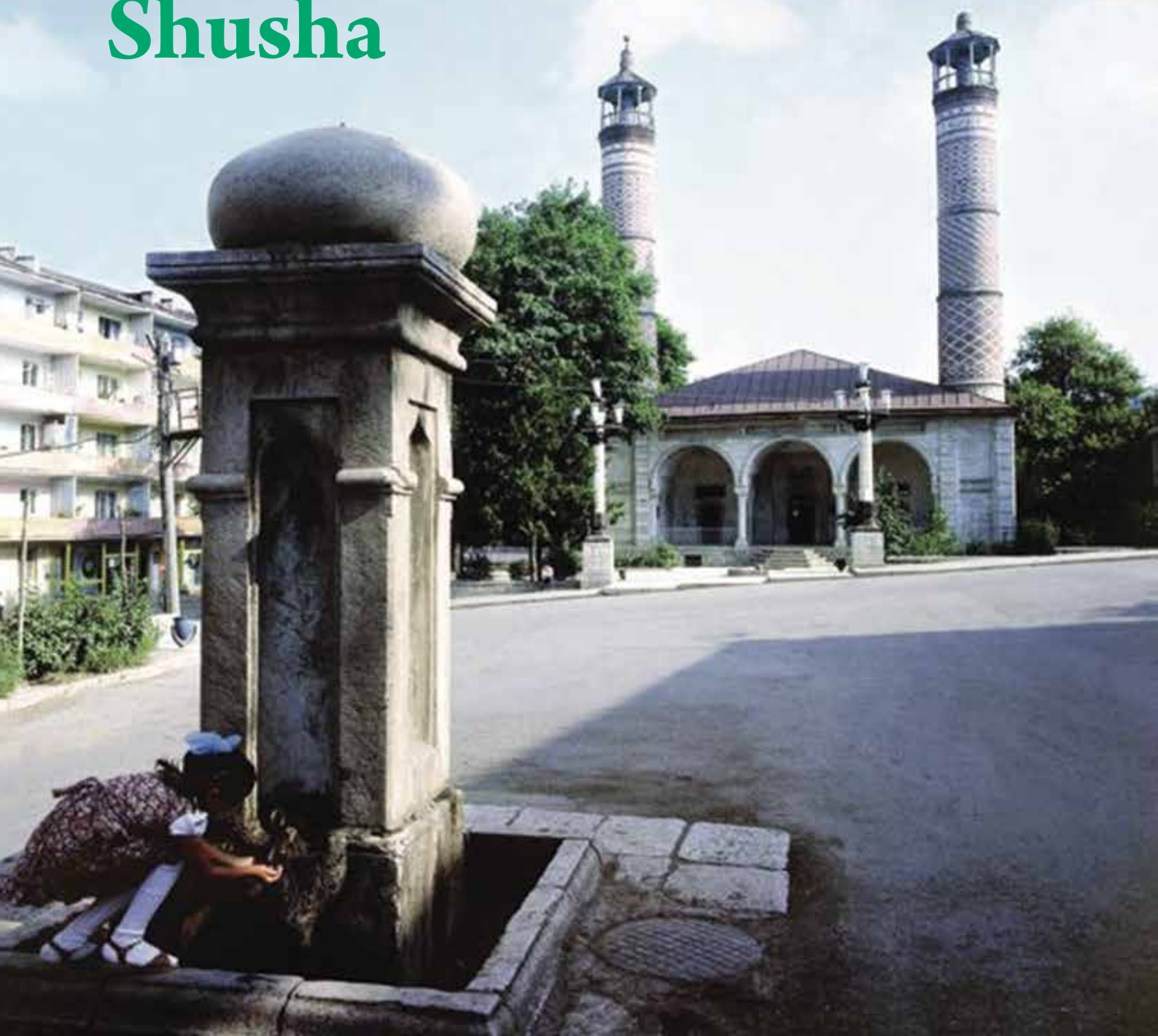


Poetess Khurshidbanu Natavan and water supply of Shusha



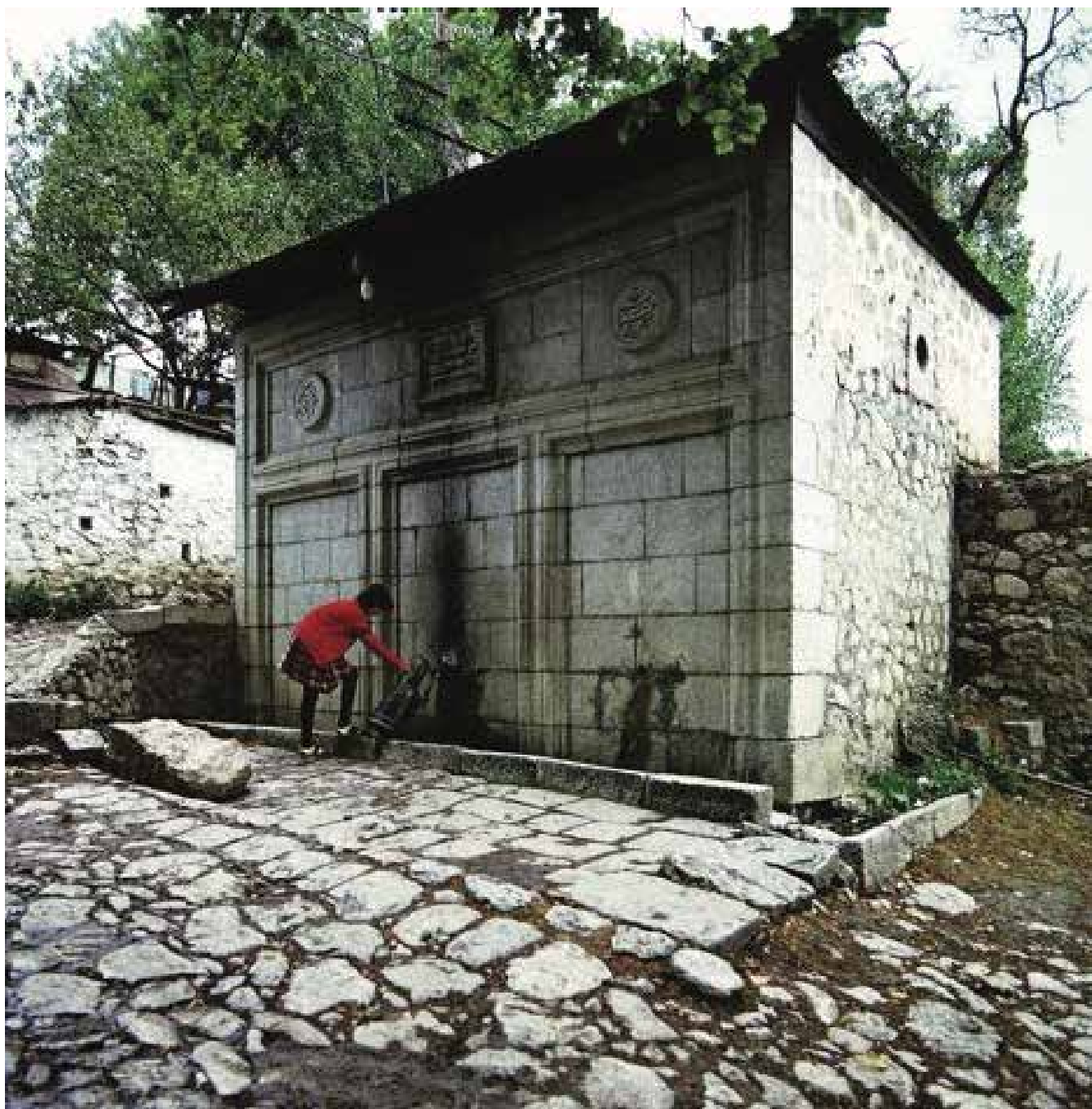


mastered Arabic and Persian languages, studied the Koran and secular sciences, as well as the canons of classical poetry of the East. The literary environment of Shusha played an important part in shaping up Khurshidbanu's talent. She was also a gifted artist, was engaged in needlework and embroidery. Along with this, her kindness and humanity won Khurshidbanu the sympathy of the residents of her native town. It is said that she never refused anyone who asked for help.

