

# ԱՐՎԵՍՏԱԳԻՏՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ ART

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## THE FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTION OF THE ART OF ARMENIAN CARPET WEAVING

**Key words:** Armenian carpet, symbolism, proto-symbolism, ornament, mythology, national heritage, color composition.

### **Introduction**

The creation of carpets, rugs (lint-free carpets), as well as various types of embroidery and textiles (hereinafter referred to as "carpet, carpets") is the oldest type of applied art in Armenia. Armenian carpets are both unique works of art and a national craft, a heritage that has been transferred to us from time immemorial and clearly shows that each Armenian carpet is an object of rare beauty. Armenia is rightfully considered one of the most ancient centers of carpet weaving, which continues to develop now and represents an important part of the Armenian culture. For centuries, carpets have been the national symbol of Armenia and have a special historical and cultural value. The traditions of Armenian carpet weaving have been preserved to this day and continue to demonstrate this unique art to the world<sup>1</sup>.

The most common material for making carpets was sheep's wool, and only the wool that was sheared from the back of a living animal was used. It was

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\* Հոդվածը ներկայացվել է 16.02.23, գրախոսվել է 16.02.23, ընդունվել է պաշտոնապես 28.04.23:

<sup>1</sup> Ghazarian 1988, 2–24.

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because that the wool on the sides of the sheep was hard, therefore, low-quality threads which were obtained from such wool was difficult to dye. The rest of the sheep's wool was used for various household needs. Other materials such as goat hair, cotton, silk, linen were also used in Armenian carpet weaving, and only natural dyestuff was used to dye yarn.

Carpet weaving was a traditional art, widespread in all regions of Armenia. Carpets were an indispensable and necessary household item that covered floors, tables and decorated walls. They were also of material value, since the carpets were in demand and profitably traded, they were exported to other countries. During archaeological researches on the territory of the Armenian Highlands, samples of carpets dating back to the first millennium BC were found. Fragments of ancient woven textile products made of wool were found in the Artik burial ground (XII–XI centuries BC), in Karmir Blur (VII century BC) and the medieval capital of **Armenia, the city of Ani**<sup>2</sup>.

One of the first documented indirect evidences of Armenian carpets is the famous book of Xenophon "Anabasis" (430–360 BC). It describes how after the battle of Kunaks, the Greek army retreated and while passing through the territory of Armenia, robbed the people, calling them barbarians (book IV, chapter IV), and after (book VII, chapter III), being in Thrace, Xenophon wrote: "Then he (Heraclitus from Maronea (Thracian)) approached Timasius from Dardana (Greeks), as he heard that he had barbarian goblets and carpets and said that Seuthes (Thracian king) expects to receive gifts from those invited to dinner"<sup>3</sup>; "And Timasius, having drunk for the health of Seuthes, gave him a silver cup and a carpet worth 10 min"<sup>4</sup>. Why Xenophon called the Armenians barbarians and at the same time highly appreciated their culture, is a topic for separate studies...

The famous Venetian merchant and traveler of the 13th century Marco Polo distinguished himself by his obvious bias towards the Armenians. Proceeding from the opportunistic considerations of the period (Armenian merchants competed with the Venetian ones), in chapter 21 of his book "Journey", he touched upon the topic of Armenian carpet weaving: "There are three peoples in Turkomania. Turkomans honor Muhammad and follow his law; people are simple and their

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<sup>2</sup> Ավանեսյան 2020, 6, 7:

<sup>3</sup> Ксенофонт 1951, 106–109.

<sup>4</sup> Ксенофонт 1951, 197–198.

language is rude. They live in the mountains and in the plains, wherever they know that there are free pastures, as they are engaged in cattle breeding. There are, I tell you, good Turkoman horses and good expensive mules. There are also Armenians and Greeks here; live interspersed in cities and fortresses; they are engaged in trade and crafts. You know, the thinnest and most beautiful carpets in the world are made here, and also excellent, rich fabrics of red and other colors are woven, and many other things are made here. The cities here are called: Como, Casseri, Sevasto ... " (Konia, Kessaria, Sebastia)<sup>5</sup>. In fact, in the region of Historical Armenia, where the Turkomans (Seljuk Turks) ruled at that period, carpet weaving was the prerogative of Armenians and Greeks.

***Armenian carpets: general description***

Medieval written sources say that carpet weaving in Armenia was at a very high level. Armenian carpets had their own way of weaving and a distinct style. But the special value of Armenian carpets lay in their unique color range, the color scheme that gives the carpet a complete, unique and harmonious look. Among the endless variety of colors and shades, a special place was given to red, which was obtained from Ararat cochineal (vordan karmir), known in the world as carmine<sup>6</sup>. Ararat (Armenian) cochineal has also been used by Armenian chroniclers and artists since the early Middle Ages to write manuscripts and draw miniatures. The first written evidence of the Ararat cochineal dates back to the 5th century; it is also mentioned in the works of medieval Arab writers<sup>7</sup>.

This shade of red was obtained from insects, varieties of which (besides the territory of Armenia) are also found in other geographical areas. Such sources of this shade as Mexican cochineal, oak (Mediterranean cochineal), Polish cochineal and Indian "kerria lacca" are well known.

According to our research, technologists who dyed threads and textiles<sup>8</sup>, used different colors in Armenian carpets, obtained due to natural dyes and their derivatives:

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<sup>5</sup> Поло 1940, 17–18.

<sup>6</sup> Авдалбекян 1962, 89–94.

<sup>7</sup> Дурново, Мнацаканян 1978.

<sup>8</sup> We express our gratitude to the Armenian carpet technologist from Caesarea, Abraham Damla.

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- red color was obtained from the Armenian (Ararat) and other types of cochineal; from the secretions of insects of the species “*kerria lacca*”; from the roots of madder dye (krapp), in the Armenian interpretation “toron”;
- blue color came from indigo dye, also called “indigo”; from the “woad” plant (*Isatis tinctoria*), however, the paint obtained from that plant did not stand the test of time and burned out under sunlight and daylight, therefore it was used very rarely;
- yellow color was obtained from “dye mignonette”; from the peel of pomegranates; from immortelle flowers and some other plants;
- brown color from the green peel of walnuts;
- black color from acorns with the addition of oak bark with an admixture of iron, by oxidation;
- for white, natural white wool or cotton was used.
- also known are dyes obtained from mollusks of various species, which are known under the general name “murex”, from which purple-red and purple-blue dyes were obtained, called “royal purple”, which was mainly used for dyeing fabrics.

