

Ramil Guliyev
PhD (Art Study)
Institute of Architecture and Art of ANAS
(Azerbaijan)

ramil_amea@mail.ru

MINIATURE ART IN THE RESEARCH OF THE INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTURE AND ART

Abstract. This article examines the institutional development of miniature-art studies within the Institute of Architecture and Art of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences and explains how a coherent scholarly school emerged through successive methodological advances. The analysis focuses on three key researchers—Adil Gaziyeu, Karim Karimov, and Jamila Hasan-zade—whose complementary contributions shaped the field. Gaziyeu’s work is discussed as a foundational stage that systematized the material-technical dimension of manuscript arts, refined professional terminology, and introduced artists’ treatises into academic circulation. Karimov’s contribution is assessed through stylistic and iconographic analysis, including arguments concerning the cultural attribution of the Tabriz tradition. Hasan-zade’s research is interpreted as extending the chronological horizon to earlier phases, strengthening multi-language source criticism, and building a corpus of works dispersed across major international collections. The article also addresses provenance and reconstruction challenges, and it outlines contemporary priorities: digital cataloguing, comparative visual analysis, and closer integration with conservation science.

Key words: Institute of Architecture and Art of ANAS, Azerbaijani miniature, art studies, Adil Gaziyeu, Karim Karimov.

Introduction. Medieval book culture functioned as one of the principal platforms in Eastern civilization for the circulation of knowledge, the expression of aesthetic thought, and the construction of political-legitimizing

discourse. In this context, miniature painting is not merely a set of visual additions illustrating the text, but a complex artistic system that expands the semantic layers of the text, brings the reading experience closer to ritual and representation, and conveys the worldview of the period through iconographic codes. Within the Azerbaijani cultural space – especially in Tabriz and its associated library-workshop (library/*ketāb-ḳāna*) environments – the miniature tradition was shaped during various political formations (the Ilkhanids, Qara Qoyunlu, Aq Qoyunlu, and Safavids) and, merging with the region’s multilingual literary canon (Ferdowsi’s “Shahnameh”, Nizami’s “Khamasa”, etc.), became one of the leading directions in the global history of the “art of the book.”

The interpretation of the main material. Within the system of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences, the institutional basis of miniature studies is directly connected with the activities of the Institute of Architecture and Art, established in 1945. According to official information, the Institute was founded by the great composer and academician Uzeyir Hajibeyli, initially bore the name Institute of the History of Azerbaijani Art, and from 1948 developed for a long period (40 years) under the leadership of the academician-architect Mikayil Useynov. The mission of the Institute encompasses a wide spectrum, including the study of the historical, theoretical, and methodological problems of Azerbaijani architecture and art from antiquity to the modern period, as well as the investigation of the connections of national art with other cultures; within this framework, fundamental collective publications such as “The History of Azerbaijani Architecture”, “The Art of Caucasian Albania”, “Azerbaijani Art”, and “Azerbaijani Miniatures” have been prepared. This institutional environment has made it possible to conduct systematic research on miniature art not only at the level of individual works, but also in the context of schools, stylistic layers, and mechanisms of artistic production [2].

The starting point in the scholarly analysis of miniature painting is the precise determination of its place within the complex of the “arts of the book.” A manuscript book is not merely a “carrier” consisting of text: components such as the quality and watermark of the paper, the type of script, inks and pigments, layout and gilding, binding, and traces of restoration together form a material-cultural system. Within this system, miniatures both provide a visual commentary on the literary text and semantically signal the status of the book—court patronage, elite consumption, diplomatic gift, and so forth.

Studies conducted by the Metropolitan Museum of Art on the “Shahnameh” tradition demonstrate that Ferdowsi’s epic was appropriated by various dynasties as an ideological instrument; for this very reason, the production of new copies was often accompanied by costly illustration and illumination programs. From this perspective, the miniature functions as a form of “visual rhetoric” at the intersection of text and politics, requiring from the researcher not only stylistic analysis but also competence in historical source studies and textual scholarship [7].

