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Gulshan Gasimzade
Azerbaijan State Academy of Fine Arts
(Azerbaijan)

gulshengasimzadeh@yahoo.com

PALACE CARPETS IN ANCIENT AND EARLY MIDDLE AGES IN AZERBAIJAN HISTORICAL TRADITIONS OF ITS CREATION

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Abstract. The article discusses the history of the palace complexes in the Manna and Median lands in the ancient Azerbaijani states and the tools used in their decoration. As you know, at the end of the 3rd millennium BC, at the beginning of the 1st millennium BC, architecture and decorative-applied arts developed in the state of Manna. The presence of carpets in the palaces of the Manna state is not in doubt, because according to scholars, the development of Median, Achaemenian and Scythian art benefited from the art of Manna. Sources show that during the time of Astyages, the floors of the Medians were decorated with magnificent carpets. The carpets discovered from the Turkish-Scythian mounds of Altai were classified by experts as Median culture.

Key words: Manna, Hasanlu, palace carpets, Sasanian carpets, Achaemenids.

Introduction. The roots of statehood traditions in the territory of Azerbaijan go back to the most ancient times. Manna (10th–6th centuries BC) and Median (2nd half of the 7th century BC – 550 BC) were the oldest states that arose in this land. The main territory of the Manna state was holding Zamua, the country of the Lullubeys. Local tribal chiefs united with the population of neighboring areas to form a single centralized state. In its heyday, the Manna state did not lag behind other Central Asian countries in terms of the level of development of agriculture, animal husbandry and various professions.

The excavations of Hasanlu (settlement IV) provide a lot of information about the lifestyle and culture of the Manna state. A strong fortification is

located in the center of the town. This fortification is surrounded by walls made of mud bricks, the thickness of which is about 3 meters. Inside the castle there was a palace, a chapel (temple) and a treasury. Because many pearls and glass beads were found here, the treasure was called the «house of pearls». It is difficult to give an accurate opinion about the art of carpet weaving and palace workshops operating in this area at that time. Nonetheless, in the mentioned period, it is confirmed by the discovered artistic examples that various types of professions developed at a high level. A gold breastplate and other artefacts found at Ziwiya indicate a positive view of the development of carpet weaving.

According to its importance, Median was considered the second state in the territory of South Azerbaijan. Despite the fact that the life of this state was not long from a historical point of view, Median left a great mark on the history of ancient Azerbaijan. In 590 B.C. Med, invades the Manna state and as a result the Manna state falls. The main part of the territory of the Manna state was the mountainous region east of Lake Urmia.

The interpretation of the main material.

The capital of the Median state was the legendary city of Ekbatana (Agbatan). That city is located in the current Takhta-Suleyman district, namely, in the Iraq-Anjali province, on the southwestern coast of the Caspian Sea. According to Herodotus, the first Median monarch by Deioces (709-656 BC) founded this city. Deioces was elected by the people after the Assyrian captivity and became the ruler of the devastated country. After consolidating his power, Deioces accepted the title «Czar of Tsars «. This title was an indicator of both his courtier status and power.

In the Avesta texts, the capital city of Ekbatan is described as a well-fortified and populous city distinguished by its wealth and grandeur. Similar information is given in the works of Herodotus. According to Herodotus, the palace built by Deioces was the main beauty of Ekbatan. «When the Medians chose Deioces as their ruler, he ordered to build for himself a house worthy of the title of king and a great fortress wall.» So this palace was surrounded by seven walls decorated with towers and battlements, and each wall was higher than the other.

According to Polybius, the interior walls, columns, ceiling beams and other wooden parts of the Ekbatan palace were made of cedar and cypress wood, covered with layers of gold and silver with chintz ornaments. Additionally,

plates made of pure silver were also used in the palace. In the temple of Ena, there were columns decorated with gold [9, p. 26].