The remaining color shades were obtained by mixing the above basic dyes. For example, green color was obtained by mixing blue with yellow. It should be added that much depended on the specific technologist. It is safe to say that two technologists, dyeing threads under the same conditions using identical technology, received different shades. Each of the dyeing workshops provided its own geographical area, but could also export dyed threads, which determined the identity of the color shades of certain geographical areas of carpet weaving. The continuity of technological schools was carefully preserved, and the difference in color halftones, which could only be distinguished by experienced experts, was associated with the individual characteristics of a particular master.

Armenian carpets were exported to various Asian countries, where they were highly valued, royal courts were decorated with Armenian carpets and the wealth was measured by them. In the 9<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> centuries, the tradition of Armenian carpet weaving gradually reached Europe. Armenian carpets were already produced there locally or exported from Armenia to Asia and Europe<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Аракелян 1956, 135–136, Lauren 1999, 68–72.

Until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the art of Armenian carpet weaving was canonical or, in the language of art criticism, existed within an academic framework. As in other segments of the culture of folk art, a separate “caste” of weavers and technologists was formed, who knew the secrets of obtaining natural dyes and the art of ornamental style, which further developed and were continually handed over to the coming generations. All Armenian carpets created before the 20<sup>th</sup> century are canonical and “readable”. Starting from the second quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the art of carpet weaving changed from the canonical to more free interpretations. Moreover, if earlier the masters creating carpets were not entitled to change the ornamental style and color composition of the carpet, with the exception of individual inscriptions and dating, already in the 20<sup>th</sup> century a departure from these principles was clearly visible in the carpets. The reason for this was the well-known events that happened to the Armenian people in this historical period: the expulsion of Armenians from their traditional places of residence in the Ottoman Empire during the First World War, the massacres, and the inclusion of significant territories of historical Armenia into Azerbaijan, which led to the destruction of the traditional way of life.

Nevertheless, the traditional technique of Armenian carpet weaving and the form of Armenian ornaments, inherited from the ancient Armenian masters, were preserved. The ornamental symbolism of ancient carpets has been largely preserved in modern Armenian carpets to this day<sup>10</sup>.

Carpets were originally one of the methods of popularization and preservation of proto-symbolism. In ancient times, the means, materials and methods for popularizing symbols were very limited. There were only rock carvings, later stone carvings, cuneiform writings, then handwritten manuscripts decorated with miniatures, scrolls appeared, along with all this. Carpets were one of the methods for popularizing and preserving ornamental symbolism and, thereby, transferring this segment of the culture to subsequent generations. Armenian carpets can be considered as a kind of “symbolic-ornamental texts”, which, through symbols, convey information coming from the depths of millennia. Therefore, the Armenian carpet can rightfully be called the keeper of traditions. The production of any new carpet is based on the reproduction of an ornamental

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<sup>10</sup> Темурджян 1954.

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motif-symbol in its innumerable stylistic and color variations, as a carrier of ancient ideas.

### ***Ornamentation and symbolism of Armenian carpets***

Ornament is one of the oldest types of human pictorial activity, which in the distant past carried a symbolic and magical meaning, symbolism, and a semantic function. Researchers of ornaments believe that it arose already in the Upper Paleolithic era (15–10 thousand years BC)<sup>11</sup>. The semantics of ornamental compositions can be harmoniously built on the foundation of the rules and the alphabet of the ideographic method of representing reality, based on the experience of cognition and thinking. The ideographic language of the population of the Armenian Highlands reveals the mystery of interpretation of the semantics of the ancient peoples' ornamental art, including the Armenians, and their contemporaries.

The ornamentation of Armenian carpets is striking in its diversity, while each ornament has a certain profound meaning<sup>12</sup>.

Over the many years of the existence of decorative art, various types of ornaments have developed geometric, floral, complex forms, from simple articulations to complex intricacies of motifs. The early abstract geometric forms of the ornament, gradually developing, were later combined with conventionally realistic floral and animal ornaments. The folklore and poetic attitude to the world was especially strongly imprinted in carpet weaving ornaments. The nature of symbolism is multifaceted and varied, its emergence and development can be traced even from circumstantial evidence and archaeological finds that may imply symbolism. This kind of archaeological evidence suggests that humanity's sense of geometry is innate. The number of basic, characteristic elementary signs that make up symbols, which, in turn, are combined into ornamental figures, is not so large: a square, a triangle, a circle, a cross, a ray, a straight line, a segment, etc.<sup>13</sup>. The combination of signs, in addition to purely graphic aspects, also creates a mental, philosophical impression that opens up a wide field for symbolic expression before the human mind. Considering the characteristic ornaments of Armenian carpets, we will constantly encounter this aspect of the transformation

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<sup>11</sup> Лоренц 1898.

<sup>12</sup> Kouymjian 1991, 247–253.

<sup>13</sup> Frutiger 1989, 43–61.

of signs into a language, by means of their comparison and combination, which creates for the viewer, in addition to being informative, a purely aesthetic effect of the graphic combination of signs. Just as letters are formed into a verbal image by means of connection, complete ornaments are also formed due to the convergence of individual elements. Their complete connection, of course, is achieved through contact, intersection or complete overlap. The overlapping of figures and their various combinations lead to an infinite number of possibilities, some of which will be outlined here<sup>14</sup>.

In particular, almost all Armenian carpets have a decorative belt along the perimeter, inside which the very theme of the carpet is placed. This technique is used to enhance the effect of the overall composition. The field of the carpet and its frame, no matter how stylized they may be, should be deliberately separated, since these two concepts of "decoration" and "dressing with symbols" are subject to different conditions and laws, respectively, they are perceived differently by the viewer.

In the ornaments of Armenian carpets, one can trace human feelings, thoughts and efforts to understand oneself and one's environment; there is a constant theme of reconciliation with the duality of the surrounding world. Consciousness of life and death, day and night, good and evil, mind and matter, male and female, as well as other concepts generated by the opposition and duality of the surrounding world, led to a great variety of dogmas, worldviews, religions and philosophies; much of all this is collected here, in the most beautiful creations of Armenian weavers. We can say that the master who creates the carpet, in fact, is an intermediary between two worlds, visible and invisible. In the old days, craftsmanship itself was considered something "magical". The more fully the master's creation expressed the content through its aesthetic perfection, the greater was its symbolic value

#### ***Analysis of the conceptual features of Armenian carpets***

For 20 years, we have been carrying out fieldwork in all Armenian villages of Artsakh (Karabakh). When purchasing ancient carpets from Armenian families, we paid special attention to the collection of folklore, family traditions of carpet weaving. The result of this work was the creation in 2011 of the carpet museum in Shushi, which has a unique feature; more than 95 percent of the exhibits

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<sup>14</sup> Лоренц 1898.

