

QAJAR STYLE IN ART AS A PHENOMENON OF AZERBAIJAN ARTISTIC CULTURE

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Abstract. The paper deals with the Azerbaijani artistic culture before and after division to “southern” and “northern” parts. Qajar style pursues the traditions of Azerbaijanian miniatures are analyzed in the paper.

Keywords: artistic culture, Azerbaijan, miniatures, Qajar style.

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Manuscript received: 18 January 2018

1. Introduction

Azerbaijani art of 19th century is closely connected with socio-political, economic and cultural changes that took place in the middle of 18th century. Artistic processes at the end of 18 - the beginning of 20th centuries are closely related to the development of capitalism and statehood, with the transformation of Azerbaijani ethnic groups into the developed nation. The common national self-consciousness of “southern” and “northern” Azerbaijanians proves that these processes went on intensively before the separation of Azerbaijan to Southern and Northern.



Picture 1. Ismail Jalayir. The girls at the teapot. Museum Victoria and Albert. London



Picture 2. Allahverdi Afshar. The lovers. Georgian State museum of Fine Arts. Tbilisi.



Picture 3. The Qajar paintings showroom in Victoria & Albert museum. London.

Turkmenchay agreement which divided Azerbaijan between Russia and Qajar Iran was unable to separate the art. It has remained integral from ethnical perspective.

XIX century is the last in the history of integrated artistic culture of Azerbaijan. Division to North and South initially was not so catastrophic, considering regular cultural contacts in all spheres and at all levels, although, this division assumed irreversible character in the 20s of the XIX century. New Farsi monarchist dynasty which came to power in Iran in 1925 after Turkic, and seizure by Bolshevik army the territory of young and independent Northern Azerbaijan pull apart national arts on different sides of Araz river.

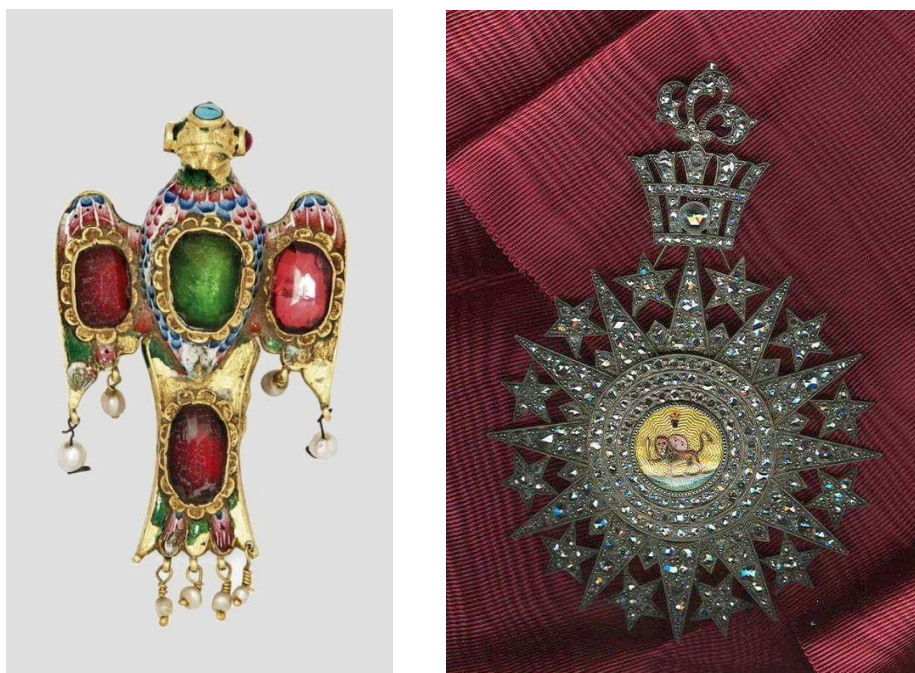


Picture 4. Qajar epoch artefacts in British Museum. London.

Moving away from tradition of miniature and experiencing European influence, Azerbaijani art generated distinctive, deeply national phenomenon which have got the name of Qajar style (this name origins from Turkic monarchy ruled in Iran, which named its country Qajaria, but not Iran) in Western study of art.



Picture 5. Qajar style earrings. Palace Golestan. Tehran.



Picture 6. Pendant in the form of a bird and medal. Doha, Museum of Islamic Art.

In 19th century art of Azerbaijan sparkles with such names as Allahverdi Afshar, Abdoulgasim Tebrizi, Mirza Kadim Erivani, Mir Mohsun Navvab, Ismayil Jalair, Mehrali, Mirzababa, Jaffar, and others.



