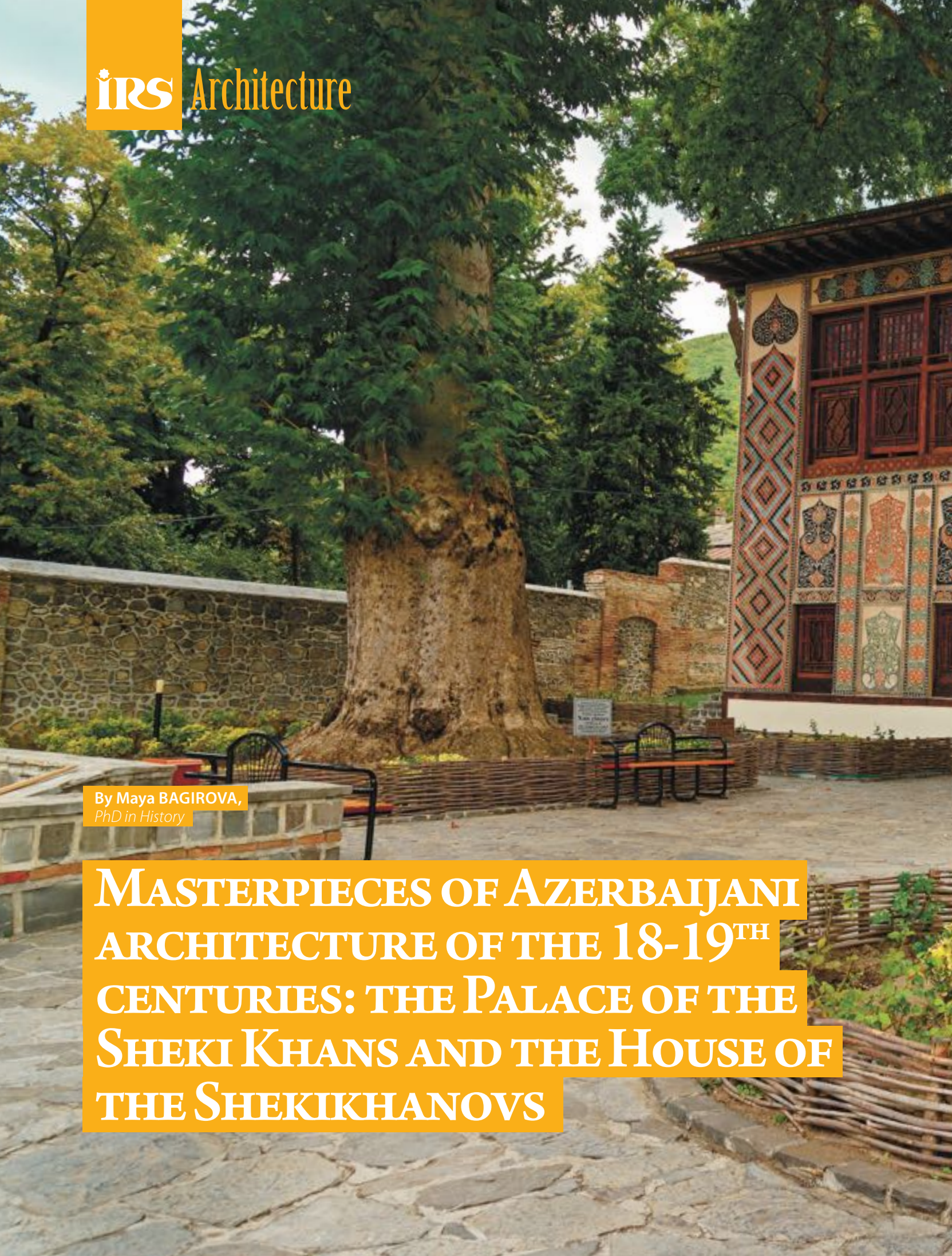


By Maya BAGIROVA,
PhD in History

Masterpieces of Azerbaijani architecture of the 18-19th centuries: the Palace of the Sheki Khans and the House of the Shekikhanovs

A special place among the unique architectural sites of Azerbaijan of the 18 and 19th centuries is occupied by the sites of Sheki – the Palace of the Sheki Khans and the House of the Shekikhanovs.

