

SHEKI KHAN PALACE WALL PAINTINGS: EVENT FLOW MINIATURE WAR SCENES

*Şeki Han Sarayı Duvar Resimleri: Olay Örgüsü Minyatür
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ABSTRACT

The event flow war scenes from the murals of the Palace of Sheki Khan, built in 1762 in Sheki, Azerbaijan, which is among the rare examples of Turkish architecture, were examined. The research, was carried out through literature review, on-site examination of the Palace of Sheki Khans and interviews with palace officials. While human life continues with struggle, this struggle can sometimes turn into a war. Even though war involves violence, pain and death, it is a source of pride for all nations and is recorded in their history as a heroic story. For this reason, even in the most popular palaces, frames depicting the war adorn the palace walls. Starting from cave paintings, extending to the present day, major events that have become an important subject of wall painting are visually depicted in history. The objects, weapons, clothes, ornaments and everything belonging to the period used in historical events that occurred over time have survived to the present day visually through paintings. For this reason, visualizing history live by creating visuals of the events increases the importance of wall painting. One of the most important applications of war scenes in Turkish painting is in the Sheki Khan Palace, built in the 18th century. These war scenes are depicted in the form of a plot on the walls of Konak Otağı, approximately fifteen meters long. In the research, the war scenes depicted on the walls of the Konak Otağı of the palace were examined in terms of their composition, painting techniques, features and event flows. In the research, the artistic interactions of nations with mutual relations in the historical process, specifically Azerbaijan, has been evaluated.

Keywords: Palace of Sheki Khan, Mural, Miniature, Event flow, War scenes.

ÖZ

Türk mimarisinin nadir örnekleri arasında sanat incisi olarak yer alan, Azerbaycan'ın Şeki kentinde 1762'de inşa edilen Şeki Han Sarayı duvar resimlerinden olay örgüsü savaş sahneleri incelenmiştir. Araştırma, literatür taraması, Şeki Han Sarayı'nın yerinde incelenmesi ve saray görevlileri ile görüşmelerle gerçekleştirilmiştir. İnsan yaşamı, mücadele ile devam ederken, bu mücadele zaman zaman bir savaşa dönüşebilmektedir. Savaş her ne kadar şiddet, acı ve ölüm içerse de, tüm ulusların gurur kaynağı olup, tarihlerine kahramanlık öyküsü şeklinde işlenmektedir. Bu sebeple, en gözde saraylarda bile savaş anlatan kareler saray duvarlarını süslemektedir. Mağara resimlerinden başlamak üzere, günümüze kadar uzanan, özellikle duvar resim sanatının da önemli bir konusu haline gelen büyük olaylar görsel olarak tarihi anlatmaktadır. Zaman içinde oluşan tarihi olaylardan kullanılan eşya, silah, giysi, süs ve devrine ait ne varsa resim aracılığıyla görsel olarak günümüze kadar ulaşmaktadır. Bu nedenle, oluşan olayların görselini oluşturarak tarihin canlı olarak görüntülenmesi duvar resim sanatının önemini artırmaktadır. Türk resim sanatında savaş sahnelerinin en önemli uygulamalarından biri de 18. yüzyılda inşa edilen Şeki Han Sarayı'nda bulunmaktadır. Bu savaş sahneleri olay örgüsü şeklinde Konak Otağı duvarlarında yaklaşık on beş metre uzunlukta işlenmiştir. Yapılan araştırmada, sarayın Konak Otağı duvarlarında resmedilen savaş sahneleri kompozisyonu, resim teknikleri, özellikleri ve akışı yönünden incelenmiştir. Araştırmada, Azerbaycan özelinde tarihsel süreçte karşılıklı ilişkileri olan milletlerin sanat etkileşimleri de değerlendirilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Şeki Han Sarayı, Duvar resmi, Minyatür, Olay örgüsü, Savaş sahneleri.

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GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Azerbaycan güzel sanatının kadim bir tarihi ve zengin sanatsal gelenekleri vardır. Azerbaycan'ın mimari ve sanat eserlerinin en önemlisi olan Şeki Han Sarayı 1762 yılında Şeki hanlarının yazlık konaklama yeri olarak Hüseyin Han Müştak zamanında (1758-1780) Usta Abbaskulu tarafından Şeki kentinde inşa edilmiştir. Şeki Han Sarayı'nın ön cephesinde ve iç yüzeylerinde duvar resmi sanatının etkin ve yoğun biçimde uygulanmış olması Türk resim sanatı açısından oldukça önemlidir.

Şeki kenti, Azerbaycan'ın kuzeybatısında, Büyük Kafkas Sıradağlarının güney kesiminde kurulmuştur. Kentin merkezi ve Şeki Han Sarayı, kendine özgü mimarisi ve İpek Yolu üzerinde önemli bir ticaret merkezi olan tarihi nedeniyle 7 Temmuz 2019'da UNESCO Dünya Mirası Listesi'ne alınmıştır. Tarih boyunca Rus, Arap, İran ve Osmanlı egemenliklerinin etkisinde kalmış, bir süre hanlıklar tarafından yönetilmiştir. Yüzyıllar boyunca farklı kültürlerin etkisinde kalan Şeki şehri, İpek Yolu'nun üzerinde olması ve farklı medeniyetlerin etkisi sebebiyle çok özel bir sanat tarihine sahiptir.

Azerbaycan resim sanatında minyatür üslubu önde gelen önemli bir ifade aracıdır. Türk minyatür sanatı, Budizm, Maniheizm, Hıristiyanlık ve İslamiyet dini ve sonraki yıllarda Batılılaşma etkisinde gelişme göstermiştir. Ortaçağ Azerbaycan sanatının uluslararası ölçekte tanınmaya önemli ölçüde katkı sağlaması, öncelikle, önemli bir sanat türü olarak değerlendirilen minyatür sanatı ile mümkün olmuştur.

Türk duvar resminde ilk olay örgüsü anlatım örnekleri Orta Asya Afrasyab duvar resimlerinde görülmektedir. Olay örgüsü anlatım; bir metin veya resimde ifade edilen olayın öncesi ve sonrasıyla kendi içinde art arda gerçekleşen ve birbirine bağlanan bazı küçük olaylardan oluşmasıdır.

Şeki Han Sarayı, iki kat ve her katta birbirini izleyen üçer oda olmak üzere 6 oda, 4 koridor ve 2 aynalı balkona sahiptir. Sarayın her odası birbirinden farklı ve her biri duvar resimleri ile ustaca süslenmiştir. Duvar resimlerinin tamamında doğal boyalar kullanılmış ve boyandıkları tarihten bu güne çok az bozularak gelmiştir. Her iki kattaki orta salonların ve ikinci katın yan odalarının tüm duvarları, nişleri, duvarlardan tavanlara sarkıt şeklindeki geçişler ve tavanları resimlerle süslenmiştir. Saraya ayrı bir güzellik kazandıran muhteşem ızgaraların çevresinde yer alan duvar resimleri dört gruba ayrılır; renkleriyle dikkat çeken bu tablolar arasında (1) geometrik ve bitkisel desenli kompozisyonlar, (2) olay örgüsü desenleri, (3) hayvan resimleri, (4) bitki ve hayvanların bir arada gösterildiği görseller mevcuttur. Bu zarif süslemelerin çekiciliği altın, turkuaz, kırmızı, mor, yeşil ve sarı renklerin ustaca kullanımı ile güçlendirilmiştir. Saray, bölgenin zengin kültürel mirasını yansıtan Fars ve Türk mimari tarzlarının bir karışımını sergiler. Bu tarzda inşa edilen yapılara, aynı şekilde Tebriz, Tahran, Şuşa, Hoy, Erivan ve Tiflis'te de rastlanmaktadır.

Sarayın duvarları, tempera tip fresk resimleri ile süslenmiş, pencereler ise etkin ve estetik ışıklandırma ve gölgeleme tekniğine uygun olarak renkli cam mozaiklerden yapılmış vitray şebeke şeklindedir. Pencerelerde, 5.000 civarında cam parçası kullanılmıştır. Sarayın tüm pencere ve kapıları ahşap parçalarından ve renkli Venedik camlarından ustalıklı bir araya getirilmiştir. Ayrıntılı el oyması mukarnaslar, özenli vitray pencere camlarının üst kısımlarını süslüyor. Sarayın pencere camlarında farklı boyut ve renklerde, son derece hassas boyutlarda elle kesilmiş binlerce vitray parçası bulunmaktadır. Güneş ışınlarıyla etkileşime girdiğinde sarayın iç kısmı ruhani aydınlatma desenlerinden oluşan bir serap haline geliyor.

Şeki Han Sarayı, Azerbaycan mimarisine özgü her türlü işçilik ve resim sanatını bir araya getirmiştir. Bu sarayda sadece şebeke değil, taş, ahşap, alçı üzerine oymalar, gravür, yakma, geometrik ve bitkisel resim, minyatür resim ve dekoratif uygulamalı sanatlar da geniş çapta uygulanmıştır. Bu saray Azerbaycan'ın çok figürlü olay örgüsünün korunduğu tek eserdir.

