

# **Defining the patterns of architectural structure of the northern cities of Azerbaijan for maintaining historical values: case examples: Qibla city, Lahij and Khinaligh**

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## **Abstract:**

Architecture and urbanism of Azerbaijan are ancient and culturally rich. It includes primitive structures such as underground holes and evolved organization of city spaces (house, market, main street, religious buildings and ...). Ancient spaces maintain the identity of the country by representing natural architectural values and history of middle ages. Maintenance of historical values is very important. The local economy can be improved by knowing the existed capacities and development of tourism facilities. Qebla, Lahij, and Khinaligh in the northern part of the country are among historical cities that can be the tourism destination. Meanwhile, previous studies paid less attention to the analysis of valuable features of ancient residency and using them in contemporary conditions. The goal of this study is investigation about the nature of the formation of the ancient residential houses of Qibla, Lahij and Khinaligh cities from a historical and architectural point of view, to discover the unique features of them and find the conditions of regeneration and expansion of them in today's situations. So, three protected area (Qebla, Lahij, and Khinaligh) in mountainous regions of Azerbaijan are chosen and their structures were investigated for discovering the international tourism opportunities. The methodology is systematic and analytic and finally, suggestions will be offered. In the first step, through fundamental study, the existed books and documents were investigated. Then, through comparative analysis of the previous experiences and field study, history, architecture, culture, and tourism are investigated by charts, graphics and studying people in the society. Practical findings of this study show that the regeneration of architecture of these regions in micro and macro scale and rehabilitation of biological activities of cities like Qebla, Lahij and Khinaligh and the addition of facilities like hotels and family resorts, can enhance international tourism opportunities.

**Keywords:** architectural values, historical architecture, Azerbaijan, Qebla, Lahij, Khinaligh, tourism cities.

## **1-Introduction:**

Architecture and urbanism of Azerbaijan are ancient and culturally rich. It includes primitive structures such as underground holes and evolved organization of city spaces (house, market, main street, religious buildings and ...). Therefore, maintaining monuments in Azerbaijan is very important and many programs were suggested for protecting this rich heritage. The importance of maintaining rich cultural- historical heritages is justifiable in many aspects. One of these aspects is maintaining the identity of the community and displaying the traditions and way of life of ethnic groups. On the other hand, the existence of historical heritages can attract foreign tourists. Creating new tourist facilities in the ancient regions as well as creating new jobs as a means of developing local capabilities will enhance the economic development of the region. This issue gives more motivation for restoration and maintenances of the regions. In this regard, studying the characteristics and structure of monuments according to different sources and identification of their future capacity should be considered as an important issue. It should be noted that the rich architecture of Azerbaijan has some positive aspects that can be used in contemporary architectures. For example, in 1995, Aichi City was the subject of a comprehensive analysis of the medieval historical works. In addition to the city of Aichi, in other cities of the country (Shakki, Shusha, Ordubad, etc.), several studies investigated about the reasons of formation of historical monuments and the types of structural elements and suggestions for their preservation are offered. Such an analysis has been done specifically on the peninsula of Absheron (Sholan, Mardin, Nebuchadnezzar, etc.). Among historians who have studied historical works, we can name Zia Bonyadov, Farideh Mehrandara, A. A Babayof, J. M Gasif, J. Zeinal Aglo, J. A. A Khalilov, E

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<sup>1</sup>This article is based on the doctoral thesis of the first author and the guidance of the second author.

Aliyev, Bakikhanov, A. Y Kryshensky and Yanofsky. Among the architects are: Hosseinov, Salamzadeh, Britanitsky, Mamedzadeh, Fatollah F, and ... However, previous studies did not consider the analysis of the valuable features of ancient settlements and their application in the contemporary conditions. In another hand, in terms of economic, natural potentials as factors that affect tourism are not considered. So, the innovation of this study is that for the first time the geographical situation of Qebla, Lahij, and Khinaligh in terms of their structures and their building features will be analyzed and the ways of achieving international tourism role in the contemporary era will be considered.

In this research the following issues are investigated:

- Investigating factors affecting historical cities and their spatial structure
- Evaluation of monuments maintenance and classifying their performance
- Promotion of protection and regeneration of monuments as international tourism centers by considering natural climate advantages.