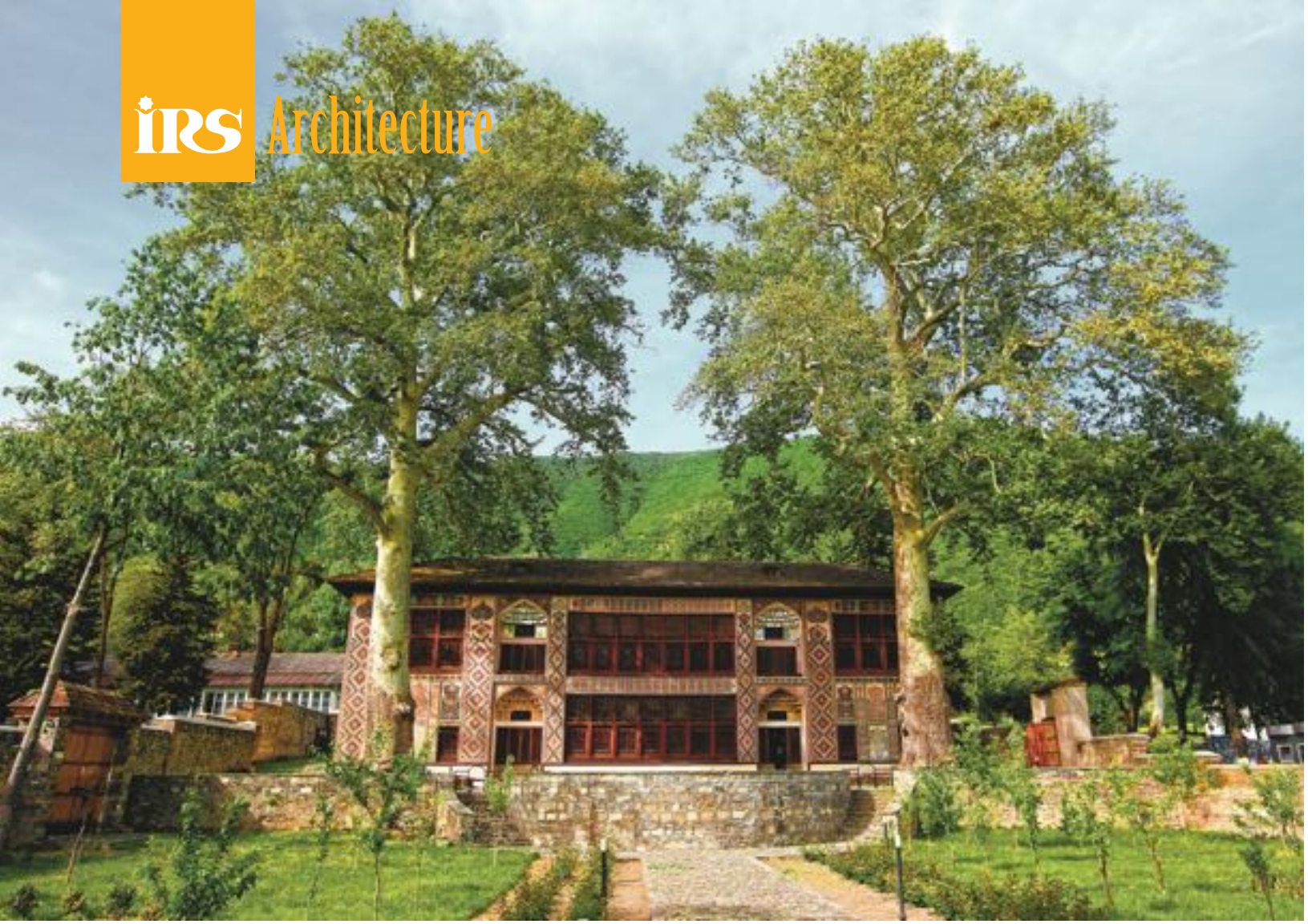
In the second half of the 18th century, the art of painting directly related to architecture and construction gained a great momentum in the Sheki Khanate. All significant architectural structures of Sheki were richly decorated with murals, which was the most popular type of painting technique in the Sheki Khanate. Wall paintings were dedicated to various topics: scenes of hunting for wild animals, which was one of the favorite entertainments of the khan and his entourage, battles, floral and geometric ornaments, drawings created on the basis of Nizami Ganjavi's "Khamsa", scenes of palace life, everyday sketches from peasant life , blacksmith's workshops, etc. The name of talented painter Abbas-Gulu is encrypted on the plafond in the hall on the second floor of the Palace of Sheki Khans. It should be noted that the walls of the palace were restored more than once, which is why one can find paintings by folk craftsmen from different times there.

