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TRADITIONAL GANJA CARPETS AS THE SAMPLE OF THE AZERBAIJAN CULTURAL HERITAGE

Annotation

For the first time, the source-study significance of the formation and development of traditional Ganja carpet weaving in the study of the history of culture, arts and crafts, also ethnography of the Caucasus region was investigated on the basis of various written scientific literature, archival documents, as well as archaeological artifacts and individual ethnographic materials. By introducing comparative scientific research methods, various decorative and applied features, the characteristic ornamental features of numerous carpet weaving patterns were brought to study. The unique examples of Ganja carpet weaving, having rather unique craft features, have been studied as important sources in the study of material and spiritual cultural life, centuries-old craft traditions, ethnic values and traditional attitudes, characteristic of the everyday and economic lives of the local peoples of the whole Caucasus region.

The role of the ancient branch of artistic craft - carpet weaving in the study of the development of trade, the formation of urban culture, enrichment of cultural, social and political relations between the peoples of the Caucasus is noted, also the importance of this branch of craft in the development of such ancient cities as Ganja, located on The Silk Road was substantiated from a scientific point of view. On the basis of specific examples were determined reflection in separate ornamental elements of such characteristic features of the local peoples of the region as courage, honesty, loyalty, hospitality, a rich dining culture, religious and national tolerance - tolerance, and a culture of coexistence - multiculturalism.

Keywords: *Ganja, Azerbaijan, the Caucasus, historical and ethnographic research, craft traditions, examples of material culture, weaving, carpet weaving.*

Annotasiya

İlk dəfə olaraq Gəncə şəhərində ənənəvi xalçaçılığın təşəkkülü və inkişafı tarixinin müxtəlif yazılı elmi ədəbiyyatlar, tarixi mənbələr, arxiv sənədləri, həmçinin arxeoloji tapıntılar və çöl etnoqrafik materialları əsasında öyrənilməsinin Qafqazın mədəniyyət tarixinin, dekorativ sənət növlərinin və etnoqrafiyasının tədqiqində əhəmiyyəti araşdırılmışdır. Komparativ (qarşılıqlı müqayisəli) elmi üsulların tətbiqi sayəsində tədqiq olunan çoxsaylı xalçaçılıq nümunələrinin dekorativ-tətbiqi cəhətləri, səciyyəvi naxışlanma xüsusiyyətləri öyrənilmişdir. Bir sıra nəfis və təkrarsız sənətkarlıq xüsusiyyətlərinə malik olması ilə seçilən Gəncə xalçaçılıq sənəti məmulatlarının bütövlükdə Qafqaz bölgəsinin maddi və mənəvi mədəniyyətinin, çoxəsrlik

sənətkarlıq ənənələrinin, yerli xalqlarının bir sıra etnik dəyərlərinin, özünəməxsus həyat tərzinin, məişətinin və təsərrüfat fəaliyyətinin səciyyəvi cəhətlərinin üzə çıxarılmasında sahib olduğu mənbəünaslıq dəyəri tədqiq olunmuşdur.

Bəhs edilən və qədim tarixə malik toxuculuq sənəti sahəsi olan xalçaçılığın Qafqaz bölgəsində ticarətin inkişafı, şəhər mədəniyyətinin təşəkkülü, yerli xalqlar arasında mədəni, ictimai, siyasi münasibətlərin inkişafında rolu öyrənilmiş, qədim İpək Yolu üzərində yerləşən Gəncə kimi bir çox şəhərlərin təraqqisində bu sənətkarlıq sahəsinin dəyəri elmi əsaslarla araşdırılmışdır. Tədqiqat əsərində yerli xalçaçılıq nümunələrinin naxışlarında bu qədim bölgədə yaşayan yerli xalqlara məxsus mərdlik, sözüünə bütövlülük, sədaqətlik, qonaqpərvərlik, zəngin süfrə mədəniyyətinə sahib olmaq, dini və milli dözümlülük olan tolerantlıq, birgəyaşayış mədəniyyəti - multikulturalizm kimi xüsusiyyətlərinin öz əksini tapması nümunələrlə əsaslandırılmışdır.