İkinci katın ortasında Konak Otağı denen büyük bir toplantı odası vardır. Duvarlar çok sayıda çiçek ve kuşun resmedildiği tablolarla kaplıdır. Odanın ortasındaki küçük bir şerit, Şeki'nin savaşmış olabileceği çeşitli savaşları hayali olarak göstermektedir; Osmanlı, İran, Rusya ve Moğolistan gibi çok uzaklardan gelen ve hepsi de giysileri, şapkaları ve bayraklarıyla tanımlanabilen orduları içeriyor. Sarayın Konak Otağı, karmaşık geometrik ve bitki desenlerini gösteren çizimlerin yanı sıra avlanma ve savaş sahneleri ile zengin bir şekilde boyanmıştır. Konak Otağı frizleri, av ve savaş sahnelerini tasvir eden güzel resimlerle süslenmiştir. En ünlü fresklerden biri "hayat ağacının" yakınındaki tavus kuşudur. Konak Otağı olay örgüsü minyatür savaş sahneleri odanın doğu ve batı duvarlarında toplam 15 m uzunlukta ve 25 cm genişlikte bir şerit halinde düzenlenmiştir. Şeki Han Sarayı'nda ön cephe pencerelerinden itibaren başlayan savaş sahnelerinde savaşçıların yanında atlar, silahlar, bayraklar, gözetleme dürbünleri, çalgı aletleri gibi figürler bulunmaktadır. Arka pencere üzerinde yer alan ilk savaş sahnesinde belirgin figürler olarak; arka tarafta savaşçıların motivasyonunu artırmak amacıyla atlar üzerinde nefesli ve vurmali çalgı çalan askerler bulunmaktadır.

Savaş sahnelerinde savaşan taraflar konusunda kesin bir bilgi bulunmamakla birlikte, neticede bu sahnelerde bir savaş gösterilmiştir. Aynı mekanda zarafeti, estetiği, güzelliği simgeleyen çiçek tasvirleri yanında tam bir tezat teşkil eden savaş vahşetinin birlikte gösterilmesinin derin anlamlar içerdiği dikkate alınmalıdır. Konak Otağında, yaşamın en güzel ve en vahşi yanları birlikte ortaya konarak muhtemelen insanların yaşam dengesini oluşturmasına katkı sağlamak amaçlanmış olabilir.

Türk resim sanatı Şeki Hanları Sarayı'ndaki olay örgüsü minyatür duvar resimleri tarihi ve estetik sunumu ile tarihi aydınlatıcı niteliklere sahiptir.

INTRODUCTION

People have drawn pictures on rocks and cave walls to communicate with future generations and to pass on their culture to future generations. The oldest known examples of these drawings within the scope of visual art date back 60,000 years (Aydingüler, 2023: 8591). Visual art is a fundamental component of human experience that reflects the world and time we live in. Painting, one of the visual

arts, is the most effective way to reach human history, culture, life and experiences. In order to understand the development of societies, it is necessary to follow the paintings they produce. Painting, which witnesses the historical development of humanity, dates back to the paintings drawn on cave walls and ceilings during the Ice Age. Since these first examples, it has continued with various art movements, each of which reflects the political and social influences of the period in which it emerged and has its own style and characteristics (Joy Culture and Art, 2023).

A significant example of wall paintings is in the Sheki Khan Palace built in the city of Sheki in Azerbaijan (Fig. 1) in the Caucasus region. The ancient city of Azerbaijan, Sheki, was founded in the southern part of the Greater Caucasus Mountain Range in the 8th century BC (Fig. 2). It has remained under Russian, Arab and Iranian rule throughout history (Azizsoy, 2016: 611). In the early 18th century, when the Sheki Khan Palace was built, the struggle for dominance over Azerbaijan took place between the Ottomans, Iran and Russia (Binark, 1992; Göl, 2016).



Figure 1. Azerbaijan and surrounding countries (Travelaze Tourism Services, 2021. Azerbaijan. <https://www.travelaze.com/azerbaijan/>; Access date: 27.09.2024)



Figure 2. Azerbaijan Map: Geographical location of Sheki city

In the second half of the 18th century, almost all of the cities of Azerbaijan were damaged by the attacks of invaders and feudal conflicts, and from time to time the population structure in the cities was temporarily negatively affected (Kurban, 2009). After the end of the Safavid rule in 1747, as a result of the shaken political and central authority, independent khanates of Baku, Ganja, Karabakh, Shirvan, Sheki, Quba, Erivan and Talysh (Lenkeran) were established, ruled by khans of Turkish origin. The Sheki Khanate, whose foundations were laid by Haji Chelebi Khan in 1747, was ruled by Haji Chelebi Khan (1747), Muhammad Hasan Khan (1797), Mustafa Khan (1804), Cafer Kulu Khan

(1806) and Ismail Khan (1815) respectively (Mutallimov, 2015: 158, 162; Binark, 1992; Mecidov, 2008). The social order was based on sharia and customs. The administrative system of the khanates was generally preserved during the Russian period (Mutallimov, 2014). The failure to establish a strong and centralized state in the region for a long time strengthened Russia's desire to dominate this region, which had rich natural resources as well as commercial and agricultural importance (Mecidov, 2008; Turan, 2018). Until the beginning of the 18th century, there was a conflict between Iran and the Ottomans in Azerbaijan, and with Russia's turning to the region in these years, the three states began to fight, and in the early 19th century, Azerbaijan came under Russian rule (Binark, 1992).

The location and physical structure of the palace: The Sheki Khan Palace, the most beautiful example of Azerbaijani architecture, was built in approximately 1762 as a two-story summer palace. The length of the palace, whose main facade faces south, is 30 m and its area is 300 m². It has 6 rooms, 4 corridors and two mirrored balconies (Mammadova, 2022: 262). Basic natural materials such as raw brick, river stone, plane tree and oak were used in the construction of the Sheki Khan Palace. No adhesive or binding materials such as nails, glue, etc. were used in the construction. Thanks to the workmanship demonstrated with the production methods specific to the period, it was possible for the work to survive to the present day in a healthy way. It has an extremely beautiful appearance with the decoration of its surroundings, external and internal walls. Each room of the palace is different and each is skillfully decorated with wall paintings. All the walls, niches and stalactite-shaped transitions from the walls to the ceiling, as well as the ceilings of the central halls on both floors and the side rooms of the second floor, are decorated with paintings.

The exterior of the palace has many artistic elements that can enrich its artistic capacity. Geometric and floral patterns, stalactite arches and colorful networks made with sgraffito and relief-colored coating give the palace's facade a special beauty and uniqueness.

The wall paintings, which are located around the magnificent grids that add a special beauty to the palace and stand out with their colors, are divided into four groups: (1) compositions with geometric and floral patterns; (2) plot patterns; (3) animal images; and (4) paintings showing plants and animals together. The appeal of these elegant decorations is enhanced by the skillful use of gold, turquoise, red, purple and yellow colors. The palace exhibits a mixture of Persian and Turkish architectural styles that reflect the rich cultural heritage of the region. Buildings built in this style can also be found in Tabriz, Tehran, Shusha, Hoy, Yerevan and Tbilisi. The two-story building with a rectangular plan bears traces of the settlements of the Sheki people, and the rich decorative elements in its interior indicate that the building belongs to palace-type structures. There are important similarities between the Ishak Pasha Palace built in Doğu Bayezit in 1784 and the Sheki Khans Palace, especially in terms of flower and tree decorations. The Ishak Pasha Palace resembles the Topkapi Palace in terms of plan (Bulat, 2013: 22, 31). The Sheki Khan Palace is located within the castle walls, in the northeastern part of the castle. The rectangular palace courtyard is also surrounded by low protective walls. The courtyard consists of three terraces, and the palace building is located on the highest terrace (Fig. 3).

The Sheki Khan Palace is a two-story building built in the tradition of residential houses in Sheki (Fig. 4). The floor plans are repetitive, with three rooms arranged side by side on each floor (Fig. 5). What distinguishes the palace from other residential buildings is its elaborate decorative ornaments (Fig. 6).

In front of the south facade there is a rectangular pool and two plane trees. The main - south facade is divided into three sections by two portals, completed with stalactites, latticework decorated with colored glass and carved and painted patterns on the plaster (Fig. 7a). The north facade consists of a simply plastered flat surface deepening at the edges (Fig. 7b). The north facade also has sgraffito patterns consisting of two simple colors, simpler than the south facade, following the lines of the interior walls. Simple applications were made to the west and east facades. There are only doors with stairs on the plastered facades. The west facade also has two windows and a door on the first floor, opening to a staircase leading to the roof. The side sections are similarly developed with grid panels on the first floor and surface curtains on the ground floor. Two of them have grid windows, while the other four have panels with floral ornaments in the sgraffito style (The State Tourism Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2020).



Figure 3. Location plan of the Sheki Khan Palace (The State Tourism Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2020)

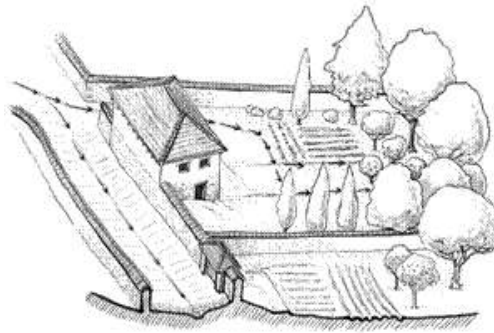


Figure 4. Traditional house culture with garden in Sheki (The State Tourism Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2020)

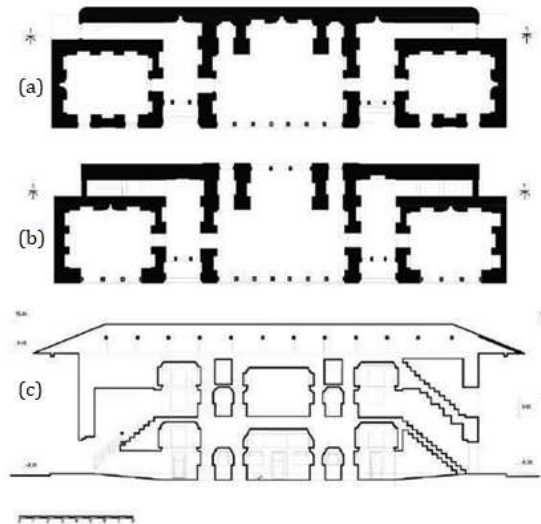


Figure 5. Layout of the Sheki Khan Palace: (a) ground floor, (b) first floor, (c) section (The State Tourism Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2020).

