

# ARTS

of the PEOPLES  
of Central  
**ASIA**

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**Janabayeva**



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**ARTS OF THE PEOPLES  
OF CENTRAL ASIA**

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The book presents the aesthetic features of the decorative and applied arts of Central Asian peoples, many unique examples of which—as well as the knowledge and skills associated with their production—are recognized by UNESCO as masterpieces of traditional art and appear on the organization's Lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage. By looking at the origins and subsequent development of these folk arts and crafts, the author reveals the historical continuity of the cultural traditions of the peoples of Central Asia.

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*Dedicated to the loving memory of my mother,  
Mariya Davletova*



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# Introduction

Central Asia<sup>1</sup> is one of the oldest centers of human culture. Its indigenous peoples — Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Uzbek, Karakalpak, Turkmen, Tajik — have much in common in culture, life, and traditions because of ethnic kinship and common historical destiny. However, each of these ethnic groups has made its own original contribution to the general treasury of world culture.

This book examines the aesthetic features of decorative and applied arts of the Central Asian peoples, many of the unique samples of which, together with the skills and knowledge related to their manufacture, are recognized by UNESCO as masterpieces of traditional art and are listed on the World Intangible Cultural Heritage List.

The author expresses her gratitude for the provided illustrative material on Kazakh folk art

to the staff of the Central State Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Almaty) and personally to Director Nursan Alimbai, as well as to the First Deputy Director Beibitkali Kakabaev, to the employee of the Center of Anthropology and Anthology Gulzhan Akhmetova; to employees of the State Museum of Arts of Kazakhstan named after Abylkhan Kasteev (Almaty); to Deputy Director for Science Svetlana Kobzhanova and to Head of the Center of Decorative and Applied Arts of Kazakhstan Gulyaim Zhumabekova. The author also expresses her profound gratitude to the staff of the State Historical and Cultural Reserve Museums “Issyk” (Issyk); the State Historical, Cultural and Natural Reserve Museum “Tamgaly” (Almaty region); and the Museum of Musical Instruments named after Ykylas (Almaty).

## Chapter 1.

# The Origins of the Arts of the Central Asian Peoples. Traditions and Modernity

### Cultural Legacy of Rock Art

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The arts of the peoples of Central Asia have their origins in ancient times, as evidenced by the rich archaeological material found on the territory. Rock carvings are considered some of the most outstanding monuments of the art of ancient people.

Kazakhstan has the richest territory of rock paintings — 130 petroglyph complexes from different time periods (from the Stone Age to the Middle Ages), among them the cavern on Bukhtarma River, East Kazakhstan; the cavern of Kotyr-Kyzyltau (Central Kazakhstan); with the largest collection found in Eshkiolmes, Bayan Zhurek, Tamgaly, Kulzhabasy, Sauskandyk, Arpa-Uzen, Kaskabulak,

Kyzylshyn, and Tekturmas (South Kazakhstan and Zhetysu)<sup>2</sup>, with images and techniques of execution typical for each period. The best-known monument of ancient rock art is the visual tract of Tamgaly, located 170 kilometers north-west of the city of Almaty in the south-east part of the Chu-Ili Mountains. Numbering up to 5,000, these petroglyphs cover a large time interval, from the Bronze Age to the late Middle Ages. In 2004, the petroglyphs of the Tamgaly archaeological landscape were added to the List of World Heritage by UNESCO as a treasure of global significance.

Unique paintings include images of solar signs, various symbols (mazes, swastikas, circles), images of animals (rhinoceros, bison, wild ox, Bactrian camels, horses, deer, argali, etc. [Picture 1]), an-

Picture 1. *Tamgaly Petroglyphs. State reserve-museum “Tamgaly”*



Source: Author's photo.



thropomorphic creatures, “sun head” deities (in the Tamgaly tract, around the “sun head” creature there is a portrayal of “dancing men”, alone and in

pairs performing a ritual dance [Picture 2]), scenes of hunting, plowing, sacrifices, vehicles (hunting and war chariots), and others.<sup>3</sup>

Picture 2. “Sun Head” Deity and Dancing men. State reserve-museum “Tamgaly”



Source: Author's photo.