Açar sözlər: *Gəncə, Azərbaycan, Qafqaz, tarixi-etnoqrafik tədqiqat, sənətkarlıq ənənələri, maddi mədəniyyət nümunələri, toxuculuq, xalçaçılıq.*

Introduction

Ganja region is located in the northeast of the Lesser Caucasus. This region was a very important part of the historical development of Azerbaijan. Since Ganja city and the regions surrounding it are in close economic and cultural relations with one another, the people residing in this territory have developed similar values, including similar traditions, ways of life, economic relations, and paths of development. Regions such as Dashkasan, Gadabay, Samukh, Goygol, Goranboy, and Shamkir were established around Ganja and their territories contained residential settlements and played active roles in the economic and cultural life of Ganja throughout history. From an ethnographic standpoint, the closeness of these settlements is seen even more vividly through concrete examples. Although great examples of carpet and carpet items were distinctly created by the people of this region, they are based on the same styles of creativity and investigation, making the collection of the carpets woven here into the same group necessary [1, p. 6705-6706].

Many of residential settlements in this territory can inform researchers about the history, outlook, and ethnic relations of the people including study of necropolises, barrows, castles, and palaces; the ruins of fortifications, caravansaries, bridges, tombs; as well as stones in strange forms, statues of horses and rams, temples, churches, mosques, and sacred places. The places names and geographic names are examples of folklore representing the past and the rich cultural heritage of Azerbaijanis. The local people were occupied with handicrafts, husbandry, and breeding cattle and they used the gifts of nature efficiently. The folklore, myth and legends, tales, and poetic examples are products of the rich imagination of the local people and indicate the outlook of the people settled here. In addition to the myths and legends reflecting a traditional Turkish outlook, the stories about the history of each geographical name and sacred place also reflect this influence in the region. Each daily and ornamental item or military arm found in old residential settlements reflects a great cultural history and could be evaluated separately as a

pearl of art. These examples reflect the aesthetic views of the local people while showing the richness and versatility of the tradition of mastery.

Materials and methods of the research

Ganja and the surrounding regions have a multi-colored and rich nature mainly consisting of mountainous areas and foothills. The rivers full of clear water and the verdant meadows made this territory particularly efficient for husbandry. The climate zone endows this region with specific colors and tones. The Samukh, Goranboy, and Shamkir regions are distinguished for their rich gardens, vineyards, and subtropical plants, while Gadabay and Dashkasan are famous for their alpine meadows and mountain plants. In addition to its forests rich in oak, hornbeam, pear, apple, cherry, walnut, and cherry-plum trees, multi-colored plants including wormwood grow in the fields of this area, and different shrubs grow in the rocky crags. The complex and versatile landscape makes its flora unique, almost as though the alpine meadows, high mountains, and the multi-colored flowers are examples of a great carpet. These conditions led to the purchasing of quality wool and natural dyes by providing the development of husbandry, particularly breeding sheep.

Weaving was highly developed in Ganja. Traditional types of fabric were considered for every kind of clothes and woven in specific quantities. In many cases, the kind of clothes and name of the fabric became identical, such as “jejim”. Products known as “blanket cover,” “mattress cover,” “prayer rug,” “curtain for mattresses,” “curtain for corners,” and “cover for mutakka” (long and round pillow for leaning to rest) were woven in the jejim weaving style are artistic examples where the name of the fabric and product type are the same [2, p. 6].

A coarse calico is also woven in some villages of the Ganja region, especially in Samukh where this fabric is particularly distinguished. In addition to weaving excellent carpets, silk, and half-silk fabrics, they produced high quality cotton fabric (zarifagh) called “jalamaya.” Gauze was produced from the finest type of cotton thread and fine white “jalamaya.” Gauze was produced from the finest type of cotton thread and fine white “jalamaya” was produced from the double or triple twisted type. “Jalamaya” is a densely woven type of cotton fabric woven in Ganja.