In this regard, the purpose of this study is investigating about the nature of the formation of the ancient residential houses of Qibla, Lahij and Khinaligh cities from a historical and architectural point of view to discover the unique features of them and discover the conditions of regeneration and expansion of them according to the today's situation. In addition, regeneration of time-worn textures with the goal of development of tourism will result in stable regeneration of the forgotten region and regeneration of the forgotten texture. Likewise, according to Msk-64 bylaw (Russia or Soviet Union), these regions are risky, therefore, strengthening the existing texture is necessary in addition of their regeneration.

## **2- The scope of this research**

In the framework of the recent research, the thematic domain is the three protected area in mountainous region of Azerbaijan (Qebla, Lahij and Khinaligh). In this regard, their structure and their features will be investigated and the possibility of joining this regions to international tourism system will be studied. In the scope of this research, structural features and rich works in this regions that caused protection of mountainous cities like Qebla, Khinaligh and Lahij, will be defined as functions of variables that affect on development, promotion and identification of opportunities of international tourism.

## **3. Methodology**

The methodology of this research is descriptive-analytic and refers to different analytic-systematic methods and suggestions. In the first step, through fundamental study, the existed books and documents were investigated. Then, through comparative analysis of the previous experiences and field study, history, architecture, culture, and tourism are investigated by charts, graphics and studying people in the society (through the interview).

## **4- the Theoretical framework of research**

Extensive information on the history of the northern part of Azerbaijan shows that in the past, many ancient settlements have existed in the Caucasus-Albanian territory. For example, the Qibla region, the territory of northern Azerbaijan, between the third and fifth centuries was the capital of Albania. After being conquered by the Arabs, despite its development, the capital was transferred to the Ganjeh. As the result, many cities on the banks of the Kor River gradually developed in order to strengthen their relations with other countries.

For example, although the city of Qibla was not the capital of the country since the fifth century, in order to maintain its activity, began to communicate with the caravan roads.

By studying the works of urbanism art at that time, it can be concluded that the functional structure of habitats has been formed due to geographical location, natural weather conditions, the presence of water component and the relationship with the caravan roads. In the design of many cities and castles, the structure of the tripartite (residence, cemetery, Caravanserai) dominated.

This structure was based on the principle of the elements of space (street, square, gate, market and caravansaries, main shopping center, memorial buildings, and religious centers) that created the infrastructure.

In addition, the defensive factor played an important role in shaping urban planning (Qibla, Ganja, Baku, and Tabriz). However, public and religious architecture, watchtowers, gates, and commercial main streets were the main elements that shaped the facades of urban buildings. Therefore, nature was considered as the most influential factor in the planning of the city's design and architectural monuments.

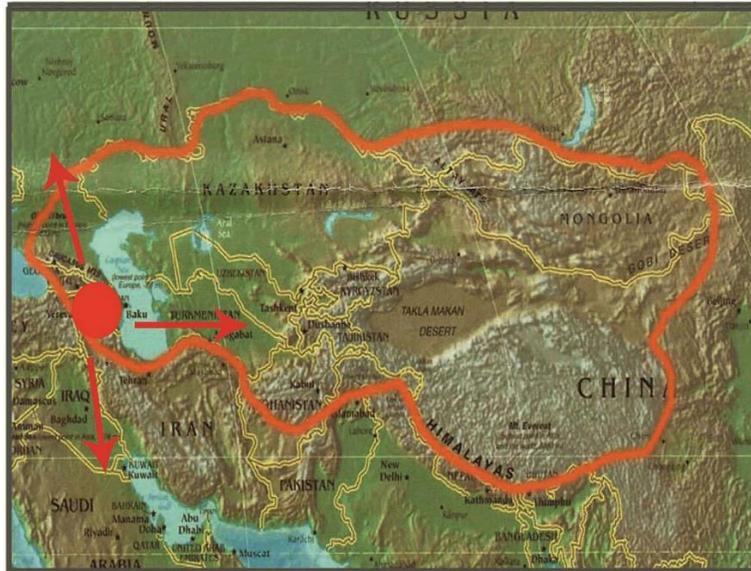


Figure 1 shows caravan roads in northern regions of Azerbaijan

#### **1-4 effective factors on the volume and spatial organization of historical settlements (Qebla, Lahij and Khinaligh).**

In addition of the valuable architecture of Azerbaijan in medieval centuries, an extensive scope of cultural and artistic works of this country were considered. Many historical works in Lahij, Khinaligh and Qebla are considered for this research. Today, these works are reminder of different stages of engineering and architecture that rehabilitate the traditions and artistic features.

