



HEYDAR ALIYEV FOUNDATION

CULTURAL HERITAGE OF

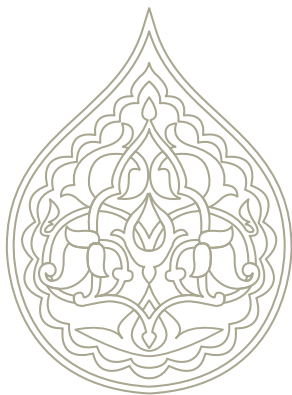


A Z E R B A I J A N

Musical Instruments



HEYDAR ALIYEV FOUNDATION



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Traditional Musical Instruments of Azerbaijan



As one of the major elements of national identity and self-consciousness, music has always played a special role in the life of the Azerbaijani people. Musical legacy of Azerbaijan is enormously rich and versatile, so are the traditional Azerbaijani musical instruments.

Gaval dash (tambourine stone) is the oldest musical instrument discovered in Azerbaijan's Gobustan area with rock carvings and archaeological finds dating back to the 10 millennium B.C. nowadays, part of UNESCO's World Cultural Heritage. Tambourine stone is believed to be a predecessor of Azerbaijani drums, naghara. Primitive humans played on it, which gave a harmonious sound.

Although many Azerbaijani musical instruments have been integrated into other world nations' cultures, historical documents preserved to date show that these instruments belonged to the Azerbaijani people.

Fawaid-I Ashara (The Ten Benefits) and Maqasidu-l-Alhan (Objectives of Tunes) treatises by Kamaladdin Abdulqadyr bin Qeybi al hafiz Maraghaly (1353-1435), a renown Azerbaijani expert in music, provide information concerning almost 40 musical instruments.

A number of mediaeval travellers like I.Barbaro, F.Kotov, A.Oleary, E.Kempfer, Brin, P.Vostrikov, etc. provided extremely interesting information concerning that-time Azerbaijani musical instruments. However the way they try to present the tools described is not through their original names but through the names of similar European musical instruments. E.g., back in 1623-1624, Fedot Kotov, a Russian merchant, uses the following names for traditional Azerbaijani instruments: 'truby' for pipes (boru in Azerbaijani), surenki for zurna, 'litavry' for timpani (naghara), nabat for hand bells.

The Russian sources also provide references of the musical instruments described by German traveller Adam Oleary during his trip to Shamakhy and Ardabil in 1636-1638. The way the tools are presented in the Russian transcription is the following: svirel (reed pipe standing for Azerbaijani ney, balaban or tutek), truba (pipe or garaney in Azerbaijani), barabany (drums, kos or tebil in Azerbaijani), ruchniye barabany (hand drums, standing for Azerbaijani naghara), buben (tambourine, qaval or def in Azerbaijani), gudok (whistle or special type of whistle for Azerbaijani kamancha), zytry (zither for Azerbaijani qanun, chang and santur), fleyta (flute for Azerbaijani balaban), lyuntnya (lute for Azerbaijani oud), snake hypnotizing reed flute (for Azerbaijani tutek and ney), rozhok (horn for Azerbaijani zurna), dudochnik (piper for Azerbaijani balabanchy), kriviye roga (curved horns, presumably for Azerbaijani shahnefir), symbal (copper disks or dulcimers for Azerbaijani sinjler), dudki (pipes for Azerbaijani tutek or balaban), turetskiy baraban (Turkish drum for Azerbaijani Turk davul), fafroroviye chashi (7 porcelain tubes filled with various amounts of water and played with double sticks, chini kasa in Azerbaijani).

Engelbert Kempfer (1651-1716), another German traveller and naturalist, staying in Shamakhy on December 19, 1683 and in Baku on January 6-9 1684, left an interesting legacy of 23 sketches depicting local musical instruments and written comments regarding a number of non sketched tools.



Comments to sketches:

1. Zurna (surnai), 2. Qumro, 3. Sinj (sindfij), 4. Dumbul (denbaal), 5. Duhul (dobul), what is hereby implied is a large percussive tool inconvenient for transportation and played with drumsticks. The tool's image is nonetheless missing, 6. Dumbek (donbek), what is implied is a 4-stringed instrument known as chahartar, with sketch missing, 7. Daf (def), 8. Daire (daireh), 9. Kos (kuus), 10. Goshanaghara (nagbareh), 11. Tabil-baz (thebli baas), 12. Mridangam (tympani), 13. Gara ney or garanay (kharanha), 14. Nafir (nefir), 15. Shahnafir (sjacb nefir), 16. Setar (oud, reyxoeba), the sketch depicts setar however the comments relate to an oud-shaped musical instrument, 17. Chehesdah (tfjehesdeh), 18. Kamancha (kamaantfjeh), 19. Pandura or kobiz, 20. Mughniye-shaped instrument, 21. Chang (tfjeng).

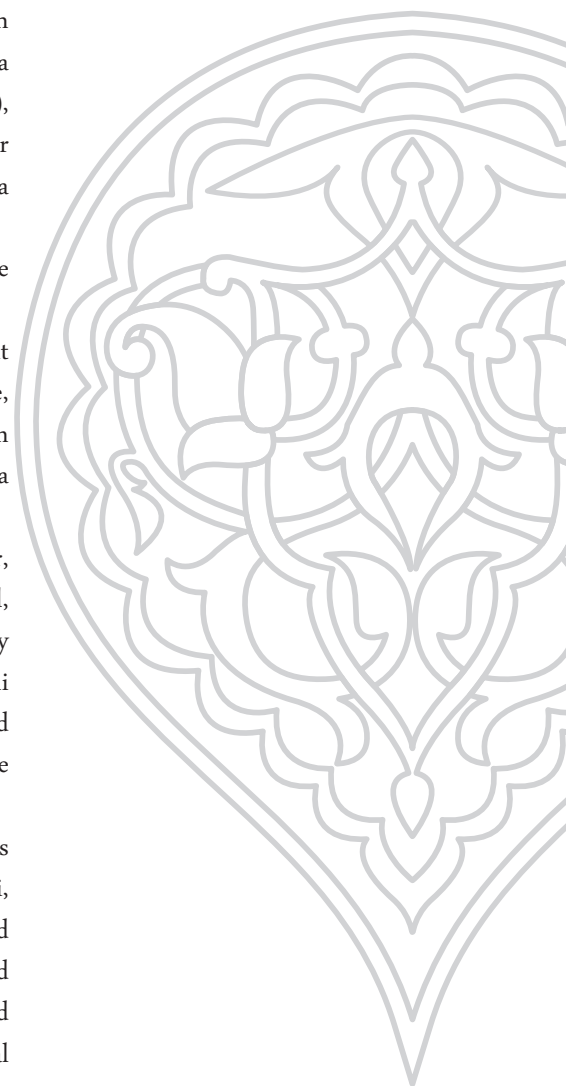
As it may be concluded, compared to other visitors, Kempfer tried to provide a more precise transcription of the musical instruments described.

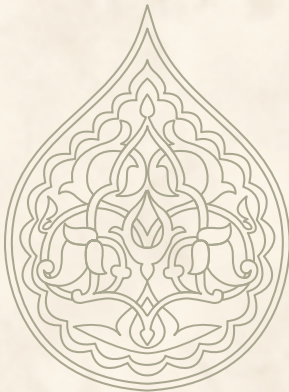
Archaeological finds supported by historic chronicles and literary sources provide evidence of about 60 various musical instruments historically used in Azerbaijan. These are gopuz, chang, roud, chagane, robab, santour, barbed, Shirvan tanbour, choghur, ney, nusche, to mention a few. The State Museum of Musical Culture of Azerbaijan is one of the depositories of these instruments today, which are a part of vast museum collections numbering more than 50000 items.