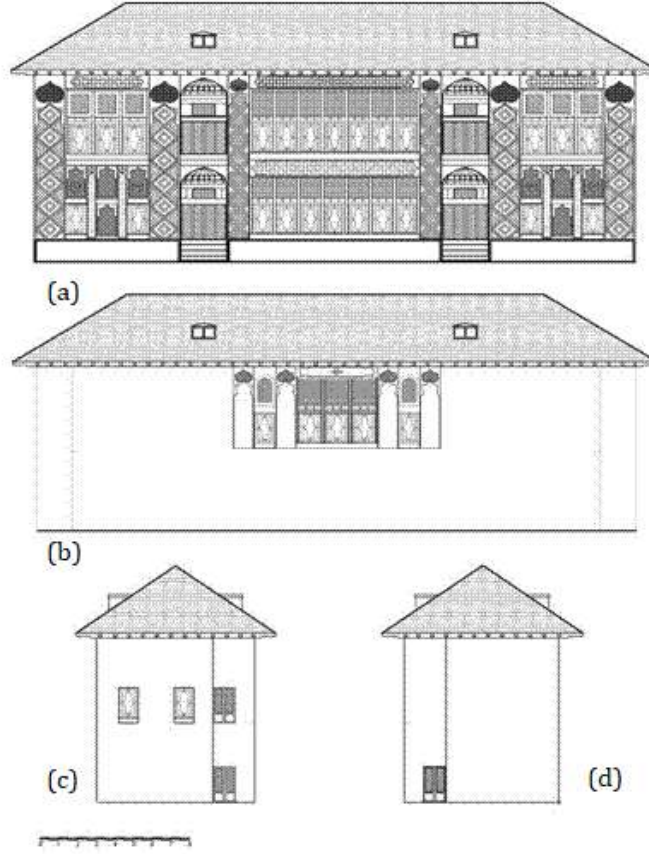


Figure 6. Facades of the Sheki Khan Palace: a) south facade, b) north facade, c) west facade, d) east facade (The State Tourism Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2020)



Figure 7. Sheki Khan Palace; (a) south facades, (b) north facades (The State Tourism Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2020; Üçüncü, 2024)

Cultural interaction: The Sheki Khan Palace, which is the most beautiful example of 18th century architecture in the Caucasus and reflects the characteristics of the people's houses, is a historical and architectural monument of world importance. The art of hunting and war painting, which is also used in the palace, has attracted the attention of the people in the state organization and military organization since the Central Asia of the ancient Turks. The historical roots and cultural function of this interest have also determined the legal, military, environmental and ecological regulations that provide significant support for war and hunting. Hunting in Turkish culture has played a role both in the development of military qualities that prepare for war and in the constant maintenance of shooting and riding skills (Güven and Gergüner, 1999). In the palace, a large place is given to gold plating,

gilding, mirroring, stained glass and ornamentation works in accordance with the folk architecture and decorative applied art of the time. The design of the palace's interior paintings shows that there are many influences here. In particular, Sheki's status as one of the most important trade centers on the Great Silk Road had an impact on the architecture and art of the Sheki Khan Palace (Fig. 8). Caravans and merchants coming to this city from all over the world brought not only the products they would sell, but also the architecture, culture and art of other nations. The works found on the Silk Road, which served as a trade route between Europe and China, are very similar in terms of grid windows, designs and colors to those of Turkey, Iran, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, India, China and other countries (Rasulova, 2021). The Silk Road has been the most important road connecting eastern and western countries in history. While the main purposes of this road are political and economic, its cultural function is also extremely important. Many different societies learned each other's culture during this trade process. Azerbaijan and therefore the architecture and art of the Sheki Khan Palace were also affected by this. Due to its geographical location and architectural style, the Sheki Khan Palace is compared to Bakhchisaray (1532) in Crimea and the Al-Hambra Palace (1232) in Andalusia. There is also a similarity in terms of reflecting Islamic architectural traditions, the abundance of cypress trees and the importance given to fountains. The network art applied in the architecture of Iran, Azerbaijan and Central Asia in the 9th-12th centuries was also intensively applied in the Sheki Khan Palace (Rasulova, 2021). The depictions of war and hunting scenes bear important traces of Turkish-Persian art history in particular. Due to the prohibitions related to the Islamic religion in Muslim countries, only geometric ornaments, nature images and plant patterns were depicted for many years. Although the Sheki Khan Palace in Azerbaijan, a Muslim country, was built in the Eastern Islamic architecture style, the miniature human paintings applied in the palace create a belief-figure contradiction. Despite this, in the Sheki Khan Palace, artists tried to create flawless and harmonious works while remaining true to their traditions (Kanberova, 2019).



Figure 8. The Historical Silk Road (Şiraz Duvarı. 2017. “Tarihi” ve “Modern” İpek Yolu. <https://sirazduvari.com/tarihi-modern-ipek-yolu/>; Access date: 27.09.2024)

Although they live in different geographies, a unity of style in the works of art of the Turks, showing the characteristics of the Turkish belief and lifestyle, has continuously renewed and continued for years without losing anything (Berkli, 2020). Classical Azerbaijani-Turkish architecture and painting also developed together with the architecture and painting art created by the Turks in Asian countries extending to East Turkestan. Along with geometric, vegetal, and written patterns in the wall paintings of architectural structures, miniature drawings covering animal pictures, plants, war, hunting scenes, and palace life in the art and architecture of the Turks from ancient times formed the basis of the architectural structure patterns of the Islamic period of Azerbaijan. Although these drawings were used for ornamental purposes in architectural works, they are all signs that symbolically express the creation thoughts and mythology of the Turks (Kanberova, 2019).

The relations between Azerbaijan and Anatolian Turks began with the Seljuks in the 11th century. The arrival of Oghuz, Seljuk and Kipchak Turks to Anatolia via Azerbaijan had significant effects on these

relations. After the establishment of the Ottoman Empire, relations with Azerbaijan continued to increase, and relations with other countries continued in the same way. Although there were very lively commercial, economic and cultural relations between the two countries, political developments determined the course of relations between the Ottoman Empire and Azerbaijan (Khalilova, 2016: 1). These relations naturally affected the development of art between the countries. Two important Azerbaijani painters, Shahgulu and Veli Can, who worked in the Topkapi Palace in Istanbul at the beginning of the 16th century, and Azerbaijani artists such as Abdulgeni, Mensur Bey, Mir Agha, and Sheikh Kemal, who were in Turkey at various times and for various reasons, had significant effects on the development of Turkish Miniature Art (Mehdiyeva Azizzade, 2007: 2067). Relations with the Ottoman Empire developed since the establishment of the Azerbaijani Khanates in the second half of the 18th century. The Russian and Iranian pressure on the Khanates was an important factor in the development of relations between the Khanates and the Ottoman Empire (Mutallimov, 2015: 168–169). Migrations, wars and commercial relations were effective in the development of the culture and art understanding of societies (Kurtoğlu and Akengin, 2023: 603). The city of Sheki, which has been influenced by different cultures for centuries, has a very special art history due to its location on the Silk Road and the influence of different civilizations. In addition, Turkish and Persian poems, such as the Quran translated into Turkish, played an important role in administration and science. During this period, Ottoman Turkish and Azeri Turkish were quite similar to each other (Mutallimov, 2014).

Wall painting materials and techniques: The paints used in wall paintings consist of a mixture of binders and pigments that give color (Dikilitaş, 2005). In the paintings of the Sheki Khan Palace, paintings using the egg tempera technique and the technique of carving on clay were used. In Azerbaijani wall paintings, the transparency and flexibility of the paints in the paintings indicate that they were made with egg paints instead of glue. In addition, while adhesive paint always remains sensitive to water, egg paint strengthens over time and completely loses its sensitivity to water after a few years (Гаджиева, 2012; Miljković et al., 2017; Janson, 2020). Almost every facade of the palace is decorated with tempera-type fresco paintings, and the windows are in the form of a stained glass network made of glass mosaics of different sizes and colors suitable for effective and aesthetic lighting and shading techniques. Approximately 5,000 pieces of glass were used in the windows. All the windows and doors of the palace are skillfully assembled from pieces of wood and colored Venetian glass. Elaborate hand-carved muqarnas adorn the tops of the elaborate stained glass windows. The light filtering into the palace through the red, yellow, blue, purple and green colored glass reminds us of a rainbow. In the middle of the second floor is the Konak Otağı (Köşk Odası), which was used as a meeting room. In addition to the drawings depicting complex geometric, animal and plant patterns, the friezes of the Konak Otağı are decorated with beautiful paintings depicting hunting and war scenes. Miniature war scenes are designed as plots on the eastern and western walls of the Konak Otağı (Fig. 9). The war scenes fictionally depict various wars that Sheki may have fought in. These include armies from as far away as Turkey, Iran, Russia and Mongolia, all of which can be identified by their clothing, hats and flags (Гаджиева, 2012: 3). It is also suggested that these war scenes may represent conflicts during the Khanate period.



