

CARPETS OF AZERBAIJAN

Azerbaijan History in the Patterns

Azerbaijan has an ancient and unique culture in which carpet-weaving is one of the most developed fields of the decorative arts. Alongside other handicrafts, weaving originated in Azerbaijan in the Neolithic Age. Cattle grazing in the Neolithic Age gave way to the development of sheep farming, which gradually turned into the main activity of households, creating a surplus of wool, the main source of weaving. Besides the development of weaving techniques, raw materials for the production of dyes were needed, of which Azerbaijan has plenty, including madder, cochineal, pomegranate rind and oak. Under such favorable conditions, weaving progressed on an unprecedented scale. Archeologists found traces of floor mats (4th millennium BC) in the Jalilabad region and small heads of spinning spindle axles and bone spinning wheels (4th to 3rd millennium BC) in Kultepe. The most ancient textile remains – linen, cotton and wool – were found in Mingchevir catacombs, burial mounds and other burial sites (2nd to 1st millennium BC). There were also traces of local natural dyes in the woollens discovered by the archeologists.





Carpet of Latif Karimov "Azerbaijan carpet-weaving centers", 1984

During the Iron Age (1st millennium BC), weaving and carpet-weaving were widely developing in Media and Atropatena. Upon arriving in Atropatena, Alexander the Great adopted the clothes of the Median people. The delicate dyeing of textiles in the Caucasus was also mentioned by the ancient Greek historian Herodotus (5th century BC). Whilst researching the carpet remains found in the excavation of the Pazyryk burial sites in the mountainous Altay

region, S.I. Rudenko identified them as the product of Iranian and Atropatena carpet-weavers.

Spinning was one of the main businesses of the Albanians from the first century BC to the third century AD. Metallic scissors for sheep shearing ("qyrkhylaq") dating from the 2nd to 3rd centuries were found in Mingechvir. The remains of weaving looms ("khan") carpet-weaving tools (bone comb, "kyrkid"), sink-stones and remains of

carpets all date from the 3rd to 8th centuries.

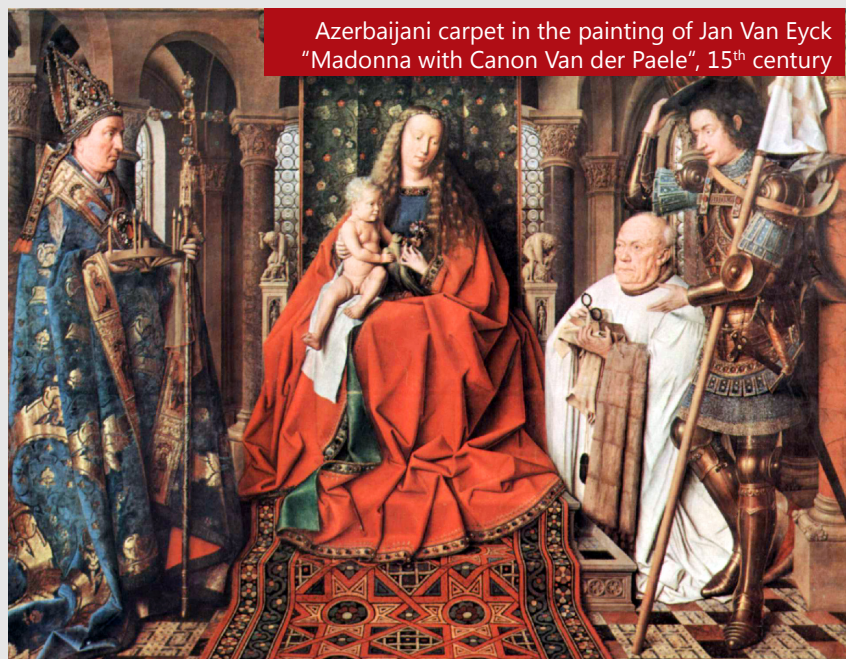
Azerbaijani carpet-weaving developed slowly during the period of the Arab Caliphate due to the erosion of the economy and the appearance of a new ideology, etc. Islam forbade the portrayal of people and animals. On one hand, the arts suffered, but on the other hand new compositions known as Namazlyk "Mihrabi" were created, conventional flower design and geometrical ornaments were developed and carpet weavers began to use Arab literature and various Islamic symbols. Arab historian Aby Jafar Mohammad Tabari (839-923), Chinese explorer Huan Tesank and Albanian historian Moses Kalankatuy wrote about the high-quality carpet production in Azerbaijan during the 7th century and Al-Mukaddasi in the 10th century, as well as the notes from the manuscript of "Hudud-al-Alem" of that period. Azerbaijani silk carpets were praised in "Kitabi Dede Qorqud" epic poem in the 10th century. Azerbaijani carpets were also described in the works of the great Azerbaijani poets Qatran Tabrizi (11th century), Nizami Ganjavi, Khagani Shirvani (12th century) and others.