Together with the most prevalent and nowadays popular Azerbaijani folk musical instruments like tar, kamancha, saz, oud, balaban, zurna, tutek, tulum, kanon, dumbek, naghara, gosha naghara, gaval, etc., these instruments are used and valued as an integral part of Azerbaijan's musical heritage. They are absolutely essential for the art of mugham that provides a sort of imprint of the Azerbaijani people's genetic code. They are equally important for the art of ashys, the Azerbaijani minstrels and folk singer poets. Both the mugham and the ashyg arts are nowadays recognized as a part of the world's intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO.

Along with deeply rooted traditions of being used in folk songs and dances, these musical instruments were broadly used in the works of the classic Azerbaijani composers, starting with Uzeyir Hajibeyli, the leading light in local music and the author of the first opera in the Muslim Orient (Leyli and Majnun, 1908). It was U.Hajibeyli who succeeded in introducing tar, one of the most valued Azerbaijani musical instruments, in the European orchestra. Enormous technical opportunities offered by folk instruments augmented by the performers' virtuosity made them widely used in professional works by modern composers.

The Azerbaijan State Museum of Musical Culture is nowadays one of the country's major musical depositories of this kind. The Museum boasts of more than 50 thousand items, which, together with other public and private collections, provide a valuable evidence of Azerbaijan's deeply rooted musical traditions and instruments. Cautiously preserved and cherished, they constitute a true national pride.







Percussive Instruments



Private collection
19th century

GAVAL

Gaval is a percussive instrument which has a lengthy tradition of use in the Azerbaijani music. According to the medieval poetry and art, gaval was frequently used at the royal court. It was an inalienable piece of accompaniment for the khanende, traditional performers of mugham, the art included in the UNESCO's World Cultural Heritage List as of 2003. Typically, gaval was manufactured of walnut with membrane crafted of tanned sturgeon skin. The wooden frame was adorned by copper rings from inside.



Gaval, private collection. Made on the basis of archival sketches
End of the 20th century



Goltug naghara

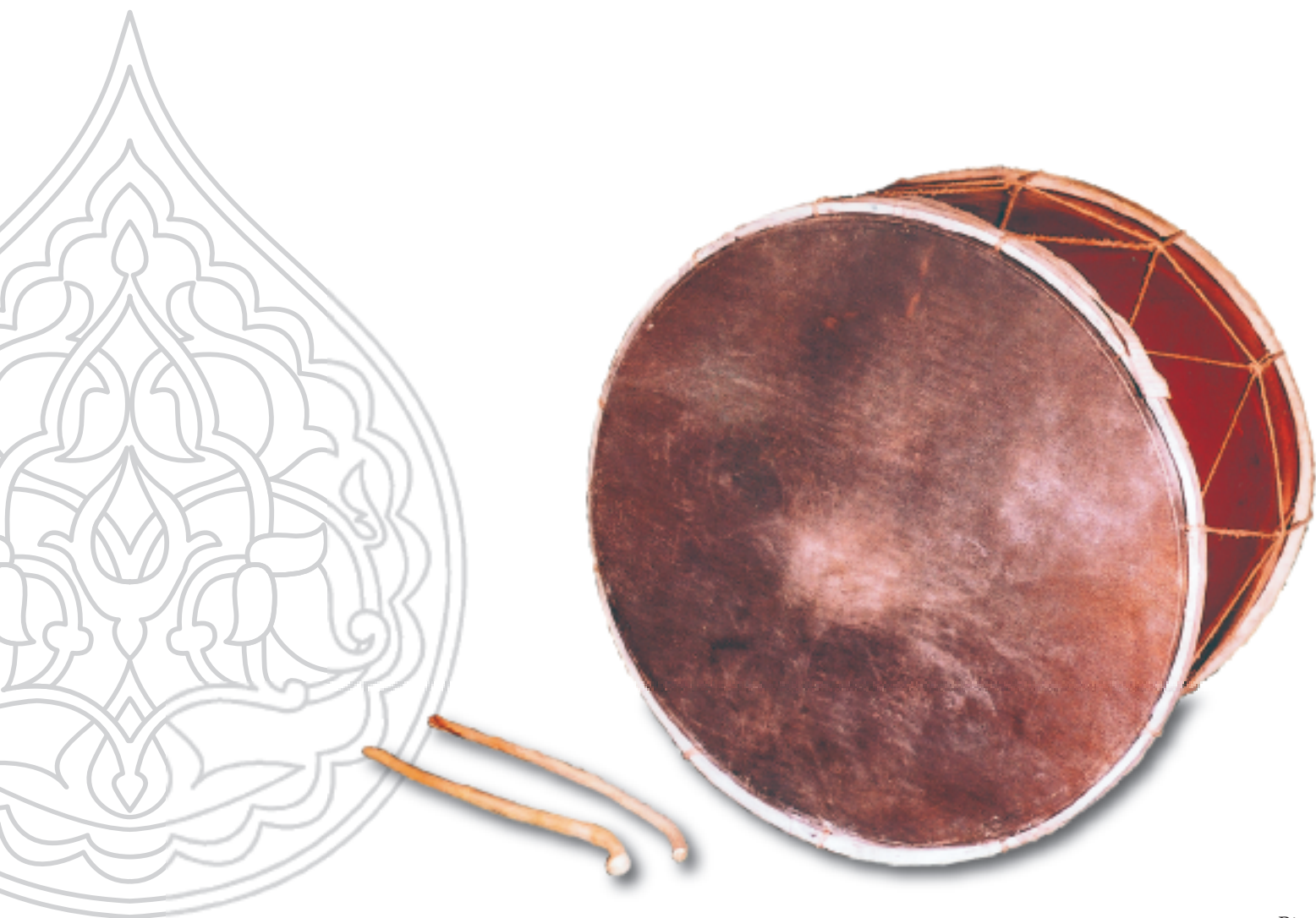
Private collection. Made on the basis of archival sketches
2nd half of the 20th century

NAGHARA

Naghara is a type of drum. The naghara family includes three major versions of this instrument, such as big naghara, small naghara and qoltuq naghara (i.e. bosom held naghara). These types differ in size and performance mode. The largest option has a body 40-45cm in diameter and 50-55cm in height. It is played with wooden sticks. Small naghara, also known as jura naghara, can also be played with sticks. However fingers and palms may be used as well. Its dimensions are 30-32cm in diameter and 34-36cm in height. Almost of the same size with small naghara, qoltuq naghara is pressed to the performer's body by his elbow, and played with fingers and palms only. The body of naghara is made of mulberry, apricot or other types of wood, whereas the membrane is crafted of goatskin or sheepskin.



Jura naghara
Private collection. Made on the basis of archival sketches
70s of the 20th century



Big naghara
Private collection. Made on the basis of archival sketches
80s of the 20th century



Private collection. Made on the basis of archival sketches
80s of the 20th century

KOS

Historically known as keburghe in Azerbaijan, this was one of the largest instruments used for military command and traditional ceremonies. With the shape of a huge bowl, it has the body made of clay, copper and bronze. A coupled version of the instrument may be used to produce various timbre and tones. The sound is produced by mallets. Due to its varying size, three types of kos are distinguished, i.e. horse kos, camel kos, and elephant kos.



