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THE LIFE AND WORK OF KARBALAYI SAFIKHAN KARABAKHI, AN ARCHITECT FROM SHUSHA

Abstract. This article is dedicated to the life and creativity of the prominent architect Karbalay iSafikhan Karabakhi, who lived in Shusha in the 19th century. Karbalayi Safikhan Karabakhi is known for his unique style in Azerbaijani architecture. He participated in the construction of many historical buildings, mosques, and other architectural examples, particularly in Shusha. Among his most notable works are the Imamzade Mausoleum in Barda (1868), the Juma Mosque in Agdam (1870), the Ashagi Govhar Agha Mosque (1874–1875), the Yukhari Govhar Agha Mosque (1883), and the Saatli Mosques (1883) in Shusha, as well as the Haji Alekber Mosque in Fuzuli (1889–1890). These monuments are considered some of the best architectural examples of their time, both aesthetically and functionally. SafikhanKarabakhi’s architectural style is characterized by the use of local materials and the application of Azerbaijani national ornamentation in his buildings.

Key words: Karabakh, Shusha, architect, Karbalayi Safikhan Karabakhi, creativity.

Introduction. Throughout history, Karabakh, especially the city of Shusha, has attracted the attention of researchers worldwide with its ancient and rich architectural heritage. Among the historical architectural monuments in Karabakh, religious structures have been particularly prominent. Notably, “the number of historical and religious monuments identified in the Azerbaijani territories that were once under occupation amounts to 403. Of these, 67 are mosques, 144 are temples, and 192 are pilgrimage sites. In the territories of Karabakh and its surrounding districts, 67 mosques were officially operational

(13 in Shusha, 5 in Aghdam, 16 in Fuzuli, 12 in Zangilan, 5 in Jabrayil, 8 in Gubadli, and 8 in Lachin). Of these, 63 were completely destroyed, and 4 were partially damaged and rendered unusable. Only through the pressure of international organizations was it possible to preserve the walls of the Aghdam Juma Mosque and the Ashaghi Govhar Agha, Yukhari Govhar Agha, and Saatli Mosques in Shusha” [5].

The architect behind many of the religious monuments in Karabakh that have survived to this day, particularly the mosques in Shusha, was Karbalayi Safikhan Karabakhi, a renowned architect from Shusha known for his unique style in Azerbaijani architecture.



Fig. 1. Rizvan Karabakhli. Portrait of Karbalayi Safikhan Karabakhi. Paper, ink. 1994.

Karbalayi Safikhan Karabakhi not only demonstrated his creative work in Azerbaijan but also beyond its borders. In this regard, the prominent architect’s descendant, BoyukkishiSafikhanov, recounts about his grandfather: “According to my grandmother, Safikhan was one of the best architects of his time. He was never left in peace. Anyone who needed to build a house, mosque, bathhouse, or spring would always summon him. It is likely that he left behind some works in Central Asia as well. He returned six months late from his pilgrimage to Karbala. When asked why, he said they were building a new mosque and kept him there for that reason” [2, p. 12].

It should be noted that Karbalayi Safikhan Karabakhi's works mainly focused on religious buildings. Among his most notable monuments are the Imamzadeh Mausoleum in Barda (1868), the Juma Mosque in Aghdam (1870), the Ashaghi Govhar Agha (1874–1875), Yukhari Govhar Agha (1883), and Saatli Mosques in Shusha (1883), and the Haji Alekber Mosque in Fuzuli (1889–1890). These monuments are considered some of the finest architectural examples of their time, both aesthetically and functionally.

Naturally, all of the monuments built by Karbalayi Safikhan Karabakhi are distinguished by their unique architectural solutions and harmonious compositions. However, we will focus primarily on the religious buildings he constructed in Shusha.

The interpretation of the main material. Karbalayi Safikhan Karabakhi was not only a distinguished architect but also actively participated in the social and cultural life of his time, significantly shaping the architectural landscape of Shusha.

Karbalayi Safikhan Karabakhi was a prominent architect who left his mark on the cultural and architectural environment of Azerbaijan in the second half of the 19th century. Born in 1817 in Shusha, he worked there for many years and passed away in 1910 in Shusha. As the son of Sultan Huseyn the mason, Karbalayi Safikhan Karabakhi displayed great mastery in the fields of architecture, craftsmanship, design, and artistic decoration. He played a significant role in the development of Azerbaijani architecture, participating in the construction of many historical monuments, mosques, and mausoleums in Shusha and various regions of Azerbaijan. Among his most remarkable architectural works, the mosques in Shusha – Ashaghi Govhar Agha (1874–1875), Yukhari Govhar Agha (1883), and Saatli (1883) – stand out in particular.