Improvements in sheep husbandry after the Mongol conquest gave rise to significant wool supplies to the domestic and foreign markets and in the course of time, carpet-weaving became widespread. The Italian merchant and traveler Marco Polo and the French monk Rubruck also wrote about the carpet weaving of the 13th century.

Azerbaijani weaving in the Middle Ages reached its peak in the 16th and 17th centuries during the reign of the Safavids. It became the most popular handicraft and art of that period. There were large numbers of urban and rural carpet-weavers producing for the market, but many were weaving to meet their own needs, nourishing the roots of the artistic and ornamental enrichment of Azerbaijani carpets. Carpets and different kinds of carpet-weaving products (zili, farsh, gali, kilim (napless carpet), mafrash, etc.) firmly entered the life of the Azerbaijani population becoming one of the main elements of the internal

decoration of the houses and carts, palaces and mosques, municipal caravanserai, hospitals, madrasah and libraries. The great demand for carpets caused an expansion in the economic basis of carpet-weaving in Azerbaijan. Miniature oil painting was also rapidly developing in that period. There were special court workshops where the painters-miniaturists and carpet-weavers were working together creating new carpet compositions. Sultan Mohammad and his son Mohammadi, Shah Tahmasib, Sadig Bekou Afshar were among these painters-miniaturists. The famous Sheikh Safi carpet was woven in 1539 in Tabriz and is now on display in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. The size of the carpet is 10.5m x 5.3m with a total area of 56.12 sqm. In the 1570s, the Englishman J. Duckett wrote from Shirvan: "There is no one, even the poorest, who didn't sit on the carpet – good or bad - and the whole house or the whole room where they usually sit is covered with carpets".

The intensive development of the material culture of Azerbaijan and the extension of its relations with European countries in the Middle Ages left the traces of Azerbaijani carpets in Renaissance painting such as "Madonna with Canon Van der Paele" by Flemish painter Jan Van Eyck (1390-1441), "The Virgin and Child with Saint Victor" and "Portrait of a Young Man" on the reverse side by German representative of the Flemish school, Hans Memling



Azerbaijani carpet in the painting of Jan Van Eyck "Madonna with Canon Van der Paele", 15th century

(1440-1494), "The Annunciation" by the Venetian painter, Carlo Crivelli (1457-1493), "The Ambassadors" by German painter, Hans Holbein the Younger (1498-1543) and "Scenes from the Life of Aeneas" by Italian painter Pinturicchio (1454-1513).

Azerbaijan fell into small feudal states at the end of the 17th century, but the people continued to develop carpet-weaving. The English explorer Thomas Herbert wrote in the beginning of the 17th century that a lot of hard-working and skillful craftsmen (carpet weavers) were living in the cities and flooding the markets with their products.

The formation of single khanates in Southern and Northern Azerbaijan as early as the mid-18th century increased the role of local art schools. Moving away from the influence of miniatures, the carpet-weaving centers of Northern Azerbaijan restored the popular tradition of decorative-applied arts and every khanate had own its carpet-weaving workshop.

It is known that the founder of the Karabakh khanate, Panah-khan, invited famous masters from different parts of Azerbaijan to Shusha to actively develop jewelry-making, pottery, timberwork and particularly carpet-weaving. The Georgian researcher Zedgenidze, who visited Shusha in 1886, writes: "...Almost all of the carpet-weaving production was concentrated in the Azerbaijani families. Armenians had to learn the secrets of carpet-weaving from them".