These images, according to researchers, reflect the “perception of the ancient man of the world, the universe, of life and death.”<sup>4</sup> They deliver a truly aesthetic delight to modern audiences. Ancient artists have not just carved images, but managed to convey their attitude to the depicted

objects; for example, an admiration for a powerful figure and the curved horns of a wild ox, or the poses of animals in swift motion with their legs thrown back and forth, reproducing them with astonishing precision and with a balance of the body parts.

## Pottery of Antiquity through the Ages

The oldest area of material culture in which artistic creativity strongly manifested itself in many ways was in the production of ceramics. Early monuments of Central Asia (stations and cemeteries) preserved abundant fragments of ceramic vessels; for example, the ceramics of the Anau and Namazga-Tepe settlements of Turkmenistan found in the northern and southern (Vakhsh and Bishkent) valleys of Tajikistan; the burial ceramics of the Arpa tract, found in the Dzhaiylma and Kaindy settlements in the Chui valley of Kyrgyzstan; and ceramics of the Botai and Andronovo cultures in north-west and central Kazakhstan.

The first discoveries of clay use and decoration were made through primitive potters' skill. Primitive potters were well aware of the technical properties of the clay and skillfully used its rich malleable properties, namely, its ability to acquire

any shape desired by the master. According to numerous fingerprints, scientists have established that the oldest vessels were made by women<sup>5</sup>. It is most striking that the molding of ceramics — one of the most ancient techniques of pottery production performed by hand, without the use of a potter's wheel — has been preserved and still exists in the mountainous regions of Tajikistan (Pictures 3, 4). As in ancient times, it is produced exclusively by women. In their courtyards, they mold a vessel using one or two pieces of clay, then dry it in the sun, then immediately burn it in a small fire. When the vessel cools down, they leisurely paint its surface with a homemade "brush." Notably, they make the pottery not to sell but for their own economic needs: as hand washers, all manner of jars and bowls for grains and vegetables, jugs for whipping butter, or for the preparation and storage of sour milk. These primitive vessels are amazingly beautiful and touching in their naive simplicity and unfeigned sincerity.

Picture 3. *Hand washer chilapchi* by artisan S. Sakhatshoeva. Egid village, Darvaz, Tajikistan, 1954



Source: L. Dodkhudoeva, ed., *Narodnoe iskusstvo Tadjikistana (traditsionnye remesla)* (Dushanbe, 2011).



Picture 4. Bowl for whipping *charhdeg* butter. Gumbulak village, Faizabad, Tajikistan, 1966



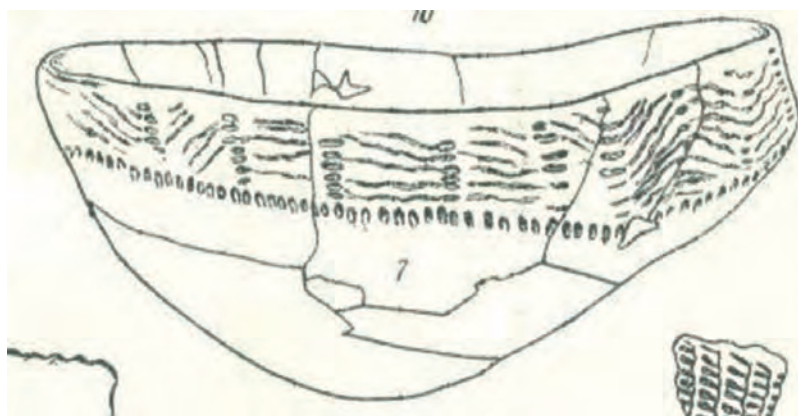
Source: L. Dodkhudoeva, ed., *Narodnoe iskusstvo Tadzhikistana (traditsionnye remesla)* (Dushanbe, 2011).

