

The Albanian historian of the VIIth century A.D., Moisey Kalankatuiski, gives information about the manufacturing of carpets in Albania³ and their use in the life of its aristocracy. The Armenian historian Sebeos, in his report of items captured in 628 from Nakhchivan by the Byzantine Emperor Heracilius, mentions many carpets with golden and silver threads.

A great deal of information about carpet making in Azerbaijan can be found in the writings of medieval authours. A Chinese traveler of the VIIth century, Khuan-Tes-Ank, names Azerbaijan as a major center of carpet making carpets, and palazes have been found in catacombs of the VIIth century.

In the early Middle ages (IIIrd-VIIth centuries) the whole Transcaucasian region was under the influence of the refined culture of Sassanid Iran. A carpet of Shah Khosrov the First, named "Spring of Khosrov," is described by virtually all oriental carpet studies, and this is no coincidence, scince its subject continued to be developed in the following centuries and became the pattern for a great number of Tabriz carpets known as "Dord Fasil" (Four Seasons). Medieval sources contain certain information about the features and types of Azerbaijani carpets. For example, an anonymous Xth century source, "Hudud Al-Alem," mentions the Azerbaijani towns Marand, Ganja and Samkir, where high quality woolen pieces were produced; carpets and palaz made in Nakhchivan, Khoy, Mugan, Salmas and Ardabil gained word-wide fame. An Arabic historian of the IXth-Xth centuries, Tabari, also reports concerning the high quality carpets of Azerbaijan. Masudi, an Arabican traveler of the Xth century, also records that carpets named makhfur are produced in Marand, Tabriz, and Ardabil. The beauty of Karabakh carpets, of Barda in particular, "...which have no equals," is described by another Arabic authour of the Xth century, Al-Mukaddasi. Concerning the export of madder dye from Barda to India, the Arabic authour Al-Istahri (Xth century) and others such as Ibn-Heukal and Govhal (Xth century), mention special worms from which a dark red dye (girmiz) was obtained and even exported to Europe.

Ornaments similar to those seen on carpets are often met on epigraphic monuments, for instance, grave stones. Some even have illustrations of looms and tools used in carpet making. These are encountered in the Lachin region, the village of Urud (Sisyan destrict) and kind are present in the collection of the State museum of Azerbaijani Carpets and Handicraft and date to the XVth–XVIth centuries.

³ Caucasian Albania—a statae which existed on the territory of modern Azerbaijan from the IV th c. B.C. to the VIIth c. A.D.

Information about carpets is often present in folklore—dastans, especially in the famous Azerbaijani epic of the XIth century, “The Book of Dede Korut.”

A great deal of important information about Azerbaijani carpets is contained in classical Azerbaijani literature. Nizami and Khagani mention carpets woven in silk with the use of precious yarns. In general, the XIth to XIIth centuries marked a significant period in the history of the Azerbaijani people. This was a time when Azerbaijan’s economy and culture flourished the epoch of the so-called “Azerbaijan Renaissance.”

Interesting information about Azerbaijani carpets is present in medieval European travel accounts. Marko Polo, in the XIIIth century, cited the unique fabrics produced in Tabriz; Genoan merchants brought these fabrics to Europe. At the same time the Frenchman, Ruburuqe, visited Derbent, Shamakhi, Nakhchivan, and other towns and noted that many good carpets were produced there. The Venetian traveler, Ambrozio Contarini mentions the beautiful carpets in the place of Uzun Hasan, ruler of the Ag-Goyunlu State (XVth c.). Tektander, envoy of the German Emperor Rudolf the 2nd, who was sent to the court of the Safavid Shah Abbas the 1st, in his description of Tabriz, mentions many mosques, the floors of which were covered with beautiful carpets. He mentions similar carpets while describing a reception in the palace of Abbas the First.

However, not only the upper strata of society in Azerbaijan lived amidst carpets. The Englishmen, Bannister and Ducet, who visited Shirvan in the XVIth century, reported that people had very few utensils except for carpets and copper pieces. “They sit on the floor on carpets cross-legged as do tailors. There is not a man, even among the poorest, who does not sit on the carpet (good or bad); all the floors in the house or in the room where they sit are covered with carpets.” This proves that every strata of the population of medieval Azerbaijan generally used carpets and carpet-like items in their everyday life.

In the XVIth century, English merchants reached Azerbaijan, Shirvan in particular, through the Volga-Caspian route. These were agents of the English “Russian company” The Englishmen, A. Jenkinson, R. Chini, A. Edwar-des, T. Bannister, and E. Ducet presented valuable information about Azerbaijan in the mid-XVIth century. A. Jenkinson describing the reception by the Shirvan beylerbey (Ruler), Abdulla Khan, writes “... the whole floor of his palace was covered with rich carpets. and they sat on a square-shaped carpet woven with golden and silver threads, and two pillows of corresponding value were put on it”.

