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Oksana Mammadova
Institute of Architecture and Art of ANAS
(Azerbaijan)

dumanchik@rambler.ru

ANALYSIS OF THE COMPOSITION OF THE GANJA MEMORIAL COMPLEX

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Abstract. The article is devoted to a scholarly examination of the architectural and compositional structure of the Ganja Memorial Complex. The study systematically explores the spatial organization of the complex, its functional zoning, artistic expressive means, and key compositional elements. Particular attention is given to the semantic content of the spiral-shaped planning solution, interpreted as a visual metaphor for the trace of an explosion and traumatic memory. The article analyzes the interaction between open and enclosed spaces, the role of the museum building within the overall composition, as well as the integration of fragments of ruins into the memorial environment. Based on a synthesis of semantic and compositional approaches, it is determined that the architectural language of the complex functions not only as an aesthetic form but also as a carrier of ideological and historical meaning.

The research findings demonstrate that the composition of the Ganja Memorial Complex holds significant importance in terms of the spatialization of collective memory, the visual interpretation of historical events, and the emotional guidance of visitor experience.

Key words: Ganja Memorial Complex, composition, architectural form, spiral structure, historical memory.

Introduction. The Ganja Memorial Complex is an architectural and cultural site located in the city of Ganja, conceived to commemorate the victims of missile attacks against civilians during the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict. It was created on the site of damaged residential buildings and

a former park that had been struck during the attacks. The complex is built directly over the ruins caused by missile strikes in October 2020, with the aim of preserving historical memory and serving as a carrier of information for future generations.

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Fiq. 1, 2. Laying the foundation of memorial complex and construction process

The construction officially began in January 2022 with the foundation laid by Ilham Aliyev, and the complex was inaugurated on September 27, 2025, within the framework of the Remembrance Day. This complex is not only a memorial, but also an appeal addressed to the international community.

It should be noted that the city of Ganja, located approximately 80 kilometers from the front line, was subjected to missile attacks by the Armenian armed forces on October 4, 5, 8, 11, and 17 during the Patriotic War.

The interpretation of the main material. The Ganja Memorial Complex covers a total area of 4 hectares. The remains of the destroyed buildings have been preserved in the open square of the complex in the form of a special installation. The main architectural composition of the memorial is structured around a spiral form. This spiral symbolizes the traces left by a missile impact on the ground – a crater – thus conveying the dramatic impact of the events through a visual language.

The central architectural structure includes a two-story museum building designed in a crescent shape, which, when combined with the spiral, creates a rhythmic spatial flow. The crescent-shaped building, with a total area of 2,400 square meters, houses the museum exhibition on the first floor, while the second floor contains a multifunctional hall intended for seminars, training sessions, and various events.

The concept of the Ganja Memorial Complex was developed by the reputable British company Chapman Taylor, while the construction design was carried out by the “Azermemarlayihə” State Institute. The memorial is designed as

a spiral structure descending up to 12 meters in depth, embodying the horrors of the war through an artistic image executed in a minimalist style [2].

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Fiq. 3, 4. General view of The Ganja Memorial Complex

The Ganja Memorial Complex is composed entirely of custom-designed corten steel structures, each solving complex technical and spatial challenges. At the center of the project stands a spiral-shaped corten steel element installed on a pre-cast concrete base. Corten steel – an alloy containing elements such as copper, chromium, and nickel – is highly resistant to atmospheric corrosion and does not require painting. Often referred to as “weathering steel” or “bleeding steel,” it forms a rust-colored protective layer (patina) over time, which enhances its durability [3]. The use of corten creates a striking contrast between rough texture and modern forms, reinforcing the conceptual expression of the memorial.

At the Ganja Memorial Complex, specially designated observation areas have been planned to allow visitors to perceive the spiral form of the museum complex. Wooden benches following the line of the spiral provide spaces for rest and contemplation. The complex also includes a curved corten memorial wall, where laser-cut inscriptions are accentuated with internal LED lighting, creating a clear three-dimensional effect without the use of additional materials.

In October 2020, during the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War, the city of Ganja was subjected to five missile attacks by the Armenian armed forces. As a result, 27 civilians lost their lives and 125 were injured. The number of candle elements represented on the corten surface corresponds to the number of those who lost their lives.

Fiq. 5. Corten steel construction of Memorial Complex

Fiq. 6. Section of complex plan of The Ganja Memorial Complex

The museum building is organized into two functional zones: the lower floor houses the exhibition, while the upper floor serves as a multifunctional event space. This zoning helps guide visitors through the thematic structure of the complex. The museum exhibition is composed of sections that present historical processes in chronological order.

The Ganja Memorial Complex is not only an architectural memorial but also a mechanism for preserving national memory. The themes represented within the complex extend beyond contemporary war crimes, aiming to present, on a broader scale, the tragic experiences endured by the Azerbaijani people throughout history. An exhibition reflecting crimes committed against the Azerbaijani people has been organized in the exhibition hall and structured into several sections. The first section highlights events of the early 20th century, including the 1905–1906 massacres, the 1918 massacres, as well as the deportations of Western Azerbaijanis from their native lands during 1948–1953.

The exhibition section includes the following thematic areas:

• “Early 20th Century” – historical tragedies of the Azerbaijani people;

• “Deportation and Forced Displacement”;

• “Genocide and Massacres”;

• “Ceasefire and the Patriotic War Period”;

• “Missing Persons, Mass Graves, and Mine Terror”;

• “Towards a Bright Future” – a message of hope and peace directed at the future.

The open space of the complex is organized through a planned spiral walkway and symbolic components. The spiral contour, combined with the preserved remains of residential buildings, presents on a macro scale the destructive impact of war.