Private collection. Made on the basis of archival sketches
End of the 20th century



The State Museum of Musical Culture of Azerbaijan, 16187
18th century

GOSHA-NAGHARA (Double naghara)

Gosha naghara, literally 'a double drum', consists of two bowl-shaped drums of different sizes tied together. The drums' membrane was traditionally manufactured of tanned animal hide, while the body was made of clay. Nowadays wood and metal may be used as well. Gosha naghara is played while rested on the floor or on a platform by wooden drumsticks. The instrument remains widely used today.



Private collection
19th century

TEBIL

Known for its sizeable dimensions and loud sound, tebil was used in Azerbaijan since the very old times. The instrument presents tanned leather stretched upon a wooden bowl, with sound produced by two mallets with leather-covered edges.

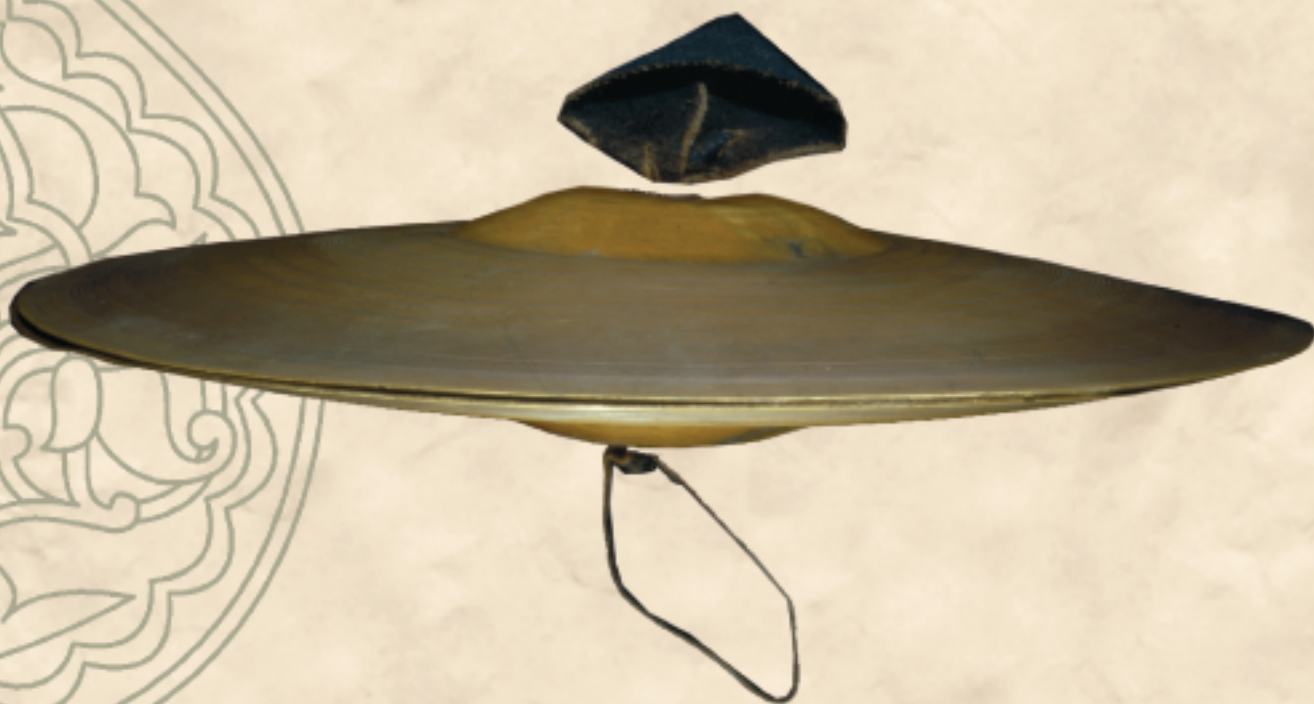


Private collection
19th century



Private collection
19th century





Private collection
19th century

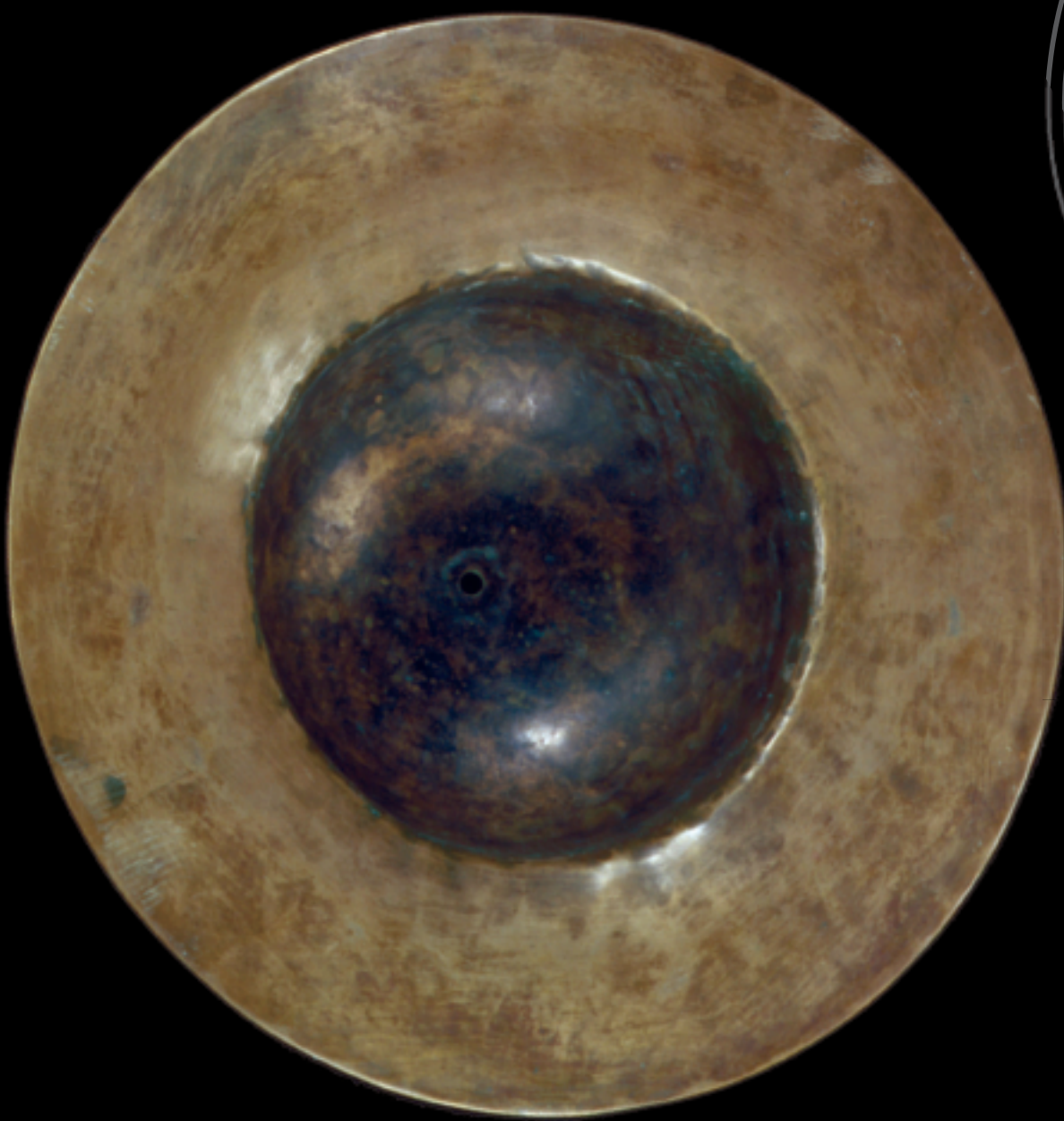


5 - 6 centuries
Fuzuli, Yedditepe village
Bronze

SINJ

This ancient percussive tool was discovered in the course of archaeological excavations in Azerbaijan, sinj consists of two metal trays usually made of copper or bronze. Two pieces of belt attached to the trays' protuberant sides enable to put them of right and left hands respectively and thus produce a sound by hitting the plates together like timpani. Several types of sinj were generally used in Azerbaijan, i.e. the big one (475-600 millimeters in diameter), the medium one (375-450 mm), the 'baby' (250-350mm), and the 'dwarf' or 'pygmy' sinj (140-150mm). In old days, sinj was among the major instruments used by military bands.





Sinj
Private collection
19th century



Private collection. Made on the basis of archival sketches. 2nd half of the 20th century

DUMBAK

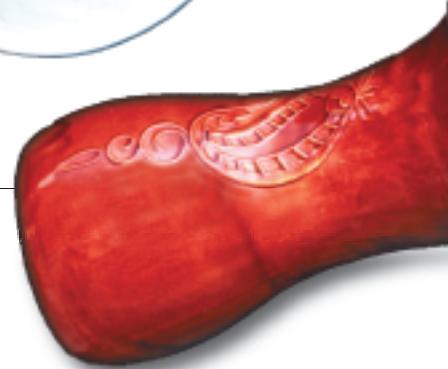
