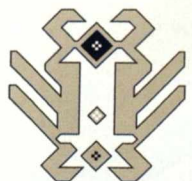




Ministry of Culture and
Tourism of Azerbaijan

Azerbaijani
carpets





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Azerbaijan is a country that since ancient times has been famed for its art with carpet weaving playing the leading role.

Carpet weaving for the Azerbaijani people has always been the very sphere of culture, where its the rich inner world, world outlook and aesthetics are reflected. For centuries, Azerbaijanis were born, lived and died on carpets.

Origins of carpet weaving in Azerbaijan are traced back to the Bronze Age. Archaeological findings and written sources testify that as early as in the 2nd millennium BC people living in the territory of Azerbaijan used to weave various carpet-wares.

According to numerous historical sources and descriptions of European travellers, Azerbaijan in the Middle Ages was one of the outstanding centres of carpet-making in the whole Orient. The diversity of nature, various historical, economic and social factors made a great contribution to the variety of Azerbaijani carpets. Each region of Azerbaijan is famous for its original carpets and carpet-ware being quite peculiar to each place.

Thus, for many centuries various carpet weaving schools were formed in Azerbaijan. They got their names from regions and became known as Guba, Baku, Shirvan, Ganja, Gazakh, Garabagh, Nakhichevan and Tabriz schools.

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Carpet weaving has traditionally been a preoccupation of women, who carefully transmitted this art from one generation to another. They say that there was no woman in Azerbaijan unable to weave a carpet. It is not surprising that one of a girl's basic dowry objects was a carpet set called "Dast-hali-gaba" consisting of 3 - 5 parts. The girl herself had to take part in its weaving. This centuries-old tradition spread and made carpet weaving extremely popular among Azerbaijani people; this was one of the principal types of art in the region.

According to the weaving techniques, carpets are divided into piled and pileless ones. The pileless carpets include such famous ones as palas, jejim, shedde, kilim, zili, verni, soumakh and ladi. Since ancient times carpet-ware have been quite popular in household use: pileless carpet-ware - khurjun (saddle-bag), mafrashi (carpet trunk, box), chul (horse cloth) etc, and piled - dast-hali-gaba, khalcha, khali, gaba.

How can the Azerbaijani carpet be described? It has to be seen, as it absorbed all the colours of nature of the native land; the magically playing colours of the carpet took in the ruby brightness of pomegranate grains and golden shining of quinces, the copper colours of saffron, amber and the lilac tints of grapes. The Azerbaijani carpet is full of inexhaustible richness of colour, unique combination of patterns, flight of creative mind and great skills.

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GUBA carpet school

The Guba region is the biggest carpet centre in Azerbaijan. It is located in the north-eastern part of the country and consists of mountain, submountain and low-land areas. The main Guba carpet weaving points are Sirt-chichi, Pirebedil, Alpan, Afurja, Mollakamalli, Shah-nazarli, Garagashli etc. which represent more than 30 various compositions.

The Guba carpets differ with their diversity of compositions, complexity of geometrical patterns and restraint of colour harmony.

Their patterns consist of artistic vegetative and animal motives. The borders of Guba carpets are particularly interesting; they show difficult patterns, and often occupy the major part of the central field.

Many Guba carpet compositions such as "Alpan", "Gonakkend", "Alchagul-chichi", "Khirdagul-chichi", "Gimil", "Pirabadil", "Zeyva", "Biliji", "Ugakh", "Afurja", "Orduj", "Jimi", "Gadim Minara", "Sirt-chichi" etc., are famous for their dense weaving, delicate structure, complicated patterns, elegant contours and harmonious colour combinations.

Alongside with piled carpets, Guba carpet weavers also produce pileless carpets called "Soumakh", "Palas" and various carpet-ware.

"SUMAKH" Guba,
early XX century





"GIMIL" Guba, early XX century



"PIRABADIL" Guba, early XX century

BAKU carpet school

"KHILA-BUTA" Baku,
XVIII century



The Baku carpet centre includes villages of the Absheron peninsula - Novkhani, Nardaran, Bulbul, Fatmayi, Mardakan, Gala, Amirjan (Hila) and others, as well as the region of Khizi with such villages as Gaadi, Khil, Keshi, Findighan.

The majority of these carpets were named after the villages where they were woven: "Khila-buta", "Khila-afshan", "Novkhani", "Surakhani", "Gala", "Baku", "Go-radil", "Fatmayi", "Findighan", "Gaadi" etc.

The Baku group is characterised with its softness, bright colours and delicacy of patterns. Geometrical and vegetative motives usually dominate in these carpets.

The carpet "Khila-buta" is woven in the village of Khila (nowadays Amirjan) in the eastern part of the Baku region. The carpet represents the motif of "buta" being the most popular ones in the Azerbaijani decorative art. In the past the motif used to have symbolical meaning and was used by fire worshippers as a symbol.

