

**Artegin Salamzade**  
*correspondent member of ANAS*  
*Institute of Architecture and Art of ANAS*  
*(Azerbaijan)*

*ertegin.salamzade@mail.ru*

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## CONSTITUTIONAL ATTRIBUTES OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN IN THE ART OF SHEBEKE

**Abstract.** The national flag, coat of arms, and national anthem are primary constitutional symbols or attributes of a state. Throughout history, they have harnessed the vigour of the nation and mobilised people in service of the Motherland. Nowadays, we can see the State Flag and Coat of Arms of Azerbaijan in many films and theatrical productions and depicted in paintings. However, only in one type of art do the state symbols of Azerbaijan receive artistic interpretation – the art of shebeke. Shebeke is a decorative plane assembled from many carved wooden elements and pieces of coloured glass fixed between them without glue or nails. The master of shebeke, Tofiq Rasulov, became the owner of such a unique creative experience. This article analyses the State Flag of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the figure of the king from the series «Chess Figures», and the compositions «Towers of Fire» and «Pomegranate» executed by him in the technique of shebeke.

**Key words:** Constitutional attributes, State flag, shebeke, symbols, tradition.

**Introduction.** Throughout history, the national flag, coat of arms, and anthem have harnessed the vigour of the nation and mobilised people in service of the Motherland. There are almost 2000 nations worldwide, but only about 200 have their national states. The Azerbaijani people assumed this responsibility more than 100 years ago. The Government approved the decision on June 21, 1918, on the first State Flag of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. It was a red cloth with a white crescent and a star. It differed from the flag of the Ottoman Empire in having an eight-pointed star rather than a

five-pointed star. The ADR government made the new decision at the sitting on November 9, 1918. The resolution stated: «The national flag is the flag consisting of green, red and blue colours with a white crescent and an eight-pointed star» [1, p. 47].

**The interpretation of the main material.** There are various versions regarding why choosing exactly these symbols and who is the author of the idea of the ADR tricolour. According to some authors, the concept of the tricolour flag dates back to the theoretical heritage of the famous philosopher and public figure Seyid Jamaladdin Afghani. They believe that the philosophy of D. Afghani served as the basis for the development of national ideology in Azerbaijan and Turkey by such thinkers as Ismail Bey Gasprinsky, Ziya Gokalp, Alibek Huseynzadeh, Ahmed Bey Aghayev, Mamedemin Rasulzadeh, Najaf bey Vezirov and Jeyhun Hajibeyli [1, p. 46]. Others give primary credit to Alibek Huseynzadeh, arguing that he was the one who formulated the triad of «Turkisation, Islamisation, and Europeanisation» and suggested representing these concepts with the colours blue, green, and red. They also contend that Huseynzadeh influenced the visions of Ziya Gokalp rather than the other way around [2]. We, in turn, emphasise that the legacy of S. Afghani places particular importance on the issues of nationalism and national self-determination. Whereas the whole meaning of the ideology of A. Huseynzadeh lies in the apologia of Turkism.

Today, the State Flag and Coat of Arms of Azerbaijan are featured in numerous films and theatre productions and depicted in paintings. However, only through the art of shebeke the state symbols of Azerbaijan receive a unique artistic interpretation. Tofiq Rasulov, a master of shebeke, possesses distinctive creative experience in this art form. His work has earned him recognition both within Azerbaijan and internationally.

We have repeatedly mentioned the definition of a shebeke. A shebeke is a decorative panel assembled from many carved wooden elements and pieces of coloured glass fixed between them without glue or nails. The technology for making shebeke has always remained unchanged.

Tofiq Rasulov creates new forms of the shebeke technique, focusing on the state symbols of Azerbaijan. The design of a round-shaped State Flag of Azerbaijan, crafted in the shebeke technique, for the former OVIR (Visa and Registration Department) building of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, should be regarded as the turning point.

The content aspect of the circular composition depicting the national flag plays a crucial role. The flag of Azerbaijan is pictured for the first time in the art of shebeke, thus introducing actual content into traditional art. For your attention: this is the inaugural depiction of anything in shebeke art. Let us recall that shebeke is not a fine art but a decorative and applied art. So, the ornaments accepted here are not images. On the contrary, although the flag is a state symbol, it is created according to the laws of figurative representation.