Interesting information about carpet is presented to us by travelers on the XVIIth to XVIIIth centuries. Thus, the German A. Olearius, who travelled

from Derbend to Baku, then to Shemakhi, mentions that houses of peasants were comfortable and floors were covered with carpets. Similar information comes from the Scotch physician Bell, who during his service in Russia in 1715–1718 visited Derband, Baku, Shemakhi and Tabriz. Describing the live of Shirvan natives, he mentioned that floors there were covered with carpets and mats. Ne also refered to the extinsieve production of fabrics and carpets in Tabriz.

References of the many fine carpets used in all social classes of Azerbaijan can also be found in accounts of travelers, officials ethnographes, and others who visited the country in the XIXth century.

Based on various, it is known that from the Middle Ages Azerbaijani carpets went to markets of many eastern countries. Starting with the XIVth century numerous Carpet appeared in Europe where they quickly entered the European way of live. This was no coincidence in this period, Azerbaijan established trade relations with European through Venetian and Genoan merchants who had all trade routes to the West under their control.

Having become part of the lifestyle of Europeans in the XVth to XVIIth centuries, Azerbaijan carpets were depicted on the canvases of many European Artists. Thus, "Mugan" carpet on the Shirvan groupe can be seen in the pictures of Hans Memling (XVth), "Mary with the Child" and "Portrait of Young Man". Carpet of the Ganja–Kazakh group are depicted in these paintings; "Envoys", by German artist, Holbein (XVIth c.): "Amunciation" by Venetian, Carlo Crivelly (XVth c.), "Saint Sebastian" by Italian, Antonelly de Messina (XVth c.). Azerbaijani carpets can be seen on the fresco, "Marriage of Findling, "by Domenico de Bartolo in the Santa Maria Cathedral in the city of Sienna; in the painting of Domenico Morone, "Birth of Holly Foma", in the tapestry, "Lady with Unicorn" (XVth c.) from France and in many other paintings of European artists.

Undoubetly, carpet export was of great significance to Azerbaijan and this fact affected the local carpet weaving. Weaver concetrated special attention on the quality and designs of exported carpets. The export of Azerbaijani carpets to Europe began in the Rainaissance when the western people started to take an interest in both antiquity and oriental carpets.

Popularity of Azerbaijani carpets was due to to their artistic features and aesthetic impact on viewers.

The aesthetic of the carpets gained the recognition of not only Western artists but also Azerbaijani miniaturist painters. Pictures of the carpets can be seen in Tabriz miniatures of the XIIIth to XIV centuries. These miniaturies are reliably dated a fact which permits analysis of depicted carpets which have not survived from that period. The miniatures show carpets with patterns, designs, and color schemes which later became the basis for the present Shir-

van, Karabakh, Guba, and Tabriz carpets. Moreover, these pictures help us to observe the progress of carpet art in Azerbaijan. During that period, while preserving ancient traditions, weavers simultaneously developed new Islamic motifs. So, carpets with pre-Islamic patterns are visible on the western canvas, while Tabriz miniatures display mostly the new ideas of carpet designing.

Miniature painting of the XIIIth to XIV centuries employed among others, motifs of the Far Eastern art which were brought into Azerbaijan by Uigurs. Dragons, clouds and fabulous creatures of the Sino-Uigur myths all appeared in Tabriz miniatures. Later these motifs molded into local forms, emerged in Azerbaijani carpets.

The so-called Golden Age of carpet weaving and art crafts in Azerbaijan is attributed to the XVth to XVIth centuries. In that period Tabriz painting flourished as well, and its development had a great influence on carpet art. In the court workshop of Tabriz, the weavers cooperated with the miniaturists who elaborated sketches for carpets. Therefore, it is no accident that among three thousand extant carpets of the period, at least two hundred specimens are masterpieces.

Such a large-scale production of masterpieces could take place only under strict government supervision. The Safavid Shahs valued carpet export an important income source for the treasury, and the inhabitants paid taxes with carpets. Shah Abbas the 1st (late XVI to early XVIIth cc.), who would seat himself a carpet loom (1a, p. 352), set up state workshops in many towns. Carpets from such workshops were created in accordance with approved sketches, while in villages far away from the main trade routes traditional weaving continued.

