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THE IMAGE OF UZEYIR HAJIBEYLI IN MEMORIAL REPRESENTATIONS

Abstract. The article explores the artistic image of Uzeyir Hajibeyli, the founder of professional Azerbaijani music, as represented in memorial depictions. Based on an analysis of commemorative objects—monuments, sculptural works, bas-reliefs, memorial plaques, as well as numismatic materials and jubilee attributes—the study examines the forms through which the composer is preserved in visual memory. Special emphasis is placed on the role of realist portrait traditions, national stylistic features, and symbolic elements in shaping Hajibeyli’s image. It is argued that in memorial representations, his image goes beyond an individual portrait, functioning as a carrier of national cultural values with ideological and aesthetic significance. As a result, these images, not only fulfilled a commemorative function, but also became an artistic and socio-political symbol that strengthened the legacy of the great composer in the cultural memory of the Azerbaijani people.

Key words: medallist, coin, Uzeyir Hajibeyli, commemorative visuals, symbols.

Introduction. Historical events, national heroes, collective traumas, and major social turning points continue to live on in human memory in various forms. This memory is preserved not only through oral and written means but also in visual form—that is, through tangible objects and artistic representations. In this context, the concept of “memory visuals” comes to the forefront, playing an essential role in the formation and transmission of socio-cultural memory.

Memory visuals are visual art objects and symbols created with the purpose of preserving and transmitting events, personalities, and values associated with

the past to future generations. These visuals evoke emotional resonance in people, strengthen their connection with historical identity, and simultaneously symbolize certain moral values within the collective consciousness.

The interpretation of the main material. Memory visuals can manifest in various forms:

1. Monuments and sculptures – sculptural compositions dedicated to historical figures, heroes, or public events (for example, war victory memorials or monuments in the Alley of Martyrs).
2. Commemorative coins and stamps – numismatic and philatelic materials issued by the state that carry the visual symbol of historical events.
3. Memorial plaques and bas-reliefs – commemorative plates installed in places where prominent figures lived or worked.
4. Portrait paintings and photographs – artistic depictions created to preserve the image of legendary personalities in memory.
5. Official and unofficial symbols – flags, badges, emblematic compositions, or posters.
6. Museum exhibits – objects of historical significance such as personal belongings, documents, clothing, and weapon samples.



Fig. 1. Phaleristic and philatelic materials (a table medal minted on the occasion of Uzeyir Hajibeyli's 80th anniversary; the breast badge "Laureate of the Azerbaijan SSR State Prize named after Uzeyir Hajibeyli"; the badge "Symphony Orchestra named after Uzeyir Hajibeyli – 60 years"; the badge with the inscription "U. Hajibeyli; envelope; stamp).



Fig. 2. Monument to Uzeyir Hajibeyli in Vienna.



Fig. 3. Memorial plaque on the wall of the house in Baku where Uzeyir Hajibeyli lived.

Memorial visuals are instruments of memory that do not rely solely on historical documents and texts to preserve the past; on the contrary, they function on a more emotional, aesthetic, and symbolic level. They serve the preservation, transmission, and continuation of values on both individual and collective levels. In this regard, memorial visuals are not only works of art but also visual codes of social and cultural memory. Their main functions are as follows:

- Preservation of collective memory – to retain the history and spiritual heritage of societies.
- Formation of identity – symbolic expression of national, religious, or ideological identity.
- Education and upbringing – to inform new generations about historical events and instill a sense of patriotism.
- Ritual and ceremonial function – to animate commemorative spaces by being used in state events, remembrance days, and public ceremonies.
- Political and ideological communication – to promote certain values through visual symbols selected by the state or public institutions.

“In addition to playing a major historical role in the formation of the common Turkic culture, the Azerbaijani people occupy a significant place among the nations of the world with their highly developed culture, including the visual arts, which they have preserved and promoted... One of our historical and cultural monuments that proves the ancient roots of Azerbaijani art is coins and medals. The art of medal making, small in form yet immense in content, concise, and possessing a profound emotional impact, is the bronze chronicle of a nation. Coins and medals are the bearers of national spirit and ideas” [2].