Based on the sources, it would be logical to assume that the interior rooms were also decorated with beautiful carpets. Looking at the written texts of ancient writers, we can easily say that Median carpets and dyed fabrics became popular throughout Asia. Carpets were an indispensable part of the decoration of palace rooms, and according to some researchers, there were also workshops that fulfilled palace orders at that time [5, p. 41].

87 km from Persopol, the first capital of the Achaemenid state. It became the distant city of Pasargad (Gardens of Pars). Cyrus the Great began the construction of this city in 546 BC, but died before completing its construction. Literary sources mention that the palace of Cyrus the Great at Pasargada was decorated with beautiful tapestries, probably woven by Median artisans. Xenophon also mentions the existence of valuable carpets with rich artistic and aesthetic properties: «The city of Sardis is famous for its «shaved» (lint free) carpets. «Only the monarch could walk on the carpets in the palace» [8, p. 52].

According to Appian, Cyrus room was decorated with tapestries attached to the wall with gold and bronze «hooks» like the Medians palace. This information provided by Appian proves that the Medians palace was also decorated with carpets. Considering that the most skilled carpet masters of ancient times were the Medians and that the Persians learned the art of carpet weaving from the Medians, it can be thought that Cyrus' tomb was decorated with carpets made by the Medians. We can imagine how beautiful the tapestries were that decorated the tomb of Cyrus and the golden coffin. It is known that Alexander the Great also admired these carpets.

Later, monarch Darius I built Persepolis, his personal residence, and made it the capital of the country. As before, the craftsmen of the Medians were actively involved in the construction of the new capital of the Achaemenid state. Information about Achaemenid period carpets is provided in various sources. The ancient Greek writer Xenophon, in his work Anabasis (circa 400 BC), repeatedly emphasizes that Achaemenid carpets are a true work of art, an ornament and a sign of prestige. In fact, at that time, gifts were considered the most valuable gifts given to foreign diplomats.

Many carpets have survived from ancient times to the present day. These carpets were discovered in 1949 by the famous archaeologist

S.İ.Rudenko during his excavations in the mounds in the Altai Mountains. The discovery of these carpets caused a real sensation in world culture, and the carpets were studied by various researchers [8, s.19]. There are various assumptions about their origin, but according to Aliyeva, these are Median carpets [3, p. 12].

Among the artifacts of Pazırım, the most famous copy is a pile carpet with a procession scene. Patterned images are located on the border of the carpet. In separate lanes – moving horsemen, gazelles and Griffins are depicted. The intermediate area of the carpet is divided into 24 squares (four squares in width, six squares in length). All squares are decorated with the same type of decorative motif and an equilateral cross. All the features of this pearl of art confirm that the weavers are skilled craftsmen who can display the most complex designs on the carpet by applying a high density of knots and loops. All these facts It suggests that a developed tradition of carpet weaving was formed in the 1st millennium BC.

Fig. 1. Hun carpet (Pazyryk burial), BC 383-200 years, size – 200x183 cm; material – wool; weaving – double knot; number of knots – 3600x1 sq. dm.; total number of knots is more than 1,25,000; Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg.

In addition, several Median lint free carpets woven with the kilim technique, with motifs and ornamental patterns, have also come down to our time. One of the tapestries depicts two women. According to S.İ. Rudenko, this is a scene of fire worship [8, p. 74-76]. Nonetheless, K.M. Aliyeva

rightly points out that Iranian fire worshipers cover their mouths with a special hood when approaching the fire altar. Based on this, K.M. Aliyeva believes that the images on this carpet contain images of Median women – Zoroastrian magicians. They sing the hymn of the Zoroastrian mags, which, according to the scholar, is the source of the art of mugham. K.M. Aliyeva justifies her opinion as follows: "In our opinion, the plot of this tapestry has nothing to do with fire worship, which was the official state religion of the Achaemenids and Sassanids. Instead of worshiping fire, women (one of whom is a virgin, wearing a crown) hold a bowl filled with the sacred drink called haoma and sing hymns. It is likely that each religious hymn was dedicated to a different celestial body" [11, p. 127]. Considering that Deioces Palace is the center of the sitar cult, this carpet depicting female singers can also be considered a palace carpet. It should also be noted that palace carpets had a cult importance at that time. There is no doubt that carpets were woven in various bundles at that time, but unfortunately they have not survived to the present day.