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(carpets) have an accurate attribution. Thanks to the research and data obtained, it was possible to understand and determine the features of the ornamental style of Armenian carpets. Armenian carpets, conceptually, display four directions:

- the themes of the divine, dating back to the times of paganism, as well as later biblical subjects;
- mythology, using plots from myths, legends, tales and folklore;
- natural phenomena: day, night and their harmonious change of each other, the sun, stars, starfall, etc.;
- flora and fauna of the environment.

Often these concepts are organically intertwined. Thus, for example, for humanity, birds endowed with wings and the ability to fly in the air, must always have seemed unusual creatures, endowed with more than earthly abilities. The fact that birds are associated not only with something “earthly” but also “heavenly” and even beyond, already implies what can be called the embodiment of symbolic perception. Therefore, it is not surprising that all flying creatures have always been very strong objects of attraction for symbolic images, including in carpet weaving. Here, of particular interest is also the fact that the ability to fly is also assigned to other creatures, granting them wings as an attribute. Thus, the winged serpent became an omnipotent dragon, and the winged man became a heavenly angel. For this reason, images of birds and other winged creatures can often be seen on Armenian carpets. An exception to the association of wings with flight is the peacock (rooster), whose luxurious plumage and regal appearance have made it a favorite image in the mythology of many peoples. Among Yezidi Kurds who worship the sun, peacocks and roosters are associated with the beginning of the solar system and are interpreted as “Tavusi Melek” (Tavusi Malak) - Peacock Angel, and therefore it was forbidden to eat roosters<sup>15</sup>.

Interpretation of the image of a peacock (rooster) with the Sun is among different peoples. In Iran, the metaphorical name for the Sun is Tavus-e Falak. Images of peacocks are often present in the ornaments of Armenian carpets, where they are also depicted as birds of paradise with royal plumage, located symmetrically around a specific symbol of the sun, while their blooming tails are interpreted as an allegory of Sunrays and light. In Russian folklore, the symbol of eternal rebirth, the personification of the solar energy necessary to continue life,

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<sup>15</sup> Асатрян, Аракелова 2014, 1–28.



is the Firebird, dying in the fall and resurrecting in the spring, its feathers are cast in gold and silver, and its wings shine like flames<sup>16</sup>. In Armenian folklore this bird is known as «հազարան բլբուլ» (azaran blbul).

The egg is a universal mythological symbol associated with the myth of the universal egg; sometimes that egg is golden, floating in the waters of the primeval ocean, from which the Deity subsequently appears. In Finnish myth, a duck lays an egg from which the universe emerges. In Chinese legend, the universe is represented in the form of a chicken egg from which the progenitor Pan Gu was born<sup>17</sup>. The image of this symbol is also found on Armenian carpets, symbolizing the allegorical plots of the birth of a new life in the form of a chick hatched from an egg. The theme of the origin of life from an egg is also present in the folklore of the Armenian people. I would like to emphasize the same allegory with Easter eggs in Christianity adopted by the Armenian people at the state level in the year 301.

Insects also found their place in the ornamentation of Armenian carpets, not least because of their ability to fly. The butterfly, depicted on Armenian carpets, was identified with the human soul, as well as with the very life of a person, since it was believed that a butterfly, like a person, goes through three phases during its life - the caterpillar phase was associated with material life, the cocoon phase with death, which was considered as a temporary phase of being, and the release of a butterfly from a cocoon – with the ascension of an immortal soul into the spiritual world, which is perceived as a metamorphosis - a constant transition from one state to another. In Greek mythology, Psyche was the goddess of the soul and was represented on the monuments of fine art in the form of a butterfly<sup>18</sup>. It is also important to note the direct images of butterflies on carpets, which were related to the production of silk – an integral part of the production life of the Armenian people. Often on Armenian carpets there are images of bees. The bee is one of the most versatile symbols, which is present in various interpretations in the mythology of many peoples<sup>19</sup>. The bee occupies an important place in the

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<sup>16</sup> Макарова 1997, 134.

<sup>17</sup> Макарова 1997, 133.

<sup>18</sup> Овидий XIV 1986, 358–374, Обидина 2013, 75–78.

<sup>19</sup> In Hinduism, the blue bee was depicted on the forehead of Krishna, on the lotus of Vishnu and above the triangle of Shiva; in ancient Greece, bees were also attributed a divine origin, “the god of love Phanet, is a loudly buzzing heavenly bee”, and they also carried wax for the God Apollo from the country of Hyperboreans; in Scandinavian mythology, in the

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ornamentation of Armenian carpets, here it is associated with the feminine and the worship of the Great Mother Earth, the one who gives rise to life, drawing an allegorical analogy with the queen bee, which plays a dominant role in the hive and gives life to bee offspring. The worship of the Great Mother among Armenians is identified with the Goddess Anahit, symbolizing fertility, the fruitful Earth, which is the Great Mother. The strictly organized swarm of bees symbolizes diligence and thrift. The mere fact that bees gave honey to man, represented them as objects of worship.

The symbol of the scorpion has been present in the mythology of ancient peoples since ancient times, while it could play both a positive and a negative role. In many countries, the scorpion symbolized protection and security. Scorpions also found their reflection in the ornaments of Armenian carpets; they are shown on the carpets, the thematic component of which identifies the underworld. It is not by chance that under the arches of the Cathedral of Holy Etchmiadzin of the Armenian Apostolic Church there is an image of a scorpion. Scorpions themselves personify the guards, protecting the security of the gates of the underworld<sup>20</sup>. The serpent is also frequently depicted on Armenian carpets. The snake symbol itself is one of the most convenient forms for a symbolic image. This "lack of body" must have been one of the reasons why the extremely simplified form of the snake appears at all times as one of the most mysterious of all pictorial representations. Of course, there are many deeper reasons for the visibility of the snake symbol than the mechanical simplicity of its image. The figure of a snake can be considered a symbolic archetype, persistently present in the human subconscious<sup>21</sup>. In the ornaments of Armenian carpets, there are realistic and graphic images of snakes in different variations, one of which is the theme of the

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"Younger Edda" it is mentioned that the god Odin stole the "divine honey of poetry" and gave it to people. A number of positive symbolic meanings are also associated with a beehive: an orderly society, wisdom, eloquence. Later in Christianity, bees were also considered "divine winged creatures" and even a symbol of the Holy Spirit and the emblem of Virgin Mary. The image of bees can be traced on the coats of arms and mantles of the royal dynasties of Europe in the early Middle Ages.