The Russian researcher M.D. Isaev remarked that carpet-weaving was most concentrated in Azerbaijan at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. By the turn of the 19th century, the traditional Azerbaijani handicraft industry, particularly carpet-weaving, started to decay due to spread of textile and carpet manufacturing in the world and their lower prices compared to handmade products.

At the end of 20th century, carpet weaving became one of the impor-



Azerbaijani carpet in the painting "The Ambassadors" of Hans Holbein, 16th century



Azerbaijani carpet, 19th century



Carpet of Tebriz group, 19th century

tant areas of the economy in Azerbaijan. At present, it is developing in many regions of the country and more than twenty large and mid-size carpet-weaving factories are operating in the country, particularly in Guba, Gusar, Kurdamir, Ganja, Shamakhi, Shabran, Gazakh, Tovuz, Shaki and Baku. Carpets of the Azer-Ilme company stand out, and they met with great success at the trade fairs in Atlanta (USA, 1997), Hannover (Germany, 1999) and Moscow (2003). The carpets woven in the factories of this company form part of private collections in the USA, Germany, France, Turkey, Russia, Italy, Austria, Japan, Sweden, Norway and South Africa.

The Azerbaijani State Carpet and Applied Art Museum named after carpet designer Latif Karimov was established in Baku in 1967.

The museum is located in the center of Azerbaijan's capital, opposite Seaside Boulevard. This is the first carpet museum in the world. Valuable carpets and carpet-weaving products from all regions of the country are displayed there: piled (khalcha, khali, dest khali, gebe) and napless (palas, kilim, djedjim, sumakh, shedde, verni, zili); various carpet-weaving products (khurdjun, chul, heyba, mafrash, yehar gashlighi) and other works of this decorative art. The museum's collection includes about 15,000 small and large carpet-weaving items. One of the most valuable exhibits is the "Khilibuta" carpet decorated with national ornaments produced by Karabakh carpet-weavers in the 10th century. The museum staff organizes different events and attends many international exhibitions, con-

ferences and symposiums. On February 7, 2011, the Museum Center hosted a presentation of the film "The Art Azerbaijani Traditional Carpet", the film and website (www.carpet.intangible.az) prepared by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism for UNESCO. The website contains full information about Azerbaijani carpets. The Heydar Aliyev Foundation issued a catalogue entitled as "Azerbaijani Carpets".

Azerbaijani carpets have been included in the **UNESCO** intangible cultural heritage list. The issue of inclusion of Azerbaijani carpets in this list was discussed at UNESCO's 5th meeting in Kenya.

Many Azerbaijani carpets are treasured in the world's greatest museums and many private collections as well. An Azerbaijani carpet woven by Gazakh carpet-weavers of the 15th century depicting two birds on a tree is exhibited in the **Stockholm Museum**.

The carpet "Phoenix Fighting with Dragon" woven in the 15th century in the style of the Gazakh school is in the **Museum of Islamic Art in Berlin**. The Carpets "Godja", from Karabakh, "Shamakha" of the 17th century, as well as Tabriz carpet "Ovchulug" of the 16th century form part of the collection of the Metropolitan Museum in New York. The Museum of Turkic-Islamic Works in Istanbul, the **Museum of Oriental Cultures of the State Hermitage**, the **State Museum of History in Moscow** and the **Russian Museum of Ethnography in St Petersburg** exhibit various Azerbaijani carpets. The Metropolitan Museum in New York, the Museum of Turkic and Islamic Art in Istanbul, the State Art Museum in Istanbul, the State Museum of Art of Eastern People in Moscow,

Budapest Museum, the Museum of Art in Philadelphia, Munich Museum, the Museum of Textile in Vienna and many other museums of the world also have Azerbaijani carpets in their collections.