At that time, the lands of Northern Azerbaijan were called Alban-Arran (Aran). The culture that developed in these regions had many features similar to the Southern Azerbaijani culture. L.Kerimov writes: «Monuments of material culture of the VI-II centuries BC found on the territory of Azerbaijan confirm the high development of profession and art. During a certain period in Manna, Atropaten and Albania, professions, especially carpet weaving, developed at a high level" [6, p. 12].

Fig. 2. 5th Pazyryk burial, Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg.

This small excursion into the political life of ancient Azerbaijan allows us to evaluate the level of development of urban and palace culture in these places. Written sources also confirm that carpets were an indispensable part of palace interiors at that time. The tradition of using carpets for palace interiors was already formed in the 1st millennium BC (maybe even earlier). The Median were known throughout the world as the world's most skilled carpet weavers. Later, Median carpet weaving traditions were adopted by neighboring peoples.

During the Sassanid dynasty (III–VII centuries), the researches of the researchers repeatedly confirm that Azerbaijani carpet-making developed as before. For instance, Chinese traveler Xuan Teli-ank writes that at that time Azerbaijan was considered the largest center of carpet weaving. Another author Movses Kagankatvatsi (Kalankatuylu Musa) writes in his work «The History of Aghvan» that «silk fabrics and colorful, bright carpets are produced in the northern regions of Azerbaijan» [1, p. 2].

The formation of the traditions of palace carpets began at least from the time of the Median ruler Deiocus. These traditions were continued during the time of the Achaemenids and later Alexander the Great, and found their deserved place in Sasanian culture. Carpets decorating Sasanian palaces are reported in many written sources. It is known that weaving and carpet workshops operate in palaces. There, cocoons were grown and silk threads were made. These handmade threads were woven on special looms for silk fabrics and pile and lint free carpets [2, p. 6].

That historical period attracts attention from another aspect. Therefore, it is possible to find information about the weaving of carpets decorated with precious stones from various sources. For instance, the genius Azerbaijani poet Nizami Ganjavi (XII century) describes an interesting scene in his poem «Khosrov and Shirin» as follows: "When the Shirin princess is preparing for a party, she instructs her servant to «lay carpets decorated with precious stones on the floor" [6, p. 13].

The most famous carpet woven during the Sassanid period has remained in history due to its descriptive characteristics. This carpet decorated the rooms of Khosrow I, the last ruler of this country. The Shah ordered this carpet for the reception room of his palace in the capital Ctesiphon. This carpet, measuring 140x27 m, depicts a garden of extraordinary beauty, reminiscent of the garden of paradise, made of silk, gold and silver threads and precious stones.

Arab historian Abu Cafer Muhammad Tabari (839-923), while writing about the occupation of Ctesiphon by the Arabs, stated that «Arab soldiers found a carpet of the «diba» type (that is, large and very expensive, woven from silk). This carpet, called «Zimistan», was hung in the courtyard of the ruler's palace, and Khosrow in particular enjoyed its unique beauty. The border of the carpet is woven with thread-arranged emerald stones. Pearls and precious stones are placed in the middle of the carpet. This carpet had all the colors in the world. The carpet was 300 cubits long and 60 cubits wide (about 2.67x13.85) [5, p. 2; 6, p. 15].

K.M. Aliyeva claims that in fact there were four carpets in the palace, each of which reflected a different season of the year. The «Khosrov spring» carpet was from the same set, and this piece was hung as a curtain in winter. On hot summer days, the «Zimistani» carpet, reflecting the winter landscape, was hung in the courtyard of the palace. Over time, in the 18th and 19th centuries, four carpets were combined to create a single composition called «The Four Seasons of the Year». Such compositions were typical examples of the Tabriz carpet weaving school [3, p. 12].

