



World Heritage

Sheki Khans'

Sheki "Yukhari Bash" National Historical-Architectural
Reserve

Khanate period in Azerbaijan

The Khanate period in Azerbaijan refers to the era from the mid-18th century to the early 19th century, when the territory of Azerbaijan was divided into several independent and semi-independent states known as khanates. This period began after the weakening and collapse of the rule of Nader Shah Afshar in 1747. Local rulers established their own governments, each led by a khan who controlled political, military, and economic affairs.

At the beginning of the 19th century, the independence of many Azerbaijani khanates gradually ended due to Russian expansion in the South Caucasus. After the Russo-Persian wars of 1804–1813 and 1826–1828, the territories of northern Azerbaijan were incorporated into the Russian Empire through the Treaties of Gulistan (1813) and Turkmenchay (1828).

The Khanate period played an important role in shaping Azerbaijan's historical identity. It was a time of political independence, regional development, and cultural growth. Many architectural monuments, traditional crafts, and urban forms that represent Azerbaijani heritage today originate from this period.





KHANS

The Sheki Khanate was an important khanate established in northern Azerbaijan in the 18th century by **Haji Chelebi Khan**. With its capital in Sheki, the khanate became renowned for its remarkable development in trade, craftsmanship, and architecture.

Haji Chelebi Khan was a prominent statesman who founded the Sheki Khanate in the 18th century and secured the region's independence.

During the reign of **Muhammed Huseyn Khan Mushtag** (1759–1780) the grandson of Haji Chelebi Khan, the Palace of the Sheki Khans was built. This palace is considered one of the finest masterpieces of Azerbaijani architecture, celebrated for its elegant shebeke (traditional stained-glass lattice) windows and richly decorated wall paintings.

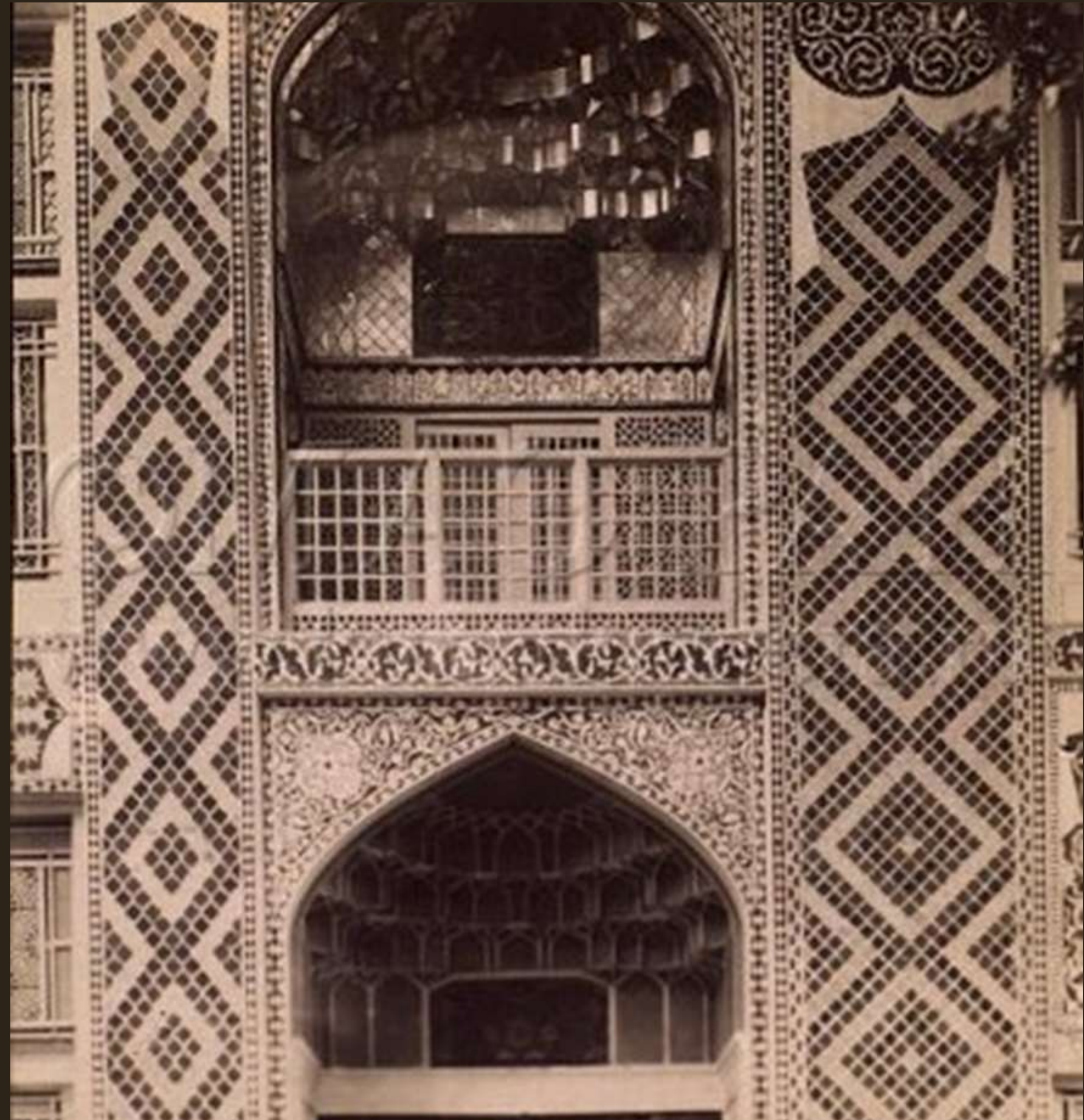
The Harmony of Stone, Light, and Craftsmanship