Some pileless carpets such as palas, kilim and zili and carpet-ware kheyba, chanta, khurjun, were also woven in the Baku region.





“ZILI” Baku, early XIX century



“SURAKHANY” Baku, late XIX century

SHIRVAN carpet school

The Shirvan carpeting school is located in the north-eastern part of Azerbaijan and covers Shamakhi, Maraza, Aghsu, Kurdemir, Hajigabul, Goychay and numerous villages.

Since the Middle Ages, Shirvan carpets have been popular in the entire world with their rich compositions and difficult patterns.

German and English travellers and ambassadors of the 16th-17th centuries described the artistic peculiarities of these carpets. European painters of the 14th-15th centuries used to depict these carpets in their works.

Nowadays Shirvan carpets of the 13th-14th centuries are kept in the best museums of the world.

Shirvan carpets are woven in big sizes and with high density of knots.

The carpets called "Arjiman", "Jamjamli", "Gabistan", "Maraza" and "Kurdamir" are the most well-known piled carpets from the Shirvan group.

Shirvan was also famous for its pileless carpets such as "Palas" and "Kilim" made in the villages of Pashali and Udulu.

The Shirvan carpet weavers also used to make various carpet-wares, such as chuval (bag), khurjun (saddle bag), mafrash (woven box), chul (horse cloth) and others.

"ARJIMAN" Shirvan,
early XX century



"KILIM" Shirvan, early XX century



"JAMJAMLI" Shirvan, XX century

GANJA carpet school



The Ganja carpet making centre is located in the northwest of Azerbaijan and includes Ganja and neighbouring villages, as well as Gedebe, Goranboy, Shamkir, and Samukh. The main carpet production centre is Ganja.

Since the 10th-11th centuries Ganja has been famous for its silk and woollen textiles and high quality carpets, which were made in numerous local workshops. The Ganja carpet school also had an impact on weaving points around Ganja. Ganja carpets differ from other carpets in Azerbaijan with their patterns, variety of compositions and elegance of contours. The best examples of Ganja carpets are the ones called "Gadim Ganja" and "Fakhrli". "Gadim Ganja" is also sometimes called "Ganja-shahar", "Ganja-buta" or "Butali Ganja".

Carpets of the "Fakhrli" type were usually woven in small sizes and used mainly as prayer rugs (namazlig).

GANJA Ganja,
early XX century





"FAHKRALI" Ganja, hegira 1332/1904



"GANJA" Ganja, early XX century

GAZAKH carpet school

"BORCHALI" Gazakh,
early XX century

This school includes the villages of the Gazakh region and is concentrated in the north-western part of Azerbaijan, as well as in some Azerbaijani villages in Georgia (Borchali, Garayazi, Garachop and Gachagan) and until recently in Armenia (Bambak, Lambali, Ijevan and Garagoyunlu).

The compositions of "Borchali", "Shikhli", "Gaymagli", "Gachagan", "Salakhli", "Garayazi" and some others are the most famous in this group.

Patterns of the Gazakh carpets drew attention of European painters, starting from the Middle Ages; pictures of these carpets can be met on canvases related to the 16th century, such as "The Annunciation" by Carlo Crivelli and "The Ambassadors" by Hans Holbein.

Excellent examples of the Gazakh carpets of the 14th-19th centuries are kept in many world museums including the Victoria and Albert Museum of London, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Istanbul Museum of Turkic and Islamic Art, as well as in private collections.





"DEMIRCHILAR" Gazakh, XIX century



Unnamed. Gazakh, early XX century

GARABAGH carpet school

Located in the southwest of Azerbaijan the Garabagh consists of mountain and lowland areas.