Currently a new building to house the **carpet museum**, designed in the form of a bolt of carpet, is being constructed in the vicinity of Seaside Boulevard. The ceremony of the laying of the foundation of the new carpet museum was held on May 17, 2008 in Baku. The President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, and UNESCO Director



Carpet "Gonagkend" of Guba group dating to 1948

General, Koitiro Matsuura, attended the ceremony. The four-storey building of the new museum is three times larger than current Museum of Azerbaijani Carpets and Applied Arts in Baku. The exhibition halls will occupy three floors and the fourth floor will be divided into two parts: exhibitions of the Children's Museum of Carpets and Applied Arts and exhibitions of the Azerbaijan State Museum of Modern Arts. The State Museum of Carpets and Applied Arts has been named after the carpet designer Latif Karimov since 1991 because the museum was founded on his initiative in 1967.

The famous carpet-weaving researcher Latif Karimov divided Azerbaijani carpets into four schools: Guba-Shirvan, Ganja-Gazakh, Karabakh and Tabriz. These schools were also divided into the sub-schools. Other researchers place emphasis on seven schools:

Guba; Shirvan; Baku; Ganja; Gazakh; Karabakh; and Tabriz.

The Guba-Shirvan school is divided into three groups: Guba; Shirvan; and Baku. The Guba group includes the carpets spread throughout the following regions: 1. The following carpets were woven in Guba: Khohna; Guba; Alpan; Khirdagulchichi; Alchagulchichi; and sumakhs of Guba. 2. The carpets of Garagashli, Shahnazarli, Mollakamalli, Ledjedi, Piryabedil, Bilidji, Ugah, and Charah produced in Shabran. 3. Gonaghkend carpets included Gonaghkend, Orudj, Afurdja, Yerfi, Gymyl, Djek, Gyryz, Djimi, Khashi, Arsalan, Khan, and Salmesoyud.



Carpet "Namazlik" of Shirvan group dating to the 19th century

The Shirvan group covers the following carpet-weaving regions: 1. The carpets of Shirvan, Gobustan, Shamakhi, Israfil, Ardjiman were woven in Shamakhi. 2. Maraza carpet weavers produced the carpets of Maraza, Nabur, Chukhanli, Djygyrli and Djemdjeli. 3. The carpets of Birdjo, Gashed, Pirhasanli were woven in Aghsu. 4. The carpets of Shilyan, Kurdamir and Sor-sor were woven in Kurdamir. Hajigabul carpet weavers crafted the carpets of Hajigabul, Shiralibek, Gabala and Salyan, as well as beautiful palases and kilims, sumakhs, bags (chuval), saddlebags (khurdjun), mafrash, horsecloth (chul).

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Carpet "Shikhli" of Gazakh group dating to the begin of 20th century

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Carpet "Ganja" of Ganja group
dating to the begin of 20th century

The usually count of the carpets Guba-Shirvan is from 40x40 to 55x55, successively 160,000-350,000 knots in one square meter. The Guba-Shirvan carpets are not large in size, typically 1 to 4 square meters, sometimes 10 to 15 square meters and even 20 square meters.

The Guba, Shirvan and Baku carpets have the same technical features, but differ in their ornamental edges and color-grade. Baku carpets usually contain medallion and symmetric compositions with geometric ornaments and are styled with flower elements. Shirvan carpets are characterized by elements of anthropomorphism, zoomorphism, housing and conventional elements as well. Their characteristic colors are red, deep blue, earthy yellow, white, etc.

The Ganja-Gazakh style is divided into the two groups of Ganja and Gazakh.

The Ganja group includes the carpets of the following regions: 1. The carpets of Ganja, Gedim Ganja and Samukh spread throughout the Ganja region. 2. Gornaboy is known for its carpets of Chayli, Shadli and Fakhrali. 3. Gedabey carpet weavers are crafting Gedabey, Chiragli and Garagoyunlu carpets.

The Gazakh group includes the following regions: 1. Gazakh, Salahli, Shikhli, Kemerli, Demirchiler, Gaymaghli, Goycheyli, Daghesemen, Oysuzlu, Verni, Zili and Shedda, and carpet-weaving products like mafrash and sul are woven in the Gazakh region.

Some historic locations of carpet-weaving of the Gazakh center are currently located in the territory of Georgia, populated by an Azerbaijani community, and in the regions of Armenia, populated by Azerbaijanis until their exile at the end of the 20th century.