<sup>20</sup> The Egyptians Selket is a scorpion goddess from the underworld. In Babylon, similar functions were performed by a strange fantastic creature in the form of a man with a scorpion's tail and with a drawn bow in his hands, which was depicted on gates, doors and boundary stones. Ek Chuah, the god of the ancient Maya, was often depicted with the tail of a scorpion.

<sup>21</sup> **Мюллер** 2019, гл. 5. 21.

tempting snake in the Garden of Eden. All these images found their place in the ornamentation of ancient Armenian carpets<sup>22</sup>. One of the most common images on Armenian carpets are “vishaps”, that is, dragons. The symbolism of dragons has an extensive component. They were the keepers of water, fire, a symbol of wisdom and knowledge of all things. In Armenia, there are large numbers of ancient stone sculptures of dragons (վիշապաքար, vishapakar), which are located on the hills and in the viewed territories, thereby, in an allegorical sense, being the defenders of space<sup>23</sup>. In mythology, dragons had both positive and negative meanings, which again confirms dualism and the eternal struggle between good and evil. The dragons on the carpets were mostly depicted in pairs, looking in different directions, standing as guards, and this implies constant monitoring and protection. On the upper part of the scepters of the Armenian Catholicoses one can see paired dragons.

In the mythology of different peoples, there are two-headed animals, the symbolism of which is identical to the images of paired dragons in Armenian carpets. In the myths of ancient Greece, it was Orthros – a monstrous two-headed dog, the son of Typhon and Echidna. Orthros guarded the magical bulls (cows) of Gerion, and was killed by Hercules during the abduction of these bulls<sup>24</sup>. The double-headed eagle is one of the most ancient universal symbols. Images of a double-headed eagle were discovered during excavations of the Hittite kingdom (XII century BC). In India, the two-headed bird Gandaberunda is found on the bas-reliefs of ancient temples. The double-headed eagle was depicted on Byzantine banners, was the emblem of the Holy Roman Empire, and it is the emblem of Russia today. In Armenia, the double-headed eagle was depicted on the flag of the Mamikonyan princely family. Two-headed animals are often found on Armenian carpets as well, which are identified with the All-Seeing Eye of God; one head is sleeping, the other is awake, vigilantly watching everything, and vice versa. The allegory is as follows: God constantly sees everything, protects and, of course, nothing can be hidden from Him, including the deeds of people. Hence, this kind of vision of the world contributed to the education and observance of moral norms by the people.

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<sup>22</sup> Raphaelian 1953, 125.

<sup>23</sup> Алишан 2002, гл. 5–6, Պետրոսյան, Բորիսյան 2015, 233–257:

<sup>24</sup> Грейвс 1955, переведено в 1992, гл. 34, 127.

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Different peoples of the world have identical mythological stories with similar creatures. One of these mythological creatures is the winged horse. In ancient Greek mythology, there was a winged horse Pegasus, born at the source of the Ocean, where his name comes from. Pegasus, which means “turbulent current” in Greek, could fly at the speed of the wind<sup>25</sup>. For Armenians, it is a winged fiery horse (Հրեղեն Զի – Hreghen Dzi), a popular character in the Armenian epic and folk tales, which is also depicted on Armenian carpets.

Demonic creatures crowned with horns, symbolizing the dark, negative side of life and being servants of the forces of evil, occupy a special place among the many symbolic images depicted on carpets.

Camels played a special role in people's lives as beasts of burden, without which it would have been impossible to imagine the world trade of those times. The well-known Great Silk Road passed through the Armenian Highlands, and Armenian merchants have occupied a prominent niche in trade between countries and peoples since ancient times. In China and India, Armenian merchants had the exclusive right to trade in the continental parts of these countries, while trading companies of European countries could develop their activities only in ports, at sea shores and along the banks of rivers. Probably for this reason, many carpets were woven to depict caravans with loaded camels, as well as people sitting on camels. The image of animals on carpets did not always have a symbolic meaning, because the people always wanted to pay tribute to them as irreplaceable helpers in everyday life. On many Armenian carpets, you can see images of horses, dogs, cats, which indicates the importance attached to domestic animals, the actual perpetuation of the “smaller brothers” and the attitude of a person to everything that surrounds him<sup>26</sup>. In the human subconscious, animals have always played the role of essential archetypes of everything instinctive as symbols of material, spiritual and even cosmic forces. This theme is especially traced both in the ornaments of Armenian carpets and in Armenian miniatures since the Early Middle Ages. Christ was described as the Lamb of God, and the Holy Spirit

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<sup>25</sup> **Кузьмин** 2020. In the mythology of the Turkic peoples, winged mythical horses – tulpars, are the personification of fidelity, courage and strength. In Udmurt folklore, the legendary winged horse Boiln has wings, which are visible only at night, Uchchaihshravas in Hindu mythology is the seven-headed flying white horse of God Indra, the king of all horses, Chollima is the Korean mythical winged horse, Sleipnir in Scandinavian mythology is the eight-legged flying horse of the supreme God Odin.

<sup>26</sup> **Аристотель** 1956.

became visible in the form of a dove flying down. Armenian carpets are characterized by the richness of the symbolic and ornamental representation of fauna. These symbolic images were intended both for carpet decoration and as information with symbolic content. Humanity is surrounded by the wealth of the vegetable kingdom, which in former times covered an even greater part of the surface of the Earth. The forest gave man shelter and food. Plants, fruits and vegetables are still an important part of our diet. Therefore, it is not surprising that all kinds of plants as well as the animal world, have become symbols with deep content.