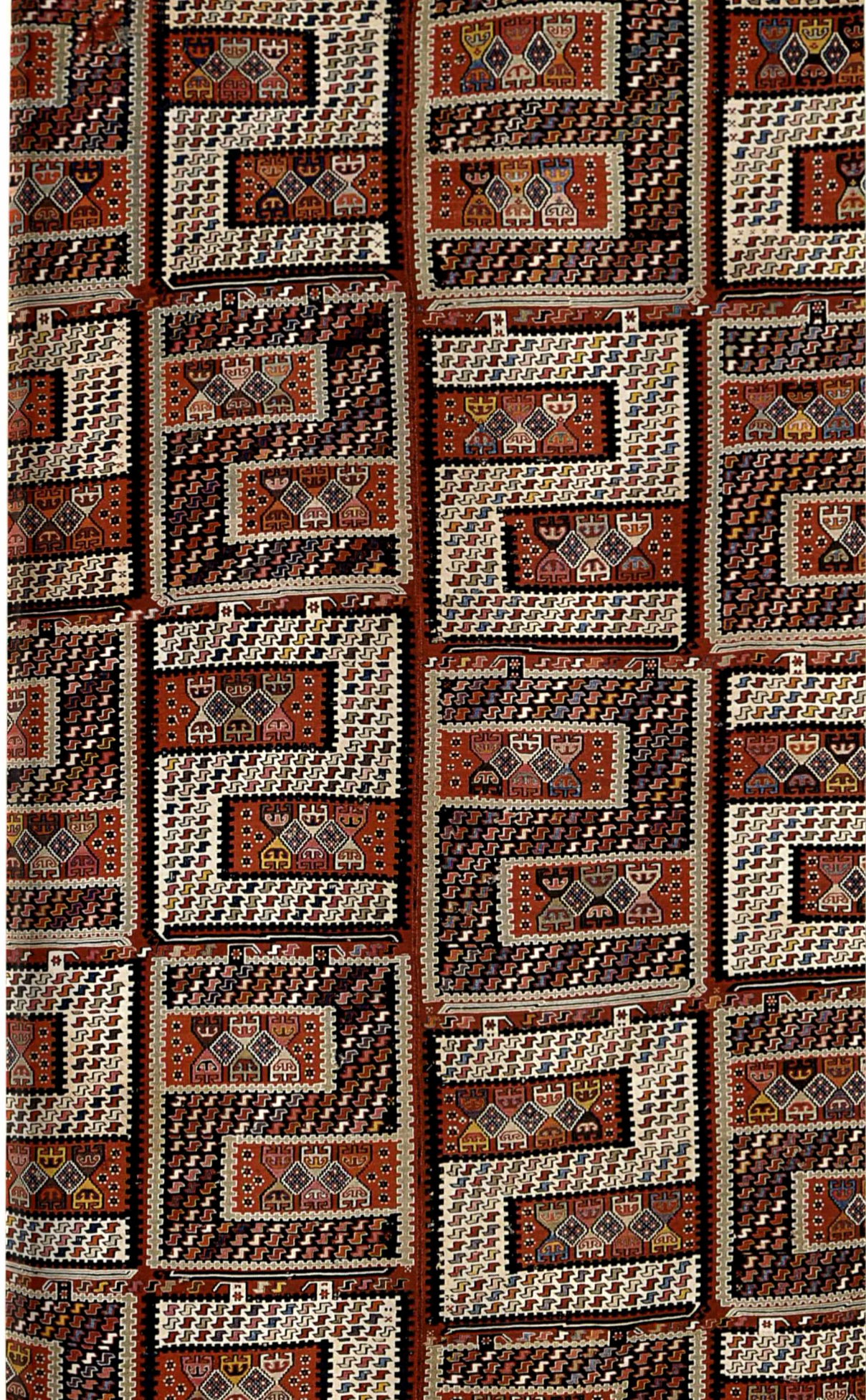
Since the 10th century various Arabic historians such as Al-Mugaddasi, Masudi and others have written that this region was a large centre of carpet making. In the 19th century Garabagh played a leading role in carpet weaving in Azerbaijan.

