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## THE SYMBOLISM OF THE TREE OF PARADISE IN THE TRIUMPHAL ARCH OF BAKU

**Abstract.** The first Arc de Triumphe in Azerbaijan marks the beginning of the symbolic path to victory. 44 arched elements reflect the number of days of battles for Karabakh and the integrity of the Motherland. The main decor of an architectural structure is the element of tree. The tree of life is a fundamental archetype in many of the world's mythological, religious, and philosophical traditions. The symbolism of the tree of paradise in the Turkic tradition is a multi-layered and multi-tasking image that combines the ideas of life, death, rebirth and spiritual connection between worlds.

To study the material in addition to photographing the monument, the author developed a passport – a description, including the name, brief historical background, place and time of construction, reason for construction, names of the authors, main dimensions, material, decorative program and its semantic features. In the wake of rising social activity and national self-awareness and increasing public interest in history and cultural traditions, the triumphal structure is gaining relevance. The concept and execution of a modern, and moreover, timely arch fits into and fully reflects the cultural situation in Azerbaijan – commitment to modern trends, without forgetting the historical roots.

**Key words:** Triumphal arch, Baku, tree of paradise, carpet, symbolism.

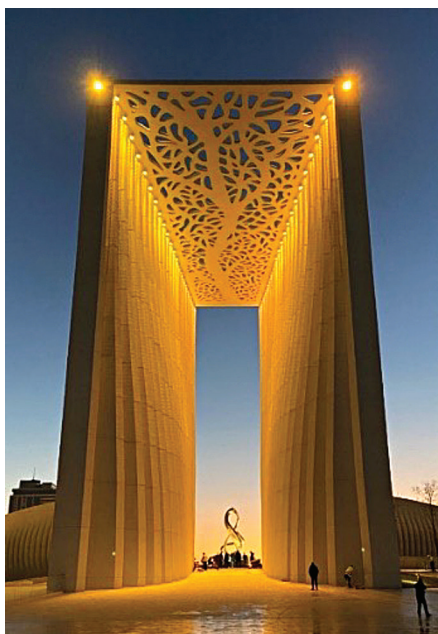
**Introduction.** According to the decree of President I.G. Aliyev «On the creation of the Memorial Complex of the Patriotic War and the Victory Museum in Baku,» the Victory Park, spanning an area of approximately 10 hectares, was inaugurated on November 8, 2024. In the near future, the Victory Museum is planned to be established within this park. At the entrance to the Memorial

Complex, visitors are greeted by the Triumphal Arch, marking the symbolic beginning of the path to victory. The first of its kind in Azerbaijan, the arch comprises 44 elements, representing the 44 days of the Karabakh battle and the nation's territorial integrity. The Triumphal Arch is a hymn to victory, carved in stone, symbolizing a significant step in the maturity of the state and its ability to protect its people and safeguard its independence through military strength.

**The interpretation of the main material.** Having existed for over two millennia, this type of triumphal structure has been inseparably linked to the cultural history of many countries and peoples, celebrating the heroism of victories, immortalizing historical events, and reflecting the unique interplay of arts in each era. The tradition of welcoming victors and holding parades under triumphal arches originated in Ancient Rome. According to custom, an army returning from battle could not enter the city without first undergoing purification from the bloodshed and was required to remain outside the city walls. The wall of the arch symbolized a barrier separating the heavenly and earthly realms, while the archway represented a gateway to the heavens, an apotheosis (ascension and glorification). The arch symbolizes a transition to the celestial world and the triumph of life over death.



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Triumphal Arches can be either temporary (most often made of wood) or permanent (constructed from stone, brick, or concrete). These architectural monuments typically feature one, three, or five spans covered by semicylindrical vaults. They are topped with an entablature and an attic and are adorned with statues, reliefs (bas-reliefs and high-reliefs), and commemorative inscriptions. Such monumental structures, architecturally designed as arches, are erected at city entrances, street intersections, or along major roads to honor victors or commemorate significant historical events.