The carpets of this group are mid-size and have a small count and higher nap, as well as strong durability. The count varies from 25x25 to 35x35, successively 60,000 to 120,000 knots in one square meters.

Ganja and Gazakh carpets have technical similarities, but different artistic features and sizes. Gazakh carpets are larger than Ganja carpets. Usually Ganja-Gazakh carpets are 3 to 10 square meters in size. Sometimes Dast-Khali-Gebe is manufactured in these regions. Ganja-Gazakh carpets have a simple composition, but its ornamental elements are more geometrical than Guba-Shirvan carpets. The carpets of the Ganja-Gazakh groups have a limited range of colors mostly using yellow, green and brick color.

Karabakh carpets are divided into three groups: Karabakh, Shusha and Jabrayil. The carpets of Barda, Aran, Godja, Calyabi, Buynuz, Daryanur, Achma-Yumma, Shabalid-buta, Nakhchivan, Balig, Lambaran, Karabakh, Khantirma, and djedjims are woven



Carpet "Demirchiler" of
Gazakh group dating to 1916

in Karabakh. The Shusha group includes the carpets of Malibeyli, Lempe, Baghchadaguller, Bulut, Sakhsidaguller, Nelbekigul, Gulaylig, Mundjug and Zarmahal. The Jabrayil group includes the following carpets: Khanlig, Garagoyunlu, Gubadli, Kurd, Gasigumashli, Bahmanli, Mughan, Talish, palas and kilims.

The Karabakh group also includes the carpets of Talish-Lankaran and Nakhchivan.

A number of centers dense populated by Azerbaijanis were until recently, particularly Zangelan, occupied by the Republic of Armenia.

Karabakh carpets have a count of 30x30 to 40x40 or 90,000 to 160,000 in one square meter. Despite the poor count, these carpets are considerably durable and thick. They are large in size and have an oblong form, but there are small Karabakh carpets as well. The

carpet set "Dast-khali-gebe" is widely known here. The Karabakh carpet-weavers usually knot carpets of 2 to 20 sqm in size, and sometimes 25 to 30 square meters.

Mainly medallion, narrative and ornamental carpets were produced in Karabakh. The carpet weavers used different compositions, some of which were designed as a result of the creative conversion of composition of the Tabriz school. Flower compositions were designed in geometric style in these carpets. Karabakh carpets are distinguished by bright and multiple colors, particularly golden-yellow, ruby, purple, brown and pink.

The Tabriz school is divided into the Tabriz and Ardabil groups. Tabriz and Ardabil are located in Iran (southern Azerbaijan) and carpets and rugs



Carpet "Four seasons" of Tebriz group dating to the 19th century



Carpet "Nelbekigul" of Karabakh group dating to the begin of 19th century

knotted there are known as Persian carpets in catalogues and museums.

The Tabriz group includes carpets of Tabriz, Goravan, Heris, Bakhshaysh, Lachakturunj, Afshan, Garaja, Ovchulug and Dordfesil, but the Ardabil group includes the carpets of Mir, Achma-yumma, Sheikh Safi, Ardabil, Shah Abbas, Sarabi and Zanjaan.

The Tabriz carpets have a 25x25 to 60x60 count and contain 60,000 to 360,000 knots in a square meter. These carpets vary in size with 1 to 40 sq m of overall area, sometimes 50 sq m. Tabriz carpets have very complicated compositions with flower ornaments, rarely using geometric figures. Masters from Tabriz produce carpets with patterns such

as “Lachak-Turunj”, “Buta”, “Balig”, “Afshan”, “Ovchulug”, “Sutunlu”, “Shah Abbas” and “Sheikh Safi”. The “Afshan” pattern contains several branches in the form of a spiral. Sunshine-golden, deep blue-maroon, yellow-red colors are used in Tabriz carpets.

The carpet-weaving process has several phases: washing wool; manufacturing and dyeing threads; tightening the basis; and the direct phase of knotting. Azerbaijani carpet weavers usually used buck fleece, rarely goat or camel hair. Different matting items were based on plant materials (cotton and cane stalk) and silk. In the late 15th to early 16th century, Azerbaijani masters began to use gold and silver threads to entwine precious stones in the silk carpets.