Figure 9. Sheki Khan Palace frieze mural: Event flow war scenes, (Üçüncü, 2024)

The first examples of plot (event flow) narration in Turkish wall paintings can be seen in the Central Asian Afrasyab wall paintings. The plot narration consists of some small events that occur in order and are interconnected within themselves, and the pre-event and post-event are expressed in a text or picture. This situation, which is connected to each other and creates continuity, is also expressed with the word "pattern" or "chain". For this reason, the expression "event chain" is also used to define the plot (Yakut, 2014: 62). Afrasyab wall paintings are divided into large and small event walls according to the logic of traditional Central Asian painting features. A different plot is visually reflected on each wall of the building. Although some of these paintings have been destroyed, the existing parts provide sufficient clues to understand the event (Yabalak and Sağ, 2020: 126). The principle of the plot selection, attack scenes, heroic displays and armies' wars after a series of clashes still continues, and the general structure has not changed. However, what is more important here is the present-day existence of these historical war scenes and their meaning in reflecting the conditions of the period.

Tourist importance and visitor potential: Art tourism is also an important tourism area. With art tourism, people from different countries and regions have the opportunity to express themselves through their cultural heritage, architectural values and art; in addition, art becomes a source of pride for societies that produce. Art tourism directs people's travels in order to see art and artists, examine their works and satisfy their curiosity. Therefore, the essence of art tourism is that art, artists and their works directly motivate travel. However, the main purpose of travel for tourists may be to engage in an artistic activity or to include artistic activities in their holiday experience. Art tourism also increases the tourism potential in economic terms (Özgürel and Baysal, 2018). Although there is no definite information on the number of visitors to the Sheki Khan Palace, the following data can be mentioned: The number of tourists visiting Azerbaijan in 2023 is 2.085.648 (Habibbaylı, 2024). Among the important works of Azerbaijani medieval architecture, the Sheki Khan Palace, which was included in the World Cultural Heritage List by UNESCO in 2019 and is famous for its historical and natural beauties, is one of the most visited works by tourists and fascinates those who see it. On the other hand, it is possible to expect that the number of visitors to Azerbaijan and the Sheki Khan Palace will increase due to the fact that both Azerbaijan and the city of Sheki are on the Silk Road and the Sheki Khan Palace has been included in the World Heritage List (Asian Art, 2019). Solutions have been produced to facilitate visitors' visits to the Sheki Khan Palace; turnstile, online ticket sales, photo studio. In addition, it may be useful to place information boards containing the architectural and historical features of the work in the palace courtyard in order to provide preliminary information to visitors to the Sheki Khan Palace (Habibbaylı, 2024).

Restoration and conservation work: The wall paintings of the Sheki Khan Palace, built in 1762, have deteriorated and opened over time (Fig. 10), therefore conservation and restoration work became necessary.



Figure 10. Cracks and deteriorations in some paintings in the Sheki Khan Palace.

After the Sheki Khanate came under the rule of the Russian Empire, the Sheki Khanate was used for military purposes and was repaired many times by the local government. The first restoration of the palace was carried out by the poet Karim Agha Fateh, grandson of Hussein Khan Mustag, between 1848 and 1851. The renovation was mostly carried out on the main facade and the ground floor; both the plaster and decorations of the main facade, the interior of the main hall on the ground floor were plastered and the wall paintings were renewed. The doors, ceilings, and mantelpieces were repaired. The roof was dismantled and rebuilt using painted oak shingles instead of ceramic tiles. It is believed that the other buildings of the palace complex were demolished in 1851. At the same time, two windows on the first floor on the eastern facade were covered with bricks and their interiors were decorated with wall paintings (The State Tourism Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2020). In 1939-1940, a scientific research was carried out by a team established by the Azerbaijan Monuments Protection Department to reveal and restore the original wall paintings of the palace. As a result of this research, the wall paintings in the halls of both floors and the additions of later artists were cleaned of dust and dirt, and paintings from the late 18th century, parts of the wooden ceiling of the hall on the first floor, some of the blue-toned paintings covering the stalactites, large sections of the famous hunting and war friezes on the second floor were revealed, and other paintings were discovered under the later paints. The poet Nikolay Tikhonov, who visited the palace in 1947, stated that the impressive wall paintings of the Sheki Khan Palace were skillfully preserved with their various patterns. The first complete restoration of the Sheki Khan Palace was carried out between 1955 and 1965 under the supervision of Niyazi Rzaev. In these restoration works, measurements and restoration drawings made by two talented architects, Kamal Mamedbekov and Nikolai Utsyn, were used. The restoration works based on the drawings were carried out by the artist F. Hajiyev and the network master A. Rasulov. The wooden poles and beams that had deteriorated over time were removed and reinforced with new elements. Although the project proposes a wooden structure instead of the existing roof structure, a reinforced concrete arch was built on the walls and a metal structure was mounted on it. Some parts of the foundation were also reinforced with concrete. The plaster of the walls, the decorations of the facades and the wall paintings were restored. The wall paintings were restored by the artist-restorer Farhad Hajiyev, and the frescoes were restored by the local fresco master Ashraf Rasulov from Sheki.

The last full and complete restoration, carried out within the framework of the project "Protection of Cultural Heritage" in 2002-2004, was carried out by the restoration team of the German company "Neumühler Bauhütte GmbH" (Uwe Henschel, Dietrich Wellmer, Elisabeth Wellmer, Andreas Lessmeister) with the support of the World Bank (The State Tourism Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2020).

Although the Sheki Khan Palace has been repaired and rebuilt many times since its construction, all this work has not had a negative impact on the appearance of the palace.

1. Materials and Methods

In the research, observation was applied as part of the quantitative research, interview, literature review and systematic evaluation methods were applied as part of the qualitative research. In the first stage of the research, literature review was conducted on the subjects of Turkish National Wall Painting, Miniature Art, War Scenes, Colors, Azerbaijani Wall Paintings and Miniature Art. In the second stage; miniature war scenes from the wall paintings of the Sheki Khan Palace built in 1762 in the city of Sheki in Azerbaijan were examined on site and interviews were conducted with palace officials. In the last stage, the findings were evaluated and the research was completed.

2. War Scenes in Turkish Miniature Art

Miniature is a term used for very finely crafted, small-sized pictures (Çetin, 2018: 8). It comes from the Latin word "miniare", meaning "to paint in red". The word "miniare", which was previously used to indicate the titles of a book in red, has also come to be used for pictures that decorate and support the written text over time (Konak, 2015: 228–29). An important feature of miniature art is that it conveys the subject to be depicted completely. Perspective is not used in miniature art; distance and height, light, color, shadow and emotion are not specified. It has been widely used in book processing.

Height increases or decreases according to the importance of the person; this is achieved by placing those in the foreground at the bottom of the paper and those in the background at the top. The figures are arranged so that they do not completely cover each other. The subject is covered in the smallest detail regardless of the distance. Although most miniatures aim to document reality, an ornamental structure is emphasized instead of the background, depth, perspective and time features that reflect space (Konak, 2014: 45–46). In Ottoman period painting sources, the words "tasvir" or "embroider" are used instead of the term miniature, and the word "nakkaş" is used for those who do embroideries. Miniatures, in a broad sense, are explanatory pictures placed in manuscripts to illuminate the text (YEM-2, 2008: 1070).

Miniature art is a visual narrative technique developed to document personalities, events and various depictions in the texts they wrote in order to pass on Turkish-Islamic culture to the next generations. In Turkish-Ottoman culture, miniature was used as a means of documenting information by visualizing it rather than expressing artistic tendencies related to aesthetics and beauty (Özcan, 2005: 238–239; Yuldashev, 2022: 13). The first known miniature examples of the Turks appeared in Central Asia during the Uyghur period (745-840) (Compareti, 2009: 55-66; Kundak, 2017: 44; Marshak, 2002: 5-20; Yabalak and Sağ, 2020: 120). The Kızıl, Khotan, Bezeklik and Sorçuk fresco-type wall paintings and miniatures found in the Turfan region show that there was a Central Asian Turkic painting style different from Chinese painting. Uyghur miniatures, unearthed in the Uyghur capital Hoço and depicting texts in the Manichaeism religion, are an introduction to 9th and 10th century Turkish painting (Muradova, 2021: 8). The human types, composition approach and some motifs of this period are later seen in the miniature art of the Seljuk period (YEM-2, 2008: 1070–1071).

The wall paintings of the Warakhsha Palace in Old Penjakity (Tajikistan) and Bukhara (Uzbekistan) were probably painted in the 7th and 8th centuries (Kundak, 2017: 48–49; Sazak, 2013: 1–2). Among the Warakhsha Palace paintings, there is a figure of a horseman riding on horseback, turning back and shooting an arrow, which is called the "Turkish shot" (Kundak, 2017: 47–48; Sazak, 2013: 10–11). Old Turkish painting includes works on the subjects of beliefs such as Buddhism, Manichaeism and the Islamic period, which remained within the beliefs of more than a thousand years from the 8th century to the end of the 19th century. The composition is painted in a sequential and symmetrical order, using bright colors, mostly dark blue and red. The art of making a portrait of a person's face, which reflects their personal character, was first seen in Turkish wall paintings in 750 (Aslanapa, 2010: 15–16; Berkli, 2010: 158–159). In the early archaic period, Chinese influence began to be seen alongside Indian influence (Berkli, 2010: 161). After the middle of the archaic phase, Manichaeism and Chinese influence gained importance.