The Palace of the Sheki Khans was built using locally sourced construction materials. Natural elements such as stone, wood, and colored glass were skillfully incorporated into its construction. The palace is also a unique example of architecture, shaped by the influence of Persian, Eastern and local architectural traditions. At the same time the palace was strongly influenced by the region's role on the Silk Road. For centuries, Sheki was an important trade center connecting the East and West. The movement of merchants, craftsmen, and cultural ideas along the Silk Road influenced the palace's architectural style, decorative elements, and artistic traditions.



Structural Planning

The Palace of the Sheki Khans follows a two-story, symmetrical layout. It consists of six rooms, four corridors, and two iwans (open vaulted porches). The ground floor was primarily used for service functions, with only the Divan Hall being richly decorated. The upper floor was designed for official receptions and ceremonial purposes, featuring grand reception halls and elaborately decorated rooms. At the center of both floors is a spacious hall, around which the other rooms are arranged. This well-balanced layout successfully combines functionality with architectural elegance, reflecting the refined planning principles of the period.



First Floor

The first floor of the palace contains the waiting room, the registry office, and the Divan Hall. Every room is equipped with a traditional fireplace (bukhari). The walls feature decorative niches, while the doorways are designed with high thresholds, reflecting the architectural characteristics of the period.





Decorations

The wall paintings of the Palace of the Sheki Khans are exceptionally rich and decorative in style. They feature geometric and floral motifs, as well as hunting and battle scenes. These paintings not only enhance the palace's interior with remarkable artistic and aesthetic value but also provide unique insights into Azerbaijani mythology and ethnography.



Second Floor



The Lady's Chamber

The room reserved for female guests is distinguished from the other rooms by the dominant use of the color red.



Guest Chamber

This room, where Muhammad Huseyn Khan Mushtag received poets and distinguished guests, features large shebeke windows on both sides.