Polishing was one of the stages in the discovery of the material properties by ancient potters; it included a thorough finishing of the vessel's surface with a bone or pebbles, and then baking, which imparted a particular shine to the vessel. Both aesthetic and utilitarian considerations are combined in the process of polishing: burnishing makes the crock denser, waterproof, and increases the value of the vessel. In order to improve the technical and decorative qualities of the vessel, a potter covered it with a thin glass film; its surface was painted with thin, diluted clay (which could be white, green, or blue), different in structure from the clay mass of the crock. This sparse paint soaked into the pores and was baked together with the vessel; it then resulted in a utensil with what we now call engobed painting. Engobe is beautiful for its utilitarian and aesthetic qualities.

Therefore, ceramics are a striking indication of how their creator could operate imagery and how

an ancient craftsman strove to affirm two purposes in an item — utility and beauty. Although ceramics changed over the centuries, their functions always remained the same: to serve as a container for water, milk, wine; solid and liquid food; and stores of grain, flour, and butter. The changes affected only the technology of the development of the products — their form and decoration. Thus, ceramics of the Southern Aral Sea (from the settlement located in proximity to Dzhambas Kala fortress, from archaic mansions and burial Dingildzhe, etc. [dated 4,000–3,000 centuries BC]) from the so-called Keltiminar culture<sup>6</sup> are crude and made of poorly mixed clay full of sand, crushed shells and other impurities. They typically take the form of a primitive, archaic cylindrical-conical or semi-egg-shaped vessel with a rounded or sharp bottom (with a neck diameter of about 28–30 cm). Due to their awkward and asymmetric form, these vessels resemble the rocks among which they were placed (Picture 5).

Picture 5. Kelteminar culture monument. Southern Aral Sea



Source: S. P. Tolstov, *Po sledam drevnekhorezmiyskoy tsivilizatsii* (Moscow, Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1948).

Later in the Bronze Age, the characteristics of ceramics underwent significant changes. They consist mainly of pots with bulky forms. Bulky bodies and flat bottoms are the characteristics of the ceramics of the Andronov culture<sup>7</sup> on the ter-

ritory of Kazakhstan<sup>8</sup> (Picture 6) and the ceramics of ceramics of the Tazabagyab culture<sup>9</sup> of the Southern Aral Sea region (Karakalpakstan), the latter of which was influenced by the former.<sup>10</sup>

Picture 6. Ceramics of the Bronze Age. Southern and Central Kazakhstan



Source: Central State Museum of Kazakhstan. (Author's photo.)

Over time, ancient craftsmen learned to create a pot convenient for cooking and storing foodstuff with a steady bottom and a widely divergent body on the sides — sloping upward, then tapering to the collar, as though replicating the shape of flames kissing the pot from each side. Such a form allows

increased heating of the surface; at the same time it reduces the possibility of fast boiling and prevents coal and soot from getting into the narrow neck (Picture 7). This pot is convenient to get in and out of the fire. The beauty of these ceramics is in their plain and perfected shape.



Picture 7. *Pitchers. Kok Mardan burial (second–fourth centuries) and Borizhar burial (sixth–ninth centuries), South Kazakhstan*



Source: State Historical Cultural Reserve-Museum of Issyk. (Author's photo.)

The aesthetic aspects of ancient ceramics are found in their adornment and ornament. They are explained by an aspiration to “protect” the vessel with magic forces as well as the ability to apply technical discoveries in clay treatment (for example, the application of prints could facilitate a smoother heating of the clay walls and reduce the risk of cracking while drying and burning). An important characteristic of the ancient ornament as an art form of that time is that it was applied onto the item, fitting to and replicating its shape. The aspiration of the craftsmen to break the monotonous rough surface of the crock by the application and

alternation of a choice of stripes, dots, or strokes, placed symmetrically and rhythmically, can be attributed to an unconscious desire to decorate the item.