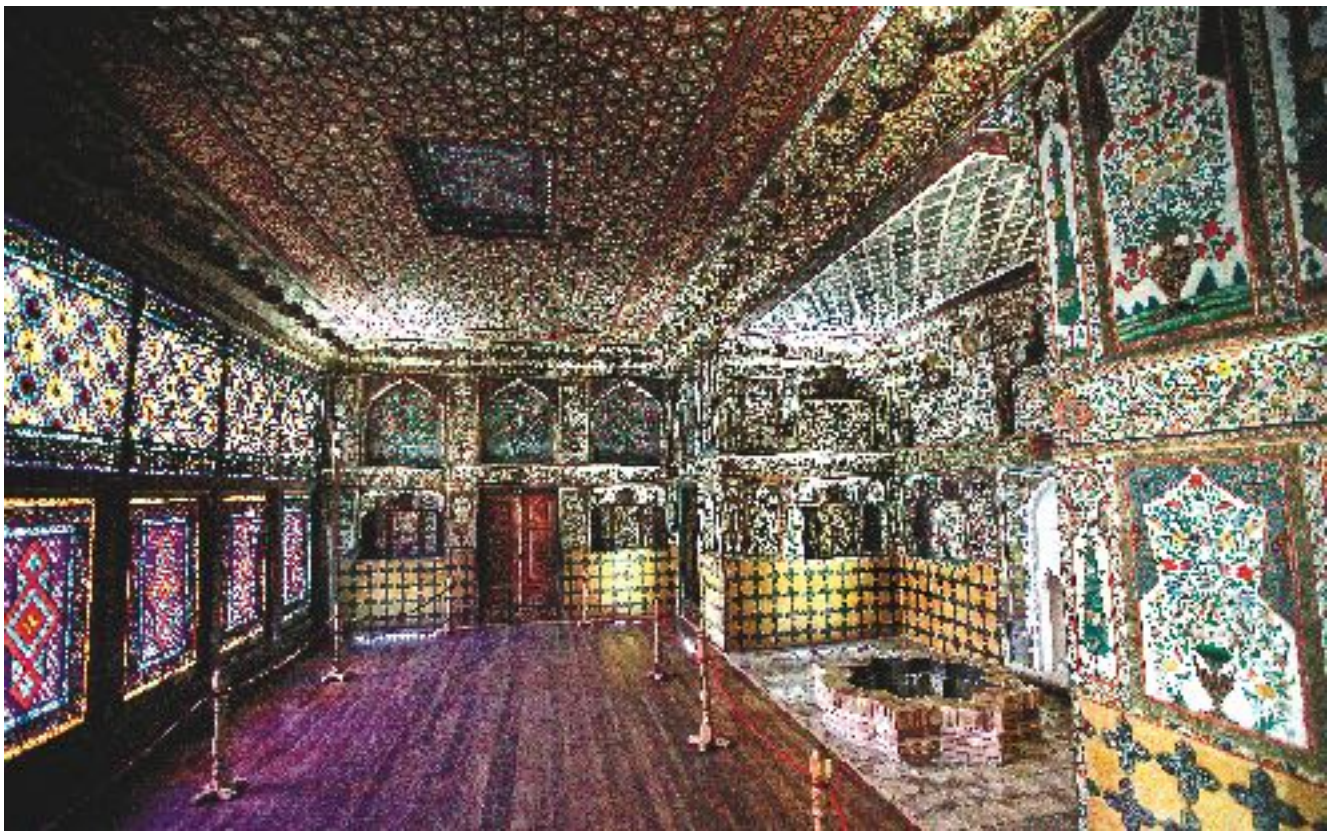
The Palace of the Sheki Khans, considered one of the outstanding architectural sites in Azerbaijan in