In the XVIIIth century, the situation remained practically the same after the collapse of the Iranian state, followed by the emergence of independent khanates in Azerbaijan. Local khans quickly monopolized all trade, including that of carpets in external markets. According to M. D. Isayev who in the beginning of the XXth century collected information from the oldest carpet weavers of the region, khans tried to organize carpet production in Karabakh. Sometimes carpet weavers were invited from Persia to train local weavers in composition and patterns.

In the beginning of the XIXth century, patterns and sketches called khancheshni (khan's pattern) were frequently encountered in Azerbaijan.

No doubt this marketable carpet-weaving existed and was widespread in the XIXth century. In the State Historical Museum in Moscow there is a carpet produced in Khila village near Baku signed and dated "1801 Karkhane khilla." 1. It is evidence for the existence of carpet workshop in Azerbaijan by the XIXth century.

The rapid growth of carpet manufacture in Shirvan, Karabakh, Guba, and Baku was surveyed in detail by M.D. Isayev, who concluded that khans collected taxes from people in the form of carpets and rugs with a view to their further sale outside the kanates.

Russia after its conquest of the Transcaucasus (in the early XIXth century), started developing the local carpet market.

According to S. Gulishambarov, growth in carpet production for export was observed within XIX century.

The principal consumers of Azerbaijan carpets in the XIXth century besides Russia, the largest importer of carpets, were England, Turkey, Germany, France, the USA, and certain Eastern countries.

Ever growing interest in oriental carpets, including those of Azerbaijan, made their serious scientific study and classification inevitable. The highest results in this respect were achieved by Western European scholars. The merit of the first foreign studies is that they gave rise to a common interest in Azerbaijani carpets, and opened to Europe the wonderful world of carpets, its aesthetics and philosophy.

Another merit of foreign research into oriental carpet art is that they for the first time specified the main carpet zones of Azerbaijan (Tabriz, Ardebil, Gyanja, Kazakh, Guba, Shirvan, Baku) and this specification formed the basis of Azerbaijani carpet classification.

Many Western European carpet researches, with access to different collections, showed the public valuable pieces of Azerbaijani carpet art starting from the XIIIth century through the present.

Among foreign scholars to be noted are the following: A. Reig, R. Neugebauer and A. Orendi, R. Neugebauer and S. Trol, A. Diley, V. Bode, A. Pope, F. Kelly and M. Gentles, G. Lois, K. Erdmann. All these authors often described Azerbaijani pieces when analyzing oriental carpets. The fundamental research of Artur Pope holds unique place among all these works. Having studied dozens of highly produced pieces of the XVIth to XVIII centuries had been in Southern Azerbaijan, and that carpet art of the period had been strongly influenced by miniature art, the center of which was Tabriz. Artists of these two schools are carpet and miniature art complementing and influencing one another, brought the art of carpet ornamentation to perfection.

Modern foreign researches who have produced very interesting work included: S. Khabari, M. Ropes, I. Melhover, U. Shurman, M. Beh-Azin, I. Metenmayer, G. Rueden, K. Larsen, J. May, M. Aga-Oglu, C. Ellis, R. Right, T. Sabahi.

Often Azerbaijani carpets are found in different catalogues, guide-books, annotations to exhibitions, and popular journals. Usually such sources give a

description of the subject and ornament and indicate the region where carpets of this type were made.

Among such sources we can distinguish, for example, the catalogue to the exhibitions "Early Caucasian Carpet" in (1975) from the Textile Museum prepared by Charlys Grand Ellis, who thoughtfully studied several hundred carpets, including early Caucasian (so-called "dragon carpets") and come to justified conclusion about their Azerbaijan origin.

In the beginning of the XIXth century, Azerbaijan, as a result of a number of wars, was divided between Russia and Iran. Territories north of the Arax and Astarachay rivers were taken by Russia, and areas to the south remained under Iran. Russia immediately started to develop and study the occupied territories. Russian entrepreneurs and scholars were first interested in natural resources and the national handicraft industry. Thus, a number of fundamental studies concerning Azerbaijani carpet appeared, primarily in the late XIXth to early XXth centuries.

1. Karkhanei is a general name of any workshop.

It should be noted that previously information about oriental carpet, including those of Azerbaijan, was inaccurate and did not have reliable scholarly background. This was the case due to a number of circumstances. At that time Azerbaijan located on important trade caravan routes from Asia to Europe, was not only the center of carpet making, but also a transit point for different goods including carpets. Therefore, Azerbaijani carpet could be found everywhere in the market of many neighboring regions. Merchants, second-hand dealers who gave information to European customers about these carpets, often did not know themselves where the carpets were from and offered Azerbaijani carpets as locally made; they gave wrong information about their origin, etc. As a result, the data upon which European research was based was often fragmentary and unreliable.