Dumbak is another type of percussive instruments. It has a shape of a large goblet, usually made of burnt clay, wood or metal. The membrane is normally leather. Dumbak is played while suspending from performer's shoulder. The sound is produced by fingers of both hands. The instrument is broadly used in folk performances to this day.



A girl with dumbak. Painting, oil on canvas, 150 × 82 cm, Qajar Dynasty. 19th century, The Georgian National Museum. The Shalva Amiranashvili Museum of Fine Arts



The State Museum of Musical Culture of
Azerbaijan, 14791
1978





The State Museum of Musical Culture
of Azerbaijan, 16221
1950



The State Museum of Musical Culture
of Azerbaijan, 14780
1978





The State Museum of Musical
Culture of Azerbaijan, 12719
1970s

LAGGUTU

Laggutu is a percussive tool made of wood. It comprises two small box-like rectangle parts carved out of a solid piece of wood with deeper indent on the upper desk. It is this shape that makes the sound of this instrument particularly unique. While played, laggutu is placed on a platform and struck with two wooden drumsticks. The instrument is particularly popular in the southern areas of Azerbaijan.



Private collection
19th century

DAF

Daf is another percussive tool with a long tradition of use. In the past, not a musical party was held without this instrument. This is probably the reason why portrayals of daf are so frequently found in the mediaeval miniature art. The drum's sturgeon membrane was jacketed over the round frame made of walnut and adorned by copper cups or rings in the circle's five points.



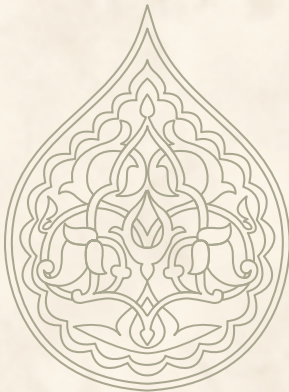
Private collection. Made on the basis of archival sketches
1970s

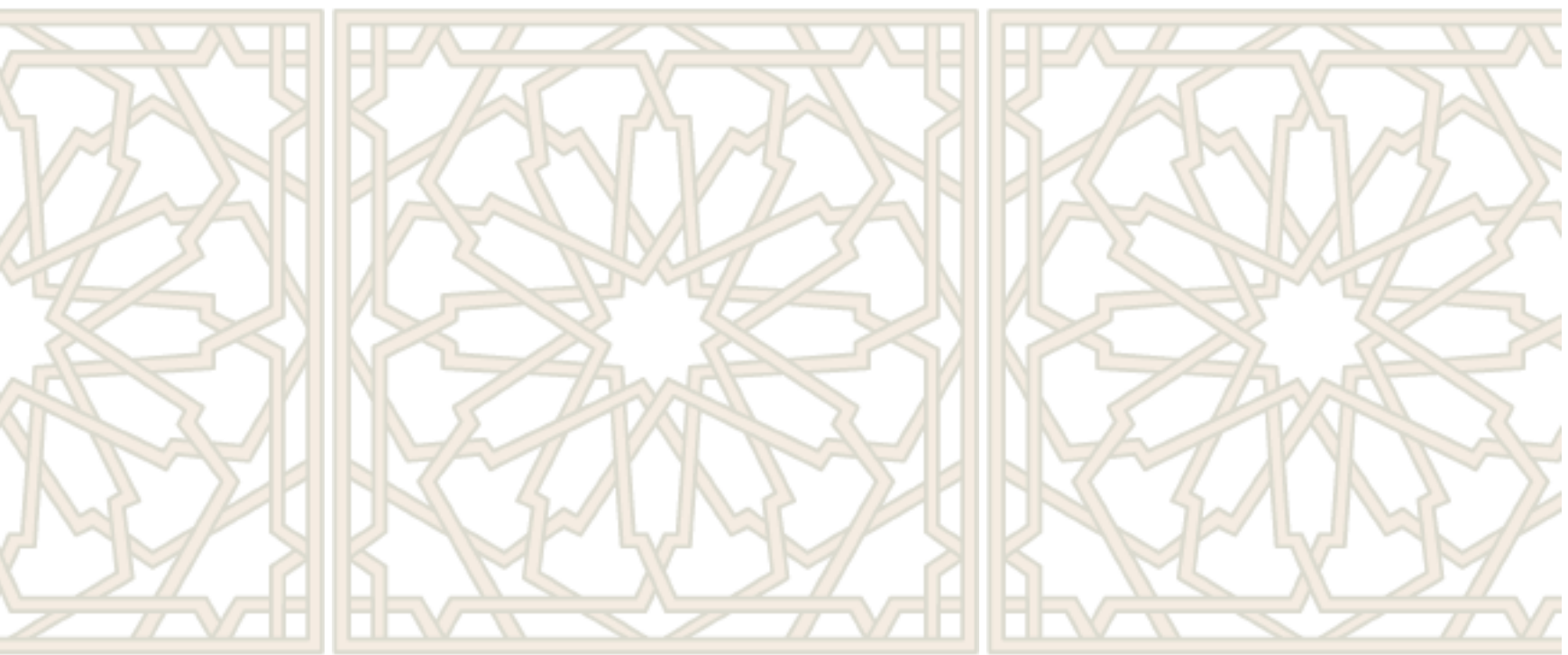
SHAGRAG

Shagrag is a percussive musical instrument made of shells, wood and bronze. It has a visual similarity with castanets. The instrument comprises two to four small pieces of wood passed onto fingers by means of leather or string rings.