Khurshidbanu's poetic activities began in the 1850s. The leading themes in her ghazals were love, human

beauty, and nature. Along with classical poetry, the ashug art occupies a special place in Natavan's legacy. Since 1872, Khurshidbanu headed a literary assembly called "Majlisi-uns", or a "gathering of friends". Along with poets, this assembly was also joined by musicians – more than 30 members in total. Khurshidbanu chaired the assembly for about 20 years. She adopted the literary pseudonym of Natavan, which means "helpless".

In 1850, Natavan married Prince Hasay bey Utsmiyev. In 1855, they had a son, Mehdi Gulu, and in 1856, daughter Khanbika. However, in 1864, the family broke



up, and two years later Hasay Utsmiyev committed suicide. In 1869, Natavan married a certain Seid Huseyn, a poor resident of Shusha, and they had a son named Mirabbas.

Despite the hardships of life and failures in her personal life, Natavan was actively involved in charity work, the improvement of her native city and its environs, including the construction of bridges, roads, schools and mosques, as well as the repair of old buildings. In 1873, at the poetess's expense, a water pipeline was

built in Shusha, through which water flowed from the Isa-bulaghi spring 10 km from the city. This water pipeline, which grateful Shusha residents still call "the spring of the khan's daughter", was built in a little over a year from specially made pottery pipes and cost 20,000 rubles – a fabulous sum for that time. From an area called Yastigal area, the water supply system branched out in two directions – to the khan's palace and the residential area of the upper part of the city, where two octagonal, beautifully decorated pavilions with hidden pools and six taps were built.



The water pipeline was officially opened on August 18, 1873. Guests from Shirvan, Sheki, Ganja, Nakhchivan and other places gathered for the ceremony. A feast was held in the Shusha Khan's Garden with the participation of khanende, mugham and ashug performers, and dancers. Khurshidbanu Natavan arrived at the ceremony with members of her family, including her son Mehdi Gulu and his wife.

The launch of the water pipeline led to the appearance of more bath-houses in Shusha, the city's landscaping improved. Residents of the city were saying that "water from the spring of the khan's daughter refreshed hearts, like the poems of Natavan herself, as if it were not water flowing among stones, but the thoughts and feelings of the poetess". Unfortunately, several years later, Natavan's son Mirabbas died at the age of 17. This loss had a heavy impact on the poetess's state of mind and did not bypass her work – she poured out her soul



in a number of ghazals. Under the influence of her experiences, Natavan fell seriously ill. Having somewhat recovered, she went to Tiflis in 1888 for further treatment. But the death of her husband in 1891 became another heavy blow, which led to a further deterioration in her health. In addition, unknown assailants stole money and jewelry from the poetess's house that was intended for charitable purposes. As a result, the construction of an irrigation canal from the Araz River to the Mil steppe had to be suspended.

Natavan died in her native Shusha on October 1, 1897. The city's residents carried the poetess's body on their shoulders to neighboring Aghdam, where she was buried in the Imarat family cemetery. The Azerbaijani people have fond memories of the remarkable poetess and philanthropist: streets, libraries, schools are named after Khurshidbanu Natavan, her state was erected in Baku, and a bust in Shusha. Natavan's manuscripts and per-



sonal belongings are kept in archives and museums. In April 2012, the President of Azerbaijan signed a decree on celebrating the 180th anniversary of Khurshidbanu Natavan's birth in recognition of the major role she played in the development of Azerbaijani literature. On May 8, 1992, Shusha was occupied by the armed forces of Armenia. Years of devastation and destruction, robbery and looting began. Among other things, the water supply system, the landmark of Shusha and a cultural heritage of the Azerbaijani people, was severely damaged. Only 30 years later, in November 2020, the liberation of the city by the Azerbaijani army crowned the victorious outcome of the Second Karabakh War for Azerbaijan.

On May 12, 2021, during a visit to Shusha, President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev announced the restoration of the "Khan Daughter's Spring", one of the symbols of the city. According to the President, before fleeing the city, the Armenian occupiers damaged the water pipes, drying up all 17 of its fountains. "This is an act of barbarity, and this once again shows that Shusha has always been a foreign city for Armenians. Now Shusha is coming back to life, and one of the symbols of Shusha, the "Khan Daughter's Spring", has been restored. Today I drank water from this spring." 🌱

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