There are piled and napless carpets in Azerbaijan distinguished by their

are used in palas knotting. Its composition contains horizontal strips of various thicknesses and colors. Its basis was not dyed. Palases were produced in different parts of Azerbaijan which occurs until the present day. Chi-yi-palas, in which an ornament is knotted with a third thread, is considered as the most beautiful palas.

A kilim is produced by tightly interweaving the warp and weft strands of the weave to produce a flat surface with no pile. Colored or frequently colorless thread was used for warp. A combination of palas and kilim is called “karvood”. Shirvan weavers were traditionally knotting “gazmali kilim” with complex technology of whipping. Most kilim weaves are “weft-facing”, the horizontal weft strands are pulled tightly downward so that they hide the vertical warp strands creating weaves of kilim “gadirga”. Kilim and palas were manufactured in all parts of Azerbaijan. The best kilims were produced in Pashali, Udullu, Baku, Agjabedi, Jabrail, Yardimli, Tabriz, Geravan, Bakhshayish and Senne.

The djedjim’s warp is tightened with multicolored threads of 35-40 cm width and 15-16 m length. The djedjim is knotted from silk “kedji”, wool and occasionally cotton. Its composition contains vertical multicolored strips of different widths. It

was used for weaving clothes, decorating mattress, etc. Djedjims were produced in Barda, Agjabedi, Lambaran, Jabrayil, Shusha, Ordubad, Zangelan and Zagatala.

A lada is produced by interweaving



Mafrash of Baku group dating to the begin of 20th century

the warp and figure threads or interweaving only the threads of warp. Lada are mostly knotted in Karabakh and Gazakh.

A shedda is knotted as the djedjim with multicolored threads of warp. Its large and tight vertical strips are repeated horizontally with the multicolored threads of weft creating plaid decorated with zoomorphic motifs using a third patterning thread binding it around the warp threads. The colored patterning thread passes through the two warp threads entwining each of them. There are three characteristic groups of shedde with different decoration: self-colored; checked; and narrative. Shedda of the 17-18th centuries depicted hunters, horsemen and caravans of camels. Knotted with fine fleece, self-colored beige, red, brick and green, sheddes are very beautiful. They were used for brides’ wedding dresses, as well as men’s wear. Centers of shedde manufacturing include Karabakh, Nakhchivan and Gazakh.

The zili has several methods of manufacturing. In one form, the pattern is created by the patterning thread, which, as in the first row of the sumakh, in the form of loops following each other, winds each sequential pair of the threads of warp. In zili, all rows of the patterning thread lie down on each other only sideways. The second form of zili is knotted by free binding. Here the main background is carried out by canvas interlacing, and patterns by the additional colored threads, laid out in the form of a figure. The third type of zili is manufactured by the technique of “ilgekli dolama” (binding loops). Zili were knotted by the masters from Baku, Karabakh, Shirvan, Gazakh and Tabriz.



“Chi-yi palas” of Baku group dating to the begin of 20th century

methods of weaving. Palas, kilim, djedjim, verni, zili, lad, shedde, sumakh, as well as mats like “hesir” and others are among the napless rugs.

Simple and complicated methods of threading wefts between piles of basis



Khurdjun of Baku group dating to the begin of 20th century

The **vern** has a many-colored warp and a weft, and they are formed by the winding technique. This form has a figure characteristic of it alone, large S-elements, which alternate in colors in checkerboard order covering the entire surface of the carpet. The background is usually red. The basic element is the semi-abstract image of the dragon that is considered the guardian of a house and the patron of water. Verns were produced mostly in Karabakh and Gazakh.

The name of pileless carpets "sumakh" is connected with the name of Shamakhi city. Sumakh are formed by the "gayig" technique. The pattern of each figure is created by the patterning thread, which in the form of loops following each other winds each pair of the warp threads. In every two rows the patterning colored threads create the form of a plait on the surface of carpet. The first row of loops is located in one direction, with the second in the opposite direction. Sumakh has a furry wrong side due to the long stub-ends of the threads. A rich composition and color saturation is characteristic for this group of carpets. Usually the background colors of are sumakh is dark blue and brick. Historically, centers of sumakh production were Shirvan and Guba.