Despite the architecture of Lahij and Khinaligh, during the drilling of the third protected region (Qebla), outstanding buildings were discovered that show the history and architecture of Chokhor village didn't lose its development in different ages and climate, urbanism and people activities (figure 2). However, their role as a leading force on the basis of public construction and the planning of the principle of historical settlements, natural conditions, and climatic conditions has had a major impact on the formation of their volume and spatial organization.

For example, history shows that natural and climatic factors play a coherent role in the formation of the Qebla as the permanent capital and also the main urbanization center of that area. Also, the presence of the river, the walls of the castle of the city on the hill, the presence of rocks and densely populated forests around the city, the presence of urban water are among the factors that formed this city. All elements and conditions affecting the formation of the city and the people's way of life. In other words, in different interpretations of the formation of cities, climatic, natural and functional factors are considered as the main factors. For example, climate factors (wind, sun, rain, etc.) have been used correctly in the structural and architectural design of mountainous regions. This is obvious in the direction of the streets and the construction of the terraces.

Despite the mentioned cases, because of the earthquake, the buildings were made in a way that were resistant against earthquake. For example, in Lahij the houses were built in two stories. Usually, the first floor was used for keeping livestock. For every 5-6 layers of stiles, a wooden log was placed in a horizontal sketch on the wall. The reason for this practice was that the horizontal shingles increased the building's resistance to earthquakes.