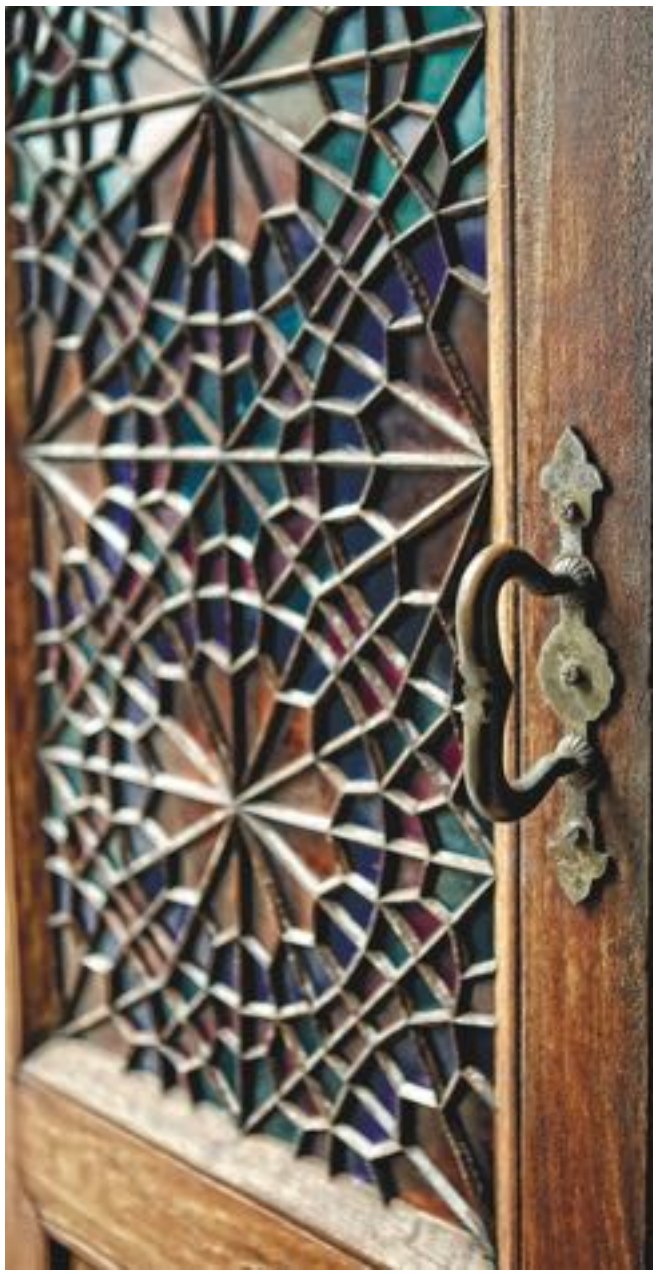
the 18th century, was built in 1797. The palace, which was once part of the palace ensemble and served as the residence of Sheki Khans, is a two-storey building. The layout of the rooms on the first and second floors is identical. The façade is made up of lattice frames with *shebeke* ornaments. The multi-colored drawing of *shebeke* complements the murals covering all the walls of the palace.

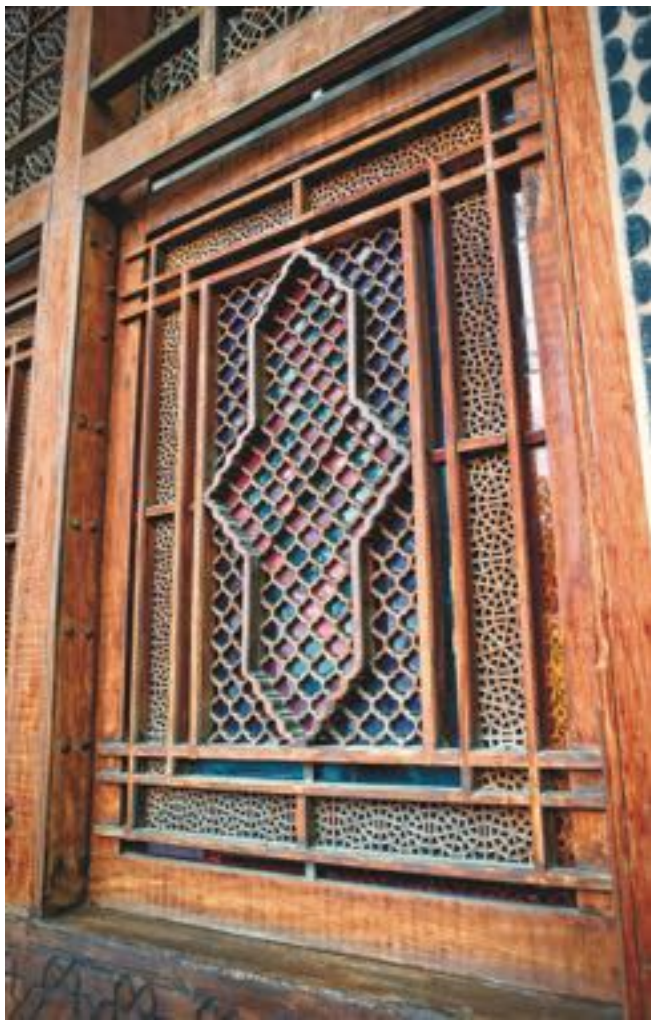
The Palace of the Sheki Khans attracted the attention of a number of travelers. A friend of A. S. Pushkin's, poet N. N. Rayevsky, spoke highly of the city of Sheki and its palace. He compared the palace with the Bakhchisarai Palace. Writer and historian Alexander Kornilovich admired this masterpiece of Azerbaijani architecture: "In Nukha, the main city, I saw their palace in the fortress... It is neglected, but even in neglect it amazes the wanderer with the remnants of its former magnificence ... Instead of the wall, it has wooden patterns of the finest work and in these patterns there is glass of all colors: dark and light blue, yellow, red. Rooms are all in colored glasses."