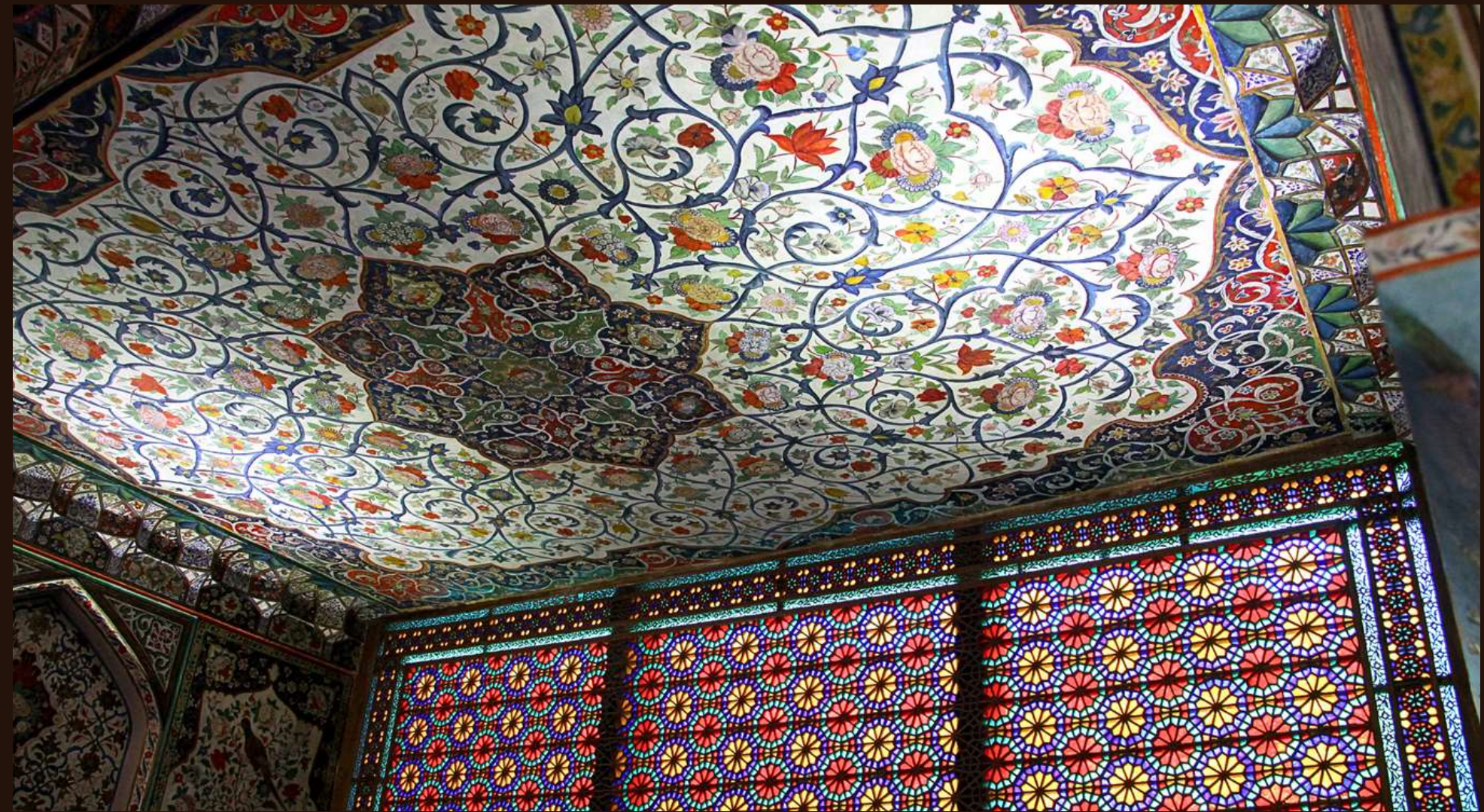


The Khan's Study

It is sometimes referred to as the "Philosophical Room" because of the symbolic meanings conveyed by its wall paintings.

“War and hunting scenes”

On the walls of the central hall on the second floor of the palace, hunting and war scenes are depicted in an 18-meter-long frieze. Of the 18 meters, 4.34 meters represent hunting scenes, while 13.66 meters depict war scenes. A total of approximately 400 people are portrayed in these hunting and war scenes.



The wall paintings of the Sheki Khan's Palace serve not only as decorative elements but also contain deep symbolic meanings. The bird and animal figures depicted in these paintings generally represent freedom, strength, and harmony with nature. Plant motifs and floral compositions symbolize the continuity of life, abundance, and aesthetic values. The hunting and war scenes portrayed on the palace walls stand out as visual narratives reflecting the heroic ideals and historical events of the period. In short, these paintings are considered not only works of art but also symbolic expressions of cultural identity and worldview.