Some Uyghurs came to Baghdad in the early 9th century during the reign of Caliph Ma'mun and later engaged in artistic activities in the city of Samarra. The miniatures made by the Uyghur Turks in the Turfan region in the mid-8th century later became the sources of Turkish miniature art. The influence of Uyghur paintings can be seen in the frescoes of the Laşker-i Pazar Palace of the Ghaznavids in the early 11th century and in the wall paintings in Rey and Keşan, the centers of the Seljuks, at the end of the same century. The Turks carried the Uyghur painting and miniature style from Central Asia to the West and settled it in Ghazni, Rey, Keşan, Mosul and Anatolia. On the other hand, the fact that Tuğrul Bey, the founder of the Great Seljuk State, entered Baghdad in 1055 and received the title of Sultan marked the beginning of the spread of Seljuk art and culture in this region. Seljuk-style miniatures were made on ceramics and tiles. During this period, the life of the Seljuks, including their style, clothing and war scenes, were depicted realistically (Aslanapa, 2010: 364).

Although monumental wall paintings or figurative mosaics were encountered in some religious works and palaces in the early periods of Islam, miniature art, which developed under the patronage of powerful palace circles in the Islamic world, continued to exist as the only dominant type of painting until the 19th century. Miniature is actually a figurative form of expression.

After the Karakhanids (840–1202) accepted Islam, the influence of Islam began to be seen in Turkish wall paintings. In the 10th and 11th centuries, there were many architectural works such as centrally planned mosques, iwan-shaped madrasahs, square-planned domed tombs and caravanserais in important cities of the period such as Balasagun, Samarkand, Bukhara, Özkent, Termez and Talas;

Wall paintings were made in each of these works (Karev, 2005: 130). Indian and Islamic influences are seen in the works of the Ghaznavids (962-1186) (Küçükyıldız, 2023: 34). Turkish painting in Anatolia began with the entry of the Seljuks into Anatolia in 1071 (Özdemir, 2021: 131-133). Figures seen in various branches of handicrafts, ceramics, tiles and especially frescoes show that the Seljuks developed a certain style of painting before coming to Anatolia (Şahin Tekinalp et al., 2023: 81).

The miniature in *Kitab-ı Tiryak*, found in Mosul in the mid-13th century, bears the Uyghur-Seljuk style. In this work, the miniatures are designed in three rows on a red background, with a realistic scene depicting palace life in the middle, a hunting scene with cavalry on top, and a passenger caravan with men and women on horses below. It is stated that the *Varka* and *Gülşah* manuscript, which contains small miniatures, also tells a love story and was prepared by an Azerbaijani miniaturist from the city of Hoy for Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni and is in the same style. Although the *Varka* and *Gulshah* mathnawi was written in Persian, the 71 miniatures in it show the continuation of Turkish types and styles that had developed in Anatolia since the Uyghurs. It is thought that the artist who made the miniatures was Nakkaş Abdulmumin, son of Muhammed, from the city of Hoy in Azerbaijan. It is understood from the inscriptions on the monuments that many artists came from various centers of Azerbaijan in the 13th century and settled in Anatolia. It is seen that this style continued in the early 14th century with the Turkish Mamluks and in Egypt (Aslanapa, 2010: 365).

Mosaic and tile techniques were also widely used in Ottoman wall decorations. Ottoman miniatures depict real events, war scenes and real life. All historical scenes were depicted only once (Aslanapa, 2010: 366-368). There was a significant development in portrait art during the reign of Fatih (Aslanapa, 2010: 369; YEM-2, 2008: 1073). After the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent, miniatures depicting city, castle and harbor views were produced without figures. Abdülcelil Çeleb (Levni) was a turning point in Turkish miniature art in the 18th century. At the beginning of the 19th century, Ottoman miniature lost its importance and Western painting began to spread (Aslanapa, 2010: 372-484).

The history of Azerbaijani wall paintings is based on the Gobustan rock depictions. From the 5th century BC to the 4th century BC, the adobe walls of houses in historical settlements in Azerbaijan were decorated with geometric shapes with red ocher. Although geometric patterns and themed wall paintings are common in Azerbaijan, geometric figures and three-leafed flowers have been found in Mingachevir, fresco ruins in Ören-Kale, and wall paintings in the Midiya places of worship in Caucasian Albania. Archaeology and written sources show that wall paintings were used as decoration in the architecture of public buildings and residential areas in the Middle Ages (Özdemir, 2019: 200). It is thought that Gobustan, whose roots date back to ancient times, has a culture even older than Mesopotamia. Looking back, it is possible to say that the miniature style has been the leading means of expression in Azerbaijani painting since the Middle Ages, along with Islam (Mammadova, 2023: 8-9). Since the 15th century, it has been possible to see human, animal, bird, arrow, bow, rose and even moon, star and sun figures, as well as floral and geometric patterns on Azerbaijani gravestones. Fruit decorations are one of the main features of wall painting art in the Westernization period. Similar practices are based on Uyghur wall art (Kanberova, 2019: 972-984; Okçuoğlu, 2000: 28-30). In the works of the Islamic period of Azerbaijan, there are depictions of animals, swallows and peacocks standing face to face, peacock and dragon fighting scenes and dragon depictions (Kanberova, 2019: 986).

While searching for alternative forms of self-expression, Azerbaijani painters discovered that miniature art had literary principles that were wonderful and incredible, secret, otherworldly and spiritual. Artists who adopted decorative and symbolic colors and managed to add meaning to certain postures and gestures of their characters rejected the European approach. The finest examples of medieval miniature art, still considered one of the expressions of unique mastery, were created in the 13th-16th centuries in the city of Tabriz in Southern Azerbaijan, currently under Iranian rule. The earliest known examples of Azerbaijani miniature art, *Varka* and *Gulshah* (before the 13th century), *Ma'nafi al-Hayvan* (1298) and *Jami ut-Tawarih* (1308-1314), show the influence of the Tabriz School in the East (Karimov, 2014: 211). Since the 18th century, the so-called Qajar style has had a modernizing effect on the artistic environment. This change is based on the works of artists who studied in Europe and returned to Azerbaijan. This modernity entered the artistic pool and had some

obvious positive effects. In Azerbaijan, the opening of the Azerbaijan Miniature Art Center in the Old City, the book illustration and miniature art section in the Union of Painters, separate miniature art exhibitions throughout the country, and the activities of the Peykar group of artists (Elchin Aslanov, Sanan Gurbanov, and Mazahir Avshar) encouraged artists to revive and spread classical traditions with new content. With the renewal of independence, some artists believed that miniature art could create an international language for Azerbaijan in the art world. The revival of the miniature style, the use of national folklore elements, including national symbols, in the plot and artistic structure of miniature compositions, and the great interest in ancient national traditions in modern times confirm this passion (Muradova, 2021: 61–62; Rzayeva, 2023: 88–92).

A unique feature of Turkish miniatures is that colors are often used as a means of abstraction, flat, bright and shadowless. Another feature is that there is no intense illumination (gold ornamentation) on the page edges as in Iranian miniatures. While historical, literary and scientific subjects are generally handled in miniature art, the Turks mostly preferred to reflect history. Illustrated manuscripts describing the wars, expeditions and festivals of the Ottoman Empire were handled in a realistic style, unlike their examples in other Islamic countries. This feature of Turkish miniatures provides the opportunity to follow the customs and traditions, clothing and Turkish-Ottoman history of the period in which they were made; each of these works has gained the quality of a historical document. During this period, wall paintings were made for decorative purposes in religious buildings, as in civil architecture. However, the wall paintings applied in Azerbaijani mosque architecture have deteriorated significantly and only a few examples remain today (Azizsoy, 2015: 160). In the 18th and 19th centuries, wall paintings not only decorated the interiors of palaces and places of worship, but also began to be used on the walls of houses. As wall paintings became more widespread in the early 18th century, the use of decorative tile art in interiors decreased. It is possible to see that the interior wall painting arrangements of houses and public buildings in Azerbaijani provinces such as Sheki, Lakhchich, Shusha and Ordubad have survived to the present day, preserving their artistic values and developmental features (Özdemir, 2019: 200).

Wall paintings began to become widespread in Azerbaijani painting in the 18th century. The most important works reflecting the stylistic features of wall paintings of this period are seen in the wall paintings of the Sheki Khan Palace and the Shekihanov House. The paintings were located on walls, panels, boards, friezes, cornices and ceiling (Seyidehmedli, 2021: 84).

It is seen that there was both national and international interaction in Azerbaijani painting. It is seen that the effects of relations with the Ottoman Empire, Iran and Russia were more intense in this area. In Eastern art, especially in miniature painting, it is possible to observe a clear differentiation of genres such as legendary-mythological, lyrical-epic, animalistic and historical in schools such as Geyrat, Tabriz and Shiraz. In Eastern art, war scenes have been in the first place along with hunts, which have been military exercises since ancient times. Over the past few centuries since the Caliphate, the existence of the war miniature painting genre has shown a strong development, starting with medieval frescoes and rock art. Each of these compositions began to be interpreted in different ways as the style developed (Elshad, 2020: 655).