As to the studies of Russian scholars, they normally were based on concrete materials often gathered directly on location in the carpet making center, therefore, their data was more accurate.

It should also be noted that Russian researchers in the late XIXth to early XXth centuries were familiar with the peculiarities of local conditions, the variability of the ethnic picture of Transcaucasia, and the geographic distribution of different ethnic populations. Therefore, their studies are of particular scientific value.

Among the investigations of Russian scholars, the work of Khatisov should be noted. These researchers investigated in detail a number of issues related to carpet making, starting from sheep-breeding and the obtaining of woolen yarn, to dyeing, methods of weaving, patterns, and so forth. He no-

tes that "Guba carpet are the most popular in transcaucasia, "and he puts Shirvan and Karabakh Karpet in second and third place respectively. He mentions the strong influence of "Persian, namely of the Tabriz tradition" on the carpet-making in Karabakh. He noted that the patterns and colors of Central Asian carpet are less diverse than those of Azerbaijan. Onather rese-arches, S.I.

Gulishambarov, had collected valuable information concerning the dye- ing of the wool. He noted that local dyes of plant and animal oreign are cha- racterized by durability and in intensity of color. He writes, "It is not rare, that local carpet keep the same quality of color throught several generations.

The traditional methods of dying Azerbaijan carpet, which make thern co- lorful and unique, are described by a number of Russian invertegators, who noted that that the population was using natural color of plant, animal and mineral origen (M.D. Isayev, V.A. Petrov I. P. Grunskaya-Petrova.)

Interesting information on Azerbaijan carpet is provided by Y. Zedgenid- ze investiganting Shusha carpet and rugs, he noted that by the number and quality of carpet and rugs Shusha had first place in the Caucasus. Writing that Shusha is populated by Armenian as well as Azerbaijan. 1. Many autho- urs of that time refer to Azerbaijanis as Tatars he pointed out that "... almost the entire carpet-martking indutry of Shusha is concentrited in the Tatar Fa- milies." He comments on the historic and social roots of this, also providing and explanaiton concerning the relative lack of carpet-making by Armenias: "... Armenians had to learn how to make carpet from Tatars." A.S. Piralaw also was among first reseaches of Azerbaijani carpets. A.A. Felkerzan alsol menthon of Azerbaijani carpets in his book devoted to the carpet of Central Asia. Some ideas of this authour, particularly concerning carpet-making and it relations to the nomadic life, are still relevant.

Aspects of weaving methods, pattern, colors and utilization of Guba, Shir- van, and Karabakh carpets may be found in the works of A.A. Miler, Descri- bign role of carpets in the life of the Azerbaijani people, noted that on would measure the wealth of another saying, "he has that much in carpets and ki- lims" V. M. Zummer was ona of the key reseachers of Azerbaijani carpets who indentifited many local centers of carpet making and enumerated their distiquishing characteristics.

By that time, reseaches had already noted that in the Caucasus carpet making was particularly advanced among ethnic and social groups which were engaged in pasturing livestock and living a nomadic lige. Thus, M.V. Muchaidze, investiganting the production of carpets in the territory of the former Azerbaijani khanate. 1, Yerevan, noted that nomans were significantly ingaged in these activites.

Among publications on Azerbaijani carpets of the middle of the XXth cen-

ture, a work of S. Tulyayev and a book "production of Carpets" (editor N. I. Sobolev.) are notheworthy.

Among the works devoted to the carpets of the Caucasus region, the investigations of M.D. Isayev must be cited. The author showed that carpet-makers of Transcaucasia were mainly of Turkish origin. He revived the development of carpet-making in Azerbaijan under the influence of historic, natural-climatic, administrative, and social factors, and explained that their high artistic merit accounted for the popularity of Azerbaijani carpets in Europe and America. He was first to characterize carpets of Transcaucasia by districts and local centers, and to identify the following areas of production; Guba, Shamakhi, Ganja, Gazakh, Dagestan, Erevan. Moreover, reviewing Dagestani carpets Isayev cites Azerbaijani terms (gaba, yarim gaba, khalcha, sumakh, etc.) which were used by the local people.

Carpets similar to the "Gazakh" were made in regions of Armenia bordering the Gazakh district (Ijevan, Bambak.) among them "Gara-gojunlu" carpets must be mentioned.

As noted M.D. Isayev and other outstanding Russian scholars noted, that carpet-making in the Caucasus region from ancient time developed primarily in the territory of Azerbaijan and largely amongst Azerbaijanis. They pointed out that in Armenia and Georgian carpet-making was developed in areas with an Azerbaijani population. The authors saw the reasons for these in the life style of Azerbaijanis, engaged in pastoral cattle-breeding and sheep-breeding. These life-style provided them with appropriate resources while social, cultural, and climatic conditions also were favorable for the development of carpet-making. Denike importantly noted that most Caucasian carpets, their patterns and colors, have their roots in the art of Turkish nomadic tribes.