The abundance of natural dye plants in addition to different types of raw material including sheep s wool, camel wool, and goats wool played a decisive role in the realization of manufacturing wool products in Azerbaijan [3; 4, p. 17].

At the end of the nineteenth century, Ganja and its surrounding regions occupied an important place concerning the abundance of wool in Azerbaijan. In historical sources, information is given on the presence of one hundred thousand sheep in this region, including the quantity of the wool reserve. This abundance increased the creation of different types of wool products. Women in Ganja did not do any work in the fields and their main occupation was weaving nice carpets and carpet items. According to the information about Ganja, the woman in each village wove carpets, rugs, horse cloths, sacks, catchalls, and the most delicate and high quality shawls called “mahud.”

The length of each shawl was seven arsheen (equal to 0.71 m) and the width was four charak (17.75 sm). Depending on their quality, each shawl was evaluated at a price between seven manat to ten silver manat according to the monetary rate of that time [4].

In the nineteenth century, Ganja was one of the places where professional needlework was centralized. The “gazma” and “doldurma” types of tekelduz needlework spread widely around Ganja. Rich families residing in this territory preferred to cover their tents with white-colored felt casts and therefore, they ordered felt casts made from white wool.

Applied significance of investigation.

Carpet and carpet items held an essential place in the daily life of the people of the Ganja region. There were carpets for praying, horse cloths and other weaving products, in addition to carpets and kilimin different sizes. The rich nature of Ganja lent special tints to the carpets of this region and endowed various dyes to the color composition. Colorful dyes are the main feature distinguishing the carpets of this region. In terms of the patterns and compositions of the carpets, the imagination, mythical views, and beliefs of the local people held an important place in their lives and their expressions were represented in the carpets. Mythological birds and animals, as well as semantic elements, resulting from their outlook on life were specific to the carpets of this region. Ganja carpets that have close ties with different carpet-weaving groups of Azerbaijan act as a main expression of thought and feelings of the people residing in this territory [5].

The main production centers of the Ganja carpet group consist of the city of Ganja, its surrounding villages, as well as modernday Gadabay, Goranboy, Shamkir, Goygol, Dashkasan, and Samukh regions. In fact, the carpets woven in each of these centers are distinguished for their specific forms. Generally, the characteristic features of Ganja carpets are their long form, high pile, and great patterns. Flat weave carpets are observed in different densities. In the Ganja region, a small portable warping machine for weaving small carpets was installed in houses or yards but the large carpets were also used. A professional master conducted the process of laying warp on these warping machines.

In the past in addition to weaving carpets, the profession of felting widely used by the people in the cattle-breeding and nomadic economy spread in Ganja, as it was an old weaving center. The felts prepared by local masters were very useful for covering of the tops and sides of shacks in the mountainous fields of this territory, as well as for covering the floor and carts. The felts were made mainly from white and black wool. The tents were decorated with pile and flat weave carpets in addition to felts. Palas, jejim, and kilim, in addition to other flat weave carpets were distinguished for their beauty. Each family would have a silk jejim woven on the simplest “hana” in the Ganja region, where silkworm breeding developed, because of the color, fine pattern, delicate knitting, and durability of these particular jejim [1; 6].

The most important parts of the dowries given to brides in Ganja included pile and flat weave carpets, manually woven catchalls, saddlebags, kit bags, sacks, salt bags, “mutakka” with carpet covers, and other woven items.

It is possible to observe the artistic and technological effect of Ganja carpets in some carpets of Gazakh and Karabakh.

The pile of carpets woven in the mountains of Ganja were longer and thicker since they were intended to keep the room warm in cold weather, in addition to their aesthetic importance [7; 8].

Different types of Ganja carpets

Ganja carpets have their own specific individual color palette, using sharp tones. The most commonly used colors are dark blue, green, yellow, blue, black, and ivory.

