



Adopted UPG #6, The Azer*baijani of Azerbaijan

Our adopted UPG #6, the Azer*baijani, represent almost 9 million people in the country Azer*baijan and over 30 million worldwide. Less than .5% are known believers in Jesus Christ. We are trusting God for 550,000 souls in their home country.

- Name: Azer*baijani
- Adoption Date: October 2021
- Population: 8.8 million (in Azer*baijan)
- Location: Azer*baijan
- Language: Aze*ri
- Religious Make Up: 88% Muslim; 12.5 % Atheist/Non-religious

Introduction / History

Azer*baijan is located in the Caucasus Mountain region on the western shore of the Caspian Sea. It is there, in the land of the ancient Medes, that we find more than eight million Azer*baijanis (also known as the Aze*ri). The name "Aze*ri" is thought to have come from the fourth century ruler, Atropat, who governed the area that is now northwestern Iran. However, it may have been derived from azer, the Persian word for fire.

Shortly after Jesus' death and resurrection the gospel was introduced to this region and there is a rich tradition of Christian influence and architecture under the "Alban" kingdoms during the first centuries of church history. Islam was introduced into the area during the seventh century A.D., eventually becoming the dominant religion, and has been practiced there in various forms ever since.

What Are Their Lives Like?

Azer*baijan is a low, fertile plateau located in the South Caucasus bordered by the Caspian Sea on the East and the Caucasus Mountains in the North and West. The region's largest city, Baku, and its surrounding areas are low and not covered with trees, but its border areas are covered with thick forests.

The climate ranges from warm to sub-tropical temperatures. Grain, grapes, cattle, sheep, and goats are raised in abundance. Vegetables, fruits, and some teas are also important products. Although the land is ideal for farming, about one fourth of the population now lives in Baku, the

nation's capital, working in industry. Energy resources including petroleum and natural gas are major exports and economic factors.

Modern life in Azer*baijan, as in most countries, varies widely from person to person and family to family. The affluent live in ultra-modern skyscraper buildings or large Villas in the suburbs or scenic areas. The poor often live in small makeshift homes, dilapidated apartments, or rustic villages. Most people fall between these two extremes. Many people work in the energy sector, agriculture, or other industries. Most urban people and many in the other regions use modern electronics for many aspects of life. Education is valued and literacy is very high.

The Azer*baijani diet consists mainly of rice pilaf and a variety of grilled and boiled meats, including beef, goat, and lamb. Traditional dishes include bozartma (mutton stew), dovga (a soup made from yogurt), meat, and herbs. Other dishes are doma, khingal, kabab, and dushbara. Tea and wine are popular drinks.

What Are Their Beliefs?

The Azer*baijanis are primarily Shi'ite Muslims, but there are a number of Sunni Muslims as well. Islam among the Azer*baijani is a reflection of the historical ties that exist between Azer*baijan and Iran. Until the twentieth century, most Azer*baijani identified themselves as Muslims rather than Azer*baijani or Turks. They believe that being a "spiritual community of Islam" was much more important than being a nation.

In Azer*baijan, religious practices are less restrictive of women's activities than in most other Muslim countries. Most women have jobs outside the home, and a few have attained leadership positions. However, some evidence of the traditional, restrictive female role remains.

- *Asterisks are included for security purposes.
- Content is provided by Bethany World Prayer Center