Culture is usually expressed through words, music, and architecture; however, coins are among the means that preserve this memory in a physical form. The symbols depicted on them, over time, turn into historical records that serve both as documentary and artistic sources. As carriers of a nation’s identity, values, and historical memory, coins are also archives of collective memory.

Coins are not merely economic instruments—they also embody the history, culture, and spiritual values of society. The symbols, portraits, and images represented on them act as documentary sources that reflect the social, political, and cultural state of a particular era. In this sense, coins deserve special study as one of the forms of cultural memory.

In particular, commemorative coins depicting renowned figures further enhance this function. The commemorative coin featuring the portrait of the eminent Azerbaijani composer Uzeyir Hajibeyli is one of the most remarkable examples in this regard. The depiction of Hajibeyli's image on the coin demonstrates how deeply his musical legacy is connected with national identity.

Such visual symbols serve not only collectors and historians but also fulfill an educational function for the wider public. From this perspective, the role of numismatics in the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage is undeniable.



**Figures 4, 5. “100 Manat” Commemorative Coin, 2008,
999 fine gold, weight 31.1 g, diameter 37 mm.**

This commemorative coin, issued by the Central Bank of the Republic of Azerbaijan, was dedicated to the 120th anniversary of Uzeyir Hajibeyli's birth. Within the framework of the cultural series, 100-manat commemorative coins were minted in 2008 by the Austrian Mint (“Austrian Mint”) and put into circulation.

Made of gold, the obverse (front side) of the coin features the portrait of the great composer, while the reverse (back side) depicts Azerbaijani miniature art motifs. Around the portrait are inscribed the year of issue “2008,” the words “Republic of Azerbaijan,” the composer's name, and the coin's denomination. The commemorative coin is a legal tender in the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan at its nominal value.

The depiction of the image of the great artist, who expressed the spirit of the nation through music, on the coin symbolizes the transformation of his musical heritage into a national emblem. Such coins are not only of interest

to collectors and numismatists but also carry educational significance for the wider public. They serve to disseminate knowledge about history, culture, and art while strengthening the consciousness of national identity.

The commemorative coin also functions as a documentary source: its year of issue, design style, inscriptions, and imagery reflect the aesthetic taste and ideological outlook of its time. Thus, this coin can become a valuable source for future researchers. It serves as an important tool for the preservation and promotion of the material and spiritual values of Azerbaijani culture.

In mass-produced elements (coins) and established symbols of recognition (medals), the representations of Hajibeyli contribute to the formation of public values. In everyday life, the coin reminds society of the role of art in cultural development, while the breast medal, conversely, affirms the hierarchy of cultural achievements. Together, these two objects constitute a dual mechanism for the socialization of cultural symbols—both mass and selective-prestigious. Coins and medals become part of Azerbaijan’s cultural diplomacy, serving as indicators of the government’s strategic intent to strengthen the country’s international image.



Fig. 6. Bronze memorial plaque dedicated to Uzeyir Hajibeyli for his House Museum (Baku, 1985).



Fig. 7. The Return of the “Shot Statues” to Shusha (2021).

Even the bust of Hajibeyli—who shared the same tragic fate as his nation and became its symbol—was “exiled” from his homeland after being shot, remaining in Baku as a displaced monument from 1993 to 2021. After the liberation of Karabakh, the Government of Azerbaijan

chose not to restore the “Shot Statues,” but to preserve them in their damaged state so that every visitor to Shusha could witness the visible traces of Armenian vandalism.