Manuscript painting that developed in Tabriz and surrounding centers in the 13th–14th centuries was closely connected with the cultural policy of the Ilkhanid rule of Mongol origin (1256–1353). The example referred to by the Metropolitan Museum as the “Great Mongol Shahnama,” dated to the 1330s and presumed to have consisted of two volumes, represents one of the most magnificent illustration programs of this period. As noted by the Museum, this manuscript originally comprised approximately 57 illustrations of Ferdowsi’s epic and more than 250 text folios, and was later dismembered and dispersed among various collections. The same source emphasizes that as a result of the official ideology of the Ilkhanid period and its extensive imperial connections, the miniatures synthesized both motifs of Chinese origin (such as cloud rhythms and compositional dynamism) and elements of Western and local traditions. Such examples demonstrate that the question of “affiliation” should sometimes be explained not so much at the level of modern national borders as at the level of historical urban centers, workshops, and networks of patronage [6].

In the early 16th century, the rise of the Safavids once again turned Tabriz into a leading court center of the arts of the book. The British Museum’s commentary on the composition attributed to Sultan Muhammad, “Rustam Killing the Lion While Rakhsh Sleeps,” clarifies the historical mechanism of Safavid stylistic synthesis: following Shah Ismail’s capture of Tabriz in 1501 and the conquest of Herat in 1510, the relocation of artists to the capital brought together the Tabriz (Turkmen style) and Herat (Timurid style) traditions within a single milieu. The Metropolitan Museum’s essay on the “Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp” further structures this synthesis: the work consisted of 759 folios and 258 illustrated pages and was produced in the royal atelier in Tabriz, with masters such as Sultan Muhammad, Mir Musavvir, and Agha Mirak assuming leadership roles at different stages of the project. The same text emphasizes that the combination of the vivid colors and dynamic

landscapes of the “Turkmen style” with the more balanced compositional principles of the “Herat school” constitutes the principal interpretative framework for explaining the evolution of the Tabriz tradition.

The role of the Institute in the field of miniature studies cannot be measured solely by individual monographs; it is also distinguished by the formation of bibliographic and terminological infrastructure, cataloguing, and the establishment of a culture of scholarly publication. The prominent place of “Azerbaijani Miniatures” among the collective publications prepared in the 1950s–1980s, as noted in the Institute’s official history, demonstrates that this direction was included in the Institute’s strategic scholarly agenda. While during the Soviet period tendencies existed in art-historical research such as the ideological filtration of sources and the homogenization of regional schools within the framework of “general Persian painting,” the systematic studies conducted within the Institute strengthened the regional, city-centered analysis of Tabriz material, while at the same time seeking to situate it comparatively within the map of the arts of the book of the Near and Middle East [2].

This historical richness simultaneously creates challenges for research. First, the fragmentation of manuscripts and their preservation in different countries (especially in examples such as the “Great Mongol Shahnama”) makes it difficult to reconstruct the original context of the artwork. Second, authorship and workshop affiliation are often determined on the basis of indirect indicators; therefore, stylistic comparison, analysis of iconographic codes, paper and pigment analyses, and catalogue-based comparative work must be carried out in parallel. Third, the miniature art form possesses its own internal theory – artists’ treatises, workshop terminology, and material recipes – which constitutes a separate layer of sources. As noted in conservation science publications such as the “Journal of the American Institute for Conservation” (JAIC), medieval Persian painters left written texts concerning the use of materials; among them, the treatise “Qanun al-sovar” / “Qanun us-süvar” by Sadiqi Beg Afshar is considered one of the important sources providing information on materials and techniques in the arts of the book. Such sources make it possible to connect modern laboratory analyses (the composition of pigments, binding agents, techniques of gold application) with historical knowledge, thereby moving miniature studies beyond the level of purely aesthetic description and closer to scientific and experimental substantiation [6].