Dancing girl with castanets. Painting, oil on canvas, 158x90 cm, Qajar Dynasty. 1800-1825. The State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg, Russia.





Wind Instruments



Private collection, 1900



Private collection, 1900



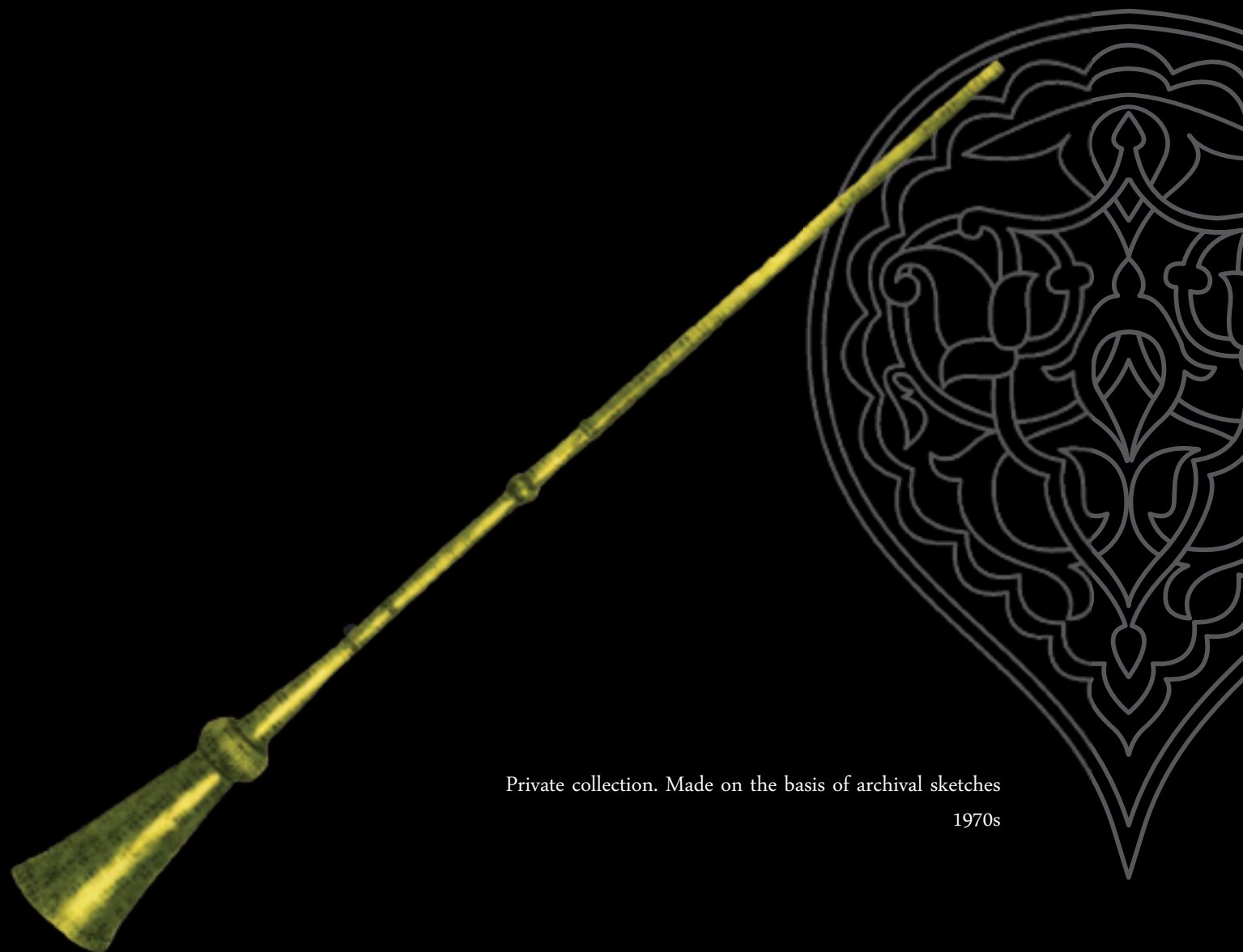
Private collection,
2nd half of the 19th century



Private collection, 1900

ZURNA

Zurna is a type of wind musical instruments known for its strong shrilly sound. The body of zurna is usually carved out of apricot, walnut or mulberry. There are seven apertures on the front side of the instrument and one on the back side. Since times immemorial, its loud and distinct sound was a signature element of a traditional Azerbaijani wedding, particularly the moments when a bride is taken from her patrimonial home.



Private collection. Made on the basis of archival sketches
1970s

GARANEY

This was another wind tool used for military command and ceremonial procedures and known for its excessively loud sound timbre.

Made of copper, it could reach up to 3 meters in length.



Private collection. Made on the basis of archival sketches. End of the 20th century

NEY

Ney is among the oldest wind tools, with several versions known to this day. Abdulgadir Maraghi, a recognized Azerbaijani expert in music (14th century), distinguished two types of ney, i.e. the white ney and the black ney. A very specific sound of ney was the reason of a poetic metaphor by Muhammad Fuzuli, a great Azerbaijani poet of the 15th century, who wrote: "It's the love that makes me moan like ney..."

Private collection,
19th century



The State Museum of Musical
Culture of Azerbaijan, 13539
1960s



TUTEK

Tutek is the forerunner of the majority of wind instruments. It is known for its soft tone and very pleasant sound. Archaeological excavations conducted in Mingchevir, Nakhchivan, Gedabey, Barda and other sites in Azerbaijan provide sufficient evidence of tutek made of bird and animal bones being in use as early as the 2nd millennium B.C. According to historic chronicles, tutek was also used in battles.



The Archaeological and Ethnographic Institute of Azerbaijan

GUSH TUTEK

Gush tutek is the most ancient sample of pipe-type wind musical instruments. The tool's name literally translated as 'the bird's pipe' is due to its sound resembling the voice of nightingale or thrush. Other names of this instrument include burbug, gil tutek (clay pipe), fit tutek (whistle pipe), burduq, etc. Made of baked clay, this bird-shaped simple tool had only 3-4 apertures.





The State Museum of Musical Culture
of Azerbaijan, 14035, 14852, 14864
1950s

Private collection,
19th century

YAN TUTEK

Yan tutek is another wind tool made of rush, reed, wood or bronze. This musical instrument consists of a pipe with seven apertures on top and one in the bottom. Sometimes two more holes are made in the bottom part to enhance the quality of sound.



The State Museum of Musical Culture
of Azerbaijan, 13540, 14031, 14058
1970s

Private collection,
19th century



BALABAN

Balaban is a popular wooden wind tool with eight apertures in the front and one in the back for sound regulation. The mouthpiece is made of cane. The origin of the instrument's name is traced to the Azerbaijani words bala, i.e. 'baby', 'small', and ban, i.e. 'crackle'.



The State Museum of Musical Culture
of Azerbaijan, 14855
1980s



TULUM

Tulum is a type of wind instruments similar to bagpipes, with a bag made of tanned sheep or goat skin. The instrument is crafted of a whole piece of animal skin, with two legs tied together and pipes attached to the other two. The pipes are made of reed or bone and have seven apertures. In Azerbaijan, this instrument was more typical of Nakhchivan.