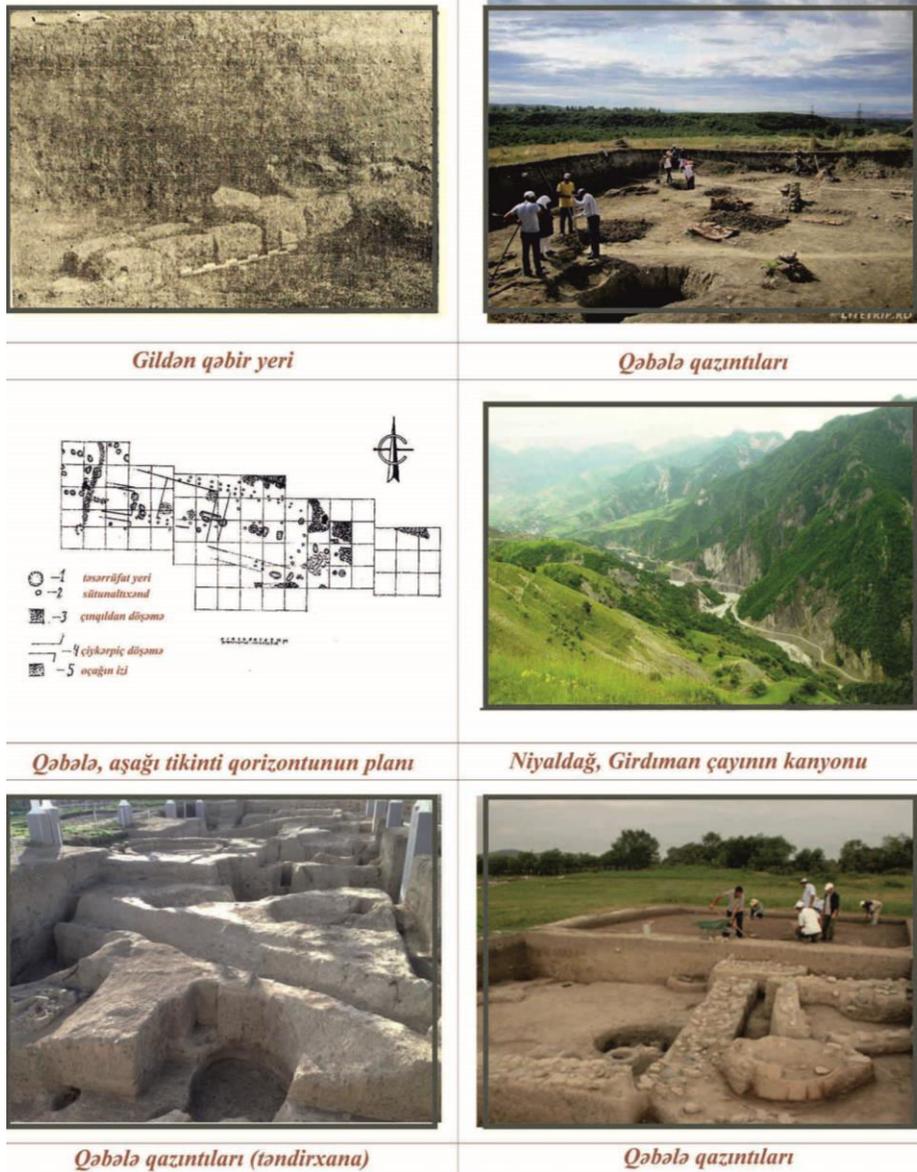
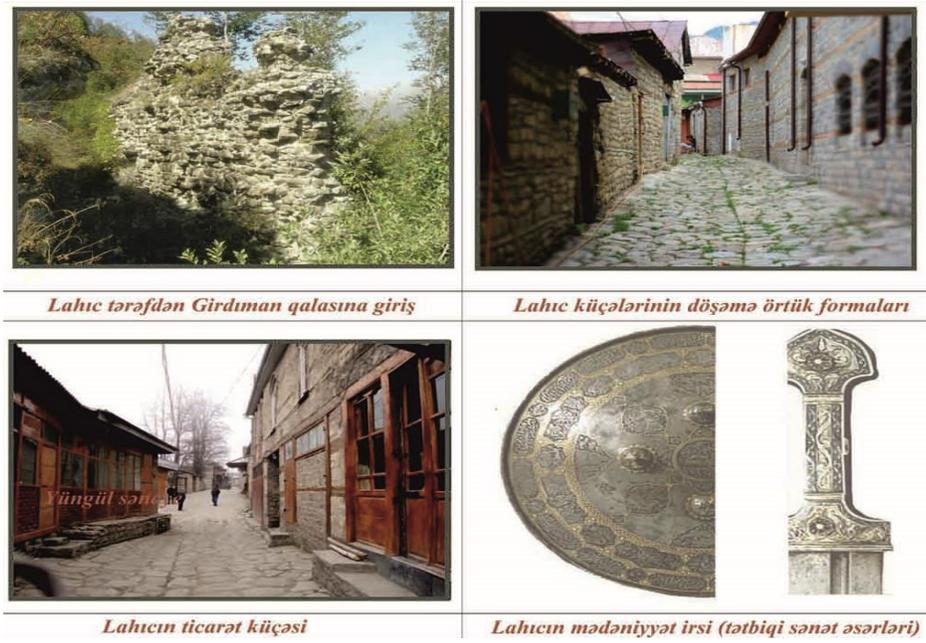