It is precisely against the background of these methodological needs that the formation of miniature studies at the Institute of Architecture and Art of ANAS as a “scholarly school” is associated with the consecutive activity of three generations of researchers. Representing the first generation, Adil Qaziyev (1906–1972) is among those scholars who created a synthesis of the “practical eye” and “academic analysis,” both as an artist and as an art historian. His biographical data indicate that Qaziyev was formed in his youth within the sphere of influence of Bahruz Kangarli, later gained professional experience in painting and graphics through education in the Baku artistic milieu and in Moscow, and from 1945 onward worked at the Institute of Architecture and Art of the Academy. Contemporary sources note Qaziyev’s publications such as “Fundamentals of color theory and artistic-technical materials and terminology of Medieval book painting, calligraphy, and bookbinding”, which characterize his approach to studying miniature not only as an iconographic text but also as a technological process. His monograph “Artistic design of Azerbaijani manuscripts of the 13th–17th centuries”, published in Moscow in 1977, is regarded as a fundamental study devoted to the manuscript book as an integrated system of design.

One of Qaziyev’s most important innovations was the step he took toward bringing artists’ treatises into scholarly circulation. Biographical sources indicate that he translated into Azerbaijani and published the treatise “Qanun us-süvar” by the prominent Safavid-period painter Sadiqi Beg Afshar; this fact enabled researchers to trace workshop terminology directly through the original source. Such an approach is significant on two levels: the stylistic features of the miniature are explained not only through the question “why it was depicted in this way,” but also through the question “how it was made”; the technological knowledge required for the restoration and conservation of manuscripts becomes systematized within the local scholarly tradition. Today, in the practice of conservation science—for example, in diagnosing processes such as pigment oxidation, degradation of binding media, and paper acidification—the information provided by written treatises plays the role of a historical “reference.” Qaziyev’s scholarly legacy served to establish this scientific–practical dialogue in Azerbaijan at an early stage.

As a representative of the second generation of researchers, Karim Karimov (1921–1995) appears as a systematizing scholar who carried

miniature studies into the broader narratives of stylistic history and the problematics of attribution. According to the official biographical information of ANAS, he worked at the Institute of Architecture and Art from 1951 onward, for a long period headed departments in the fields of applied arts and painting, and achieved significant results in the study of Safavid-period and, more generally, medieval miniature art. Karimov's monograph "Sultan Muhammad and his school", published in Russian in Moscow in the early 1970s, presents the work of Sultan Muhammad as one of the central focal points in the developmental trajectory of the Tabriz school and attempts a scholarly description of the stylistic typology of this school; in a later period, the Baku edition of the work (1993) was also used in scholarly circulation. A characteristic feature of Karimov's research is the understanding of the miniature as a "language": through iconographic analysis based on the symbolic system of images, the choice of subject matter, spatial construction, and ornamental rhythms, he seeks to explain both the stylistic boundaries of the school and interregional differences (for example, between the Tabriz and Qazvin traditions) [3].

Nevertheless, explaining the development of the Tabriz school in the 16th century solely through the "foundership" of a single individual is not unambiguously accepted in scholarly literature, and in this context it is important to consider the Institute school's approach in comparison with international art historiography. In its overview of Safavid-period painting, "Encyclopaedia Iranica" notes that in 1522 the Herat master Behzad was appointed director of the royal library, and at that stage it advances the possibility that Tabriz masters, including Sultan Muhammad, adapted their style in order to align with the aesthetic taste of the young shah, which tended toward the Behzad style. The same source emphasizes that Shah Tahmasp's "Shahnameh" project was a long-term, multi-team production process, in which the "director" function (sometimes a calligrapher, sometimes a painter) determined the scale of the project and the production team, and various masters contributed to the same manuscript in parallel. This framework makes it possible to place Karimov's emphasis on Sultan Muhammad as a "central figure" into a more methodologically accurate form: formulating the issue not as "sole founding," but as "a leading role in workshop leadership and stylistic synthesis" is more consistent both with the sources and with the cautious terminology of international scholarship.