Without question, the great bulk of Transcaucasian carpets of the XIXth to early XXth centuries were woven by Azerbaijanis. This fact is confirmed by not only many observers but also the census of the population in 1897. So, in Baku, Erevan, and Elizavetpol provinces where carpet-weaving was concentrated mainly in rural areas most of the inhabitants were Azerbaijanis: Baku—54%, Erevan, and Elizavetpol—82%. It should be pointed out that a considerable part of the rural inhabitants were engaged in herding, and it is this portion of the population which was amply provided with raw materials for carpet-making.

Interesting data on Azerbaijani carpets is provided by F.V. Gogol. He had investigated a group of famous carpets, attributed to the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries, with "hunt" and "animal" ornamental patterns, and came to the conclusion that these carpets were made in Azerbaijan. According to this author, Peter the First during his Caspian March had bought and later presented

similar carpets to the Australian Emperor. The Azerbaijani carpet has for many years been a subject of research by national scholars, such as L. Kerimov, R. Efendiev, Dj. mudjiri, N. Abdullaeva, A. Alieva etc.

On the Basis of research data L. Kerimov reached the following conclusion: "Azerbaijan always was the school of carpet making in the Caucasus. 90% of the renowned carpet compositions reputed to be "Caucasian" are actually the compositions of Azerbaijani artist."

One factor in the antique art of carpet production in Azerbaijan is the many terms used exclusively for carpet weaving. The detailed terminology of certain processes, operations, names of instruments, types of wool and yarn, methods of knotting, colors and hues, forms, shapes, functions, etc., offers clear evidence of a centuries of old culture.

Azerbaijani investigators gathered and defined hundreds of different terms connected with carpet production. Which explained the basic terminology of carpets, motifs, patterns, composition, tools, raw materials, etc., on the basis of Azerbaijani and central Asian sources, which are mainly of Turkic origin. The extent of this terminology certifies the deep, historical roots of carpet production in Azerbaijan. Many terms connected with carpet production are mentioned in other sources and literature.

In the Turkic epic, "Kitabi Dede Korgud," names of silk carpets (ipak halvha) large carpets (khali), and other items are found. Also, in the works of Nizami Gyanjavi and Khagani, Shirvani (XIIth c.) carpet-related terms are often made. In the poem, "Khosrov and Shirin", there are names of carpets like hasir, gaba, and kilim, as well as the terms orgaj, erish, and jahra. In the poem, "Iskendername," there are kandir, chuval cuhul and khali. Nizami even mentioned "Khatay chuval", confirming the existence of the Azerbaijani carpet has for many years been a subject of research by national scholars, such as L. Kerimov, R. Efendiev, Dj. mudjiri, N. Abdullaeva, A. Alieva etc.

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So in Azerbaijani carpet weaving the "turkbaf" technique of knotting is used. All these prove again deep sources for carpet making development in Azerbaijan. The turkbaf method of knotting includes two variations. In this method knots are looped around the one rear and one front strands of the warp. In two ways: 1. asymmetrical—Yandansalma, placing one end of the knot between warp strands. 2. Symmetrical—aradansalma, placing both ends of a knot between two of these strands.

Unfortunately, these knot varieties are incorrectly embodied in modern terms. So, the symmetrical knot is called turkbaf, and symmetrical farsbaf, while both are varieties of the Kurkbaf. The terms Gordes and Sanna also brought more confusion since they are carpet weaving hubs but not origins of knotting.

Due to the high artistic quality of Azerbaijani carpets they were included in museum exhibitions. To day hundreds of these carpets are kept in the collections of the foremost museums of the world. Some of these deserve special mention.

It has to be noted that for a long period many Azerbaijani carpets kept in museum and collections, among them famous examples of carpet art, have not been labeled "Azerbaijani" and were identified "Caucasian" or "Persian". Even now, when the comprehensive investigations of national and foreign researches have identified the true origin of these carpets, this tendency continues due to inertia.

Traditions of carpet-making, as a part of an integral Azerbaijani culture, were forming and developing through the course of many centuries. The fa-

te of Azerbaijan and its sovereignty during this period varied; several times the country was ravaged, occupied by neighboring countries and was divided. The people of Azerbaijan, even in the most difficult periods of its history, kept and protected their own culture and traditions, and an honored place among these traditions belongs to Azerbaijani art of carpet-making, which made a valuable contribution to the treasury of world art.