Figure 2: historical city of Qebla

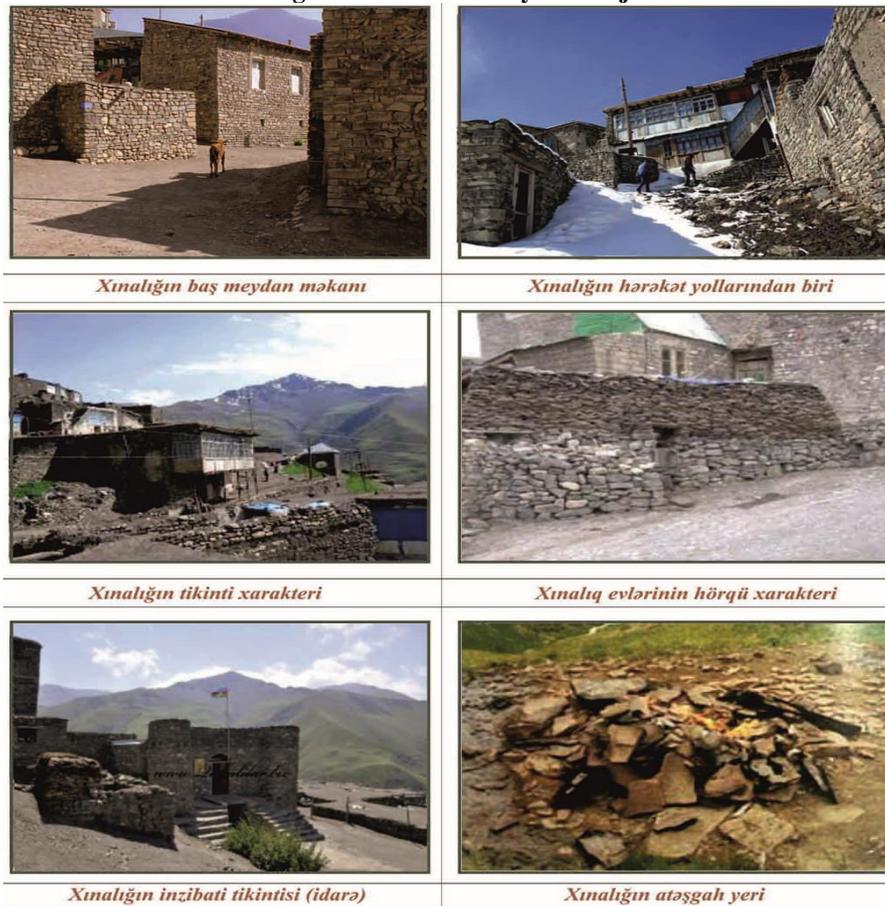
**2-4- Characteristics of the formation of structural elements in historical protected areas**

Ancient resident of Qebla, Lahij, and Khenaligh that are among 27 protected regions, are important cities in the north of Azerbaijan because of their rich heritage, history, and urbanism. These cities have special building characteristics that turned them into historical cities. These cities are significantly different from cities of other regions. They are recently protected for their local, cultural and historical heritage:

- 1- Lahij settlement is a cultural and historical heritage located in Esmaeili region that includes the protected region (figure 3)
- 2- The historical- architectural protected region and ethnography of Khinaligh located in Gooya region (figure 4)
- 3- The natural and historical heritage of Qebla tribe that recently is located in the region of Qebla as Charkhoor Qebla. The city of Qebla had been a part of a big country in the past.



**Figure 3- historical city of Lahij**



**Figure 4 . Historical city of Lahij**

It is noteworthy that the favorable natural and continental condition of these regions, plenty lands for development of different agricultural species, the existence of rare plant and animals and monuments, caused that their bio-environments are rich. Presence of several waterfalls near these cities, being surrounded by forests and the unique architectural works caused that the residents of these regions convert their living activities to advanced activities. In another hand, using building material has differentiated the local architecture. This study shows that the local structure essentially is affected by villagers/ agriculture and home traditions. Maybe, mountain lifestyle has created a special rule that a structure affected by it has been necessary. Nowadays, we are witness that the unique nature, the climate conditions, differentiated architectural works, boundaries of the country, street structure, works that create identity and solutions that are used for public, religious and residency structures define the conditions of these cities. Therefore, the criteria for values and the mentioned features were considered in the process of urbanism in medieval ages.

#### **4.3 Characteristics of the form, structure and architecture of monuments in the territory of protected areas**

Each monument has a special feature in designing, art and architecture. It is hoped that by analysis of these features, a valuable and innovative place will be created and they used with new usability and activity. We should remind that the form and configuration of the protected area, like Lahij and Qebla and Khinaligh, is formed by climate, tradition of the people, art, political, social and geographical status and foreign relationships.

As an example exportation of handicraft industries of these regions to foreign markets and connection with other regions caused that the experiences of other country is used in building these regions. To prove this issue, we can refer to the objects that are discovered in the ancient region of Qebla. Coins of other countries in this region shows the middle age life and relative social life in these regions. However, architectural buildings that are remained up to now, despite of exposure to natural damages, could maintain their original structures.