At the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the historical and cultural heritage of each nation and humanity as a whole is becoming even more valued by architects, artists, and the broader public. Unlike the classic-style Triumphal Arches established worldwide, the arch in Baku was built in a modern style. Architectural modernism, characterized by a transformative approach, emphasizes a decisive renewal of forms and structures while rejecting the artistic styles of the past.

The design of the arch was developed by leading architects and engineers, resulting in a unique structure that reflects dynamic development, blending tradition with modernity. To bring the Italian design concept to life in Azerbaijan, the project was executed by PMD Project LLC, which won the tender. The prefabricated concrete-metal structure serves as an example of the harmonious application of modern technologies.

The choice of color is no coincidence: symbolizing sanctity and dignity, white has held significant meaning in almost all world religions. For centuries, architects have chosen white for their projects to emphasize the purity of form, function, and ideology. White stands apart from all other colors as achromatic, meaning it lacks any hue.

One should not overlook white's remarkable optical property of making objects appear larger. In 20<sup>th</sup>-century architecture, white became associated with modernity and simplicity. The rejection of excess and the use of basic colors fostered a cult of minimalism within the style.

The Triumphal Arch in Baku is not only an architectural masterpiece but also a symbol of historical victories and national pride. Special attention was given to its size—its height and scale make it one of the largest architectural landmarks in the capital. On either side, there are 22 arches, totaling 44 arch elements. The height of the arch at the entrance portal is also 44 meters, while its width is 22 meters.

The rhythmic tapering of the arch openings adds a sense of dynamism to the structure. The decreasing height of the columns supporting the arch—in this case, panels adorned with branches and leaves of the Tree of Paradise—and the intricate composition lend the monument an air of lightness and elegance.

Symbolizing a heavenly life for the martyrs, the branches of the Tree of Paradise extend across the entire panel, with the cut-out leaves filling the composition's space. The word «*Jannat*», the most common term for paradise in Islamic mythology, translates from Arabic as «garden.»

The concept of the Tree of Life has been used in the religion, philosophy, and mythology of many peoples, becoming an integral part of the cultures of Europe, the Middle East, India, Africa, North America, and Australia.

Modern research by Thor Heyerdahl suggests a genetic connection between the ancient inhabitants of Azerbaijan and the ancestors of the Vikings. For example, in Norse mythology, the World Tree is represented by the sacred ash tree, Yggdrasil.

A distinctive feature of the Celtic Tree of Life is its enclosed form within a single circle. The roots are intertwined with the dense branches of the crown, uniting the past and future of all humanity and symbolizing infinity and the continuous cycle of worldly lives.

The symbolism of the Tree of Life holds immense significance in both Christian and Islamic religions, which attribute the fall of the first humans on



Earth to their consumption of the fruit from the heavenly Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

The image of paradise as a blooming garden was also characteristic of the Zoroastrian religion, where it was called «Paradis.» Over time, this word entered many European languages, retaining almost the same meaning.



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The symbolism of the Tree of Paradise in Turkic tradition is a multifaceted and complex image that embodies ideas of life, death, rebirth, prosperity, and spiritual connection between worlds. Reflecting the interaction between humans, nature, and the cosmos, this tree serves as a bridge between the material and spiritual realms.

The cult of trees has long been widespread in Azerbaijan, with numerous places dedicated to the veneration of sacred trees, revered as sources of healing, salvation, and life-giving power. These trees were believed to grant children to childless mothers, cure various ailments, and bring prosperity to those in need. How many such “Ojaghs” and “Pirs” are connected with sacred trees! We have all heard of the Tree of Wishes, the Tree of Life, and the Tree of Peace. The image of the tree permeates many areas of Azerbaijani folk art. The “Müqəddəs ağac” (Sacred Tree), whose depiction symbolizes good wishes, adorns fabrics and embroidery, is woven into the patterns of tombstones and wall paintings. It is referenced in folk tales, such as the epic Dede Qorqud, numerous ritual practices, customs, and a wealth of archaeological findings.