Private collection. Made on the basis of archival sketches, 1970s

BORU

Boru is one of the wind tools used for military signals. The instrument was made of either metal or earthenware. Kitabi Dede Gorgud epic story emphasizes a loud sound produced by boru. This horn-shaped tool could be also cast of copper and bronze alloy.



Private collection, 18 - 19 centuries

Private collection, 18 - 19th centuries



NAFIR

Nafir is a variety of garaney, smaller in size. The model made of bronze with three bowl-shape pieces bent to the back was also known as shahnafir.



Private collection,
1st half of the 20th century

MUSIGAR

Musigar is another old wind tool varying in dimensions and sound range from a smaller version of 8 pipes all the way to 20 pipes.

The sound was produced by consecutive blowing into the pipes. The instrument featured a strong whistling sound produced by its cane and reed pipes.

Private collection,
1900s



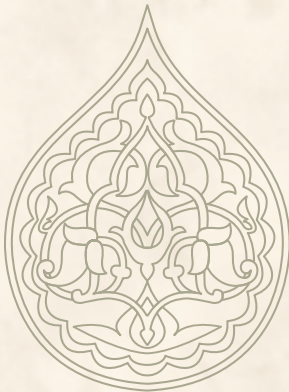
ACCORDION

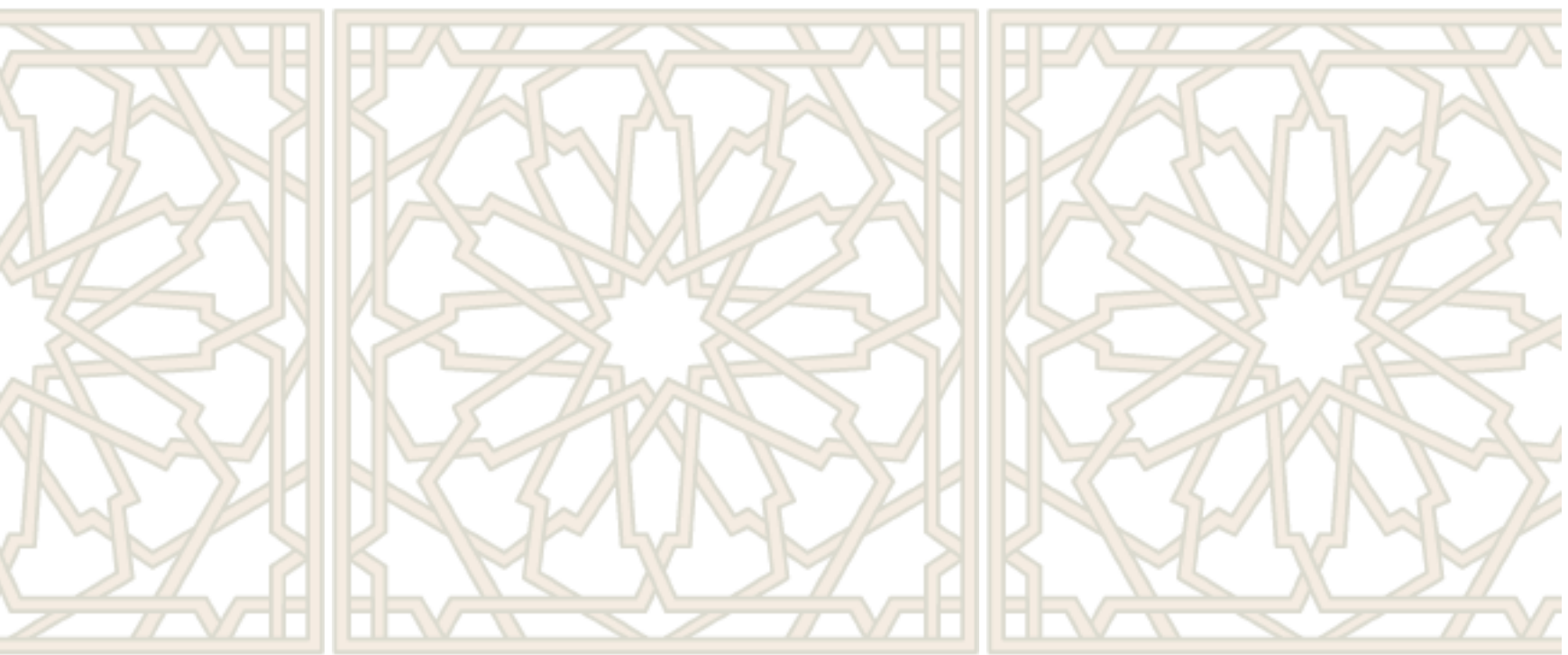
Accordion, locally known as garmon, has found its way to the Azerbaijani music as of late 19th century.

Meanwhile, it was thoroughly modified and as such, found its place among the local folk instruments, getting particularly popular in dances' accompaniment. In the Azerbaijani garmon, melody is played by forefinger, middle finger, fourth finger and little finger of the right hand. The keynote accompanying the melody is played with fingers of the left hand. Local garmon is usually richly decorated and inlaid with mother-of-pearl.



Private collection, 1988





Stringed Instruments



The National History Museum of Azerbaijan, 4379
19th century

TAR

Tar is a traditional Azerbaijani long-necked stringed musical instrument played with plectrum. Throughout its history, tar has undergone a substantial evolution with the number of strings gradually increasing from 2 to 6. The famous Shusha-based musician Mirza Sadygh, also known as Sadykh-Jan (1846-1902), introduced the most recent improvement to the instrument by adding 6 more strings and thus bringing the total number to 11. Sadykh-Jan's modifications reduced the instrument's size and playing position by moving it from knees to upper chest. This new position of tar enabled performers to better manage the sound vibration.

It was this most recent version introduced by Sadygh-Jan that made tar a kind of symbol of the folk Azerbaijani music and the leading instrument in traditional trio performing mugham, a very peculiar piece of Azerbaijan's musical art recognized as a part of the world cultural heritage by UNESCO (2003).



The State Museum of Musical
Culture of Azerbaijan, 14876
1990





The State Museum of Musical
Culture of Azerbaijan, 16077
1999

KAMANCHA

Kamancha is another stringed musical instrument played with bow. Its name originates from the Turkic word 'kaman' standing for 'bow'. Kamancha was broadly mentioned in the medieval Oriental poetry and depicted in local works of art, such as The Musical Party miniature by Mir Sayyid Ali, a recognized artist of the 14th century. The founding father of the classic Azerbaijani music Uzeyir Hajibeyli (1885-1948) highly valued kamancha emphasizing its similarity to human voice.