The ceramics of the Sogdian civilization during the second and first centuries BC to the seventh and eighth centuries AD are unique in their form and decoration. In the eighth century ceramics received new aesthetic requirements: the vessels made of cheap and accessible materials had to resemble prestigious and expensive metal products<sup>11</sup> (Picture 8). This tendency to imitate, most importantly, was reflected in the shape of the vessels. The

former traditional forms disappeared and new narrow-necked pear-shaped jugs with a triangular sink appeared. Instead of bowls, there were mugs with a rounded body and a low-set handle. The texture of the surface of the vessels and their ornamentation also became new. Sogdian ceramists, striving to give a special “metallicity” to the surfaces of products, covered them with mica and decorated them with embossed impressions of various stamps, typical for the ornamentation of metal utensils.

Picture 8. *Clay jug covered with mica (seventh–eighth century) Kafir-Kala, Sogdia*



Source: B. I. Marshak, *Vliianie torevniki na sogdiyskuiu keramiku VII–VIII vekov. Trudy Gosudarstvennogo Ermitazha. Vol. 5* (Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Gosudarstvennogo Ermitazha, 1961).

The further flourishing of pottery was due to the introduction of colored glazes (at the end of the eighth century), the spread of underglaze painting technology (starting in the ninth century) and the use of high-silica ceramic mass (starting in the twelfth century).

Glazed pottery has had a complex and long historical path. By the ninth to thirteenth centuries there were a number of regional centers for its

production, the largest of which was Samarkand<sup>12</sup>. Well-known pottery centers were also located on the territory of south Kazakhstan (Pictures 9, 10). During the archaeological studies of Otrar<sup>13</sup>, which in the period from the ninth to seventeenth centuries was one of the most developed cities in the region, scientists discovered a large number of ceramic dishes in the potter's quarter, covered with blue and green glazes.

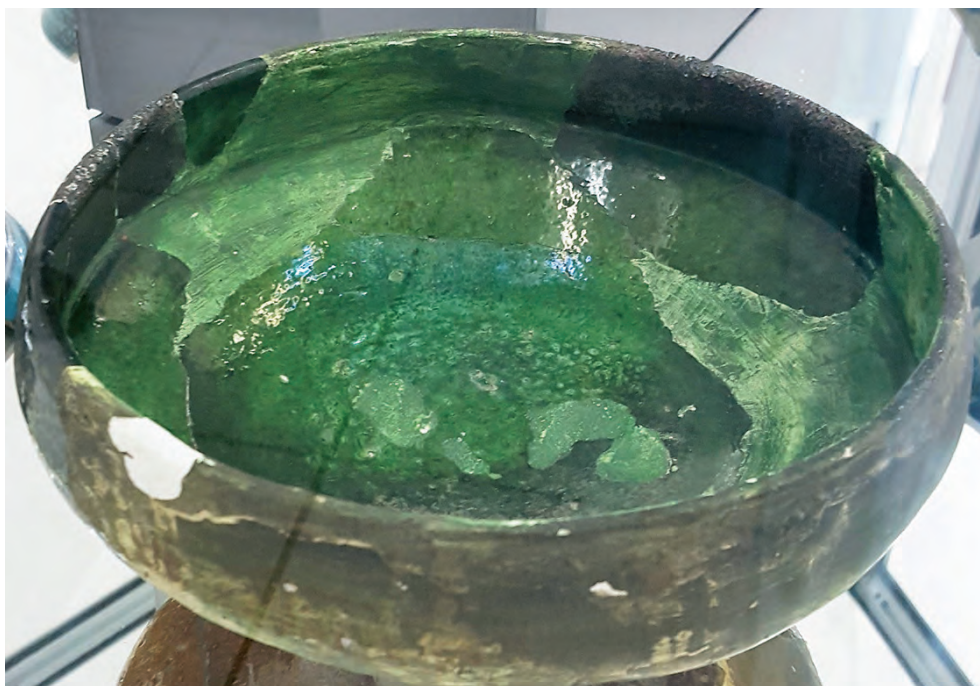
Starting from the eighteenth century, pottery acquired particular features related to regional specificities. The differences in the ceramic styles of the regional centers gradually became more prominent, and by the nineteenth century there were three main schools of glazed ceramics located in Fergana, Khorezm and Bukhara-Samarkand. The ceramists of the named schools mainly produced utensils: flat, bowl-shaped (*kosa*) and elongated pitcher-shaped (*kuza*).