In Azerbaijani carpet art, the Tree of Paradise serves as a bridge between nature, humanity, and divine forces, representing an essential element of the country’s cultural and spiritual heritage. The branches are often depicted as curved lines radiating from the center of the carpet, symbolizing the branching of life and its continuation through generations.

Leaves are frequently illustrated as small patterns, emphasizing the themes of fertility and abundance.

The tree can be depicted realistically as it is, but often the ornament takes a purely geometric form. It is represented in various variations—more abstract and less detailed—while always retaining its key symbolic elements.

One of the most common elements of Islamic ornaments is «Islimi», based on an infinite spiral branch surrounded by unique leaves and flowers, symbolizing the continuous path to the divine garden [1].

In the example of the Triumphal Arch in Baku, the transformation of botanical ornamentation into entirely abstract decor is evident. The Tree of Life, whose ornaments and patterns can be found on many artifacts and everyday items of Azerbaijani ethnic culture, remains a vital cultural component to this day.

It is noteworthy that the national pavilion of the Republic of Azerbaijan at the Dubai Expo, inaugurated in October 2020, was designed in the shape of the Tree of Life—a symbol of stability, growth, and prosperity.

The only comparable arch in modern interpretation alongside the Triumphal Arch in Baku is the Grande Arche de la Défense, built in 1989 in Paris. Representing a projection of a hypercube in three-dimensional space, this first-ever example of hyper architecture was completed in the centennial year of the Eiffel Tower. Beneath it lies a metro station, the side columns house government and commercial offices, and the upper floors are dedicated to exhibition spaces, regularly hosting exhibitions and featuring the Computer Museum.

Interestingly, many Parisians still believe that this futuristic arch was built quite recently, despite it having adorned the capital for nearly forty years. The arch was conceived as a modern counterpart and response to the iconic Arc de Triomphe, with one key distinction—it was dedicated not to military victories but to humanistic ideals.

It is also worth mentioning a similar arch, dedicated not to a historical event but to a historical figure, erected in Ganja in 2014. The Heydar Aliyev Triumphal Arch, dedicated to the 91<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the leader, adorns the entrance to Heydar Aliyev Park. This classical triumphal arch, covering an area of 1,100 square meters, measures 20 meters in width, 50 meters in length, and 38 meters in height, constructed with stone slabs.

The arch features two facades—eastern and western. The central part of the facade is decorated with geometric-patterned glass. The structure is

surrounded by 24 columns on all sides. The arch comprises seven floors and six open balconies. Stairs and an elevator lead to the top, which houses a museum, an observation deck, and a resting area.

Since its inception, the triumphal arch has been a structure with ideological significance, designed not only for contemporaries but also aimed at the future. It serves to honor the memory of the fallen, glorify the heroism of warriors, and celebrate victory.

The Triumphal Arch is not merely a decoration for the city; it holds deep symbolic meaning for the people of Azerbaijan. Above all, it symbolizes the nation's victory and strength, recalling military successes and cultural achievements. This monumental structure elevates collective consciousness and emotions, serving as a significant element of the cityscape. Its architectural composition reflects pivotal moments in the country's history.

**Conclusion.** The tree element at the top of the arch also symbolizes a flourishing and developing Azerbaijan—a path leading to new life and victory, signifying prosperity and growth.

Amid a wave of heightened public activity, national consciousness, and growing interest in history and cultural traditions, triumphal structures gain renewed relevance. At the threshold of the 21st century, humanity seeks new paths, values, and orientations, turning to cultural heritage for inspiration.

In the depths of artistic and, perhaps above all, architectural consciousness, even among the most committed innovators, profound historical roots and archetypes persist and manifest in their work. The concept and execution of the modern—and timely—Triumphal Arch in Azerbaijan align with and fully reflect the cultural context of the country: a commitment to contemporary trends while remaining deeply connected to historical roots.