The activity of Jamila Hasanzade (1947–2022), as a representative of the third generation of researchers and at the same time a scholar who traced the line of institutional continuity back to the 13th–15th centuries, deserves special mention. According to official information related to the textbook “Azerbaijani miniature art”, she worked as a research fellow at the Institute of Architecture and Art from 1973, defended her doctoral dissertation in 2002 on the topic “The Emergence and Development of the Tabriz Miniature School in the Late 13th – Early 15th Centuries,” and, thanks to her knowledge of Azerbaijani, Russian, French, and English, was able to work efficiently with international scholarly literature. Hasanzade’s monograph “Tabriz miniature art: 14th–16th centuries”, published in two volumes by TEAS Press in 2019, is presented as a systematized result of her research and is aimed at the scholarly description of works by Tabriz painters preserved in leading museums and libraries around the world. This line of research implies not only the construction of stylistic history, but also the reconstruction of the corpus – that is, the list of works, their locations, and catalogue data – which has become a key methodological requirement in the contemporary stage of miniature studies [8].

One of the main issues highlighted by J. Hasanzade is the question of the “fate” of manuscripts: from their production in the court workshop to their displacement, fragmentation, and sometimes loss of context as a result of wars, political changes, and the art market. This problem is particularly acute in the case of the “Great Mongol Shahnama”: the Metropolitan Museum notes that this manuscript was divided into parts in the modern period and that its folios/pages are preserved in various collections; as a result, the researcher’s task is not limited to art-historical analysis but also involves “reconstruction” – that is, the virtual reassembly of a corpus that was once a unified book. This increases the importance of digital catalogues and open databases in the contemporary period: without high-quality scans, dimensional and technical metadata, and provenance (acquisition history) records, both stylistic comparison and historical attribution are severely constrained. The activities noted in the Institute’s history as contributions to the preservation of cultural heritage within the UNESCO framework also demonstrate that scholarly research today carries not only the mission of “explaining the past,” but also that of “creating a scientific basis for decisions related to heritage preservation” [6].

At the present stage, one of the promising directions of miniature studies is their activation as a source for other fields. Architectural backgrounds, city panoramas, spatial organization, and ornamental repertoires depicted in miniatures are not merely artistic “decoration”, but can also be read as visual documents of the historical environment. One of the institutional manifestations of this approach is the abstract of Leyla Mammadkarimova’s dissertation entitled “Architecture in Azerbaijani and Iranian fine art of the 16th–20th centuries”, prepared at the Institute of Architecture and Art of ANAS (Baku, 2022). At the same time, dissertation lists mention Tahir Bayramov’s PhD thesis entitled “The problem of artistic tradition in Azerbaijani fine art” (Baku, 1997), which indicates that the theoretical elaboration of the relationship between tradition and innovation continues. Such studies contextualize the miniature, on the one hand, within medieval book arts, and on the other hand, within long-term artistic traditions and processes of cultural transfer.

Conclusion. As a result, research on miniature art at the Institute of Architecture and Art of ANAS can be characterized not merely as the activity of individual scholars, but as an institutional scholarly school demonstrating consistent methodological expansion. Adil Qaziyev laid the initial “basic infrastructure” by bringing into scholarly circulation the material and technological aspects of the miniature, its terminological system, and workshop texts. Karim Karimov elevated this foundation to the level of stylistic history and iconographic–methodological analysis, systematized the developmental trajectory of the Tabriz school in the Safavid context through the phenomenon of Sultan Muhammad, and proposed analytical criteria for distinguishing regional schools. Jamila Hasanzade, in turn, extended the stages of the school’s formation back to earlier periods, focusing on the corpus-building of materials preserved in international collections and on the interpretation of early stylistic layers and cultural influences. The next stage of this scholarly line requires the strengthening of directions such as digital reconstruction, open cataloguing, material analysis, and interdisciplinary source studies; only in this way can the place of the Tabriz and, more broadly, Azerbaijani miniature tradition within global scholarly discourse be mapped more precisely, while at the same time providing a reliable scientific basis for practical decisions related to the preservation of manuscript heritage.