Ganja group carpets are known as “Ganja,” “Old Ganja,” “Gadabay,” “Chiragli,” “Samukh,” “Chayli,” “Shadli,” and “Fakhrali.” The “Samukh,” “Chayli,” and “Fakhrali” carpets woven here have an artistic arrangement with a constant form, a closed type, and a central field decorated with “gyol” (medallion).

“Old Ganja” carpets have a specific artistic structure. The strips decorated in successive and diagonal form along the central field and free “buta” (paisley) elements inside them are very pleasant. These patterns are distinguished for their artistic structure and color resolution from “buta” elements inside in Baku, Shirvan, Karabakh, and Sarab carpets. This carpet is known by various names: “Ganja,” “Old Ganja,” “Ganja buta,” or “Butali Ganja.” The “Khantirma” carpet created in Karabakh as a result of the influence of Ganja carpets is reminiscent of an “Old Ganja” carpet. It may be supposed that the “Old Ganja” cheshni was created under the influence of the design of tirma clothes brought from the East during the commercial development of Ganja [9-11].

One of the carpets belonging to the Ganja group is related to the name of the Fakhrali village. These carpets were the most popular carpets of the Ganja group with individual artistic structures. As a rule, these carpets were woven in small sizes and intended for praying. The upper part of the carpet is encircled with contours with a sanctuary depiction and geometric “gyol” inside the central field. The sanctuary depiction allows the carpet to be used again, leading to the name “janamaz.”

The patterns of Ganja carpets mainly consist of geometric decorative elements. None of the elements assumes visual meaning from the point of view of appearance. Each pattern has its own meaning and arrangement. From this point of view, the carpets were used in various ceremonies: wooing, funeral or mourning ceremonies, as alms, dowries, for praying, during fortune telling, as a memorial, or for a child's birthday, among others. By considering these symbolic meanings, the age of these patterns may be discovered.

Conclusion

According to the aforementioned, it was impossible for everyone to have carpets in their homes and to use them. The carpet was used in the proper moments and by limited people according to its patterns and their meaning and thereby it became an ornament of palaces and

kings. Afterwards, it was used widely by people and became a commodity. The signs woven on the carpets indicated the date of their production, the name of the master, and the possession.

Ganja weavers mainly use the depictions of *gyol* with stepped edges, hooked patterns, rhombs, cross-like-shapes, triangles, eight-pointed stars, gazelles, birds, and marks in carpets. Another kind of pattern is in the form of a flower or fantastic animal, but these do not hold the main position in the carpets, as they are woven in small sizes. These patterns represent layers of history. No other people have an analogue of these descriptive styles [15-17]. The styles match the petroglyphs in the territory of Azerbaijan and motifs on earthenware. The meaning of the patterns woven on Ganja carpets has not been studied completely yet, and maybe it is impossible to explain their meaning fully. However, it is possible to explain some of them. They are the kinds of patterns that arise from beliefs; the eight-pointed star is linked to the beliefs in the heavenly bodies; the rhomb is a symbol of the female beginning of the world, increase, and abundance; the cross-shaped motif is a sign of the four elements or the four poles; the stepped *gyol* are explained as divine development to God; and the triangle is a way to carry something to God. In addition, there are elements resembling the image of a bird and they are considered the sun, the world of heaven, or paradise according to Islamic philosophy and the Oghuz saga. At this time, their depictions were subject to artistic, historical, and philosophical influences due to their assimilation and weaving on carpets in new stylized expressions. Only after these depictions was the hook or claw element surrounding the *gyol* woven on Ganja carpets. The eagle was the symbol of predatory birds, just as in old Turk and Oghuz tribal tradition. The depiction of a claw or stylized bird and eagle heads were woven on the carpets belonging only to the Ganja group [8; 20, p. 18].

This covers the general character of the artistic features of the Ganja group of Azerbaijani carpets. In order to deeply understand the formation process of the Ganja group, one must examine the modern administrative territorial division of the main carpet-weaving centers of the region.

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