Under the auspices of the International Turkic Culture and Heritage Foundation, postage stamps have been issued to introduce the rich creative legacy of prominent figures of Turkic world culture and art to wider international audiences. In 2015, postage stamps dedicated to Uzeyir Hajibeyli were approved by the U.S. Federal Postal Service and put into circulation across the country. The stamps feature the image of the composer, accompanied by the inscription: “Uzeyir Hajibeyli (1885–1948): Founder of Azerbaijani Classical Music, 130th Anniversary,” along with musical notes from his opera *Koroghlu*. Another series of commemorative stamps dedicated to the 135th anniversary of the great composer was later published and released in Spain.

In coins and medals, Hajibeyli is generally portrayed in a traditional portrait style: depicted in profile or in a half-turn view that emphasizes his seriousness and intellectual nature, presenting him to the viewer as a figure of national and cultural significance. His high forehead symbolizes intellect and creativity; glasses (seen in some depictions) suggest scholarship and academic distinction; the neat suit and tie convey cultural and professional status—artistic means that underscore Hajibeyli’s belonging to the moral elite and his intellectual character.

Compositions often include additional elements: musical notes, ornamental motifs, and scenes from the opera *Leyli and Majnun*. This symbolism establishes associative links between the portrait and Hajibeyli’s main legacy—music. Although the portraits are executed in the realist Western academic tradition, the inclusion of national ornaments reminiscent of Azerbaijani carpets, stylized decorative motifs, miniature-inspired designs, or architectural elements adds a distinctive national color. This creates a synthesis between the European portrait tradition and Eastern symbolism.

Let us compare the artistic depictions of Uzeyir Hajibeyli on the 1985 Soviet jubilee medal and the 2008 Azerbaijani gold coin. In the 1985 USSR medal, Hajibeyli’s image reflects the all-Soviet tradition of honoring “classics of national cultures.” He is presented as part of the “Friendship of the Peoples of the USSR,” viewed through the prism of socialist realism. The portrait is calm and restrained, fitting within the ideological framework of “the great

son of the Soviet people, creator of the national opera.” Ornamentation and musical motifs are minimal or absent—the emphasis is placed on the jubilee inscription.



Fig. 8. Jubilee Medal, 1985.
Medalists: T.G. Zeynalov, E.G. Zeynalov.



Fig. 9. Memorial plaque dedicated to Uzeyir Hajibeyli on the former Akhundov Mansion in Vladikavkaz, Vorontsovskaya Street (now Butyrina Street, 5).

In the coin issued by independent Azerbaijan in 2008, the image carries an unequivocally national character. Hajibeyli’s portrait is presented as a symbol of Azerbaijani cultural identity tied to an independent state. The ideological framework is expressed through the concept of “the creator of professional Azerbaijani music,” serving as a cultural code that reflects national pride.

The portrait is more stylized, with clear contours rendered in gold, designed for mass production. The composition, associated with national art, combines musical and decorative elements—notes and ornaments—that emphasize the link between music and visual aesthetics.

Although the coin is not used in daily monetary circulation (non-circulating), it can be obtained through museums, numismatists, and collectors. This highlights how cultural symbols sometimes target specific audiences (collectors, cultural institutions), while their imagery simultaneously penetrates public consciousness through publications, exhibitions, and media.



Fig. 10. Uzeyir Hajibeyli. Medal dedicated to the 60th anniversary of his birth. Minted at the Leningrad Mint in 1945 in a limited edition of 531 copies. Diameter – 60 mm; weight – 94.3 g. Medalist: Pyotr Alekseyevich Khryunov.

Uzeyir Hajibeyli — the founder of Azerbaijani music, author of the first national opera, and creator of the national music education system — is regarded not only as an artist but also as an ideological and cultural symbol. Over time, his image has become an essential element of the national identity concept. The celebration of his birthday, September 18, as the National Music Day in independent Azerbaijan reflects the transformation of an individual figure into a public symbol.