The Yukhari Govhar Agha Mosque holds a special and highly significant place in the history of Azerbaijani architecture. The building's exterior and interior artistic decoration are distinguished by their richness and delicate ornamentation. Located in one of Shusha's most beautiful corners, the Yukhari Govhar Agha Mosque, constructed in 1883, was built in honor of Govhar Agha, daughter of Karabakh Khan Ibrahim Khalil Khan. Known as the Friday Mosque of Shusha, this religious architectural monument attracts attention with its unique structure and aesthetics. The mosque's prayer hall is built in a square shape, with a rectangular appearance created by connecting

it to a three-arched porch on the northern side. Two minarets situated at the edges of the porch are connected to the prayer hall designated for women by stairs. The prayer hall is divided into naves by six stone columns, with the side sections covered by domes, and the central square area crowned by a larger dome. The interior of the hall is illuminated by two-tiered windows, creating a spacious and comfortable atmosphere.



Fig 2. Yukhari Govhar Agha Mosque. Shusha. 1883.

The main facade of the mosque is characterized by the harmonious composition of its two minarets and deep porch. During the construction of the mosque, materials such as stone and brick were predominantly used. The cylindrical bodies of the minarets are segmented by horizontal bands and adorned with colorful brick patterns, showcasing the architect's creative abilities. Karbalayi Safikhan Karabakhi's application of this architectural style in all of his monumental religious buildings played a significant role in shaping the architectural image of 19th-century Karabakh mosques.

It should be noted that the Yukhari Govhar Agha Mosque is still regarded today as a central element of Shusha's main square. When the architect built the mosque in the historical part of Shusha, he was able to create perfect harmony between the architectural elements, emphasizing the monumental characteristics of the structure. This mosque not only serves as a religious center but also plays an important role as a symbol of Azerbaijani culture and in the preservation of historical and cultural heritage.

Karbalayi Safikhan Karabakhi successfully integrated local national elements and traditions into his architectural style. For instance, he skillfully incorporated the rich traditions of Azerbaijani ornamentation into his constructions. The vegetal and geometric ornaments observed in his architectural works are a testament to his remarkable architectural mastery. Alongside these positive qualities, the prominent architect ensured the durability of the structures by utilizing local stone and other materials.

One of the religious monuments designed by Karbalayi Safikhan Karabakhi in Shusha is the Saatli Mosque, which he completed in 1883. Notably, the Saatli Mosque is considered to be Karbalayi Safikhan Karabakhi's final work.



Fig. 3. Saatli Mosque. Shusha. 1883.

The information about the construction of the mosque is inscribed on its main facade. In the location where the mosque now stands, there used to be adjacent buildings of a madrasa and mosque, where Molla Panah Vagif once taught. The Saatli Mosque, as one of the mosques in Shusha with a flat facade, features an asymmetrical entrance on its main facade. The distinguishing characteristic that sets it apart from other neighborhood mosques is its minaret. While other mosques in the city had small pavilions for the muezzin on their roofs, the Saatli Mosque was adorned with a colorful brick minaret decorated with rich patterns. Unlike the Ashaghi and Yuxhari Govhar Agha mosques, the minaret of the Saatli Mosque is not attached to the main building; access to the minaret is from the courtyard rather than the mosque interior. Visible from Divankhana Square, this expressive and colorful vertical element creates a unique silhouette and plays a complementary role in the architectural ensemble of the street. The top of the minaret is crowned with a tent-shaped dome.

The mosque's interior is enriched with embossed and applied decorations. Restoration work was carried out on this monument in the 1980s, and it was registered as a historically and culturally significant monument. However, after the Armenian occupation of Shusha in 1992, the mosque fell into ruin, with its once rich interiors completely destroyed and the minaret partially demolished. The Saatli Mosque, not only valuable for its historical and cultural significance but also for its architectural importance, requires preservation. Therefore, after Shusha was liberated from occupation, the mosque was restored between 2022 and 2023 by order of the country's leadership, as part of the effort to pass on Shusha's historical heritage to future generations.

Karbalayi Safikhan Karabakhi's activities were not limited to architecture. He also played an active role in the social and cultural life of his time. In particular, alongside his creative work, he was involved in pedagogical activities. As we know, Shusha was a cultural center at the time, and Karbalayi Safikhan Karabakhi's presence in the city greatly contributed to the development of culture and art. As a master teacher, he also took part in the training of young architects.