The National History Museum of Azerbaijan, 1503
1st half of the 20th century



The State Museum of Musical
Culture of Azerbaijan, 16079
19th century



Private collection, 12th century





The National History Museum of Azerbaijan, 9255
19th century



Private collection, early 20th century

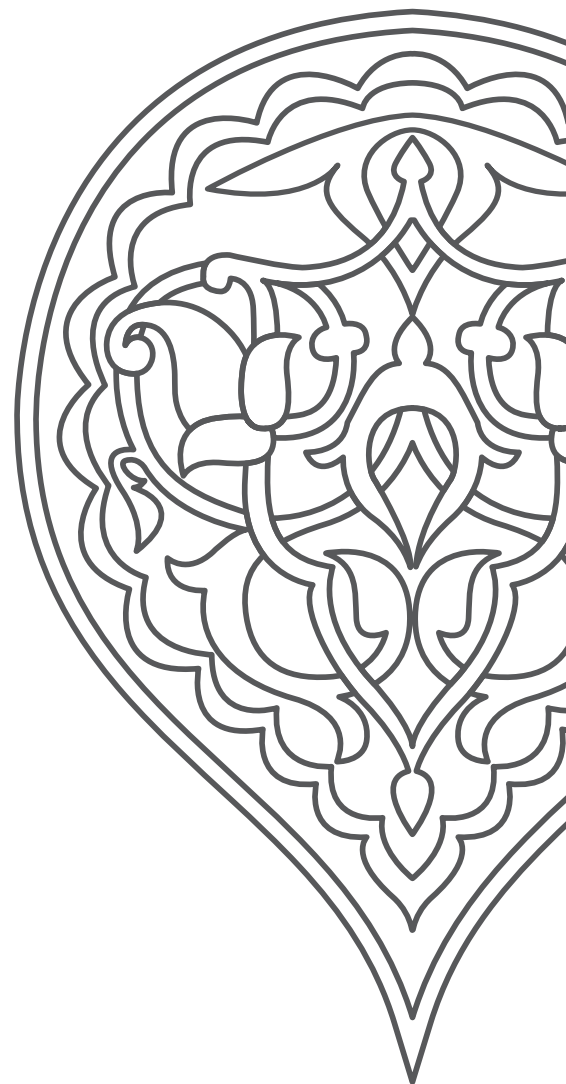




Private collection, 1st half of the 20th century

SAZ

One of the oldest and most popular local stringed musical instruments, saz is also played with plectrum. Depending on size and number of strings, 3 types of saz are known, i.e. the big (8-11 strings), the average (8-9 strings), and the small one (4-7 strings). Saz is mainly used by asuqs, Azerbaijani minstrels, whose art is nowadays included in UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage List.



A young man playing saz. Painting, oil on canvas, 85.5 × 71 cm, Qajar Dynasty. Late 18th - early 19th century, The Georgian National Museum. The Shalva Amiranashvili Museum of Fine Arts.



Saz, private collection, 1999



The State Museum of Musical
Culture of Azerbaijan, 15509
1978

ROUD

Roud is a stringed tool which is mentioned in historic sources as early as the 9th century. It is believed that its shape was influenced by pumpkin. The sound is produced by either fingers or by soft plectrum. The body part is manufactured of apricot wood with a half pine half fish skin face, whereas the neck and head are crafted of walnut.



SHAHROUD

Back in the 15th century, a stringed instrument known as shahrud had a special place of its own in Azerbaijan's musical culture. In fact, this was a variety of roud resembling oud by its shape. Five couples of strings made of silk or animal intestines (tendons) were stretched to the body part crafted of plane, beech or walnut. The resonating piece of the facial side was covered by a pine-tree board. 14-17 membranes were attached to the instrument's oblong handle.



Private collection, 18th century



Made on the basis of archival sketches.
The State Museum of Musical
Culture of Azerbaijan, 16097
1999

GOPUZ

Gopuz is the oldest known Azerbaijani stringed musical instrument. The earliest images depicting a musician playing gopuz, date back to the 7th millennium B.C. In fact, gopuz was the instrument played by the main characters of Kitabi Dede Gorgud epic story, Azerbaijan's earliest written narrative of the 7th century A.D. It may be also stated that a three-string version of gopuz is believed to be a forerunner of saz.



Private collection, 1st half of the 20th century

oud

Oud is another ancient stringed instrument with sound produced by plucking. According to Sharafaddiin Abdulmomin Urmavi, a recognized expert in music of the 13th century, oud was originally invented by one of the descendants of Muhammad the Prophet. This is far not the only version trying to explain the instrument's origin. This way or another, in the Middle Ages, oud was among the major instruments of the higher society, hence it was oftentimes portrayed and praised in poetry and art. Throughout centuries of its existence, the instrument had undergone a significant evolution, towards its present-day shape with 11 strings. The body part made of sandalwood, walnut and pear-tree is very labor-intensive, whereas other parts consist of numerous particles, some of them crafted of pine-tree.



Oud, private collection, 1st half of the 20th century



Oud, private collection, 1900





The State Museum of Musical
Culture of Azerbaijan, 16109
1986

RUBAB

Rubab is another stringed tool played with plectrum. Its body is made of mulberry, walnut and beech tree. The body surface is jacketed by fish skin, whereas the neck is made of nut. It has two pairs of twisted silk and gut strings.



The State Museum of Musical
Culture of Azerbaijan, 16135
1982

SHIRVAN TANBUR

Shirvan tanbur is a pear shaped stringed instrument with either two or three strings. Some versions of tanbur were played with a bow, but more often it was plucked with fingers or plectrum. The Shirvan Tanbur presented hereby is crafted of mulberry and pear tree, with the facial side covered with pine, and neck carved of walnut.



Tanbur, private collection, 1st half of the 20th century



The State Museum of Musical
Culture of Azerbaijan, 16108
1982

BARBAT

Barbat is a stringed instrument played by plucking and used primarily at the medieval Azerbaijani court. According to Nizami Ganjavi, a renown Azerbaijani poet of the 12th century, barbat was invented by a well-known musician, singer and composer called Barbed, described in his poem Khosrow and Shirin. Historic sources mention 3, 8 and 10-stringed versions of this tool.



The National History Museum of Azerbaijan, 4010
18th century

CHOGUR

Chogur is a nine-stringed plucked musical instrument. Its body is crafted of mulberry with walnut used for the head and neck.



CHANG

Chang is a type of harp. Archaeological evidence suggests that it was in use in the area as of the 4-3rd centuries B.C., if not earlier. According to medieval scholars and miniature works, chang was primarily played by women. Chang is the most frequently mentioned musical instrument in the poems of Nizami Ganjavi. Its body is crafted of wood and covered with fish skin. Metal loops and wooden pegs for stressing strings were made of silk and guts.