Since the mid-20th century, the image of Hajibeyli has gained prominence in Azerbaijani visual art. In Azerbaijani painting, his image appears in the works of artists such as Tahir Salahov, Tofiq Karimov, Najafqglu Ismayilov, Taghi Taghiyev, Anvar Aliyev, Huseyn Aliyev, and Vajiha Samadova. His portraits, compositions depicting his creative activity, and symbolic representations occupy an important place in the formation of the national artistic memory.

In sculptural works, Hajibeyli's portrait features are typically serious, contemplative, and inspiring. He is often depicted together with sheet music, books, and musical instruments — visual references to his dual role as composer and educator. These elements possess not only aesthetic but also deep conceptual meaning: they symbolize both the bearer of national musical heritage and the embodiment of Hajibeyli's creative philosophy in visual form.

In coins and stamps, his image is rendered in a more symbolic and laconic manner. The main goal here is to engrave his persona into the nation's collective memory and transmit it to the public through circulating media.

Conclusion. Thus, by examining how Uzeyir Hajibeyli's image is represented across various visual forms within the Azerbaijani cultural sphere, this article has analyzed their aesthetic and ideological content and identified their functions within collective memory. I would like to conclude with the composer's own words, which seem to express the essence of his life and legacy:

“In the history of humanity, there are such individuals who are not born for themselves but rather to bring benefit and progress to their people and even to all humankind. Such people serve their nation not only during their lifetime but also after death...”

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ÜZEYİR HACIBƏYLİNİN OBRAZI MEMORIAL TƏSVİRLƏRDƏ

Məqalədə Azərbaycan peşəkar musiqisinin banisi Üzeyir Hacıbəylinin memorial təsvirlərdə formalaşan bədii obrazı araşdırılır. Tədqiqatda xatirə-memorial obyektləri – abidələr, heykəltəraşlıq nümunələri, baryeflər, xatirə lövhələri, həmçinin numizmatik materiallar və yubiley atributları üzərində aparılan müşahidələr əsasında bəstəkarın vizual yaddaşda yaşadılma formaları təhlil olunur. Üzeyir Hacıbəylinin obrazının formalaşmasında realist portret ənənələrinin, milli üslubun və simvolik elementlərin rolu xüsusi vurğulanır. Müəllif göstərir ki, memorial təsvirlərdə Üzeyir Hacıbəylinin obrazı təkcə fərdi portret xarakteri daşımır, həm də milli mədəniyyətin ideoloji və estetik dəyərlərinin daşıyıcısına çevrilir. Nəticədə

bu təsvirlər yalnız xatirə funksiyası ilə kifayətlənməyərk, Azərbaycan xalqının mədəni yaddaşında dahi bəstəkarın irsini möhkəmləndirən bədii və ictimai-siyasi simvola çevrilmişdir.

Açar sözlər: medalyer, sikkə, Üzeyir Hacıbəyli, xatirə vizualları, rəmzlər.

Оксана Мамедова (Азербайджан)

ОБРАЗ УЗЕИРА ГАДЖИБЕЙЛИ В МЕМОРИАЛЬНЫХ ИЗОБРАЖЕНИЯХ

В статье исследуется художественный образ Узеира Гаджибейли — основателя азербайджанской профессиональной музыки — в мемориальных изображениях. На основе наблюдений за памятно-мемориальными объектами — монументами, скульптурными произведениями, барельефами, мемориальными досками, а также нумизматическими материалами и юбилейной атрибутикой — анализируются формы сохранения образа композитора в визуальной памяти. Особое внимание уделяется роли реалистических портретных традиций, национального стиля и символических элементов в формировании образа Узеира Гаджибейли. Автор отмечает, что в мемориальных изображениях образ Гаджибейли не ограничивается индивидуальными портретными характеристиками, а превращается в носителя идеологических и эстетических ценностей национальной культуры. В результате эти изображения выходят за рамки простой функции памяти и становятся художественным и общественно-политическим символом, закрепляющим наследие великого композитора в культурной памяти азербайджанского народа.

Ключевые слова: медальер, монета, Узеиир Гаджибейли, памятные визуальные образы, символы.