The Turks have fought many wars in Central Asia throughout their history. These legendary wars and the extraordinary heroism of the warriors have led to the emergence of works of art on this subject. One of the most important areas of application of this art has been the art of miniature. Ottoman miniatures include subjects such as castle sieges, hand-to-hand combat with the enemy, head-to-head combat of the vanguard forces, and landing by naval forces. Similarly, Iranian miniatures depicting the struggles of the Turks include subjects such as castle sieges, wars between two armies, and struggles between two wrestlers. There are differences in the quality of each subject in both Ottoman and Iranian miniatures. For example, the struggle of two wrestlers was depicted less in Ottoman miniatures (Deveci, 2017: 311–313). The Turkish-Iranian wars and feudal conflicts between the khanates negatively affected the development of visual arts in the 17th-18th centuries. Iranian miniatures were developing in the lands of Azerbaijan in the Middle Ages. Manuscripts with miniature images of people, animals, and landscapes were popular at that time. In the mid-15th century, the Karakoyunlu and Akkoyunlu states developed a new miniature style (Turkmen style). Miniatures in this style were also made in Tabriz and other cities in the territory of present-day Azerbaijan. Colorful masterpieces

of fine art continued to be created in Azerbaijan, and the Sheki Khan Palace, built in 1762, is one of these masterpieces. The walls of the palace were painted with images of people and animals, as well as miniature scenes of war and hunting (Bretanitsky and Weymarn, 1976).

3. Sheki Khan Palace Konak Otağı Event Flow Miniature War Scenes

The friezes depicting hunting and war scenes in the central hall known as Konak Otağı on the second floor of the Sheki Khan Palace are of great artistic importance. The war scenes in the Konak Otağı, which has a total length of 15 m, are designed on the eastern and western walls of the room and continue on the southern walls of small rooms in the form of cellars on both sides (Fig. 11). The friezes, which are quite different in color and theme against the background of the general images of the Konak Otağı, not only represent a special stage of development in the history of Azerbaijani fine arts, but also have value as rich ethnographic and partly historical material. This frieze, which is 25 cm wide, covers the walls of small rooms, starting from the grille and passing over the doors and niches. In the upper part, the frieze protrudes slightly, forming a 10 cm shelf. The frieze at the top of the basement rooms of the hall depicts war scenes for about 15 m. On the western and eastern walls of the Konak Otağı, there are various scenes from the wars of the Sheki Khans or friendly troops against their enemies. Although various interpretations have been made for the movements of the military units, it can probably be said that the first attack of the army is depicted in the west and its return from the warfield in the east.

Studies on the war scenes and the flags, uniforms and weapons depicted in these scenes lead to different opinions. However, the general consensus is that this war could be the War of Chaldiran, which took place in 1514 between the Ottoman Empire under the command of Yavuz Sultan Selim and the Safavid Empire under the command of Shah Ismail. Cavalry groups with various costumes and weapons under the command of the Shah and the Sultan move against each other under waving flags. Infantry and cavalry units also enter the war with them. Artillery fire on both sides; infantry engage in hand-to-hand combat; corpses and severed heads are seen everywhere; wild horses that have lost their owners run in different directions. While armed warriors bring prisoners, others throw the heads of slain enemies at the feet of the ruler. In traditional descriptions, perspective is not applied in the design of landscapes and skies. In order to open the composition inward, the artist placed the figures on top of each other or the figures in the background were slightly shifted to the side. Thus, the people and horses as a whole are depicted only in the foreground, in front of the group; at the end, the rest are given in a single line and only their heads are visible. Therefore, to show the mass of the troops, the artist traditionally depicted more than thirty horsemen on ten horses. The conventionality of the compositional structure is undoubtedly related to the traditions of medieval miniature painting (Rasulova, 2021: 160).

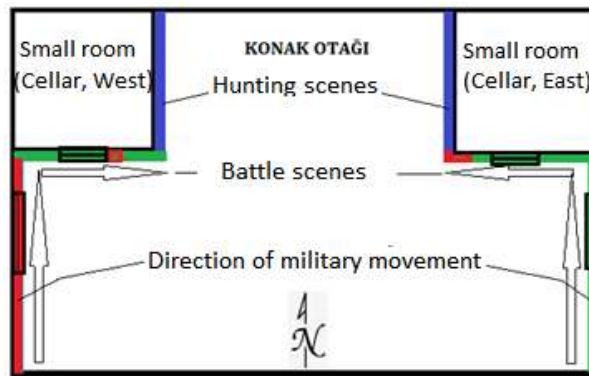


Figure 11. Locations of war scenes on the walls of Konak Otağı and direction of military movement

3.1. Horses, Equipment, Flags and Banners Used in War Scenes

Throughout history, martial arts have been an element of Turkish culture.

The common war tools of the Turks are divided into two as offensive weapons and defensive weapons. They used rifles, swords, rapiers, machetes, daggers, spears, javelins, harbes, maces, axes, bows and arrows as offensive weapons; and helmets, shields and armor as defensive weapons. Knitted armor formed by connecting steel rings together, armllets to protect the arms and wrists and knee pads to protect the knees are types of armor that protect cavalrymen. In addition, horse foreheads, neck armor, body armor and stern armor are also used to protect horses against various weapons during war. Floral and geometric motifs, various decorations and writings were also used in horse armor (Özbek, 2015: 14–22).

Horses and therefore cavalry units have become indispensable for Turks and Turkish armies in wars. Horses were the first and most important war vehicle of the Turks on the warfields, apart from war; they were also used for racing, food, mail, trade and gift purposes (Baykal, 2022).

In the miniature of the Sheki Han Palace Konak Otağı, in the war scenes; horses as war vehicles; rifles, cannons, spears, bows and arrows; uniforms, flags or banners; wind instruments (trumpets) and percussion instruments (drums); and binoculars were used. Although the saddles are not clearly visible on the horses, the ornamented and similar coatings are impressive.

Flags with different designs are seen in the war scenes (Rasulova, 2021: 161–165). There are many flag figures in many war scenes. There may be two reasons for the presence of so many flags: first, these flags may be the flags of different units of the same army, and second, different army units may have fought on the same side.

Yellow flag: A very simple sun image is given in the double-tongued or crossed flag. The sun is one of the important motifs for the Turkish people and symbolizes freedom. The sun drawn on this flag is made to resemble a human by adding eyebrows, eyes, mouth and nose.

Green colored flag: There is a red border with two crosses and a black curved sword figure on the edges of the flag. Images of such swords are also found on the flags of other khanates in Azerbaijan and are called *şemşir*. The main feature of curved swords is that they are very sharp and cutting. Therefore, when a brave man goes to war and says "May your sword be sharp!" he begs for goodness and success. Swords are depicted on flags as a symbol of victory, power and triumph. The flag is white and has a crescent on it: The flag, which is thought to be made of white satin, appears in red tones when waving. The crescent is an image generally used in the Islamic religion and especially in the Sunni sect. It has been used as a symbol of success and victory in the Turkish-Islamic world. A symbol in the form of an open hand is placed at the top of this flagpole. The hand symbol is also used under other names in beliefs and practices among Islamic societies. The open-fingered hand motif is believed to have been used in the 11th century with Shiite influences as the "hand of Ali" (Pençe-i Ali), representing Hz. Ali who lost his hand in Karbala or one of Hz. Ali's sons. On the other hand, in Azerbaijan, it is also known as "Yadullah", meaning the hand of God. Hikmet Tanyu, who stated that there is a picture of a hand with open fingers on both sides of the pulpit of a Shiite mosque in Baku, says that the wrist represents Allah, the thumb represents Hz. Muhammad, the index finger represents Hz. Ali, and the other two fingers represent Hz. Hasan and Hz. Hussein. He states that there is a belief that he represents himself (Aydoğan, 2019: 139–140). Regardless of the diversity of religion, culture and geographical settlements, in all nations of the world, the open hand, especially the raising of the right hand, is considered a sign of goodwill, kindness, generosity and peace. This image is also widely used on flags.

Triangular white and orange flag: The striped flag has a black image of holding hands. A diamond-shaped metal piece is attached to the top of the flagpole. Orange triangular flag with a sword image: It has a curved sword image. The handle of the sword is in the shape of an animal; it resembles a leopard's head. The figure at the top of the flagpole is in the form of a ram's stamp. Signs and decorations called ram's horns have been used in the ethnic symbolism of the Turkish peoples (Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Khakass, etc.) since ancient times. The first images can be found in rock paintings dating back to 3000 BC. In the symbol system of the ancient Turks, the image of the ram's horn was

considered one of the oldest sacred symbols. There are many types of carpet ornaments in the rock paintings of Gobustan, Gamigaya, Kelbecer, Goyche and Deveboynu in the historical lands of Azerbaijan alone, in the examples of the Kura-Araz culture, in the material and cultural heritage examples of the Manna, Midyan, Sakha-Scythian periods, in the Caucasian Albania, Akkoyunlu, Karakoyunlu and Safavid states, Hun Bulgar, Savir, Khazar, Oghuz and Kipchak stamps. In ancient mythological images, the ram image, on the one hand, expresses abundance and fertility, and on the other hand, it was considered one of the sacred creatures that brought the souls of the dead to God.

A triangular flag with a dark green floral pattern: The edges of the triangular flag with a golden floral pattern on a dark green background are surrounded by orange fabric. Here, there is a delicate figure in the form of a ram sign at the top of the flag tree.