However, the subsequent direction of the search for forms reveals a different tendency. The master preserves the traditional content, i.e., ornament, yet frames it within a definitive form. Public and cultural life of recent years, when the capital of Azerbaijan has become one of the humanitarian centres of the world, literally dictates new forms.

In recent decades, the Baku Humanitarian Forum, Intercultural Dialogue Forum, Eurovision-2012 music contest, and World of Mugham International Festival. In 2009, Baku was declared the capital of Islamic culture, the first European Games were held here in 2015, the International Chess Championship in 2017, and COP 29 in 2024. Many other cultural events and ultra-modern buildings are under construction. So, the compositions of the shebeke works of Tofiq Rasulov reflect almost all of this.

Among the works, there are entire series and individual pieces that stand out for introducing fundamentally new forms to shebeke art. The International Chess Championship is the subject of a series consisting of several chess pieces in various forms. These flat pieces are 130 cm high, with a wooden outline reproducing the shapes of the king, queen, knight, and other characters. A continuous shebeke ornament filled the space within the wooden frame with a solid shebeke ornament. Thus, the figure of the chess king is created based on the ornament with «sekkiz» (eight) gyols (a definite compositional form) (medallion). The State Emblem of Azerbaijan, above the head of the figure, represents the eight-pointed star motif. This emblem features an eight-pointed star inscribed within a heraldic circle.

Along with hosting international events of the highest level, a significant construction boom began in Baku during the years of independence, leading to the erection of numerous buildings that, in terms of appearance and construction technology, rival those in the world's capital cities. One such structure is the Towers of Fire multifunctional complex (2014), which has

become a recognisable architectural landmark of the city. The forms of the modern coat of arms of the capital of Azerbaijan, a heraldic composition featuring three stylised tongues of flame, are the basis of the plastic solution of the complex.

It is this symbolic and plastic idea that T. Rasulov conveys through the composition «Towers of Fire» (2016). Three stylised tongues of flame stand on a particular wooden rack. This seemingly minor element merits separate mention. In the projection from above, the stand represents three «buta» ornaments connected at one point by wide bases. The point is that we do not find such a combination of buta ornaments in the Azerbaijani tradition. However, in other cultures, one can find similar forms that are not connected with the «buta» ornament but have the same structure. From a geometric perspective, they represent three rays emanating from one point and positioned at an angle of 120 degrees to each other.

There are several such analogues. These are the so-called «three-arch», «triquetra», «triskelion». The most ancient of these symbolic signs is the «triskelion». Translated from Greek, «triskelion» means «three legs», and it is «one of the prototypes of the image of the movement of the Sun. Later, it becomes a symbol of the «run of time», personifying the course of history, the passage of time and the rotation of the luminaries» [3, p. 39]. We are far from attributing to T. Rasulov the use of the triskelion symbol. However, in solving the formal task, the master unwittingly brought an additional symbolic meaning to the composition.

In some interpretations, the ornamentation of the buta itself connects to the personification of flame. Thus, the cumulative meaning of the symbols in the composition of the «Towers of Fire» conveys the meanings related to the movement of the Sun, with flame, and thus with light. Blue, red and green are separated by straight lines, like on the State Flag of Azerbaijan. As a result, the composition is endowed with a double heraldic meaning, symbolising the flag of Azerbaijan and the coat of arms of its capital.

The pinnacle of the probe for new forms in the work of T. Rasulov in recent years can be called the composition “Pomegranate” (2015). Let us recall that shebeke is a decorative plane, and no three-dimensional objects (except for caskets or chests) are in the history of shebeke. For the first time, T. Rasulov creates a volumetric figure in the shebeke technique based on the «alty» (six) composition. A pomegranate is a polyhedron assembled from hexagonal elements. The pomegranate is not a decorative object. It is a lamp.