Arabs who came to Azerbaijan encountered very old and highly developed carpet weaving traditions here. The famous Arab historian Jafar Muhammad Tabari (839-923) states that «in the 22nd year of the Hijra (642), very beautiful carpets were produced in Shirvan province, which is located in the north-east of Azerbaijan. Based on this fact, L.Karimov concludes that the exquisite carpets that adorned the palaces of the last Sassanid kings and the first Arab caliphs were woven in the lands of Shirvan, Derbent, Gabala and Shamakhi [6, p. 6].

«There was a large carpet in the palace of Hisham ibn Abd al-Malik in the city of Damascus. This carpet, woven from silk and metal threads, was very similar to the «Baharastan» or «winterweight» carpets of Medain. This large Shamakhi carpet was probably captured during the Arab invasion, taken to Damascus and presented to Hisham ibn Abdulhami, the ruler of the period [7, p. 25].

Conclusion. The Arabs who conquered the lands of Azerbaijan eagerly used jewelry made by local artisans. At the same time, the first centuries of the Islamic period were not very conducive to the development of court culture. Pursuing an egalitarian (social equality) policy, the Arabs forbade the wearing of silk, the wearing of jewelry, and the use of utensils made of precious metals. Although carpet weaving

developed as a folk (including Arab) applied art, expensive carpets and court culture as a whole declined. Despite the fact that carpet weaving developed as a folk (including Arab) applied art, expensive carpets and court culture as a whole declined.

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Qasımzadə Gülşən *(Azərbaycan)*

AZƏRBAYCANDA ANTİK VƏ İLKİN ORTA ƏSRLƏRDƏ SARAY XALÇALARININ YARANMASININ TARİXİ ƏNƏNƏLƏRİ

Məqalədə qədim Azərbaycan dövlətlərində, o cümlədən Manna və Midiya ərazilərindəki saray komplekslərinin tarixi və onların bədii tərtibatında istifadə edilən xalçalardan söhbət açılır. Bildiyiniz kimi, eramızdan əvvəl III minilliyin sonu və I minilliyin əvvəllərində Manna dövlətində memarlıq və dekorativ-tətbiqi sənətin növləri inkişaf etmişdi. Manna dövlətinin saraylarında xalçaların olmasını şübhə doğurmur, çünki alimlərin fikrincə, Midiya, Əhəmənilər və Skif incəsənətinin inkişafı məhz Manna incəsənətindən bəhrələnmişdir. Mənbələr göstərir ki, Astiaqın hakimiyyəti dövründə Midiyalıların döşəmələri möhtəşəm xalçalarla bəzədilmişdi. Altayın türk-skif kurqanlarından aşkar edil-

miş xalçalar mütəxəssislər tərəfindən Midiya mədəniyyəti olaraq təsnif edilmişdi.

Açar sözlər: Manna, Həsənlu, saray xalçaları, Sasani xalçaları, Əhəmənilər.

Гасымзаде Гюльшан ***(Азербайджан)***

ИСТОРИЧЕСКИЕ ТРАДИЦИИ СОЗДАНИЯ АНТИЧНЫХ И РАННЕСРЕДНЕВЕКОВЫХ ДВОРЦОВЫХ КОВРОВ В АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНЕ

В статье рассматривается история дворцовых комплексов Манны и Мидийской земли в древних азербайджанских государствах и инструменты, использовавшиеся при их украшении. Как известно, в конце 3-го тысячелетия до нашей эры, в начале 1-го тысячелетия до нашей эры в государстве Манна развивались архитектура и декоративно-прикладное искусство. Наличие ковров во дворцах Маннского государства не подлежит сомнению, поскольку, по мнению ученых, развитию мидийского, ахеменского и скифского искусства способствовало искусство Манны. Источники свидетельствуют, что во времена Астиага полы мидян были украшены великолепными коврами. Ковры, обнаруженные в тюрко-скифских курганах Алтая, эксперты отнесли к мидийской культуре.

Ключевые слова: Манна, Хасанлу, дворцовые ковры, Сасанидские ковры, Ахемениды.