A mixed-color flag with two languages: The flag is two-lingual and has mixed colors; green, red and yellow colors. It is felt that there are geometric and floral patterns on it, but they are not clearly distinguishable. The figure at the top of the flag tree is a rhombus.

3.2. Artistic Features of Konak Otağı Event Flow Wall Paintings

It should be noted that almost all colors and tones were used to create the patterns on the walls of the Sheki Khan Palace, but warm and gilded tones were the most common. However, contrast harmony was also provided between different colors (The State Tourism Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2020).

The role and changes of nature, color mixture and brush techniques, figures, elegance of lines and artistic features of miniature in general are of primary importance in war scenes (Dieji, 2007). These features are also present in the war scenes of the Sheki Khan Palace and are similar to Iranian miniature wall art. In the war scenes, earth, water, sky, people, war weapons and equipment, sound devices and flags are depicted.

The friezes depicting hunting and war scenes in the central hall called Konak Otağı on the second floor of the Sheki Khan Palace are of great artistic importance. Against the background of the general images of the hall, the frieze, which is quite different in terms of color and theme, attracts the attention of the viewer with the events experienced in the images. These friezes with their interesting panoramas represent a special stage of development in the history of Azerbaijani visual art, and also provide rich ethnographic and partly historical material. While the colors in the original paintings are bright and light, the new paintings after the restoration carried out between 1955 and 1965 used dark tones, which are mainly evident in the sky images. Although the style of the old paintings is close to miniature painting, and the new paintings are close to examples of folk creativity, the decorativeness is striking in both versions of the paintings. In the new paintings, the most common colors are brick red, red, green, black, pink and white. The sky is depicted in the same way throughout the frieze; a dark sky with a low horizon is depicted. The ground is also as plain as possible; vertical bushes and grass are located on the general dark green area. The foreground is usually made up of brown hills in the form of zigzags. The landscape is enriched with trees depicted in a rather primitive manner, the trees are depicted in the form of a round green hat on a thick pole.

3.3. Konak Otağı Event Flow Miniature War Scenes

3.3.1. Konak Otağı Eastern Wall Event Flow Miniature War Scenes

The eastern wall of Konak Otağı is in the form of a plot of miniature war scenes (Fig. 12), and these pictures were divided and examined in 10 pictures to provide as much semantic integrity as possible (Fig. 13–22).

In the war scenes, weapons are used depending on the nature of the war. Spears were used in close-range wars, and rifles were used in distant wars. In the first war scene, a unit with a spear in front and a rifle behind is shown. There are many flag figures in this war scene (Fig. 13).



Figure 12. Sheki Khan Palace: Konak Otağı east wall war scenes (Üçüncü, 2024)

In the scene where the ruler joins the war, a young ruler accompanied by three nobles is in front of the two groups (Fig. 14). He has a golden scepter in his hand, a crown on his head, and a valuable robe. The ruler's horse also stands out from the soldiers with its beauty and color. The horse's cape and the ruler's robe have a dominant golden appearance. Probably some parts of these items were embroidered with gold threads. The ruler is depicted as very young, without a moustache or beard. The ruler is thought to be the Safavid Union Husayni Khan Mustak, and the ruler is thought to be Shah Ismail Hatai, who ascended to the throne at the age of 15 due to his colorful turbans. In some sources, the crown depicted on the ruler's head is suggested to resemble the crown of Nadir Shah Afshar and resembles those used in the East. Nadir Shah was Turkish; his reign was between 1736-1747. This may be the reason why some sources show the war scenes as the Iran-Ottoman wars. The ruler's entourage is young and bearded nobles. Their turbaned hats are decorated with feathers symbolizing their nobility, and their costumes are distinguished by rich floral embroidery and gold embroidery. All three of them have spears in their hands, and special bags are hung from their belts to store bows and arrows. Another important point is that the tails of both the ruler's and the nobles' horses are knotted. This tradition belongs only to the Turkish people. Knotting the horse's tail was also used by religious figures such as heroes. In the war scene, five severed heads are thrown at the feet of the ruler. One of the heads is still held by a bearded warrior. One of the horsemen opposite the ruler watches the enemy troops in the distance; he has a white horse and a striped turban. The warriors of the group in the next scene differ from the others in their headgear, facial features, and the fact that they are armed with more bows, arrows, and spears. Folded headgear of different colors is used (Rasulova, 2021: 165–169).

It can be seen that spare horses are also present in some scenes (Fig. 13). It is understood that these horses were not designed to carry loads. Therefore, they can be interpreted as spare horses to replace dead soldiers or existing horses that may become weak. Although there is no scene of conflict, the presence of enemy heads on the spears of some soldiers can be interpreted as some soldiers acting separately from the military unit and probably hunting enemies who have infiltrated the units (Fig. 14). The headgear and clothing of the unit seen in Fig. 15 are different from the plot pictures up to this section. The warriors wore Ottoman-style hats, wide trousers and frilled caftans at the ankles. They were armed with firearms, especially spears. The warriors in the front ranks hold two war banners. It is striking that each of the horses has almost different colors. The sky is dark blue and the horizon is shaped. After the frieze on the east side, on the wall above the cellar door, there is a war march scene primarily to motivate the soldiers to fight. In front of the spear-wielding military unit is a rifle-wielding military unit (Fig. 16). The soldiers have different headgear and clothing from the group in front of them. Two war banners are carried in front. In this scene, the horses are seen to be of different colors and the sky is dark blue.

A military unit armed with spears, with different headgear and clothing, advances accompanied by a commander holding a flag in front. This war banner or flag, similar to other flags, has triangular parts and is red in color. There is a similar figure on the banner (Fig. 19).



Figure 13. Sheki Khan Palace: Konak Otağı; Beginning of armed military action (Üçüncü, 2024)



Figure 14. Sheki Khan Palace: Konak Otağı; war scene: Watcher, khan, and nobles (Üçüncü, 2024)



Figure 15. Sheki Khan Palace: Konak Otağı; controlled military march (Üçüncü, 2024)



Figure 16. Sheki Khan Palace: Konak Otağı; enemy heads on soldiers' spears (Üçüncü, 2024)



Figure 17. Sheki Khan Palace: Konak Otađı; soldiers with spears; unit commander in front; and flags (Üçüncü, 2024)



Figure 18. Sheki Khan Palace: Konak Otađı; war scene: Soldiers with rifles and flags (Üçüncü, 2024)

The prominent figures in the artillery scene include warriors, horses, cannons, explosives, flags, wind instruments, guards and the severed head of a soldier (Fig. 20). After the artillery fire, two plot-based war scenes take place in the form of hand-to-hand combat (Fig. 21). As a result of the fierce fighting, some soldiers and horses fell to the ground. Weapons such as rifles, bayonets and swords were used in the fighting. Some fought with fire, some with cold weapons. Horses trampled people underfoot; wounded people lay on the ground; lifeless bodies and severed heads show all the horrors of war (Fig. 22).



Figure 19. Sheki Khan Palace: Konak Otađı; lancer military unit (Üçüncü, 2024)



Figure 20. Sheki Khan Palace: Konak Otağı: War Scene, Military Orchestra, and Artillery (Üçüncü, 2024)



Figure 21. Sheki Khan Palace: Konak Otağı; war scene: The beginning of hand-to-hand combat (Üçüncü, 2024)



Figure 22. Sheki Khan Palace: Konak Otağı; war scene: hand-to-hand combat (Üçüncü, 2024)

3.3.2. Konak Otağı West Wall Event Flow Miniature War Scenes

The west wall of Konak Otağı is in the form of miniature war scenes (Fig. 23), and these pictures were divided and examined on 10 pictures to provide as much semantic integrity as possible (Fig. 24–33).

The war scene in the plot on the west wall begins with an armed military unit walking comfortably. There are two flags in the foreground. In this scene, the sky is dark blue and there are grasses and similar short plants on the ground. The soldiers are equipped with weapons such as bayonets and rifles (Fig. 24). In front of the group, another observer is watching from a distance with binoculars. In front

of him is another group with spears. In front of the group, there is another person dressed in red, standing on a white horse and thought to be the leader of the group (Fig. 25).



Figure 23. Sheki Khan Palace: Konak Otağı western wall war scenes (Üçüncü, 2024)



Figure 24. Sheki Khan Palace: Konak Otağı; The soldier is ready for war (Üçüncü, 2024)



Figure 25. Sheki Khan Palace: Konak Otağı; the observer and the cut begin. (Üçüncü, 2024)

In a similar sky and vegetation setting, another small military unit with similar attire continues to march ahead. Most of the soldiers carry horses in reserve (Fig. 26). The scene in Fig. 27 gives the impression that a military unit is taking a break to assess. After the break, the military unit continues its march. In this scene, a tree figure is rarely seen (Fig. 28). The military operation continues. In this scene, there is a hand figure on the flag carried. The dark blue sky and the tree figure are seen as elements that complete the picture. An observer in the front watches into the distance (Fig. 29).