All civilizations have used plant symbols as basic expressions of life, growth, fertility, and so on. The plots of Armenian carpets reflect the inseparable connection between the primitive life of plants and the highest forms of life of the fauna and humanity. An example is the sacred lily flower, which being regarded in Christianity as a symbol of the Immaculate Conception and having a heraldic meaning, has been interpreted since ancient times as a symbol of the divinity of power. Lilies are depicted on royal coats of arms, on household items, etc. In Armenian, lily is translated as "shushan" or "shushi". There is every reason to believe that the name of the Armenian city of Shushi comes from the word "lily". If we turn to the dictionary of Brockhaus and Efron, then the city of Shush, Shushi or Susa (Σούσα, Susa) is the rich capital of the Elamite kingdom of Susiana, already known in the 5th century as the residence of the Elamite, and then the Persian kings, which got its name from the many lilies (Susan, Shushan) abounding in this area<sup>27</sup>. Flowers and leaves were used as material for decoration, and the growing sense of beauty led to the attribution of a symbolic content to the world of plants, with its splendor of color and richness of form, which was also reflected in Armenian ornaments. Plants have a clear symbolic meaning and were often depicted both on the border of carpets and on the main field. These are oak leaves, cloverleaves, climbing plants, roses, poppies, etc. One of the most important symbols of humanity is the tree. Its roots go deep into the earth, the trunk was often used as the main support in primitive dwellings, for this reason the tree was usually considered the axis of the world. Thus, the shape of the tree was perceived as a connecting image between heaven and earth, and its structure contained a pronounced symbolic meaning. The diverse dependence of mankind

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<sup>27</sup> Энциклопедический словарь Брокгауза и Ефрона 1891, 26.

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on wood as a source of food, a source of firewood for heating a home, building material, tools, etc., led directly to the concept of the "Tree of Life". The lifespan of a tree is much longer than a human life, which involuntarily inspires a sense of reverence for the tree as an ancestor. The theme of the "Tree of Life" is often found in the ornaments of Armenian carpets and in miniatures on the pages of ancient Armenian manuscripts<sup>28</sup>.

The history of mythology, art and design in general shows that artists have always considered the human body to be the most perfect in the hierarchy of creatures that inhabit this planet. In contrast to this theme, it is interesting to note that there is no figurative illustration in the mythology of Islam. This is why the Arabic script has taken on such a rich decorative variety, with the words of the Qur'an in written form constantly serving as the basis for the ornament known as arabesques. The exceptions are carpets of the Persian Empire with realistic images of rulers, epic scenes and hunting scenes. The theme of man and his image are widely displayed in Armenian carpets. Especially often, this theme is present in the depiction of the duality of male and female principles, in the Garden of Eden, on both sides of the "Tree of Life", as well as in everyday life.

In the whole series of various sign-symbols, there are both symmetrical and asymmetrical ones. Symmetrical ornaments include images of stars in the sky, and it is safe to say that stars are the most common symbols on Armenian carpets. A person cognized the surrounding space, perceiving himself as being both apart and in its center<sup>29</sup>. The perception of the thematic component, arising from the totality of numerous ornaments, organically presented on the carpet, comes from the perception of a person and his vision. The vast majority of carpets have a certain direction of viewing, based on the ornamental theme of a particular carpet. They also have a technical beginning and end (beginning and end of weaving), which for the most part coincides with the thematic component, reflecting the dynamic development of a theme or mythological story in a particular exhibit. Most carpets need to be viewed from a specific location, i.e. if the carpet has four sides, then the viewing direction is one side. In fact, it is necessary to perceive the picture of the carpet based on the chosen direction, depending on whether the viewer looks up, to the sky, or down, to the earth, or to what is happening around. Occasionally there are carpets where the technical and

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<sup>28</sup> **Афанасьев** 1983, 213–226.

<sup>29</sup> **Frutiger** 1989, 31–42.

thematic components do not coincide, the reason for this is that a particular weaver (in all likelihood, not having sufficient experience), when starting work, incorrectly hung out a prototype drawing in front of him. Usually, the weavers were provided with drawings of ornaments on paper lined in a fine grid, where the design of the carpet was displayed by means of dots, so the carpets can be called proto-images created by means of "pixels", which was a constructive, mathematical solution to this problem. Sometimes there are carpets where the dynamics of the thematic component has a symmetrical solution, that is, the viewing direction for such carpets does not matter, neither does it matter how they are hung (there is no difference between the "top" and the "bottom" of the carpet) and from what side to look at them. In such carpets, the image of the Divine is depicted, and the very perception of the world is interpreted as God is everywhere and in everything, and the whole Universe revolves around Him, therefore there should not be an object or subject relative to anything that can be perceived in earthly categories. Using this technique in the design of such carpets, people tried to navigate between the earth's surface, relative to which the celestial bodies were perceived, and divided the space into parts, exposing all these objects in relation to each other and separately.

This experience led humanity to its conscious choice, expressed through the sign of an equilateral cross, which provided humanity with elementary help in orientation, allowing to distinguish between top-bottom, left-right. It was the recognition of this symbol that led to the understanding of space, which became the basis of all thought processes. Various modifications of this elementary symbol of the cross testify to the primary diagram on which most subsequent perceptions and ideas are based. The basis for creating a compass is also a cross – North-South, West-East. This symbol contains mythological and speculative ideas about the origin of the world, that arise during the emergence and development of civilization. Each people has developed expressive symbolic images, explanatory and educational, but more often of a meditative nature, demonstrating their belief in the source of all life in accordance with their own specific ideas, following from the presentation of a horizontal or vertical fundamental concept of space and cosmos.

The equilateral cross is by far the most commonly used elemental symbol throughout the world, uniting the active and the passive in a dualistic connection. The graphic association with the cross as an instrument of execution, and the

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similarity of its shape to the human form made it a symbol of the Christian faith. Due to its symmetrical shape and four separately spaced ends, the symbol of the cross evokes associations with straight rays extending to infinity. Meanwhile, if an ordinary straight cross is an expression of everything that is static and firmly fixed, a cross with broken rays emerging from its center expresses movement and rotation. In fact, the cross, which represents space, in continuous rotation, has become a swastika or a rotating cross in a large scale sense. In Armenia, the symbol of swastika, which is called "arevakhach" and "kerkhach", which literally means "Sun-cross" and "curved cross", can be traced back to distant pagan times. And the Sun, also being a star, revolves around itself, and all the planets of the Solar System revolve around the Sun. Thus, in the perception of a person, the belief is formed that everyone and everything revolves around a certain center. In fact, the swastika is an image of a rotating celestial body<sup>30</sup>. Later, the swastika symbol appears on the walls of ancient Armenian churches and monasteries, in ancient manuscripts, very often, it is used as an ornament on Armenian carpets, and on the same carpet, this symbol can be depicted with the ends of rays bent both to the right and to the left sides. It is not a random who of the masters created the carpet, but a technique that allows you to show the entire composition of the carpet not in one plane, but in a multidimensional space. The sun and stars with constellations, whose "path" could be traced in the sky, were often depicted on carpets in the dynamics of the passage of this "path", i.e. on the same carpet; you could trace the dynamics of the change of day and night. The movement of the stars and the change of day and night were depicted in the form of repeating ornaments with a change in the background color of the carpet from light blue to dark blue and vice versa.