“The Khan’s private study”

“Paintings with philosophical meanings”



“One painting, thousands of stories”



UNESCO



The Sheki Khan's Palace was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2019. It was included on this list together with the Historic Centre of Sheki. Due to its unique architectural features, rich decorations, and historical value, the palace is recognized as an important cultural heritage site of global significance.

The Sheki Khan Palace was included in the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2019 under criteria (ii) and (v). Criterion (ii) recognizes the palace as an example of cultural exchange along the Silk Road, while Criterion (v) highlights Sheki's unique historical landscape, traditional urban planning, and harmony between architecture and nature

“OTHER BUILDINGS FROM THE KHANATE PERIOD”



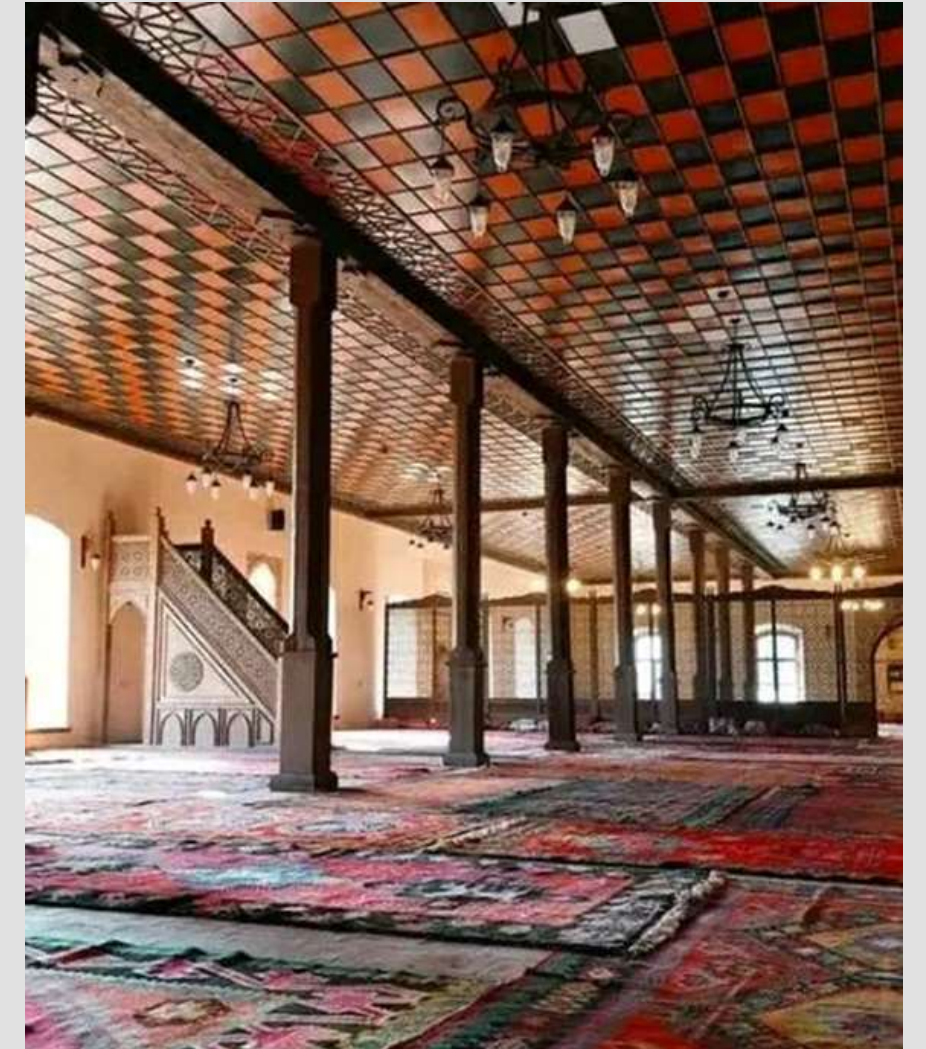
The Shekikhanovs' House

Two-storyed house
built in the 18th
century.



Carvanserai

In the 18th century, there
were five caravanserais in
Sheki. Today, two
caravanserais in Sheki are
preserved as historical
structures.