Due to this function, the composition “Pomegranate” reveals the specificity of the artistic image in the shebeke, arising due to the light penetrating through the coloured glass. However, the light is electric. Of course, the pomegranate fruit has nothing to do with state symbols. But thanks to numerous works by national artists, such as T. Narimanbeyov and O. Ibrahimov, it is perceived as an embodiment of the traditional culture of Azerbaijan.

Realising this, T. Rasulov strives to connect state and cultural symbols in one way or another. In addition to the volumetric and spatial aspects, he worked on a flat composition titled «Pomegranate.» The shape of a pomegranate stands on a rack. The fruit is slightly open, revealing octagonal elements that resemble pomegranate grains. Unlike «Towers of Fire», the red, green and blue colours are not arranged in the same order as on the national flag. With this tactful artistic device, the author hints at the connection between state and cultural symbols but does not impose his position.

**Conclusion.** Thus, shebeke is the only art form in which the state symbols of Azerbaijan are not only reproduced but also artistically interpreted. While preserving characteristics such as colour, the form of the State Flag undergoes various modifications. In the shebeke technique, the design is in perfect circles, tongues of flame, and pomegranates. A significant feature of the creative comprehension of state symbols through shebeke is their firm connection to the values of traditional national culture.

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## Ərtegin Salamzadə (*Azərbaycan*)

### ŞƏBƏKƏ SƏNƏTİNDƏ AZƏRBAYCAN RESPUBLİKASININ KONSTITUSİYA ATRİBUTLARI

Dövlət bayrağı, gerb və himn ölkənin baş Konstitusiya atributlarıdır. Onlar tarix boyu millətin enerjisini bir yerə toplayan və xalqı öz Vətəninə xidmətə səfərbər edən simvollar olmuşdur. Bu gün Azərbaycanın dövlət

bayrağı və gerbi bir çox kinofilmlərdə və teatr quruluşlarında nümayiş etdirilir, rəngkarlıq tablolarında təsvir olunur. Lakin incəsənətin yalnız bir sahəsində – şəbəkə sənətində Azərbaycanın dövlət rəmzləri öz bədii təfsirini əldə etmiş olur. Şəbəkə – çoxlu sayda kəsmə ağac elementlərindən yığılan və yarışqan, yaxud mismarın köməyi olmadan onların arasına bərkidilən rəngli şüşə parçalarından ibarət dekorativ müstəvidir. Bu unikal yaradıcılıq təcrübəsinə şəbəkə ustası Tofiq Rəsulov sahib çıxmışdır. Məqələdə onun şəbəkə texnikasında icra edilmiş Azərbaycan Respublikasının Dövlət Bayrağı, “Şahmat fiqurları” silsiləsindən kral fiquru, “Alov qüllələri” və “Nar” kompozisiyaları təhlil olunur.

**Açar sözlər:** Konstitusiya atributları, Dövlət bayrağı, şəbəkə, rəmzlər, ənənə.

*Эртегин Саламзаде (Азербайджан)*

### **КОНСТИТУЦИОННЫЕ АТРИБУТЫ АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНСКОЙ РЕСПУБЛИКИ В ИСКУССТВЕ ШЕБЕКЕ**

Государственный флаг, герб и гимн являются главными конституционными атрибутами страны. На протяжении истории они собирают в себе энергию нации и мобилизуют народ на служение своей Родине. Сегодня Государственный флаг и герб Азербайджана демонстрируются во многих кинофильмах и театральных постановках, изображаются на живописных полотнах. Но только в одном виде искусства государственные символы Азербайджана получают художественную интерпретацию – в искусстве шебеке. Шебеке – это декоративная плоскость, собранная из множества резных деревянных элементов и укрепленных между ними кусочков цветного стекла без помощи клея или гвоздей. Обладателем такого уникального творческого опыта стал мастер шебеке Тофик Расулов. В статье анализируются исполненные им в технике шебеке Государственный флаг Азербайджанской Республики, фигура короля из серии «Шахматные фигуры», композиции «Башни огня» и «Гранат».

**Ключевые слова:** Конституционные атрибуты, Государственный флаг, шебеке, символы, традиция.