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<sup>30</sup> Ковалева 2010, 70–71. Images of two or more swastikas on one carpet, with ends pointing to the right and left, make it possible to understand that in fact the carpet ornaments do not represent one plane, but are located in outer space, where they become each other's mirror image. A person's perception of the left or right side occurs relative to him, and the upper or lower side relative to the Earth. If we perceive the sides on a large scale and abstractedly, then much becomes clear. The use of the swastika by the Nazis as their main symbol is explained by the fact that German Nazism was closely connected with occult theories, and initially knowing that the swastika implies a rotating infinity, their ideologists interpreted this symbol as a mill of the human race, which should grind the whole world, thanks to which humanity has to be "cleansed" by suffering and "screening out", and the Aryans, with whom they identified themselves, will rule the world. In fact, there was a substitution of values, which we observe in our times.



It should be noted that on Armenian carpets, the ornamental theme has a dynamic and static developments, while carpets prevail, where ornaments symbolize the dynamics of cosmic or natural phenomena over a certain period. Perhaps this happened because in ancient times people could not fully understand the concept of the universal course of time, and lived from one significant moment to the next in constant expectation of renewal. This hope was expressed in the creation of cults of the Sun, stars, moon, leading to the occurrence of many symbolic images of celestial bodies. Images of stars on Armenian carpets are diverse, multifaceted and dynamic. It can be just a stylized image of a multi-pointed star, as well as a square, rhombus or polygon surrounded by curved lines symbolizing the rays, and the bends of the "rays" are usually directed in different directions. Such images, as a rule, are symmetrical, the presence of curved lines gives the viewer a sense of the dynamics of flickering, shining and rotating.

It is important to note that if in the art of academic painting, as well as in photography, the beauty of the moment is depicted, then in the art of carpet weaving, the development of the plot in dynamics is emphasized. It should also be said about carpets, in the central field of which ornaments are completely absent or reduced to a minimum, except in the stylized frame of the carpet. The main field of the carpet is dyed either in various shades of blue or in shades of red, without any ornaments, which implies the biblical story of the seventh day of the creation of the Earth. The absence of ornaments on such carpets speaks of the perception of this day as calmness and rest from work and worries; blue and red colors symbolize night and day.

### ***Conclusion***

Armenia is one of the oldest centers of carpet weaving. Initially, carpets were a means of popularizing and preserving proto-symbolism. In addition, this segment of culture was passed on to subsequent generations through carpets. Proto-symbolism is universal ornaments, identical in the cultural tradition of all ancient peoples. You can see similar ornaments among the natives of America, Arabs, Slavs, Indians, Chinese, Scandinavians, peoples of Central Asia, Persia and, of course, Armenians. The general picture of the ornamental style in specific exhibits of ancient Armenian carpets is expressed in a holistic picture of the carpet, reproduced in a harmonious combination of various ornaments. Armenian carpets reflect four separate conceptual areas: religious themes, mythology,

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natural phenomena and the environment in its various manifestations. The ornamentation of Armenian carpets has static and dynamic development. Until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the art of carpet weaving was canonical, but since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it has moved into more free interpretations, as a result of which the ornamental style and color composition of carpets began to gradually deviate from canonical principles.

It can be said with confidence that the widest range of ornamental styles is presented in Armenian carpets. This gives us the right to assert that the Armenians, along with other ancient peoples, were the keepers, bearers and distributors of universal human values in the art of carpet weaving.

#### ***Afterword***

Scientific interest in carpets in Europe, as evidence of the history and cultural heritage of a particular nation, arose in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is important to understand that during this period Armenia did not exist as an independent political entity. That time Armenia was divided among three large empires: the Ottoman, Persian and Russian. While the Armenians continued to produce high quality textiles, they did so under the heel of one empire or another. For this reason, the Armenian contribution to the art of carpet weaving has hardly been mentioned in Western literature. Carpets produced by Armenians were often presented as Persian, Turkish, Oriental or Caucasian. The very concept of "Persian carpet" or "Turkish carpet" is imperial, geographical and commercial, since Persia and Ottoman Turkey were empires that included many nations and peoples, each of which had its own culture of carpet weaving. Likewise, the name "Russian carpet" can also be used. Armenian carpets are woven by Armenians as a nation, albeit in different geographical areas, which determines the features of the color scheme, a certain ornamental style, as well as technical characteristics (density per square decimeter, number of transverse threads, knot type, etc.). The Persian carpet can be Armenian, Kurdish, Talysh, Lezgi, Baloch, Bakhtiari and, of course, woven by the Persians as a nation. The same applies to Ottoman Turkey, whose population consisted of many different nations and nationalities, each of which had its own style in carpet weaving.

The well-known German art historian Volkmar Gantzhorn, in his fundamental monograph on oriental carpets, examines in detail the history of their origin and development. Having carefully studied the rich historical and bibliographic

material and made a serious comparative analysis of the oldest carpets kept in various museums around the world and private collections, Gantzhorn comes to the conclusion that all the ornamental patterns and compositional motifs of oriental carpets date back to Armenian cultural origins. The author reveals in detail the features of the ideological and artistic originality of Armenian carpets. He writes: "The penetration of Asian nomads into Western Asia, their aggression and the subsequent conquest of Armenia and the eastern part of the Byzantine Empire in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries caused the migration movement of the Armenian population, which not only changed the demographic structure of the population in Asia Minor, but also left behind an Armenian footprint in almost all Mediterranean and adjacent countries. All territories where carpets were woven had an Armenian population. We must take into account the production of carpets even in those areas of Europe for which this correspondence cannot be reliably confirmed". Gantzhorn points out that even the few surviving European woven carpets date from the time of the influx of the Armenian population, and suggests that the production of tapestries in France and the Burgundian Netherlands may also be explained by the marriages of the high nobility from Anjou and Burgundy with noble Armenian women<sup>31</sup>.

The art critic notes the specifics of Armenian carpets, in which there is a desire for many variations in colors, a desire for variations of the symbol of the cross, which is the central motif and is presented as "star", "solar" and "photic" crosses. Summarizing his research, Volkmar Gantzhorn notes that the oriental carpet is the greatest contribution of Armenian art to the history of all world art. And this, as the author argues, should be recognized, which would be some kind of fair compensation for the Armenians as a nation that, in its more than 2000-years of history, has suffered more than any other nation, due to its geopolitical position between the East and The West, as a result of which it survived numerous invasions, was repeatedly enslaved, oppressed and deprived of copyright in its national art, which was later fraudulently attributed to the conquerors. "The treasure trove of oriental carpet patterns is part of the Armenian identity and should be understood as such", concludes the German art historian<sup>32</sup>.

