

UOT 008:316.722

Aynur Alekberova
Institute of Architecture and Art of ANAS
(Azerbaijan)

alekberova-aynur2019@mail.ru

“GALA” ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND ETHNOGRAPHIC MUSEUM – HARMONY OF PAST AND PRESENT

Abstract. The article highlights the importance of the «Gala» Archaeological and Ethnographic Museum in preserving Azerbaijan’s historical and cultural heritage. It emphasizes the rich 5000-year history of the Gala village and its cultural significance. The museum exhibits artifacts discovered during archaeological excavations, bridging the past and the present. Interactive displays, art from recycled materials, and unique sections make the museum a vital institution for promoting cultural heritage and tourism.

Key words: Gala, museum, cultural heritage, historical monuments, tourism.

Introduction. The village of Gala is a historically significant settlement located on the Absheron Peninsula, in the Khazar district of Azerbaijan, approximately 40 km northeast of Baku. The village is renowned for its rich cultural heritage, historical monuments, and ethnographic features. The area is rich in archaeological and cultural values, reflecting not only modern times but also millennia of history. The history of Gala village dates back approximately 5,000 years. Archaeological excavations in the area have uncovered settlements, cemeteries, and household and cultural artifacts from various periods, ranging from the Bronze Age to the Middle Ages. Rock carvings, ceramic artifacts, and stone tools found in the area confirm the ancient origins of this settlement. The name «Gala,» meaning «fortress,» highlights the strategic significance of the location. In the Middle Ages, the village was a fortress surrounded by defensive walls.

The interpretation of the main material. Due to its unique representation of Azerbaijan's ancient culture, the entire area of Gala village was declared a protected site. Furthermore, in 2008, the Gala Archaeological and Ethnographic Museum Complex was established as an open-air museum.

Museums play a significant role in preserving, restoring, and promoting our cultural heritage. First, let us consider the concept of an open-air museum. An «open-air museum» generally refers to any museum where exhibits are displayed outdoors. Such museums include sculpture parks, archaeological parks, and various technical museums (e.g., open-air aviation, military equipment, and transport museums). In a narrower sense, open-air museums are those that showcase examples of architectural structures. Many museums aim to comprehensively reconstruct the past. This approach allows visitors to gain an overall understanding of the history and ethnography of a particular country or region while experiencing a reconstructed space of the past.

In her 2020 book «The Preservation of Historical and Cultural Monuments,» museum expert Yegana Eyvazova notes: «Two significant factors have played a key role in the development of open-air museums: the preservation of folk architectural monuments and the display of cultural and ethnographic collections of various types. The initial conceptualization of such museums is attributed to the German researcher A. Zippelius and Polish scholar Jerzy Cieciewski» [2].

The idea and principles of establishing open-air museums were first proposed in the 18th century by Swiss scholar C. Bonstetten. In 1891, Switzerland's Gezelius established the famous «Skansen» museum [4]. Subsequently, similar museums were founded in Copenhagen (1897), Oslo (1902), Arnhem (1912), Riga, Latvia (1928), Turku, Finland (1940) and Estonia (1957), among others. Within the former USSR, the first ethnographic open-air museum was established in 1928 in Riga, Latvia. Later, in 1957, the «Rocca al Mare» museum in Estonia was opened, offering a detailed depiction of 18th–19th-century Estonian life. Similar museums were established in Novgorod, Tbilisi, Lviv, and Suzdal. Notably, the museum near Kyiv stands out due to its scale, covering an area of 200 hectares and featuring 200 large exhibits, including a 400-year-old residential house [4].

Azerbaijan, renowned for its rich history, ancient culture, and cultural heritage, has also contributed to the development and promotion of open-air museums. These museums play a significant role in the promotion and recognition of cultural heritage, inviting individuals to take a closer look at

the past, appreciate the cultural legacy, and understand it as an integral part of their cultural identity.

Azerbaijan is home to several open-air museums featuring architectural monuments, such as the Gobustan State Historical and Artistic Reserve, the open-air museum at “Ajami Seyrengah” in Nakhchivan, the Siratagli religious-architectural complex, the Bazaar Square, and the Khanegah complex within the Icherisheher State Historical and Architectural Reserve. Additionally, cultural elements in the “Gala” State Historical and Ethnographic Reserve on the Absheron Peninsula serve as exhibits in the form of open-air museums.

One of the most renowned open-air museums in Azerbaijan is the Gala Archaeological and Ethnographic Museum Complex, which operates under the “Gala” State Historical and Ethnographic Reserve. Established as a reserve in 1988, the museum complex was inaugurated in October 2008 under the initiative of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, opening a window into the history and culture of Azerbaijan. This unique site serves as a living monument to the nation’s historical heritage. Today, it plays a vital role in preserving and passing down Azerbaijan’s cultural legacy to future generations. It shows significant archaeological monuments dating back to periods before our era and the Middle Ages.

