk songs for international projects**

It is necessary to mention the importance of the concert programs which were organized in this country. Azerbaijan music has been glorified in Norway. The national music performers' concerts are both organized by the state level officials and by diaspora enterprises. The purpose of such concerts held in Norway is to get together the Azerbaijanis who live in Norway to present them both the classical mughams and modern Azerbaijan music in high level. Such projects play also an important and large role to present Azerbaijan culture to the Norwegians and foreigners living in Norway. The singers and performers of folk music instruments were invited from Azerbaijan to such concerts which were held in Norway.

Besides it the prominent Norwegian violin player Halvard Bjørgum who is very interested in Azerbaijan music also participated in the concerts as well as our Azerbaijani saz player (Saz –is and Azerbaijani national instrument) Gafar Jafarzada's presence are interesting facts.

The Norwegian Embassy in Azerbaijan works with several local and Norwegian partners, currently focusing on contemporary art, dance and music, literature and theatre. Norwegian artists like Henrik Ibsen and Edvard Munch are well-known in Azerbaijan, and continue to attract attention. Nowadays the extending of the mutual ties in music education field attracts attention. At present between Baku Music Academy named after Uzeyir Hajibeyli and Grieg Academy(Bergen), also Azerbaijan National Conservatoire and Ole Bull Music Academy (Voss) exist treatment on education exchange system, that gives chance to study different music traditions and expanding ties between these two countries. Nowadays one of the important projects realized in this field is



forming of Euroasia chamber orchestra together Baku Music Academy and Grieg Academy. This Chamber Orchestra was organized by the young performers of both academies. On April 12–18, 2015, bachelor-string players (18) from Baku Music Academy visited the city Bergen and gave concerts together with brass instruments players (11) from Grieg Academy.

The concert programs included not only the works by the composer Igor Stravinsky of the XXth century, works by the prominent Azerbaijani composer Qara Qarayev but also the work by young bachelor composers such as Vusal Mammadov for his composition "Feryad", the composition "Learning the Waltz" by Harald Saeverud and Kari Telsdat Sundet from the Grieg University.

### Results

As we see nowadays the relation between Azerbaijan and Norway in the development of deeper meaning the achievements gained together in the state level connected with the field of culture give chance to the development of bilateral relations. From the point of view of strengthening the visit of Thor Heyerdahl to Azerbaijan is very important for history of cultural ties between two country. In this regard, even the roots of the Viking period in respect of which it is expected. Very interesting, what is the probability that at the present stage of the famous Norwegian Explorer Thor Heyerdahl put forward?

Azerbaijan-Norway relations in the musical development in Norway, living Azerbaijani composer, of International importance, music festivals and "SKRUK" choir "Landet vi kommer fra" (1997), "Sommerlandet" (2003), organizer and participant known as G. G. Mamedov, creativity is important. Of his works, one of the main attributes directly Norway, ancient history and literature, in connection with the presence. The title of works confirms this. Ancient Albanian history that refer to "Albanian oratorio", "aims to visualize Allegro Albana" as works from this point of view interesting. These works of the Norwegian – Azerbaijani historical and cultural ties the values of the common point of which is devoted to Albania. It's a sort of

Thor Heyerdahl's expeditions as a reflection, an echo, their music as embodying deserves attention.

### Discussion and conclusion

Azerbaijani music in Norway for the purpose of propaganda in this country, organized concert programs a value, it should be noted: National music performers and concerts at the state level, and the Diaspora of the society from the organization. This kind of concerts is the purpose of our compatriots living in Norway, to unite them both in the classical mughams and modern Azerbaijani music at a high level to provide. Such projects also take a great role to informing the Azerbaijani culture to the Nowegians and resident foreigners in Norway.

Of course we come to the conclusion that particularly, the international music projects are very important for the relations between two countries. Firstable the most important thing in this relation is "The land we come from" – "Skruk" project (1997). The project of Azerbaijani musicians, "Skruk" Norwegian choir "Kirkelig Kulturveerksted" (the Church, the culture of the group) under the name of Norwegian companies in Azerbaijan, working with refugees, the Norwegian Humanitarian Enterprise, organization of joint cooperation, is implemented through. Major project - Azerbaijan and Norway musical ties, reinforcing and highest rated earnings as the project attracted attention. Here the main goal of CD-project is that Norway well-known choir "Skruk" and Azerbaijani soloists sing the Azerbaijanian folk songs in Norwegian language (norsk).

Nowadays, as we see the second important thing for Norway-Azerbaijan relations are the musical expression of music education in the system of mutual exchange programmes, folk musical instruments and the Symphony orchestra instruments, consisting jointly creating of ensembles, as well as the Azerbaijani-Norwegian musical traditions in the composer's works.

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