It is necessary to touch upon the biased attribution of this segment of Armenian culture to the artificially created Azerbaijani people, which gradually

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<sup>31</sup> Gantzhorn 1990, Gantzhorn 1998.

<sup>32</sup> Gantzhorn 1998.

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took place throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Azerbaijan is presented as a mini-empire, on the territory of which dozens of indigenous nations and nationalities suddenly appeared, living there since ancient times and forcibly renamed "Azerbaijanis". This term was coined on the basis of the geopolitical component of that time, with an eye set on the Persian province of the same name, so that it always hangs over the territorial integrity of Iran like the "Sword of Damocles", which we can see at present, when the ideologists of this state call themselves North Azerbaijan, and the Persian province – Southern. The capture of the cultural segment is necessary for Azerbaijan, because this is a new state with a newly formed nation, and a nation needs a culture, which they try hard to acquire in every possible way, attributing and appropriating someone else's cultural heritage, without sparing any expense for this. Here it remains only to regret that some "art critics", denying the well-known history and engaging in outright falsifications, of course receiving material benefits for this, pass off lies as reality.

So, the concept of "Azerbaijani carpet" until the second quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century cannot be found in any handwritten or printed publications. The entire pseudo-scientific history of the Azerbaijani art of carpet weaving collapses on the basis of this argument alone...

If the Azerbaijanis had really been engaged in carpet weaving for a long time, then there would have been at least some mention of this before the specified time. Interestingly, in 1952, two catalogs were published in Moscow under the special editorship of the chief compiler, Azerbaijani A.A. Akhmedov "Carpets of the Armenian SSR" and "Carpets of the Azerbaijan SSR", where copies of ancient Armenian carpets produced in the Soviet era were presented. At the same time, in the publication "Carpets of the Armenian SSR", out of nine types of carpets, two are named "Yerevan" and "Ijevan" (their design was made by Soviet artists), and seven types of carpets were presented as copies of ancient Armenian carpets, with Turkic names artificially tied to them. The forgery here is obvious. Based on the bias of these publications, I do not want to quote and cite them as links. It is enough to look at the first paragraphs of the prefaces of these catalogs, which once again prove the premeditated, expansionist attitude of Azerbaijan.

The academic concept of "Azerbaijani carpet", by publishing a catalog of the same name, was introduced in 1961 by the Azerbaijani carpet specialist Latif Kerimov, who, as there is reason to believe, was trained in this segment of culture

in Yerevan<sup>33</sup>. In fact, there was a phased and well-thought-out appropriation of the segment of Armenian culture under consideration by the political leadership of the Azerbaijan Soviet Republic, and it can be stated with confidence that the start was given by Azerbaijani ideologists in the early 50<sup>s</sup> of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

It is a well-known fact that L. Kerimov personally bought ancient carpets from the Armenian population in Soviet Armenia and took them to Azerbaijan. It is not easy to find any Armenian families in Artsakh, Gardman, Lori, Syunik, Tavush, Ijevan, in the Akhalkalaki region on the territory of Georgia, as well as in the historical Armenian territories with a compact population of Armenians forcibly incorporated into Azerbaijan, that have not been visited by Azerbaijani emissaries with an offer to buy old carpets or exchange them for new factory ones. All these carpets were transported to Azerbaijan and included in the lists of "Azerbaijani cultural heritage".

Lauren Arnold, an American art historian and author of *Princely Gifts and Papal Treasure*, says that "more than five hundred years ago, Armenian carpets were well known, valued and revered in the Christian West, long before the Azerbaijani people appeared".

Azerbaijan appropriates the Armenian tradition of carpet weaving, declaring it part of its cultural heritage, completely denying the historical role of Armenians in the rich art history of the region, and calling Karabakh carpets one of its main schools of carpet weaving. It is not uncommon to hear statements from Azerbaijani officials that Armenian carpets do not exist, and that the ornamentation of Armenian carpets is nothing but borrowed Azerbaijani designs, or that Armenians learned carpet weaving from Azerbaijanis. While such statements are blatantly absurd, they are just part of a larger narrative about the erasure, destruction and appropriation of the Armenian heritage in which Azerbaijan has participated.

Scientist, ethnographer and expert on Armenian carpets, Candidate of Historical Sciences Ashkhunj Poghosyan, the author of many articles on research in this area, has carefully documented the history of the production of Armenian carpets<sup>34</sup>. He writes that among the carpet weaving centers of historical Armenia, Artsakh (Karabakh) is of particular importance because of the variety of types of carpets with excellent features and color shades produced on its territory. A.

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<sup>33</sup> Керимов 1961.

<sup>34</sup> Погосян 2003.

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Poghosyan cites numerous and varied evidences – archaeological, written, pictorial and oral – in favor of the predominance of the culture of Armenian carpet weaving in Karabakh. Moreover, among these types there are three of the oldest surviving Armenian carpets with inscriptions and dates:

- Yerahoran prayer rug (1512), which was exhibited at the Museum of Applied Arts in Vienna;
- “Gohar” or “Guhar” (1699–1700), now owned by a private collector in the United States, but formerly held in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London;
- The carpet woven for Catholicos Nerses VI (1731) kept in the Cathedral of St. James in Jerusalem.

All of these carpets were produced in Artsakh (Karabakh). The scientist notes that the nomads who mastered foreign territories needed to somehow create a kind of cultural screen by appropriating the cultures of other peoples. In fact, the nomadic way of life practically does not allow to engage in crafts, especially carpet weaving. Carpet weaving, in its essence, is the prerogative of settled peoples. And the Turkic tribes that arrived on the territory of modern Azerbaijan had definitely led a nomadic lifestyle until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, through robberies, the nomads turned out to have a huge amount of carpets. Autochthonous sedentary Muslim peoples living in this territory – Lezgins, Tats, Talysh were also engaged in carpet weaving. In the Tat villages of Zeyva, Chichi, Kilvar, high-quality carpets were created. But today, carpets woven by Tats are also presented to the world as Azerbaijani. In the field of carpet art, Azerbaijan is waging a real war against Armenia. Agitation of the so-called “Azerbaijani” carpets is going on, books and albums are being published. At the same time, Azerbaijani specialists say that the carpets of all regions of Armenia are Azerbaijani. Numerous research centers and networks of carpet museums have been created in Azerbaijan. Hundreds of Azerbaijani specialists of various calibers “fire” at the positions of the thousand-year-old cultural heritage of our ancestors<sup>35</sup>.