In the napped carpets, the method of the simple and complex passing of weft through the warp threads is combined with the method of binding knots in the

front and back threads of warp with inserting the ends of the threads to the work face of the carpet items. The tips of threads are cut with the aid of the special carpet scissors. Among the napped carpets there are such varieties as floor and wall carpets such as khalcha, gebe, dest-khali-gyaba, pushtu, namazlyg and carpets of different designation in the household ("parda" utilized as curtains, "takht ustu" a bed cover).

There are two main artistic styles: geometric with sharp lines; and floral with well-rounded smooth lines. The schools of northern Azerbaijan use mainly the geometric style. The Tabriz school of southern Azerbaijan is known for its floral style, but sometimes it uses the geometric style as well.

Narrative-thematic carpets, depicting hunting ("Ovchulug") or the four seasons ("Dord fesil"), as well as various oriental literary works, are also outstanding among Azerbaijani carpets. Shirvan and Karabakh masters were knotting "Ovchulug" carpets depicting a horseman with a falcon in the center. A dye image of a rooster in quadrate medallion is placed at the four corners of the carpet.

The classic carpet "Dord fesil" of the 16th century, presented by Safavid Shah Tahmasib I to the Mausoleum of Imam Reza, was divided into four parts in the central area, each one depicting a season of the year.

The use of motifs of classic oriental literary works in carpet-weaving was connected with the development of miniature art. The most popular themes were illustrations from Nizami Ganjavi's "Leyli and Mejnun", "Khosrov and Shirin", "Rustam Kills the White Ogre", "Omar Khayyam with his Beloved", etc.

The patterns of Azerbaijani carpets are divided into zoomorphic, anthropomorphic, floral, geometric, depicting things of the household and tribal symbols ("tamg"). These ornaments could be performed in both floral and geometric styles.

Among the geometric figures used as the patterns, there are quadrate, rhombus, triangle, swastika and their multiple variations in combination with other zoomorphic and floral elements. The motif of the rhomb symbolised fruitfulness, broken ground and was the symbol for a woman. The triangle is connected with the magic and protection from malign forces and the evil eye. The swastika elements are seen in Sari-tepe seals and ceramics of the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age. Swastika-shaped ornaments symbolized the sun, the four corners of the earth and the four elements.

Anthropomorphic patterns or figures of a man are seen in both stylized form,



Carpet "Meeting of Khosrov and Shirin by the hunting" of Tebriz group dating to the 20th century

as in the carpet "Maraza" with the figures of people dancing Yalli, and naturalistic form, as in the narrative-schematic carpets "Ovchulug" and others.

Floral patterns contain pictures of



Saddle of Shirvan group dating to the begin of 20th century

trees, flowers and other plants, as well as their differently entitled variations.

The **buta** is a complex and rich element of Azerbaijani decoration and a very popular motif among people. It exists as a free decoration element in modern art works as well as in the past. Some experts say that the buta repeats the cypress outline; others say that it is a pheasant's feather or wing. "Buta" or "Putu" is the name of a field frutescent plant and each of its branches burns like a candle whose flame tail reminds us of

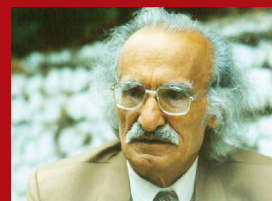
the ornamental buta. This was widely used by fire-worshippers.

The "Vag-vagi" pattern is a fantastic tree, whose fruit is reminiscent of the head of a man or an animal. This ornament was pictured as a free element on the Bayil stones of the 13th century found at the bottom of the sea near Baku. The picture of the tree describes the tree of life, a motif which was widely used in ancient Turkic scenes.

The motif of trees referred to the tree of life, a motif widespread in ancient Turkic depictions. The element of trees was frequently accompanied by the figures of birds.