Another interesting architectural site of the late 18th century is the house of the Shekikhanovs, which belonged to close relatives and descendants of Sheki









khans. The Shekikhanovs house is a two-storey building with a smooth surface of the walls. The first floor of the house is similar to the Sheki houses of that period, while the second floor was intended for guests. The windows on the first and second floors are also made in the form of large openwork *shebeke*. The wall paintings depict the heroes of Nizami Ganjavi's poems. In the house of the Shekikhanovs, there was an amazingly beautiful decorative Bukhara-fireplace lined with multi-colored tiled slabs.

The Palace of the Sheki Khans and the House of Shekikhanovs, which have retained their unique color and beauty, still attract tourists from all over the world.

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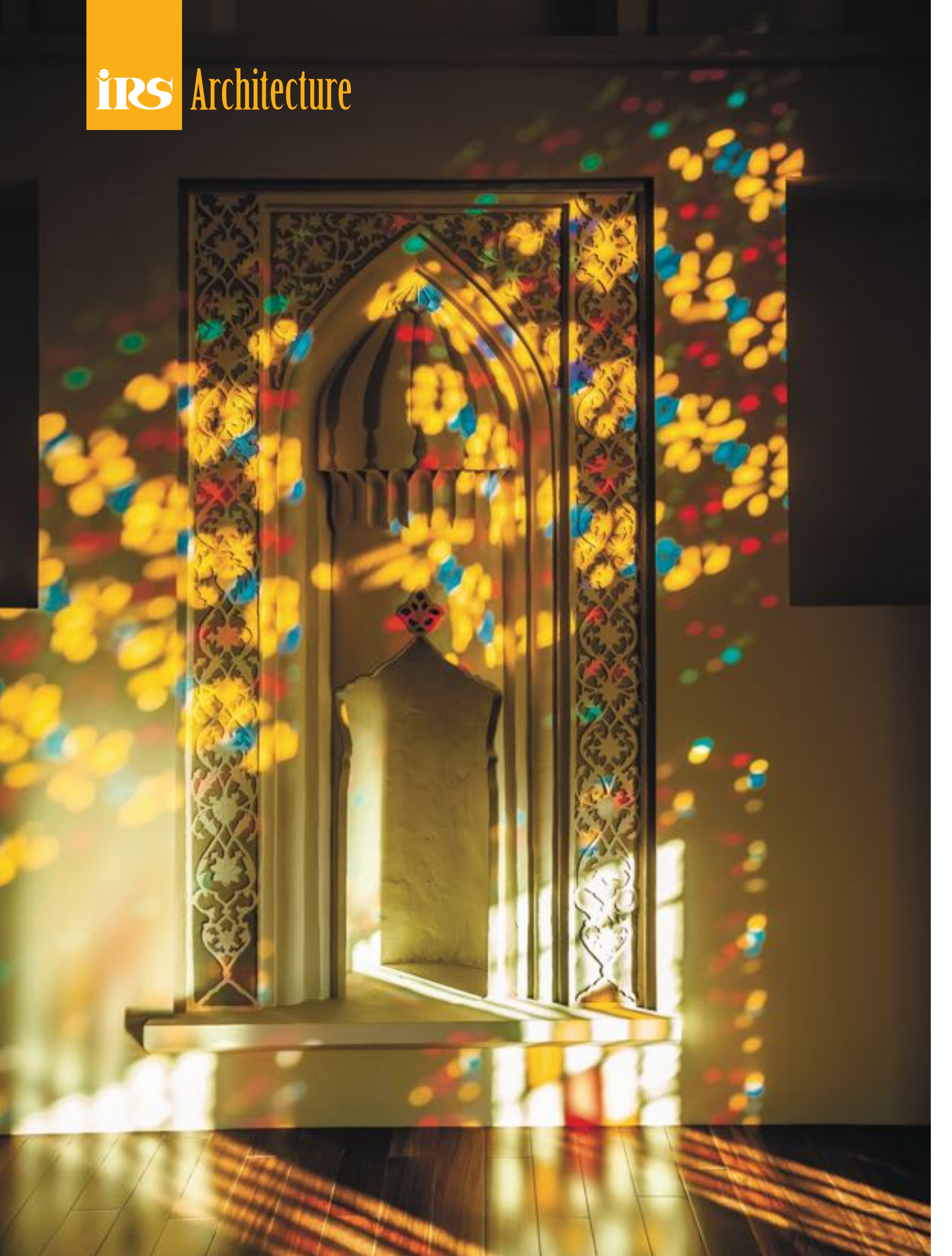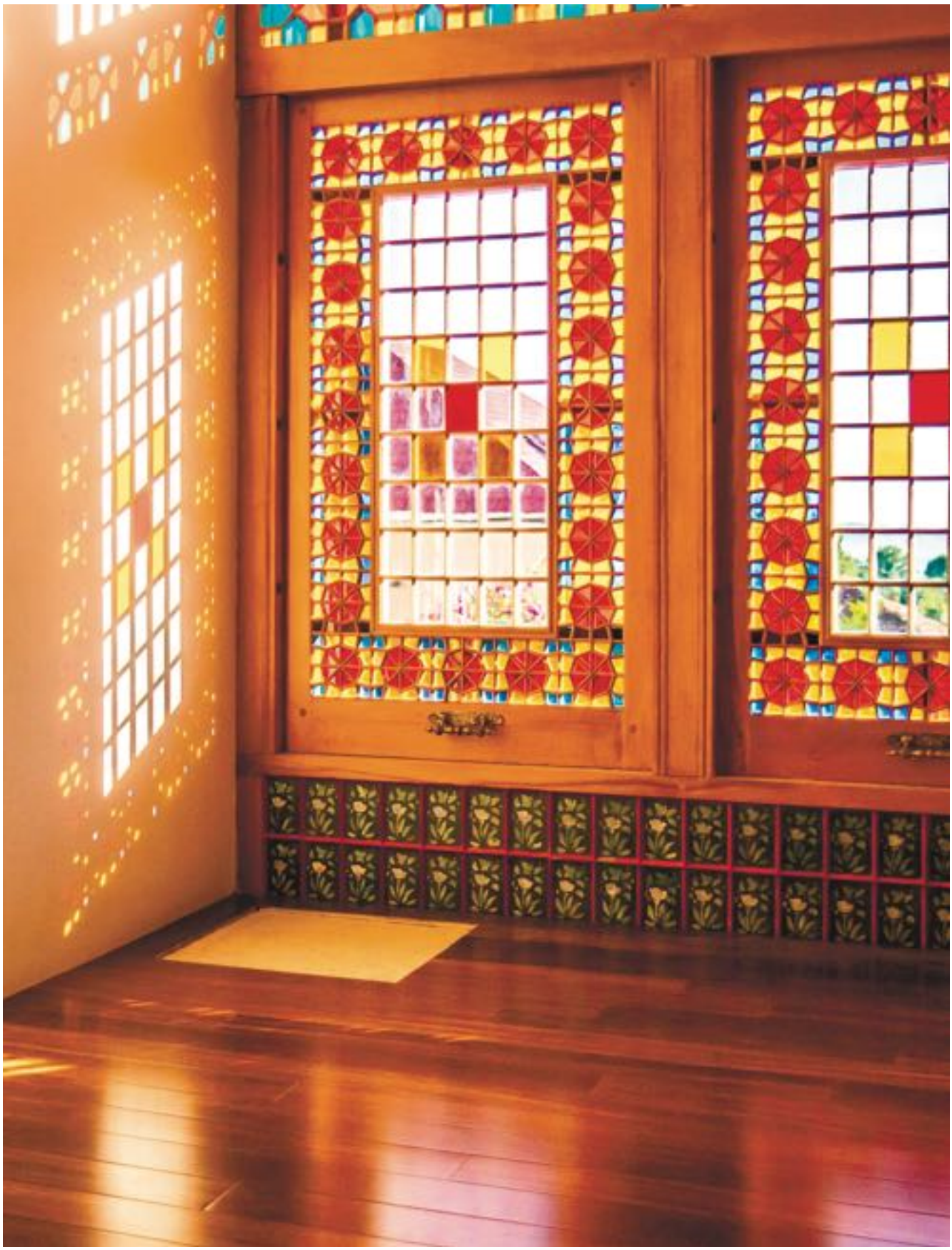
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