#### **5- Strategies for maintaining the monuments in case study regions (Qebla, Lahij and Khinaligh)**

Architectural historical heritage are those works that maintain cultural, economic and architectural values. However, these structures represent the activities, tradition and life of a nation. Therefore, maintenance of these cultural heritage should be evaluated in form of rehabilitation. In similar cases, often by urbanism planning of other regions of Azerbaijan and foreign countries, we can understand that special mountainous condition in north part of Azerbaijan is important in terms of natural landscape despite of architectural heritage.

As mentioned, maintenance and rehabilitation of the under studied regions, cause maintenance of historical and cultural heritage and attract tourists and business in the region will be improved.

Therefore, restoration of ancient building and intervention in the modernization trends of these mountainous cities that revive historical and cultural values of people can solve the security problem of the people too. However, maintenance of cultural works in different regions of Azerbaijan including Qebla, Lahij, and Khinaligh are among important issues of today.

There are much research on the protection of the regions. Many researchers such as Qates R., Stout F (USA), Cappolizi (Italy), V.Bruseviç (Poland), O.Şvidkovski (Russia) and other intellectuals of Azerbaijan suggested theories about this issue. We refer to some of them here: Z Banitov, Fr Mammadov, G Short time Babayev, S. Kazaev, and others. Isamed, M. Mumbai, R Beyram F.

However, theoretical and practical concepts of these scientist are different. One strategy is to repair the monuments completely. Some of the scientists refer to the trend of restoration as a subject of research, but others refers to updating the monuments. Therefore, several scientists suggest comprehensive research and analysis with an integrated approach to solve this problem in which the effect of environment is considered in the process of protection as much as restoration of the cities.

It is suggested that the buildings be restored in many aspects:

1- Keeping the form and architecture and volume of the building for their maintenance

- Make minor changes to volumetric structures, such as facing design, upgrading the design of recreational areas aesthetically, matching entry elements with street view, adapting the balcony of buildings with turning the street and improving its landscape.

- Change or replace the function of the buildings, through the interior design in order to revive them

In restoration of residence building in Khinaligh and Lahij regions, construction of residential buildings should be adapted with streets as whole not separate groups.

As a successful example of adaption of the texture and ancient quartier, we can refer to central part of Tabriz in Iran that includes contemporary conditions.

Using the inner courtyard and tree planting, sometimes the size of the building can be added as a semi-closed space system to reconstruct the buildings. However, the interventions should not harm the whole volume and maintain its

integrity. In addition, creating landscape in the restoration trend can upgrade the building attraction. Restoration by considering protection of the nature beside the streets and buildings, will create the favorable changes. Keeping social spaces while restoring these cities is important.

Therefore, using different methods when restoring the building for maintaining space value of historical buildings, improvement of climate conditions and social spaces can have positive impact:

- 1- Reconstruction in order to strengthen the landscape in the main streets and minor spaces; thus, improvement of landscapes and facades is of particular importance.
- 2- Restoration of architectural elements that are perfect and maintenance of its whole structure is very important. In the process of rebuilding historic cities, more attention should be focused on public utilities and urban amenities.
- 3- Reinforcement of natural landscapes by expanding green spaces and using natural element such as rocks can create a new panoramic landscape with a stronger visual effect. Harmony of landscapes with buildings and the historical environment is important.

**Reconstruction to improve tourism industry**

At the beginning of the twentieth century, large hotels were built in Moscow and Baku (Grand Hotel, Metropolis and ...). Therefore, the hotel industry was revived in the 1960s and 1930s in Europe and other countries of the world and reached a new face of evolution. In these years, new hotels were built in Azerbaijan, especially in Baku. In addition, construction of hotels in recent year ( Qebla, Shaghayegh, and others) has an important role in organizing winter holidays in Azerbaijan. Therefore, different facilities are provided that without harming the historical values of monuments, maintain the tourism industry. Among suggestions for construction of the favorable hotels, we can refer to the followings:

1. Construction of hotels and family residences;
2. Renovation of rural houses as residences;
3. Building new hotels in the surrounding area, with larger size and area.

In addition to the construction of hotels, attention to effective factors on the hotel industry and organizing these factors is important. Therefore, tourism is not possible without creating the infrastructures. In this respect, the protected regions in mountainous regions are important. Figures 5 shows some of the suggested facilities for upgrading the international tourism in the protected historical regions.