In contemporary memorial architecture, the spiral is often interpreted as the trace of an explosion crater, a mark of destruction, or the contour left on the ground by a destructive force. In this sense, it transforms traumatic traces into a monumental form of memory. Such a dialogue between physical form and symbolic meaning is a key principle of modern memorial architecture, and it has been successfully realized in the Ganja Memorial Complex.

The spiral form is one of the oldest and most polysemantic geometric structures in the history of architecture. Across different cultures, it has been widely associated with cosmic rhythms, the continuity of life, and transformation. Particularly in memorial complexes, spiral compositions serve to express the concepts of trauma, memory, and time through architectural language.

The spiral is among the earliest symbols in human history. From Neolithic petroglyphs to ancient civilizations, it has symbolized: the cyclical development of life and nature; the infinity of time; the model of birth–death–rebirth; the flow of cosmic energy.

In memorial architecture, the spiral form possesses a particularly strong emotional and symbolic impact. The center may be interpreted as a sacred core, a concentration of memory, and a metaphorical point of a traumatic event. In mythological thinking, unlike linear development, the spiral is not a closed circle; rather, it represents a recurring movement that rises to a new stage with each cycle. This quality has enabled the use of the spiral in architecture as a dynamic spatial structure, transforming physical movement into psychological experience. The spiral form is not static but invites movement. As the visitor moves along the spiral trajectory, the space gradually opens or narrows. Movement

Fig. 7. General view of the territory of The Ganja Memorial Complex

along the spiral alters the sense of direction, gradually transforms perspective, intensifies the emotional perception of space.

Fig. 8. Interior design of The Ganja Memorial Complex

In memorial complexes, this characteristic is particularly important, as the aim is not only to convey information but also to create a profound emotional experience. Thus, the spiral in memorial architecture functions as a powerful means of expression both compositionally and ideologically, transforming into an architectural code of collective memory.

In this context, the architectural language of the Ganja Memorial Complex - including the spiral, crater imagery, and crescent forms – intensifies the tragic historical background and stimulates not only individual but also collective memory. Through the thematic organization of exhibition blocks and the use of multimedia elements, visitors engage with and internalize contemporary historical events. This enhances the role of the memorial beyond commemoration, strengthening its educational and public awareness functions.

Conclusion. The composition of the Ganja Memorial Complex represents a successful architectural example both in form and content. The spiral forms, spatial arrangement of elements, carefully planned memorial exhibition, and structured open space clearly express the conceptual core of the complex. Although Azerbaijan put forward peace initiatives immediately after the war, the Ganja Memorial Complex plays an important role in ensuring that the war crimes committed against the population are not forgotten and that future generations remain informed about their history. Thus, the complex can be evaluated not only on a regional level but also as an international platform for the expression of war memory and humanitarian messages.

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Oksana Məmmədova ***(Azərbaycan)***

GƏNCƏ MEMORİAL KOMPLEKSİNİN KOMPOZİSİYASININ TƏHLİLİ

Məqalə Gəncə Memorial Kompleksinin memarlıq-kompozisiya quruluşunun elmi təhlilinə həsr olunmuşdur. Tədqiqatda kompleksin məkan təşkili, funksional zonalaşması, bədii ifadə vasitələri və əsas kompozisiya elementləri sistemli şəkildə araşdırılır. Xüsusi diqqət spiral formalı plan həllinin semantik məzmununa, onun partlayış izi və travmatik yaddaşın vizual metaforası kimi interpretasiyasına yönəldilmişdir.

Məqalədə açıq və qapalı məkanların qarşılıqlı əlaqəsi, muzey binasının kompozisiyadakı rolu, eləcə də dağıntı fraqmentlərinin memorial mühitə inteqrasiyası kimi məsələlər təhlil edilir. Semantik və kompozisiya yanaşmalarının sintezi əsasında müəyyən olunur ki, kompleksin memarlıq dili yalnız estetik deyil, həm də ideoloji və tarixi məzmun daşıyıcısı kimi çıxış edir.

Tədqiqatın nəticələri göstərir ki, Gəncə Memorial Kompleksinin kompozisiyası kollektiv yaddaşın məkanlaşdırılması, tarixi hadisələrin vizual interpretasiyası və ziyarətçi təcrübəsinin emosional istiqamətləndirilməsi baxımından mühüm əhəmiyyətə malikdir.

Açar sözlər: Gəncə Memorial Kompleksi, kompozisiya, memarlıq forması, spiral struktur, tarixi yaddaş.

Оксана Мамедова ***(Азербайджан)***

АНАЛИЗ КОМПОЗИЦИИ ГЯНДЖИНСКОГО МЕМОРИАЛЬНОГО КОМПЛЕКСА

Статья посвящена анализу архитектурно-композиционной структуры Гянджинского мемориального комплекса. В исследовании системно рассматриваются пространственная организация комплекса, функциональное зонирование, художественные выразительные средства и основные композиционные элементы. Особое внимание уделено семантическому содержанию спирального планировочного решения, его интерпретации как визуальной метафоры следа взрыва и травматической памяти.

В статье анализируются такие вопросы, как взаимосвязь открытых и закрытых пространств, роль музейного здания в композиции, а также интеграция фрагментов разрушений в мемориальную среду. На основе синтеза семантического и композиционного подходов определяется, что архитектурный язык комплекса выступает не только как эстетический, но и как носитель идеологического и исторического содержания.

Результаты исследования показывают, что композиция Гянджинского мемориального комплекса имеет важное значение с точки зрения пространственной материализации коллективной памяти, визуальной интерпретации исторических событий и эмоционального направления опыта посетителя.

Ключевые слова: Гянджинский мемориальный комплекс, композиция, архитектурная форма, спиральная структура, историческая память.