Zoomorphic ornaments are widely used in Azerbaijani carpets and the most widespread of them are the figures of birds and stylized depictions of the horn of a sheep. The figure of a tortoise was depicted in the carpets of Bahmanli and frogs, dogs, deer and other animals could also be seen in the pattern. The dragon is an inherent element of the carpets Verni and Khatai, it was supposed to protect the house and bring protection and luck. Waterfowl, peacocks, sheep, dogs, wolves, deer and

bulls were considered as sacred animals, which were echoed in legends and tales, songs, etc. The bird meant the top, the sky as the vertical projection of the earth, and the soul of the dead.



Latif Huseyn oglu Karimov (17.11.1906, Shusha – 1991, Baku) – Azerbaijani artist, carpet designer and art historian. He issued a three-volume book "Azerbaijani Carpet".

L. Karimov writes: "The form of islimi or arabesque ascends to the form of folding leaf. The khatai pattern is similar with the Islimi for its form and structure, but has characteristic features. The large and oblong sleeves or upward branches are the main elements of the composition khatai. Khata, khatay, khatan, it a title of one of the Turkic tribes.

Turkic tribal symbols, "tamga", were widely used in Azerbaijani carpets. Every tribe had its own symbol, which showed its history and movement. A rhombus with growing branches are the



Carpet "Surakhani" of Baku group dating to the end of 19th century



Composition of Azerbaijani carpets

stylized figures of sheep horns and used in all schools of northern Azerbaijan. This is one of the main elements and has multiple variations. Such a pattern is the main element of runic Turkic letters, symbols of Turkic tribes which created the basis of the Turkic Orkhon-Yenisey runic alphabet. The figures of tamga of 24 Oguz tribes are seen in Mahmoud Kashgari's book. At the same time, a tamga is the mark of a creator of an Azerbaijani carpet. These simple geometric symbols were transformed into beautiful patterns, delighting with their harmony and combination of colors, by the master weavers.

The carpet has a quadruple form expressing the idea of quadruple sizes of space and modeling the world and space. Generally the composition of piled carpets and sumakh is composed of the middle area and welting.

Straight lines on the carpets are called "Su" and divide the welting. The line could protect from malign forces and that is why the carpet space was outlined. "Su" means "water" and ancient Azerbaijanis saw a river as a barrier between the malignant demons and the dead. Villages and cemeteries were separated with rivers. Water protected the central area of the carpet, which

contained "gyl" medallions with the most important symbols.

Welting is composed of one large or two small borders. The middle or main border is called the "Ana-hashiye" which means "maternal border" and it is located between the two small borders. These small welting borders are called the "Medahil", "Zenjire", and "Bala-hashiye".

The maternal borders "Mashal" or gaychi-balig were used in many Azerbaijani carpets. Its background was white, the source of other colors. It symbolizes sacral purity and a positive source. The pattern is composed of a tripartite composition border repeated over the plane. The central element of the composition shows the figure of the goddess-mother. Therefore the middle border is called the "maternal".

The middle area could be decorated with separate elements or medallions called "Gyl". One large or two and more medallions were placed on the carpet plane. Considering that the carpet plane represents a world view, therefore its center designated with a medallion is a sacred part.

Along with utilitarian, esthetic and other functions, the carpets protected the ancient Azerbaijanis from malign

forces and attracted protection and fruitfulness. When referring to the utilitarian significance, it is necessary to mention that carpets and other carpet-weaving products were irreplaceable in the houses and nomad tents. The walls and floors were covered by carpets, carpet cloths, bags "mafrash", saddlebags "khurdjun", curtains and tablecloths were used in that time,

Every Azerbaijani carpet dazzles with its beauty. There were special ceremonies and songs in ancient times performed during the weaving process. When the carpet-weaving was ended, they invited guests to celebrate this event. There is a legend which reads that if a man sauntered into the room where carpet weavers were tightening warp it meant that the weaving process would be long and difficult. If a man rushed into the room wishing quick work to the weavers, it meant that the carpet would be knotted quickly and easily.

Azerbaijani carpets are intimately connected with the history of its cultural traditions. Today every house is decorated with carpets in Azerbaijan. The carpets hand-knotted by our mothers and grandmothers descend from generation to generation as heirlooms.



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