

## THE PRINCE OF AZERBAIJANI NATIONAL PAINTING



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If you get free from ordinary concerns and look at the world, you will see that the world is a perfect symphony of colors. The whisper of the winds blowing from the high mountains, the hum of the springs, the babble of the waterfall, the chirping of birds, the rhythmic harmony of the sea waves are not only the world of sounds of the nature surrounding us, but also the world of colors. The world of colors is the artist's world of sound, the composer's workplace. The poet also said beautifully:

Hər gül üstü bir arının iş yeri  
Ləçəkləri dodaq yeri diş yeri  
(Every flower is a bee's workplace  
Petals are the place of its lips and teeth)

There is a saying: "Death is the last word of life and music is the last word of art". But what about colors? Colors are eternal beauty. Colors are the moment of beauty's death... The artist captures this last divine moment on the canvas using paints.

One of such artists was Bahruz Shiralibey oğlu Kangarli, a painter, and graphic artist who lived for only 30 years (22.01.1892-07.02.1922), whose 134<sup>th</sup> birth is marked this year. Having suffered a serious illness in childhood and lost his hearing, Bahruz was unable to receive the necessary education and turned his attention to the magical world of colors. The name of Bahruz Kangarli is associated with formation of realistic easel painting, the formation of portrait and landscape painting as genres in Azerbaijan. Bahruz Kangarli was a graduate of the Tbilisi art school. He received professional painting education in Tbilisi in 1910-1915.

The Kangarlis participated in the ethnogenesis of the Azerbaijani people and played an active role in the political life of the country as part of the Ustajli tribe during the Safavid era. The Nakhchivan region, which was part of the Azerbaijan province in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, was the ancestral homeland of the Kangarlis. The Kangarli rulers held high titles and were among the most powerful khans in Azerbaijan since the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Members of the khan's dynasty served as the ruler of the Nakhchivan region, while members of the bey's dynasty served as the ruler's advisors.

Bahruz's father, Shiralibey, was an intellectual who kept alive the best traditions of the ancient Kangarli family. Together with his wife Shirin, he educated his eldest son Bahruz at home and encouraged him to become an artist. Shiralibey, who attended the Gymnasium, was one of the leading figures of the European-style enlightenment movement that was formed in Nakhchivan in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Bahruz Kangarli, who demonstrated unprecedented productivity in such a short lifetime and became an intellectual example of multifaceted work, is regarded as the brightest figure of Azerbaijani art of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and his works are considered a valuable legacy that breathed a new artistic spirit to our national fine arts. It is important to consider the environment in which Bahruz Kangarli, who is known as the “Phoenix of Azerbaijani painting”, was born. After all, it would be difficult to discuss the emergence of the “Behruz bey Kangarli phenomenon” without assessing the events that took place in Azerbaijan, including in Nakhchivan, where the artist was born, and in the cultural space of the South Caucasus as a whole in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

If we were to trace the major historical events of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in chronological order up to the artist’s birth, first of all we should mention the treaties of Gulustan (1813) and Turkmenchay (1828), which conditioned the unification of the whole of Azerbaijan. Although the treaty was concluded between Iran and Russia, in fact, its devastating impact hit directly Azerbaijan. No matter how natural this evolution in the development of all areas of art in Azerbaijani reality was, and even if those hidden beneath this “renewal” did not suddenly appear, they were destined to be exposed and revealed soon. The most striking aspect of this in Azerbaijani fine and applied arts was that the miniature style, which was regarded as a sign of national artistic identity, was gradually replaced by means of expression coming from European-Russian painting. After the decline of the Tabriz miniature school, Azerbaijani artists became acquainted with the realistic art traditions of the West and its expression, first in the form of the “Qajar style”, and then as a result of contact with Russian art, our national painting was enriched with new and foreign shades, which manifested eventually itself in the form of a unity of tradition and modernity (M.G.Iravani, M.M.Nawwab, Kh.B.Natavan, master Ganbar and others’ work) for a while, but after the occupation of the country by Russia in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was considered undesirable as a trend.

Bahruz Kangarli, who held his family’s prestige and dignity, rose to the level of a unique artist of his time from a very young age. The world-renowned magazine “Molla Nasraddin” played an invaluable role in Bahruz Kangarli’s development as a professional artist. “Molla Nasraddin” became an academy for the young artist. A completely new direction of his style was formed here. This was caricature and satirical painting. In this direction, the talented artist created such well-known works as “Qoca kişi” (“Old Man”), “Toy” (“Wedding”), “Elçilik” (“Marriage Proposal”). The 22-year-old artist’s exhibition was held in Nakhchivan in the summer of 1914. Local intellectuals appreciate highly their young artist’s works. The newspaper “İqbal” wrote: “Our young artist will be our pride in the future”. History confirmed this wish as a reality soon.