Conclusion. Today, the works of Karbalayi Safikhan Karabakhi form an important part of Azerbaijan's architectural heritage. His architectural style stands out for its use of local materials and the application of Azerbaijani national ornamentation in buildings. The historical and religious architectural

monuments he designed are preserved as unforgettable examples of Azerbaijani culture.

Karbalayi Safikhan Karabakhi holds an irreplaceable place in the history of Azerbaijani architecture, preserving the culture and architectural traditions of his time. The monuments he built continue to inspire future generations, enriching Azerbaijan's cultural heritage. Furthermore, Shusha's historical and architectural heritage immortalizes his name. At this point, we recall the words of Rizvan Karabakhi (Babashov), a Ph.D. and associate professor of architecture, about the distinguished architect: "The architect strung his buildings like bright pearls and hung them around the neck of the beauty named Karabakh. No matter where one of these pearls falls in the world, it immediately reveals its connection to this Karabakh beauty. The individuality, nationalism, and uniqueness of Safikhan's work lie precisely in this" [1, p. 278].

Finally, it should be noted that although our religious monuments, which reflect our spiritual values and express our national identity, were subjected to destruction under Armenian occupation, they have now been liberated thanks to the blood of our martyrs. As a result of the reconstruction policies in those areas, the buildings are being restored to their former glory. Regarding those who destroy religious buildings, especially mosques, Allah says in the Quran, Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 114: "And who are more unjust than those who forbid that Allah's Name be mentioned in His mosques and strive toward their destruction? It is not for them to enter them except in fear. For them in this world is disgrace, and they will have in the Hereafter a great punishment" [3, p. 18]. As we can see from the verse, as a result of the glorious victory of our army over the enemy, the Armenians were disgraced worldwide and will also face severe punishment from Allah in the afterlife for their vile deeds.

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ŞUŞALI MEMAR KƏRBƏLAYI SƏFİXAN QARABAĞININ HƏYAT VƏ YARADICILIĞI

Məqalə XIX əsrdə Şuşada yaşamış görkəmli memar KərbəlayıSəfixan Qarabağının həyat və yaradıcılığına həsr olunub. KərbəlayıSəfixan Qarabaği Azərbaycan memarlığında özünəməxsus üslubu ilə tanınır. O, xüsusilə Şuşada bir çox tarixi binaların, məscidlərin və digər memarlıq nümunələrinin inşasında iştirak edib. Onun ən görkəmli abidələri arasında Bərdədə İmamzadə türbəsi, (1868), Ağdamda Cümə məscidi (1870), Şuşada Aşağı Gövhər Ağa (1874–1875), Yuxarı Gövhər Ağa (1883) və Saatlı məscidləri (1883), Füzulidə Hacı Ələkbər məscidi (1889–1890) və digərlərinin adlarını qeyd etmək olar. Bu abidələr həm estetik, həm də funksional cəhətdən öz dövrünün ən yaxşı memarlıq nümunələrindən sayılır. Kərbəlayı Səfixan Qarabağının memarlıq üslubu, yerli materiallardan istifadə etməsi və binalarda Azərbaycan milli ornamentikasının tətbiqi ilə fərqlənir.

Açar sözlər: Qarabağ, Şuşa, memar, Kərbəlayı Səfixan Qarabaği, yaradıcılıq.

Аслан Халилов (*Азербайджан*)

ЖИЗНЬ И ТВОРЧЕСТВО ШУШИНСКОГО АРХИТЕКТОРА КЕРБАЛАИ СЕФИХАНА КАРАБАГИ

Статья посвящена жизни и творчеству выдающегося архитектора Кербалаи Сефихана Карабаги, который жил в XIX веке в Шуше. Кербалаи Сефихан Карабаги известен своим уникальным стилем в азербайджанской архитектуре. Он принимал участие в строительстве многих исторических зданий, мечетей и других архитектурных памятников, особенно в Шуше. Среди его наиболее известных памятников можно отметить мавзолей Имамзаде в Берде (1868), Джуму мечеть в Агдaме (1870), мечети Ашагы Гёвхер Ага (1874–1875), Юхары Гёвхер Ага (1883) и Саатлы (1883) в Шуше, а также мечеть Хаджи Алекпера в Физули (1889–1890). Эти памятники считаются одними из лучших образцов архитектуры своего времени как с эстетической, так и с функциональной точки зрения. Архитектурный стиль Сефихана Карабаги отличается использованием местных материалов и применением азербайджанской национальной орнаментики в зданиях.

Ключевые слова: Карабах, Шуша, архитектор, Кербалаи Сефихан Карабаги, творчество.