Figure 26. Sheki Khan Palace: Konak Otağı; a small military unit is on the march. (Üçüncü, 2024)

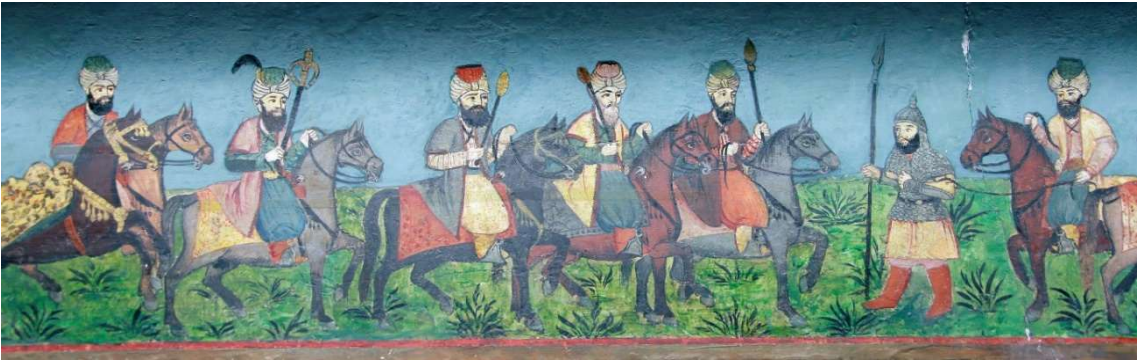


Figure 27. Sheki Khan Palace: Konak Otağı; War scene: military evaluation break (Üçüncü, 2024)



Figure 28. Sheki Khan Palace: Konak Otağı; war scene: Action after the break (Üçüncü, 2024)

In a war scene consisting of spearmen, there is a middle-aged ruler with a turban on his head and a golden staff in his hand in front of the troops (Fig. 30). The fluttering feather on his turban proves that he is a nobleman. His clothes show that he is an Ottoman ruler. His black horse cloth and his golden jacket decorated with jewels are indicators of his wealth. Behind him, an Ottoman hero and a horse are depicted, probably holding the rope to which he is tied and leaning his spear on the ground. Later, unlike the opposing army, a scout with binoculars and two clergymen are depicted. The clothes of these two clergymen are striking with their simplicity. These sheikhs or pirs wear white and black striped clothes and their hats are also different. They hold staffs with ram-like figures on their heads. In the Ottoman Empire, great importance was generally given to scholars, ulemas, sheikhs, in short clergymen, and some of them would accompany the army and give valuable advice when they went to war. In fact, his teacher Ak Şemseddin played a major role in the conquest of Istanbul by Fatih Sultan Mehmed. Then there are ten horsemen holding staffs of different shapes and three loose horses with

beautiful saddles and bridles. In front of these horsemen, a foot captive in armor and holding a spear appears. The horseman behind him grasps the rope that ties his hands and arms. Another group of warriors came from the Ottomans. They were armed with rifles and spears. One of the two rectangular flags depicts a crescent moon, the other a scimitar. There is a ram sign and a circular figure at the ends of the flagpoles (Rasulova, 2021: 173). Although there are many human figures in the scene, there are few horse figures in the front. In another spear soldier unit, the most



Figure 29. Sheki Khan Palace: Konak Otađı; war scene: march of a military unit (Üçüncü, 2024)



Figure 30. Sheki Khan Palace: Konak Otađı; spear soldiers; unit commander and flag in front; observer at the back (Üçüncü, 2024)

After the west wall frieze is completed, the war scenes continue in the upper part of the cellar room. The first scene was designed as a military orchestra (Fig. 31). The Janissary army, founded by Sultan Murat in 1362, had its own orchestra and always accompanied the sultan in important ceremonies. From that date on, the Ottoman army began its wars with military marches. In this scene, two of the horsemen play trumpets and four play serpent-shaped curved wind instruments. Two people stand up and play the kos drum to announce the start of the war. In the same scene, the commander on a black horse extends his left hand forward and gives the order to fire with his index finger. Three artillerymen with spears on their heads are firing. Behind the cannons, the cannon barrels representing the majority of the army can be seen. In front of the cannons, infantrymen wearing plain hats and simple robes and trousers engage in war with firearms and melee weapons. A horseman dressed in the same outfit observes an opposing unit coming from behind with binoculars (Rasulova, 2021: 175). In this scene, there is a rectangular flag with an open hand figure on it.

There are also soldiers being shot in a scene where different faces, heads, clothes, flags and weapons are used (Fig. 32). In the next scene, a wounded soldier is being rescued by being helped on horseback (Fig. 33). In front of this unit are corpses. In the war scene to the right of this group, it is possible to distinguish two separate groups by their clothes and faces. The warriors in the first group are seen wearing black hats made of sheepskin, which is part of the national costume of Azerbaijan. The four armed warriors identified as the second group were in front of the group. Their hats are surrounded by a striped cloth. The second group of warriors, who carry firearms, also carry spears. In front of the warriors are corpses and severed heads. This unit carries a rectangular flag with a picture in the middle and an open hand at the end of the pole.



Figure 31. Sheki Khan Palace: Konak Otağı; War scene; military orchestra and artillery (Üçüncü, 2024)



Figure 32. Sheki Khan Palace: Konak Otağı; hand-to-hand combat scene (Üçüncü, 2024)



Figure 33. Sheki Khan Palace: Konak Otağı; full combat and rescue of the wounded soldier (Üçüncü, 2024)

The war scene is incomplete. When viewed from both sides, preparations for war, advance and war are depicted in both the Eastern and Western friezes, but the scene depicting the end of the war is not included.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Sheki Khan Palace is a magnificent architectural marvel known for its unique design and intricate details. The palace exhibits a blend of Persian, Turkish and Azerbaijani architectural styles reflecting the rich cultural heritage of the region. Buildings built in this style are also found in Tabriz, Tehran, Shusha, Khoy, Yerevan and Tbilisi. Sheki Khan Palace is an architectural example representing the transition from residential houses to palace-type houses. The rectangular, two-story building bears traces of the settlements of the Sheki people and the rich decorative elements in its interior indicate that the building belongs to palace-type structures.

The polychrome hand-drawn works applied in the palace are made on light-colored plaster. The richness of forms and motifs is clearly noticeable in the decorations. The plastered ceiling with carvings, the panels dividing the walls, niches, various frames and connections, lower arches and eaves and the muqarnas covering the walls are decorated with carvings. The paintings covering the upper frieze of the central hall of the second floor of the palace are valuable in terms of pictorial art. The hunting scene in the paintings is 6 m long, and the war scene is 15 m long. Applied Azerbaijani miniature art includes depictions of leopards, cattle, people, mehter bands, trumpeter cavalrymen and drummers. Among the paintings in the Sheki Khan Palace, plot, geometric and floral patterns, and sometimes bird images were used (Mammadova, 2022: 262). Of particular interest are the paintings depicting various hunting and war scenes located in the form of friezes between the niches in the hall on the second floor. Miklashevskaya divides all the paintings into the main decorative elements of the interior: panels, niches, piers, bukharas, friezes, lampshades, pendants, doors, etc., emphasizing the course of events in a special group (Gadzhieva, 2012, p. 8). The facade of the building, the main decoration of the southern floor, the corner details of the rear ceiling of the second floor and the decorations of the recessed ceiling of the first floor are made using carved ornamental patterns. On the surface of the vertical and horizontal partitions between the lampshade grilled windows, there are geometric carpet ornaments consisting of multi-rayed stars and polygons. The panels covered with floral patterns are very similar in structure and motifs to decorative interior design patterns. Bird figures combined with flowers are used on many panels.

Due to the prohibitions related to the Islamic religion in the Eastern countries, the main goal was to create a perfect series of ideal images of nature and geometric ornaments. In the Sheki Khan Palace, artists tried to create perfect and harmonious works while remaining faithful to their traditions. It would not be wrong to say that the Sheki Khan Palace is the richest architectural work in terms of wall paintings. The Sheki Khan Palace brings together all kinds of crafts and painting art specific to Azerbaijani architecture. In this palace, not only grilles, but also carvings on stone, wood, plaster, engraving, etching, geometric and floral paintings, miniature paintings and decorative applied arts were widely applied. This palace is the only work in Azerbaijan where the multi-figured plot is preserved.

The similarity between the flower and tree decorations in the wall paintings between the Sheki Khan Palace and the Ishak Pasha Palace built in the same century (1784) shows the close relations and interaction between the Turkish tribes of the period. It is possible to clearly see the artistic sensitivity of a society in the decorative arts of that society. Before and after Islam, the Turks were influenced by various decorative traditions in their areas of sovereignty, and this influence is natural. The Turkish painting art and miniature wall paintings in the Sheki Khan Palace also have historical and aesthetic presentation and enlightening qualities.

The Sheki Khan Palace has a different position and feature in this field with its architectural design, as well as the miniatures of war scenes used in wall decorations and the mass production of these miniatures in the form of a flow of events. These wall decoration processes require great mastery and talent.

Although there is no clear information about the parties of the war scenes, a war is ultimately shown in these scenes. In addition to the display of flower depictions symbolizing elegance, aesthetics and beauty in the same place, it should be noted that the brutality of war, which is its exact opposite, carries deep meanings. Konak Otağı may have aimed to contribute to the balance of people's lives by presenting the most beautiful and the most brutal aspects of life together.

As a result, it is important to continue two types of consistent efforts for these reasons:

- 1) Training masters who will restore the wall paintings and miniatures of the Sheki Khan Palace, which are considered normal to deteriorate under the influence of time.
- 2) Making special efforts for the international promotion of the Sheki Khan Palace, which has design and aesthetic visual potential not only in the Turkish world but also worldwide, and in this context, making foreign scientific publications introducing the palace. The Sheki Khan Palace has a different position and feature in this field with its architectural design, as well as the miniatures of war scenes used in wall decorations and the mass production of these miniatures in the form of a flow of events. These wall decoration processes require great mastery and talent.

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