The museum also displays various exhibitions and artifacts reflecting Azerbaijani traditions. The complex houses archaeological and architectural monuments discovered and restored on the Absheron Peninsula. Spanning an area of 1.2 hectares, the museum provides an ideal environment for exploring and understanding Azerbaijan’s historical treasures. Managed by the Icherisheher State Architectural Reserve Department, the museum aims to present Azerbaijan’s historical and cultural heritage to both local and international audiences. The museum operates as an open-air space, encompassing diverse periods of the country’s archaeological, ethnographic, architectural, and natural heritage. Within the Gala complex, four museums function: 1. Archaeological and Ethnographic Museum Complex; 2. Gala Fortress; 3. Antique Items Museum; 4. Museum of Art from Waste.

When establishing the foundation of the museum, special attention was given to the ancient settlements and archaeological findings of the Absheron Peninsula. The creation and operation of the museum exemplify the harmony between the past and the present, showcasing how historical heritage can be preserved and presented in the modern era. Such museums play a crucial role in passing national identity and culture to future generations. The Gala

Museum is an attractive destination for both local and international tourists, contributing to the development of Azerbaijan's tourism potential. Its interactive exhibitions allow visitors to gain a deeper understanding of the nation's cultural heritage.

The Gala Museum is not limited to preserving archaeological artifacts. It also plays a significant role in shaping and maintaining national identity. This complex represents an important step in preserving and promoting Azerbaijan's rich historical and cultural heritage to the world. By bridging the gap between the past and the present, the museum significantly contributes to the transmission of cultural heritage to future generations.

Within the museum complex, archaeological and architectural monuments specific to Azerbaijan, particularly to the village of Gala and the Absheron Peninsula, have been gathered and restored. During archaeological excavations, alongside rock carvings dating back to the 3rd–2nd millennia BCE, artifacts reflecting the lifestyle, clothing, utensils, currency, and decorative patterns of ancestors were discovered. Burial mounds, residential buildings, and other architectural structures from the same period have been reconstructed to their original appearance.

The Museum Complex provides detailed insights into the daily life, economy, and craftsmanship of residents from ancient and medieval times. According to the foundation's information, this project not only preserves Azerbaijan's historical past but also contributes to the development of tourism in the country. Visitors can engage in interactive tours and participate in traditional Azerbaijani crafts such as carpet weaving, pottery, baking bread in ancient ovens, and working in a blacksmith's workshop.

The complex also includes the Gala Fortress, dating back to the 10th–14th centuries, comprising a tower and fortifications. The 13.8-meter-high tower, used for observation and defense, dates to the 10th–14th centuries. The fortifications from the 16th–17th centuries display artifacts such as gold coins, remnants of gold bracelets, and ceramic items from the 10th–16th centuries.

In 2011, the Gala Museum Complex expanded with the establishment of the Gala Information Center, the Ethno-Ecological Center, the Antique Items Museum, and a caravanserai-style restaurant [5]. The Antique Items Museum became a significant center for preserving and promoting Azerbaijan's cultural heritage. Its presence and activities positively influenced the cultural life of Gala village and held great importance for both local residents and international tourists.

As part of the Gala Archaeological and Ethnographic Museum Complex, the Antique Items Museum is known for its collection of artifacts reflecting the history of the Absheron Peninsula. The museum's collection includes nearly 3,000 cultural artifacts, with 800 of these currently on display. The second floor features decorative and applied art masterpieces, while the third floor exhibits items collected from various regions of Azerbaijan and objects produced in countries such as the USA, Germany, Austria, Belgium, France, England, Uzbekistan, Poland, Turkey, and others. These items showcase the historical interaction of Azerbaijani culture with global influences. The Antique Items Museum plays a vital role in Azerbaijan's cultural tourism sector, contributing to the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage, attracting tourists, and serving educational purposes. It significantly enhances Azerbaijan's cultural diplomacy and international image by promoting its heritage globally.

The Gala Information Center, also established in 2011, serves as a vital hub for visitors seeking detailed information about the museum complex. The center enriches the visitor experience by offering insights into the museum's exhibits, ongoing cultural events, and exhibitions. Tourists can also rent electric buses and bicycles at the Information Center, enhancing their exploration of the museum grounds. Guided tours are offered in multiple languages, including Azerbaijani, Russian, English, German, and French [6].