Picture 7. Aigrette and medal. Louvre-Lens Museum.

Only nowadays, in independent Azerbaijan we have an opportunity to raise the issue of Azerbaijani national character of Qajar School, considering this style as national phenomenon, as its brightest representatives together with the dynasty itself are the part of ancient Azerbaijani families.



Picture 7. Allahverdi Afshar. Portraits of Fath Ali Shah and Abbas Mirza. Hermitage. Saint-Petersburg



Picture 8. Qajar style paintings from Hermitage. Saint-Petersburg.

Extant samples of decorative and applied art and painting are outstanding models of artistic creativity of its epoch. They become important sources on history of culture, costumes, mode of life, musical instruments, and visual expression of aesthetic canons of our predecessors. So called Qajar style in art, formed in Iran at a court of aboriginal Turkic dynasty of Qajars during the rule of Fatali Shakh was a peculiar artistic orientation. Namely Azerbaijani painters played active role in its creation. Big number of Qajar style exhibits kept in various museums of the world and private collections,

which I had a luck to see, allows to mention the high professionalism, skilled performance, refined color manner of painters and of course showy, palatial character of this school.



Picture 9. Qajar style tapestry from Georgian state Museum of Fine Arts.Tbilisi.

It has shown unity of it's principles in all spheres, as we see an absolute supremacy of this style in decorative and applied art (carpets, embroidery, textile, ornamented tiles, jewelry, tableware, utensils, wood wares), and in book graphic works as well as in painting.



Picture 10. At the exhibition of Qajar art “The Rose Empire” in Louvre-Lens museum (March-July 2018)



Picture 11. Mirza Qadim Irevani. Qajar princess Mah Talat.
Azerbaijan National Museum of Fine Arts. Baku.

Qajar style pursues the traditions of Azerbaijanian miniatures. In my opinion, main aspect here is the reconstitution of feeling paradise within painted reality which derives from classical medieval Azerbaijanian miniatures being an archetype of Azeri tradition. This archetype is intrinsic exactly to Azeri, Turkish art. There is no such archetype nor in Indian neither European miniature. The main aspect in Christian art is, vice versa, the motive of demission of human from God, fall from grace. On the contrary, in Azeri, Sufi culture the main goal was to reach heaven mystically during lifetime (via music and art). The same is in Qajar art – creation some kind of heaven metaphor in works of Jalair, Afshar, Navvab; in samples of textile and embroidery, pile-less zili carpets, in interiors of our nobility.

Existing models of XIX century carpets allow us to mention the increase of topic samples of carpets at that time, emergence of portrait carpets with realistic portraits, stylized, but at the same time authentic. Images of poems by Nizami, Firdousi and other poets stylized according to medieval miniature stand down in XIX century to realistically performed actual persons – shakhs, their circles, epic heroes. Even in such centuries-old traditional and clearly formed structure as Azerbaijani carpet, XIX century reveals masterful influence of the aggregate of European compositional mentality existing in Qajar style, realistic, portrait mansion, gala character, ceremonial introduction of persons-real aristocrats Turkic sense of form.



Picture 12. Qajar epoch artefacts. Monumental wall painting from Palace of Irevan Khans.19 century.Irevan.

Shining, flickering with sheens of glaze festive surface and silky effect peculiar to Qajar style appeared even in “garden” carpets.





Picture 13. Qajar epoch carpets from different private and museum collections.

So, in the time of Qajars, namely under the direct patronage of Fatali Shakh, Qajar originates artistic style which then will be called as Qajar school. Azeri painters were the most active in its creation. It is worthy to mention personal painter of Azerbaijan ruler Abbas Mirza Qajar - Allahverdi - emerging from famous Azeri Gizilbash family of Afshars, which favored the world with the whole galaxy of outstanding painters. One of his best paintings, depicting the gala portrait of Abbas Mirza is kept in Moscow Museum of Art of East Nations. Today, artworks of this school adorn two beautiful halls of Hermitage. Another gala portrait of Fatali Shakh is the pearl of Victoria & Albert Museum's collection. Besides Allahverdi Afshar, this period revealed artists Muhammad Hasan Afshar Urmevi, his sons Beglar Khan and Abulfaz, and also the son of Allahverdi Afshar - Abulhasan Naggashbashi Afshar Urmevi.

Despite obvious European influence, Qajar style stands as a bright and ethnically original phenomenon of Azerbaijani artistic culture. Works created in this style is like nothing else; it is a unique and inimitable part of Eastern visualization.

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