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**Oksana Məmmədova (*Azərbaycan*)**  
**BAKİ ŞƏHƏRİNİN ZƏFƏR TAĞINDA**  
**CƏNNƏT AĞACININ SIMVOLU**

Azərbaycan Respublikasının prezidenti I.Əliyevin “Bakıda Vətən Müharibəsi Memorial Kompleksinin və Qələbə Muzeyinin yaradılması haqqında” sərəncamına əsasən 2024-cü il noyabrın 8-də 10 hektara yaxın ərazisi olan Qələbə parkının açılışı olub. Burada yaxın gələcəkdə Qələbə Muzeyinin açılması da planlaşdırılır. Azərbaycanda ilk Zəfər tağı qələbəyə aparan simvolik yolun başlanğıcını göstərir: 44 tağvari element Qarabağ və Vətənin bütövlüyünü uğrunda gedən döyüş günlərinin sayını əks etdirir. Modern üslubunda inşa edilmiş tağın əsas dekorativ elementi – Cənnət ağacıdır.

Türk ənənəsində cənnət ağacının simvolizmi həyat, ölüm, dirçəliş və dünyalar arasında mənəvi bağlılıq ideyalarını özündə birləşdirən çox qatlı və çox məqsədli obrazdır. Tədqiq olunan material öyrənmək üçün abidənin foto fiksasiyası ilə yanaşı, pasport - təsvir, o cümlədənədi, qısa tarixi, tikilmə yeri və vaxtı, tikilmə səbəbi, müəlliflərin adları, əsas ölçüləri, inşa material və dekorativ elementləri və onun semantic xüsusiyyətləri haqqda məlumat verilmişdir.

Sosial fəallığın və milli özünüdərkini yüksəltməsi, tarixə və mədəni ənənələrə ictimai marağın artması fonunda triumf abidəsi aktualıq qazanır. Müasir Zəfər tağının konsepsiyası və icrası Azərbaycanda mədəni vəziyyəti: tarixi kökləri unutmadan – müasir tendensiyalara uyğunluğu tam əks etdirir.

**Açar sözlər:** Zəfər tağı, Bakı, cənnət ağacı, xalça, simvolika.

**Оксана Мамедова (*Азербайджан*)**  
**СИМВОЛИКА РАЙСКОГО ДЕРЕВА В ТРИУМФАЛЬНОЙ**  
**АРКЕ ГОРОДА БАКУ**

Согласно распоряжению президента Азербайджанской Республики И. Алиева «О создании в Баку Мемориального комплекса Отечественной войны и Музея Победы», 8 ноября 2024 года состоялось открытие Парка Победы на территории около 10 гектаров. В ближайшем будущем здесь также планируется открытие Музея Победы. Первая в Азербайджане Триумфальная арка обозначает символическое начало пути к победе: 44 арочных элемента отражают количество дней боёв за Карабах и территориальную целостность Родины. Основным



декоративным элементом арки, выполненной в современном стиле, является Древо Рая.

В тюркской традиции символика Древа Рая представляет собой многослойный и многозадачный образ, который объединяет идеи жизни, смерти, возрождения и духовной связи между мирами. Для изучения исследуемого материала, помимо фотофиксации памятника, была представлена паспортизация с описанием, включающая название, краткую историю, место и время строительства, причину возведения, имена авторов, основные размеры, материалы строительства, декоративные элементы и семантические особенности.

На фоне роста социальной активности, национального самосознания и увеличения общественного интереса к истории и культурным традициям, триумфальный памятник приобретает актуальность. Концепция и исполнение современной Триумфальной арки в полной мере отражают культурную ситуацию в Азербайджане: соответствие современным тенденциям с сохранением исторических корней.

**Ключевые слова:** Триумфальная арка, Баку, райское дерево, ковёр, символика.