The flagrant fact of plagiarism was the inclusion of the “traditional art of Azerbaijani carpet weaving” into the representative list of the intangible cultural heritage of UNESCO. This organization, which, according to its charter, is called upon to “promote the preservation of cultural heritage and protect the equal dignity of all cultures,” posted an ad with an accompanying video prepared by the

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<sup>35</sup> Poghosyan, Abrahamian and Sweezy 2001, 150–161.

Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Azerbaijan, which lists Karabakh carpets as Azerbaijani. Neither the video nor the UNESCO inscription mentions the existence of Armenian carpets from Karabakh. This is due to the structure of the UNESCO budget, which is formed from the financial investments of various states, a significant part of which is replenished by the Azerbaijani government and the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, which is headed by the wife of the current president of Azerbaijan.

Numerous studies by Armenian and foreign scientists once again confirm the fact that the ornaments are almost identical in all ancient peoples and belong to the universal proto-culture. Identical ornaments can be found among the peoples of India, China, the indigenous peoples of North and South America, Arabs, Slavs, Scandinavian peoples, the peoples of Central Asia, Persia, and of course the Armenians. In fact, the ornamental stylistics of the culture of carpet weaving is a common human heritage. It can be said with confidence that the widest range of ornamental styles is presented in Armenian carpets. This gives us the right to assert that the Armenians, along with other ancient peoples, were the keepers, bearers and distributors of universal human values in the art of carpet weaving.

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## ՀԱՅԿԱԿԱՆ ԳՈՐԳԱԳՈՐԾՈՒԹՅԱՆ ԱՐՎԵՍՏԻ ՀԻՄՆԱՐԱՐ ՀԱՅԵՑԱԿԱՐԳԸ

ԱՄԾԱՏՐՅԱՆ Վ.

### Ամփոփում

**Բանալի բաներ՝** հայկական գորգ, սիմվոլիզմ, նախասիմվոլիզմ, զարդանախշ, առասպելաբանություն, ազգային ժառանգություն, գունային կոմպոզիցիա:

Գորգագործությունը հնագույն ժամանակներից հանդիսացել է հայկական մշակույթի կարևոր մաս, ինչը Հայաստանը դարձնում է նրա հնագույն կենտրոններից մեկը: Սկզբում գորգերը գործում էին որպես նախասիմվոլիզմի հանրահռչակման և պահպանման միջոց, և մշակույթի այս հատվածը խնամքով փոխանցվում էր հաջորդ սերունդներին: Մարդկային համընդհանուր զարդանախշերը, որոնք գրեթե նույնական են բոլոր հին ժողովուրդների մոտ, նախասիմվոլիզմ են: Նույնանման զարդանախշեր հանդիպում են Ամերիկայի բնիկ ժողովուրդների, արաբների, սլավոնների, հնդիկների, չինացիների, սկանդինավների, Միջին Ասիայի, Պարսկաստանի ժողովուրդների և հայերի արվեստում: Զարդանախշային ոճաբանությունը հին հայկական գորգերի հատուկ ցուցանմուշներում արտահայտված է գորգի ամբողջական պատկերով, վերարտադրված տարբեր զարդանախշերի ներդաշնակ համադրությամբ: Հայկական գորգերի դեկորատիվ ոճաբանության հիմնական հայեցակարգային ուղղությունները դրսևորված են չորս առանձին թեմաներով՝ կրոնական, առասպելաբանություն, բնական երևույթներ և շրջակա միջավայրն իր տարբեր դրսևորումներով: Բացի այդ, հայկական գորգերի զարդա-

## **The Fundamental Conception of the Art of Armenian Carpet Weaving**

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րանքը ստատիկ և դինամիկ զարգացում ունի: Գորգագործության արվեստը մինչև XX դարը խիստ կանոնական էր, այդ դարի սկզբից այն ավելի ազատ մեկնաբանություններ է գտել, ինչը հանգեցրել է կանոնական սկզբունքներից հայկական գորգերի դեկորատիվ ոճաբանության և գունային հորինվածքի աստիճանական հեռացմանը: Հայկական գորգերում ներկայացված է զարդանախշային ոճաբանության ամենալայն շրջանակ, ինչը մեզ իրավունք է տալիս պնդելու, որ հայերը հին այլ ժողովուրդների հետ միասին եղել են համամարդկային արժեքներ պահպանող, կրող և տարածող գորգագործության արվեստում:

## **ФУНДАМЕНТАЛЬНАЯ КОНЦЕПЦИЯ ИСКУССТВА АРМЯНСКОГО КОВРОДЕЛИЯ**

АСЦАТРЯН В.

### **Резюме**

**Ключевые слова** – армянский ковер, символизм, протосимволизм, орнамент, мифология, национальное наследие, цветовая композиция.

Ковроделие с древнейших времен являлось важной частью армянской культуры, что делает Армению одним из наиболее древних его центров. Первоначально ковры выступали средством популяризации и сохранения протосимволизма, и этот сегмент культуры бережно передавался последующим поколениям. Общечеловеческие орнаменты, которые практически идентичны у всех древних народов, являются протосимволизмом. Идентичные орнаменты встречаются у коренных жителей Америки, арабов, славян, индийцев, китайцев, скандинавов, народов Средней Азии, Персии и, конечно же, у армян. Орнаментальная стилистика в конкретных экспонатах старинных армянских ковров выражается в целостной картине ковра, воспроизведенной в гармоничной совокупности различных орнаментов. Основные концептуальные направления орнаментальной стилистики армянских ковров отражены в четырех отдельных тематиках: религиозная тематика, мифология, природные явления и окружающая среда в ее различных проявлениях. Кроме того, орнаментика армянских ковров имеет статическое и динамическое развитие. Искусство ковроткачества до XX века было строго каноническим,

но с начала XX века оно нашло более свободные интерпретации, результатом чего явилось постепенное отхождение орнаментальной стилистики и цветовой композиции армянских ковров от канонических принципов. В армянских коврах представлен самый широкий спектр орнаментальной стилистики, что дает нам право утверждать, что армяне, наряду с другими древними народами, являлись хранителями, носителями и распространителями общечеловеческих ценностей в искусстве ковроделия.