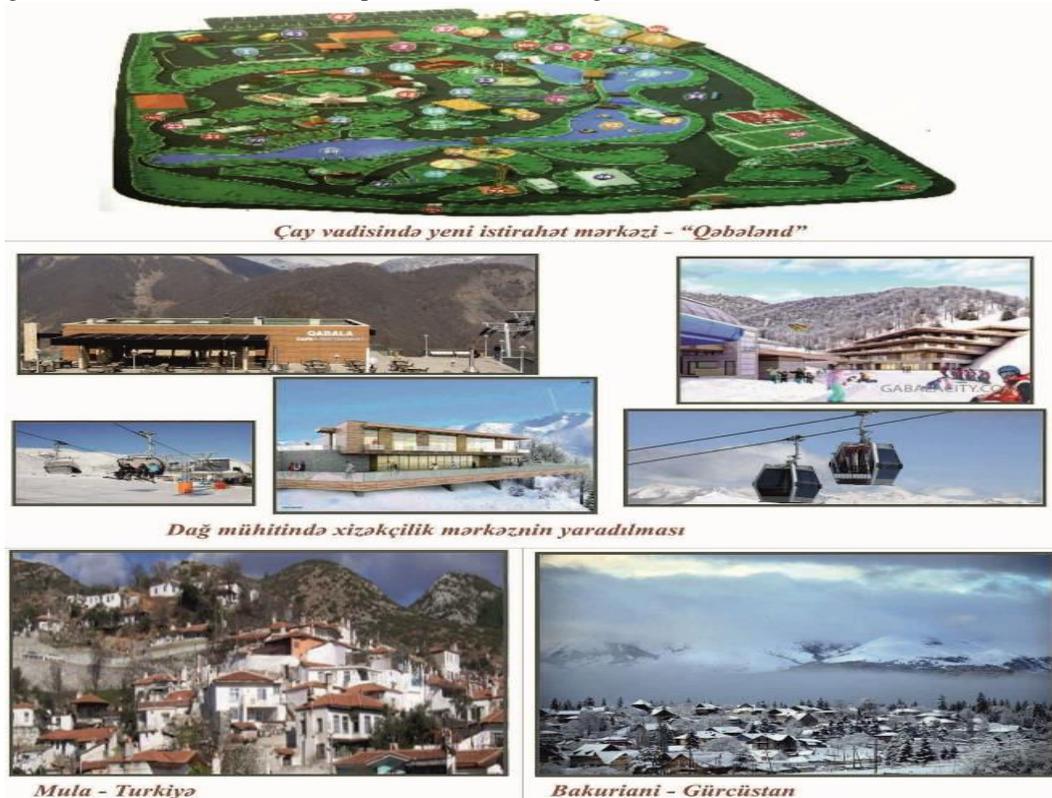


Figure 5: suggestion of recreational facilities and hotel in historical protected regions.

**Conclusion**

The architectural heritage that reflects activity, tradition and routine life of society, should be evaluated as a cultural-historical product. For example, in Albanian Caucasus architecture, there is a need to maintain the ancient heritage of Qebla. Likewise, to know the engineering and architectural techniques with ancient value, studying the spatial structure of Lahij is important. In another hand, reviewing the lifestyle and ethnography and evaluation of Khinaligh region is very important. In addition, hotel services should cause infrastructure facilities in the historical region. Restoration and improvement of the environment also should be for keeping and maintaining the monuments and historical works. There are some historical houses in Khinaligh, Charkhoor, Qebla, and Lahij, that can be used as settlements or traditional hotel and small recreational center with fewer expenses for the accommodation of tourists. Therefore, we can say that studying architectural heritage of mountainous regions with such a rich history, can be a large step for the tourism industry that contributes to spiritual, material and historical resources of the regions and active use of them. This issue can cause maintenance and healthiness of the environment. In addition, improvement and repair of the historical region is a strategy for achieving stable development. This issue, by creating the active business in tourism, cause stable social economic in village societies. Stability in these regions will be accompanied with village life survival and not quitting the villages.

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