One of the significant innovations of the museum complex was the creation of the unique «From Waste to Art» section in 2015, initiated and supported by the Heydar Aliyev Foundation. This cultural space showcases artworks made from materials that people typically discard as waste, such as cables, light bulbs, tires, plastic bottles, cellophane, toys, car parts, and other unusable items. These discarded objects have found a «second life» in the hands of skilled artists. The museum features nearly 180 artworks created by artists from over 46 countries, including local Azerbaijani artisans. Notable exhibits include a Simurgh bird sculpted from metal scraps, horse figures crafted from wood waste, and a fish figure made from plastic spoons, forks, and knives.

The «Gala» State Historical and Ethnographic Reserve, one of the world's rare open-air museums, has been recognized internationally as a member of the International Organization of Archaeological Open-Air Museums. Established in Denmark on March 16, 2003, EXARC currently has 432 members. It is a partner of the International Council of Museums and a member of the European Museum Network. The inclusion of the Gala Reserve in this

organization plays a vital role in promoting Azerbaijan's traditional lifestyle, history, and culture on an international platform, significantly contributing to its global recognition [7].

Conclusion. The Gala Museum is an invaluable site for preserving Azerbaijan's historical heritage and transmitting it to future generations. It serves not only as a platform for showcasing ancient periods but also as a harmonious center where culture and tourism converge. Reflecting the harmony between the past and present, this museum fosters dialogue for both local and international communities. One of the fascinating ancient artifacts in the Gala Reserve is the Qaval Stone, a traditional musical instrument. Although it visually resembles the thousands of rock fragments in the area, it is unique for its ability to produce metallic, jingling sounds of varying tones when struck with small stones. Historically, it has been used during dance and song ceremonies. On May 22, 2012, the Qaval Stone was prominently displayed during the Eurovision Song Contest held in Baku, symbolizing Azerbaijan's ancient cultural heritage.

REFERENCES:

1. Aşurbəyli S. Bakı şəhərinin tarixi: Orta əsrlər dövrü. – Bakı, 1998.
2. Eyvazova Y. Tarix və mədəniyyətə tabidələrinin mühafizəsi. – Bakı, 2021.
3. Əliyeva R.Ş. Azərbaycanın dünya əhəmiyyətli abidələri. – Bakı, 2015.
4. https://az.wikipedia.org/wiki/Açıq_səma_altında_muzey
5. <https://heydar-aliyev-foundation.org/az/content/view/136/2243/Qala-Arxeoloji-Etnoqrafik-Muzey-Kompleksi>
6. https://www.wikimedia.az/Qala_Arxeoloji_Etnoqrafik_Muzey.html
7. https://azertag.az/xeber/qala_qorugu_arxeologiya_uzre_achiq_hava_muzeylerinin_beynelxalq_assosiasiyasina_uzv_sechilib-3156110

Aynur Ələkbərova (Azərbaycan)

«QALA» ARXEOLoji VƏ ETNOQRAFİK MUZEYİ – KEÇMİŞLƏ BUGÜNÜN HARMONİYASI

Məqalədə Qala Arxeoloji və Etnoqrafik Muzeyinin Azərbaycanın tarixi və mədəni irsinin qorunmasındakı əhəmiyyəti vurğulanır. Qala kəndinin 5000 illik tarixi ilə zəngin mədəni irsə sahib olduğu qeyd edilir. Muzey, arxeoloji qazıntılar nəticəsində aşkarlanan eksponatları nümayiş etdirərək, keçmiş və müasir dövr arasında körpü yaradır. Muzeyin interaktiv ekspozisiyaları, tullantı

materiallarından hazırlanan sənət əsərləri və digər unikal bölmələr həm turizm, həm də mədəni irsin təbliği baxımından xüsusi əhəmiyyətə malikdir.

Açar sözlər: Qala, muzey, mədəni irs, abidələr, turizm.

Айнур Алекперова (Азербайджан)

АРХЕОЛОГИЧЕСКИЙ И ЭТНОГРАФИЧЕСКИЙ МУЗЕЙ «ГАЛА» – ГАРМОНИЯ ПРОШЛОГО И НАСТОЯЩЕГО

В статье подчеркивается значимость Археологического и Этнографического Музея «Гала» в сохранении культурного наследия Азербайджана. Указывается на богатую историю села Гала, насчитывающую 5000 лет, и его достопримечательности. Музей демонстрирует экспонаты, обнаруженные в ходе археологических раскопок, соединяя прошлое и настоящее. Интерактивные экспозиции, произведения искусства из отходов и др. секции музея продвигают культурное наследие и туризм.

Ключевые слова: Гала, музей, культурное наследие, памятники, туризм.

FIGURES



Fig. 1. «Gala» State Historical and Ethnographic Reserve – Gala Museum.



Fig. 2. Gala Museum Complex – Antique Items Museum.



Fig. 3. Gala Museum Complex – From Waste to Art Museum.