

## *Culture of Azerbaijan*

As one of the oldest nations of the world, the people of Azerbaijan are proud of their history, material and cultural monuments, rich literature, art and music culture. Beautiful nature, climate (there are 9 climate zones in Azerbaijan), richness of natural resources had a great impact on the artistic thinking and creativity of the people of Azerbaijan. Despite the fact that each of the different types of art have had long and complicated way of development, together, they provide a broad opportunity to create a complete picture of Azerbaijani art and culture. As the nature of our country, the art of Azerbaijan is also colorful, full and rich.

Folk art that closely related to the household and daily life of Azerbaijani people takes important place in the creativity of Azerbaijan. Now it is possible to see many beautiful examples of folk art of Azerbaijan in the richest museums of the world. While observing the richest museums such as, Victoria and Albert in London, the Louvre in Paris, Metropolitan in Washington, and other museums of Vienna, Rome, Berlin, Istanbul, Tehran, Cairo, you can see the artwork created by the skillful hands of the masters from Tabriz, Nakhchivan, Ganja, Gazakh, Guba, Baku, Shaki, Shamakhi and Karabakh.

The handcraft created by our people and used in their household and daily life has great and rich history. The works of art made of metal obtained from Nakhchivan, Mingachevir, Gadabay, Gazakh, Ganja etc. are about 5000 years old. The dishes, guns and jewelries found in those territories are both historical facts and valuable resources that give information about the mastery of the artist who made it. Material and cultural samples found during excavations in the territory of Azerbaijan show that our ancestors made bronze-shaped dishes, daggers, axes, belts, jewelries etc. in the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC and used it in their household and everyday life. Thus, it informs us about the antiquity of arts such as coppering and jewelry art.

The history, ethnographic and artistic features of folk art reflected in the clothes. This feature manifests itself both in certain forms of clothing and its decorations, as well as in artistic embroidery, weaving and knitting. Different drawings on house equipments and jewelries made of copper, bronze and gold prove that fine art was available in Azerbaijan in ancient times.

A picture of a sack decorated with floral paintings on a horse figure made of clay (II millennium BC) and found in Maku city of South Azerbaijan, and a description of a lion on a surface of a gold glass found in Hasanli hill near the Urmia Lake prove that carpet weaving in Azerbaijan has also very ancient history.

During archeological excavations remains of carpets and rugs belonging to I-III centuries were found from catacomb graves in Mingachevir. According to the archeological materials and written sources carpet weaving in Azerbaijan has been practiced since the Bronze Age (late 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC - early 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC). Herodotus, Claudius Aelianus, Xenophon and other ancient world historians gave

information about the development of carpet weaving in Azerbaijan. The carpets woven in carpet weaving schools of Azerbaijan (Guba, Baku, Shirvan, Ganja, Gazakh, Karabakh, Tabriz) at different times still fascinate people with their beauties. Most of them are kept in famous museums of the world.

Among the examples of fine art there are Gobustan rock paintings of VIII-V centuries BC, drawings (3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC) in Ayichingili and Parichingil mountains of Kalbajar region around the Zalkha Lake belonging to the Bronze Age, rock paintings in Gamigaya mountains, the north of Ordubad city. Various plots, scenes, human and animal images related to hunting, cattle breeding, agriculture and other spheres of life are dynamically engraved here. Gobustan rock paintings - pictograms cover a long historical period from the primitive community structure to the stage of feudalism.

Azerbaijan has been rich in works of fine art since ancient times, as well as architectural works, a branch of folk art. Maiden Tower and Shirvanshahs Palace complex in Baku, tombs of Momina Khatin and Yusif ibn Kuseyir created by architect Ajami in Nakhchivan, Panahali khan's palace in Shusha, Natava's house, paintings on the wall of Sheki khans' palace, etc. are rare pearls of architectural art. Painting of people dancing "Yalli" (dance) is very interesting among the rock paintings of Gobustan. These images show the interest of the Azerbaijani people in music since ancient times.

Azerbaijan, with its rich cultural heritage, is known as the Land of Fires, as well as the land of music. Azerbaijani music enriching the treasure of world music culture with its rare pearls has ancient traditions. The creators of folk music, who lived these traditions from generation to generation and created a great and rich heritage, have made great contributions to the development of Azerbaijani music. Folk songs, dances and ashigs have a special place in the national music of Azerbaijan. Mughams are the cornerstone of Azerbaijani national music. It is no coincidence that in 2003, the UN specialized agency UNESCO included Azerbaijani mugam in the list of cultural heritage of mankind.

In ancient times our national music has developed together with literature. For instance, mugham has developed together with Eastern poetry. Thus, while performing mugham, the singers sang ghazals (poems) of such powerful classical poets of the Azerbaijani people as Nizami, Khagani, Fuzuli, Nasimi. Along with the genres of national poetry, couplets, mukhammas, ustadname, gafilband, its poetic forms, such as gerayli, divani, qoshma, tajnis, are the favorite forms of ashigs. Literary works created by our classics and contemporaries have a special place in the treasury of world culture. The works created by M.F. Akhundov, N. Vazirov, M.S. Ordubadi, G. Zakir, M.A. Sabir, J. Mammadguluzade, M.P. Vagif, M.V. Vidadi and many other poets and writers have not lost their high artistic and aesthetic significance. One of the types of art that is closely related to Azerbaijani literature is theatrical art. Elements of ceremonies, rites and performances played an important role in the establishment of an independent folk theater. The

Azerbaijan people's theater had a realistic character and was connected with the working class. The repertoire of the people's theater consisted of small performances with a certain ethical content. People's theater has played an important role in the formation of the Azerbaijani professional theater.

History of theatrical art that is very ancient started with the spectacles of M.F. Akhundov "Lankaran khaninin vaziri" and "Haji Gara" staged in Baku in March and April, 1873. Today, the repertoire of the Azerbaijani theater, which has undergone a complex path of development, has expanded. Various performances that delight the audience can be seen at the Academic National Drama Theater, Municipal Theater, Pantomime Theater, State Theater of Young Spectators and other theaters operating in Azerbaijan today. Cinema, which is considered to be the most interesting and popular art form of our time, has penetrated into the life of our people and has become an integral part of it.

Azerbaijani art is as ancient and rich as the history of our people. The study of various types of theater, cinema, music and folk art, which have a long and complicated history of development, proves that the Azerbaijani people have a high cultural heritage. Azerbaijani artists have always made efforts to bring our national culture to the world, and to some extent have achieved this.

The list of intangible cultural heritage of the UNESCO includes Azerbaijani mugham, ashiqs art, Novruz holiday, traditional art of carpet weaving, tar (musical instrument) performance, chovgan game with Karabakh horse, kalaghai (shawl), Lahij coppersmith art, lavash cooking tradition, yalli folk group dances.