Private collection, 2nd half of the 19th century

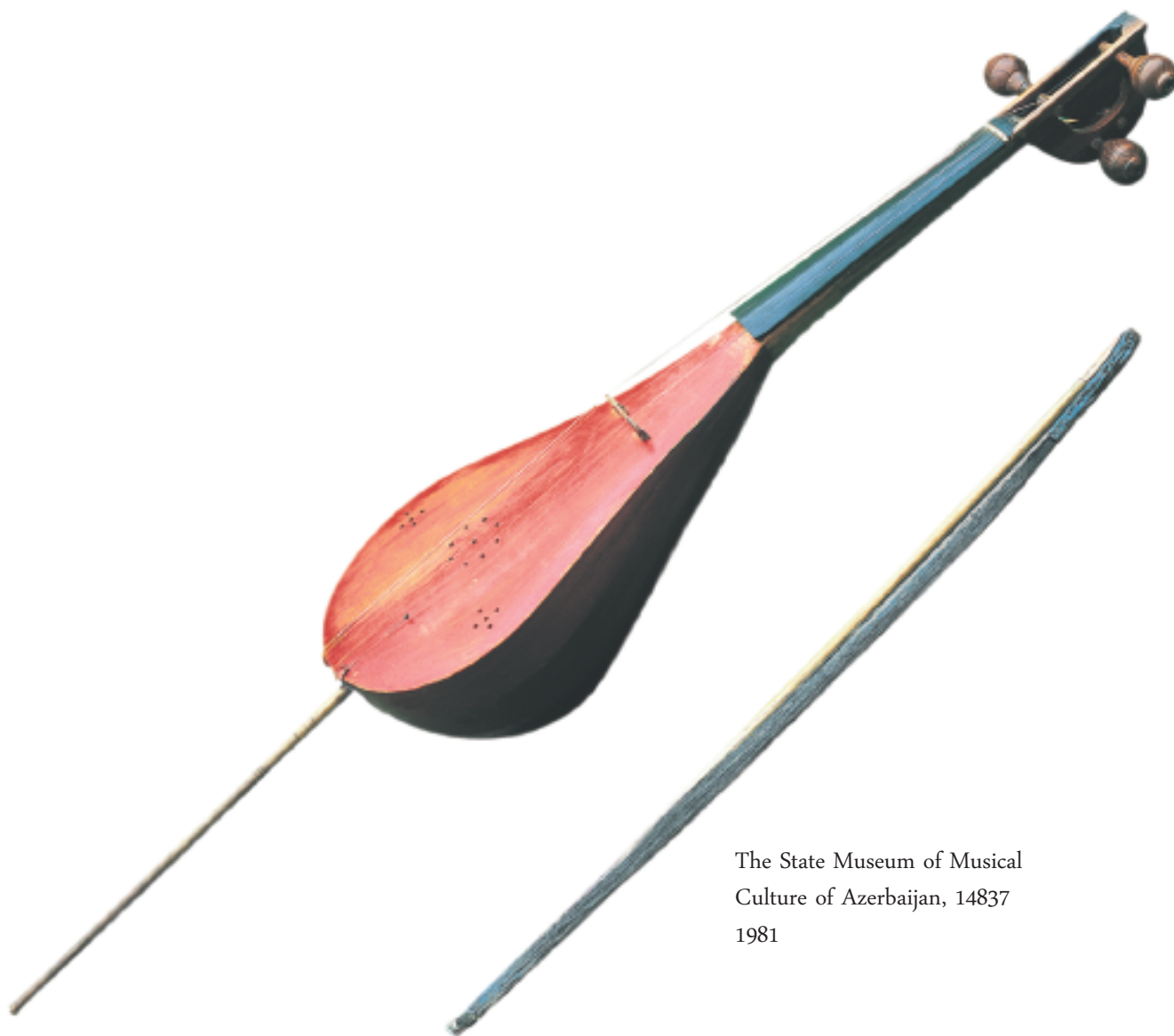




Chang, private collection, 1st half of the 20th century







The State Museum of Musical
Culture of Azerbaijan, 14837
1981

CHAGANE

Chagane is a four-stringed instrument played with bow. Frequently mentioned in the works by medieval Azerbaijani poets, it presents a complex construction comprising nine sections threaded around a metal rod which forms the core of the instrument. The sounding board is made of pine, while the rest parts of the instrument are crafted of nut, sandalwood and beech.





The National History Museum of Azerbaijan, 9596
18th century

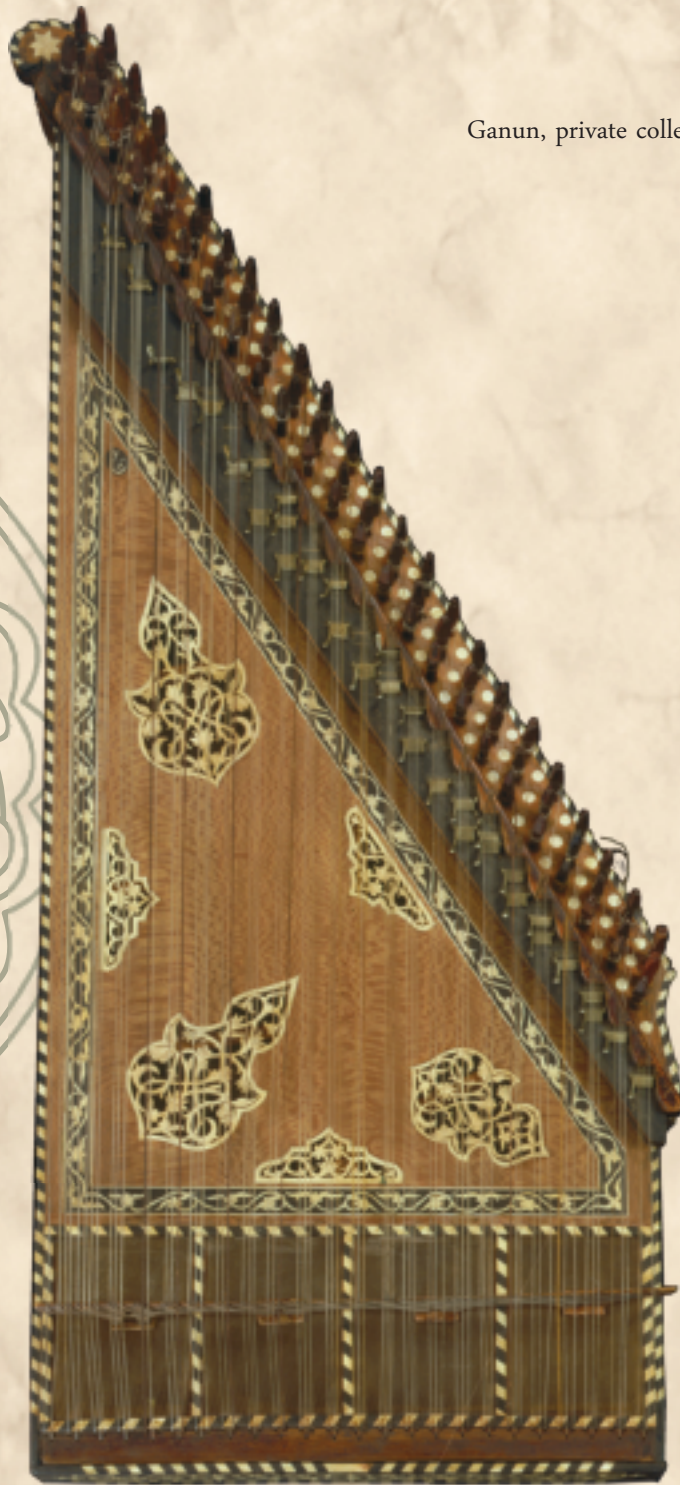


GANUN

Ganun is a lyre-like stringed tool played by plucking in a horizontal position. Ganun has a shape of a flat wooden box crafted of birch, walnut or other durable types of wood.



Ganun, private collection, 19th century





Ganun, private collection, 19th century







Private collection, 19th century



SANTUR

Santur is a horizontally played stringed instrument. The sound is achieved by hitting the strings with light hammers. This version of santur has 96 metal strings and 12 bridges, with the sound ranging from mi of the great octave to la sharp of the second octave. It can also have 9-18 bridges. The strings are stretched on a trapezoidal wooden frame, with top and bottom boards made of walnut.



Private collection. Made on the basis of archival sketches. 2009



NUZHE

Nuzhe is another stringed instrument played with plucking described by Safiaddin Urmavi, a famous Azerbaijani expert in music. With the body part crafted of plane, boxwood and cedar, it has 81 strings. Along with coupled strings stretched along a thin wooden plate, there are also shorter single strings of various length.

CULTURAL HERITAGE OF



AZERBAIJAN

Musical Instruments

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