REFERENCES:

1. Salamzadə Ə.Ə., Bayramov T.R. Kərim Kərimovun elmi yaradıcılığı. // Kərim Kərimov 85. – Bakı, 2006. – s. 12-26.
2. <https://science.gov.az/az/institutes/34>
3. <https://science.gov.az/forms/skonchavshiesya-chlenyikorrespondentyi/3430>
4. <https://medeniyyet.info.az/page/news/59574/Ressam-ve-alim-omru.html>
5. <https://br.az/read/17/https%3A//br.az/read/17/>
6. <https://www.metmuseum.org/essays/folios-from-the-great-mongol-shahnama-book-of-kings>
7. <https://www.metmuseum.org/essays/the-shahnama-of-shah-tahmasp>
8. https://aem.az/uploads/files/2024-01/1706130091_1701674882_azerbaycan-miniatur-seneti-derslik-1-2-1_compressed.pdf

Ramil Quliyev (*Azərbaycan*)

MEMARLIQ VƏ İNCƏSƏNƏT İNSTİTUTUNUN TƏDQIQATLARINDA MİNİATÜR SƏNƏTİ

Bu məqalə AMEA Memarlıq və İncəsənət İnstitutunda miniatür sənəti üzrə tədqiqatların institusional inkişafını, elmi məktəb kimi formalaşma məntiqini və metodoloji çərçivəsini təhlil edir. İnstitutun yaradılmasından sonra miniatür araşdırmalarının ardıcıl xətt üzrə təşəkkül tapması Adil Qaziyev, Kərim Kərimov və Cəmilə Həsənzadənin elmi fəaliyyəti fonunda dəyərləndirilir. Qaziyevin maddi-texnoloji bazaya, terminologiyaya və traktatların elmi dövriyyəyə daxil edilməsinə yönəlmiş yanaşması, Kərimovun üslub–ikonografiya təhlili və milli mənsubiyyət konsepsiyası, Həsənzadənin isə erkən mərhələlər, çoxdilli mənbələr və beynəlxalq kolleksiyalar üzrə korpuslaşdırma işləri ümumiləşdirilir. Məqalə miniatürün “kitab sənətləri” kompleksində yeri, rekonstruksiya problemləri, həmçinin rəqəmsal kataloqlaşdırma və konservasiya elmi ilə inteqrasiyanın perspektivləri barədə nəticələr təqdim edir.

Açar sözlər: AMEA Memarlıq və İncəsənət İnstitutu, Azərbaycan miniatürü, sənətsünaslıq, Adil Qaziyev, Kərim Kərimov.

Рамиль Гулиев (Азербайджан)

ИСКУССТВО МИНИАТЮРЫ В ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯХ ИНСТИТУТА АРХИТЕКТУРЫ И ИСКУССТВА

В статье анализируется институциональная эволюция исследований миниатюрного искусства в Институте архитектуры и искусства НАН Азербайджана, а также формирование устойчивой научной школы и ее методологический инструментарий. Показано, что системность и предметность данного направления связаны с работами Адиль Газиева, Керима Керимова и Джамили Гасанзаде. Подход А.Газиева рассматривается как фундаментальный этап фиксации материально-технических аспектов рукописной книги, терминологии и введения трактатов в научный оборот. Концепция К.Керимова раскрывается через стилистико-иконографический анализ и аргументацию проблемы культурной принадлежности табризской традиции. Вклад Д.Гасанзаде интерпретируется как расширение хронологических рамок и формирование корпуса источников на основе многоязычной литературы и музейно-библиотечных коллекций. Отдельно обсуждаются вопросы происхождения, рассеяния рукописей, реконструкции контекста, а также перспективы цифровой каталогизации и междисциплинарной интеграции с реставрационной наукой.

Ключевые слова: Институт архитектуры и искусства НАНА, азербайджанская миниатюра, искусствоведение, Адиль Газиев, Керим Керимов.