Khan Mosque

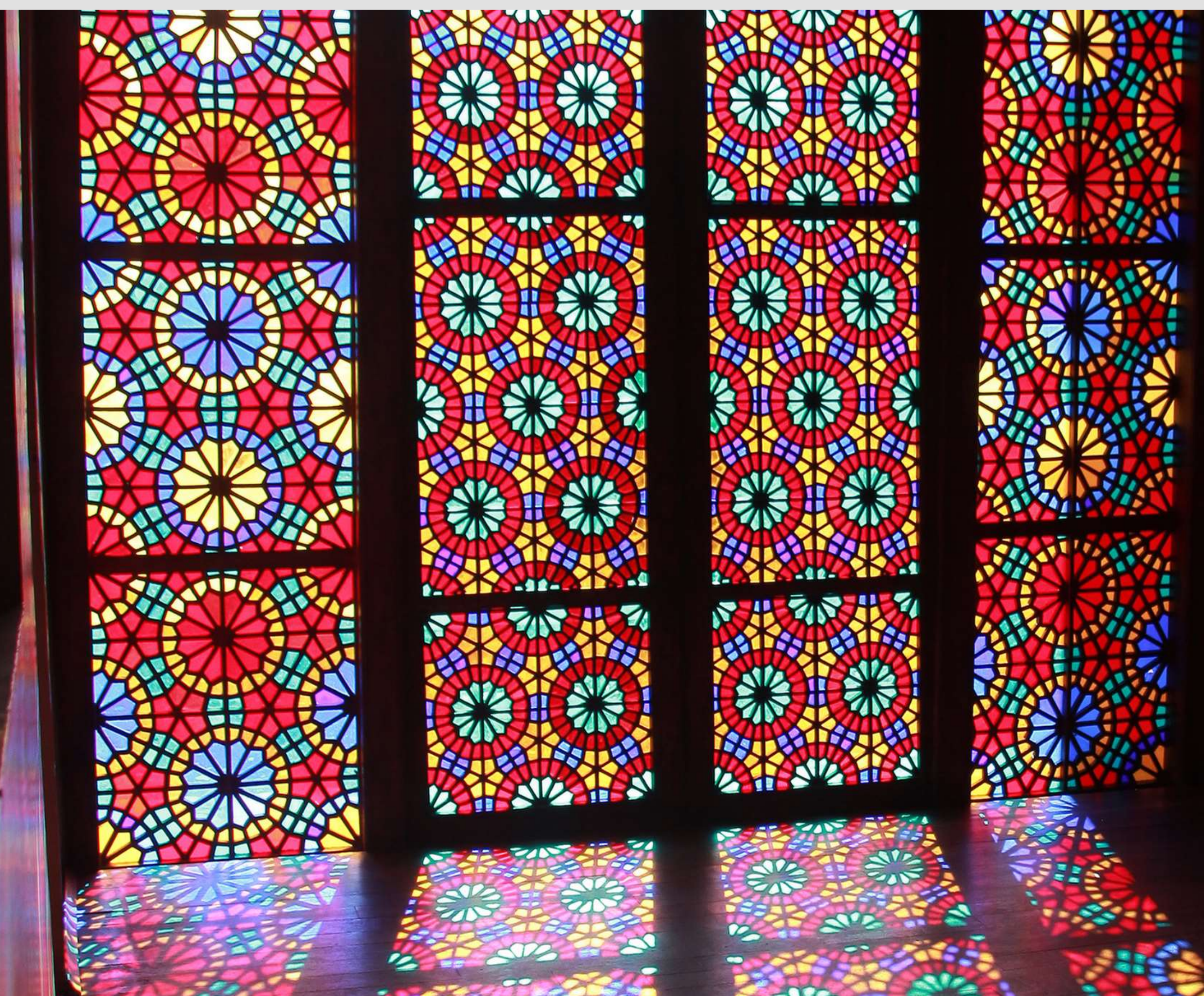
A mosque built in
the same period as
the Sheki Khan's
Palace.

FRIENDSHIP









**“Thank you
for your
attention.”**

**zaminarasulova834@gmail.co
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