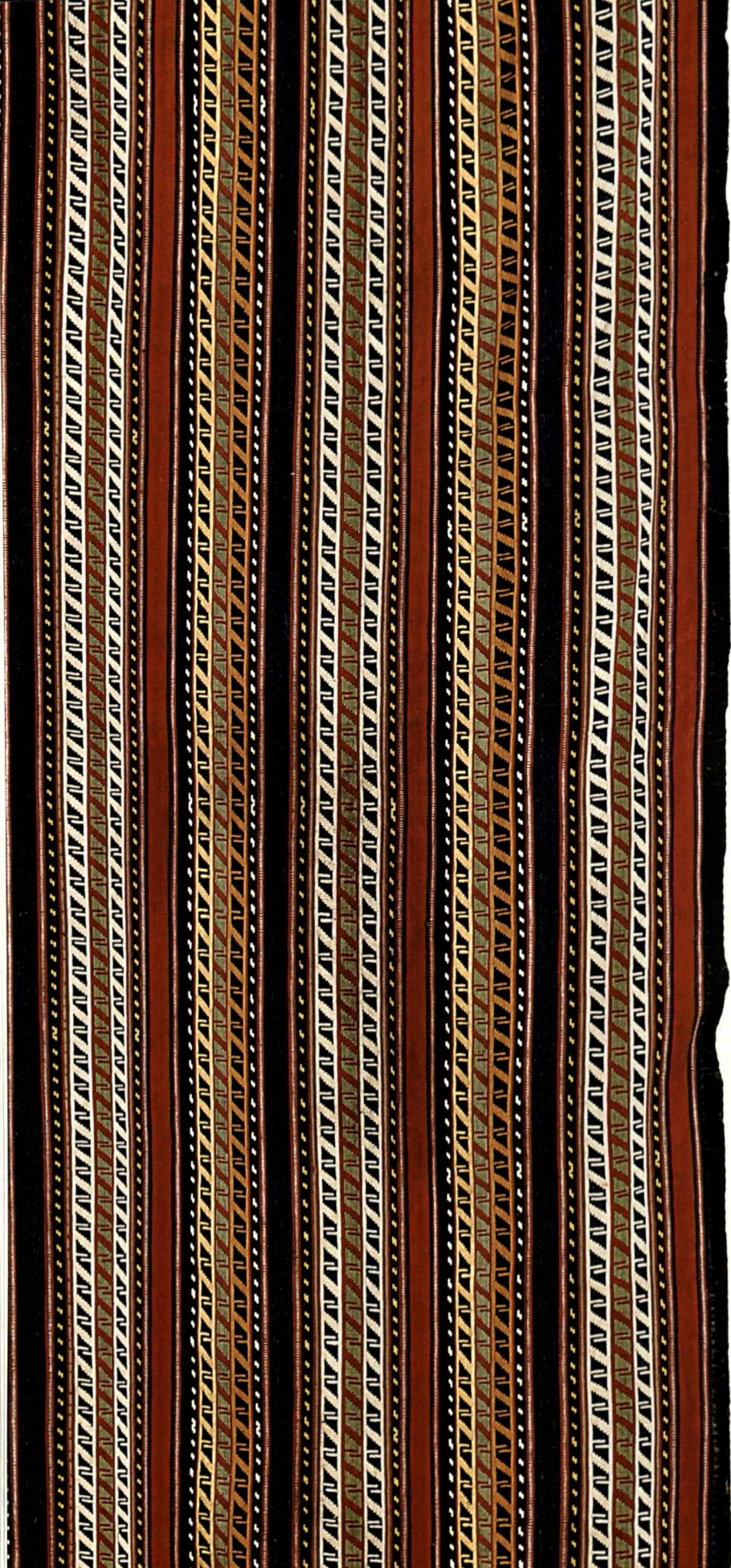
In 1750 the ruler of the Garabagh Khanate, Panahali Khan founded the city of Shusha. In the 18th century Shusha became the carpeting centre in the entire Caucasus.

"VERNI" Garabagh,
XVIII century

A Russian researcher J. Zedgenidze, who investigated Shusha carpets during this period, wrote that by quantity and quality of produced carpets the Azerbaijani city of Shusha held the first place in the whole Caucasus: "... almost the entire carpet manufacture in Shusha is concentrated in the Tatar (Azerbaijani) families and reveals the historical and social roots of this phenomenon..."

The carpets of Garabagh have big sizes and often make up carpet sets called "Dast-haligaba" consisting of 3-5 parts. Alongside with piled carpets, this school was also famous for pileless carpets kilim, zili, verni etc.





"JIJIM" Garabagh,
XIX century



"ZILI" Garabagh, early XX century

NAKHCHIVAN carpet school



Being the most ancient centre of art, trade and culture of Azerbaijan, Nakhchivan for centuries has been famous for its rich decorative and applied arts, especially for its outstanding carpet weaving. For a long time Nakhchivan, Shahbuz, Ordubad, Julfa were the centres for weaving pileless and piled carpets, which were made from wool and silk.

Here, just like in Garabagh, carpet weavers used to make "Dast-hali-gaba" (carpet sets) and khali (big carpets) with sizes from 2 to 20-30 square metres. Striped narrow and long carpets with geometrical, vegetative and animal ornaments are quite typical for Nakhchivan. Various Nakhchivan carpets with rich compositions belonging to "the dragon type" and related to the 17th-18th centuries are kept in Istanbul.

Unnamed. Nakhchivan,
early XX century





Unnamed. Nakhchivan, early XX century



"SHEDDE" Nakhchivan, late XIX century

TABRIZ carpet school

The Tabriz carpet centre is concentrated in Southern Azerbaijan (the present-day north-western part of Iran) covers the cities of Tabriz, Ardebil, Maraga, Marand, Khoy, Urmiya, Zanzan, Geresu, Geriz, Sarab, Ahmadabad, Mirish, Akhar, Salmas, Goravan, Senna, Garadag and others.

"LACHAKTURUNJ" Tabriz,
early XX century



The development of the Tabriz carpet was greatly influenced by the Tabriz school of miniature art of the 16th-17th centuries. This period is usually called the Golden Age of the eastern carpet art.

Masterpieces of this period are kept in numerous museums of the world. From among classical carpets of Tabriz it is necessary to mention such carpets as "Sheikh Safi" (also known as 'the Ardebil carpet') woven in 1539 and kept in the Victoria and Albert Museum of London and a carpet called "Hunting" of the 16th century that belongs to the collection of the Poldi Pezzoli Museum of Milan.





"SHAH ABBAS" Tabriz, XIX century



"AGAJLI" Tabriz, early XX century