God deprived him of the ability to hear the beautiful sounds of the world. Perhaps he would have felt the symphony of colors more and would have created many portraits, landscapes and still lifes. In general, the eternally young artist’s creative palette was rich and diverse. The artist’s “Qaçqınlar” (“Refugees”) series among this diversity is particularly relevant today, possessing artistic and philosophical significance. Especially noteworthy are the portraits of men and women, boys and girls, which stand out for their realistic content and their response to history.

The first major exhibition in Azerbaijan featured 500 works by Bahruz Kangarli. These include the landscape paintings “Şəlalə” (“Waterfall”), “Dağlıq mənzərə” (“Mountain Landscape”), “İlandağ ay işığında” (“İlandagh in the Moonlight”), “Günəş batarkən” (“Sunset”), “Ağrıdağ” (“Mount Aghri”), “Köhnə qala” (“Old Castle”), “Əshabi-kəhf dağı” (“Mount Ashabi-Kahf”). Bahruz Kangarli succeeded in immortalizing the sanctity of holiness in the landscape painting “Əshabi-kəhf dağı” (“Mount Ashabi-Kahf”). While the ideal of Azerbaijaniism is

reflected in the work “Ağrıdağ” (“Mount Aghri”), then the painting “Möminə xatun türbəsi” (“Momina Khatun Mausoleum”) expresses faith in the eternity of our historical memory.

Theatrical scene painting also was an important branch of Bahruz Kangarli’s work. He created set designs for the productions of M.F.Akhundzadeh’s “Hacı qara” (“Haji Gara”), J.Mammadguluzadeh’s “Ölülər” (“The Dead”) and A.Hagverdiyev’s “Pəri cadu” (“Fairy Peri”) since 1910. B.Kangarli’s name went down in the history of Azerbaijani realistic painting forever. By the decision of the Supreme Council of Nakhchivan “On perpetuating the name of Bahruz Kangarli” dated May 22, 2001, a museum dedicated to him was established in Nakhchivan and the Nakhchivan State History Museum bears his name.

The writer and playwright Adil Babayev wrote a play entitled “Yarımçıq şəkil” (“Unfinished Painting”) dedicated to his fate and creative pursuits.

The great artist Raphael said: “My mother’s kiss made me a painter”. However, Bahruz Kangarli was not fortunate enough to receive such divine mercy. Unfortunately, he lost his mother at an early age. It is safe to say that Bahruz Kangarli’s work was kneaded with childlike sincerity. His landscape paintings were created to conquer nature. The tremor of Kangarli’s art is sincerity. He stepped from nature to eternity through these paintings. His paintings are eternally young, like himself. The philosophy of the colors he applied to the canvas is enthusiasm and passion. These paintings are unaware of old age, and like their author, they will never grow old.

Bahruz Kangarli’s colors are particles that have separated from the sun. There is plenty of sunshine in his landscapes and portraits. He managed to capture the sunshine on the canvas through colors. When you look at his paintings, you see the sun’s aura and feel its warmth.

Bahruz Kangarli’s paintings immortalize the heroic Kangarlis’ invincible spirit. This spirit is my own, it flows through my veins along with my blood. As the saying goes: “He who forgets his roots has no honor”. As long as Kangarli blood flows through my veins, I will serve my Homeland, my Nation and my State for which the Kangarlis were martyred with all the energy of my mind and all the love of my heart.

**Xülasə.** Çox qısa ömür yolu qarşılığında misilsiz səviyyədə məhsuldar çalışan çoxsaxəli fəaliyyəti ilə ziyalılıq nümunəsi sərgiləyən Bəhruz Kəngərli XX əsrin ilk qərinasini əhatə edən Azərbaycan incəsənətinin ən parlaq siması, yaratdığı əsərləri isə milli təsviri sənətimizə yeni bədi ruh bəxş edən qiymətli irs hesab edilir. “Azərbaycan rəssamlığının səməndər quşu” adlandırılan Bəhruz Kəngərlinin doğulduğu mühiti nəzərdən keçirmək vacibdir. Çünki, XIX əsrin sonu XX əsrin əvvəllərində Azərbaycanda, o cümlədən rəssamın doğulduğu Naxçıvanda, bütünlükdə isə Cənubi Qafqazın mədəniyyət məkanında nələrin baş verdiyini dəyərləndirmədən “Bəhruz bəy Kəngərli fenomeni”nin yaranmasına argument gətirmək çətin olardı.

**Summery.** Bahruz Kangarli, who demonstrated unprecedented productivity in such a short lifetime and became an intellectual example of multifaceted work, is regarded as the brightest figure of Azerbaijani art of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and his works are considered a valuable legacy that breathed a new artistic spirit to our national fine arts. It is important to consider the environment in which Bahruz Kangarli, who is known as the “Phoenix of Azerbaijani painting”, was born. After all, it would be difficult to discuss the emergence of the “Behruz bey Kangarli phenomenon” without assessing the events that took place in Azerbaijan, including in Nakhchivan, where the artist was born, and in the cultural space of the South Caucasus as a whole in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.