Unfortunately, by the second half of the twentieth century, some unique centers of glazed ceramics began to disappear. This was mainly due to the development of factory production. It was not possible, for example, to preserve the traditions of the pottery of Shakhrisabz; they disappeared with the passing away of the famous master Abdukarim Hazratkulov. The pottery of Shakhrisabz was distinguished by a refinement of the painting and by signature shades of orange, due to the peculiarities of the red clay of the Zeravshan Mountains (Picture 11).

Despite the occurring changes over time, the potters of the mentioned schools — Khorezm (now the villages Madyr and Kattabag), Bukhara, Samarkand, and Fergana (Andijan, Gurumsaray, Namangan, Kokand, and Rishtan) tried to preserve the local technological and artistic features of the ceramics. The forms of the products of these schools are not very different from each other; however, the ornament motifs and colors used in these schools have a clearly noticeable local distinction. For example, the ornament of the Fergana school of ceramics, especially Rishtan, includes the entire range of decorative motifs: geometric, zoomorphic, anthropomorphic, and floral. The Khorezm school is characterized by the use of geometric and floral ornamentation, with rare elements of zoomorphic and anthropomorphic



Picture 9. *Glazed bowl, thirteenth–fourteenth centuries. Koilyk village, South Kazakhstan*



Source: State Historical Cultural Reserve-Museum of Issyk. (Author's photo.)

Picture 10. *Glazed bowl, fourteenth–fifteenth centuries. Otrar village, South Kazakhstan*



Source: State Historical Cultural Reserve-Museum of Issyk. (Author's photo.)



Picture 11. G. Ulko, "Portrait of Usto (Artisan) Hazratkulov," 1961



Source: *Vsesoiuznaia khudozhestvennaia vystavka. Katalog* (Moscow: Sovetskiy khudozhnik, 1961).

motifs. The Bukhara, Samarkand, and Tashkent schools are characterized by the use of a large floral ornament; a geometric pattern is less common and is presented as a separate abstract motif reminiscent of small rosettes or medallions.

The color palette is also unique; the Ferghana and Khorezm ceramics schools, who used the *ishkor* alkaline glaze, are characterized by shades of blue, white and green, whereas the products of the pottery centers of Bukhara, Samarkand and Tashkent, who used lead glaze, were known for their shades of yellow, red and brown.

Rishtan ceramics of the Fergana school are especially beautiful. This is largely due to the availability of local raw materials such as *hoki Surkh* clay and herbs such as *kirk bugin*, *choroynak*, and *guloba*, from the ashes (which were rich in sodium potassium and magnesium oxides) of which the *ishkor* glaze is prepared. The *ishkor* glaze is made by hand according to the old family recipes that Rishtan ceramists, who consider themselves descendants of the founders of pottery and custodians of ancient traditions, passed on from generation to generation (Picture 12).

Picture 12. A. G. Kozlova, "Rishtan Ceramics." Watercolor on paper, 2010



Source: Personal site of A. G. Kozlova, <https://arts.in.ua/artists/allaadin/>.



It is the traditions of folk culture that act as the true foundations, the sources of inspiration and as a storage place from which contemporary potters derive their ideas. By keeping traditions and following the established rules, modern craftsmen, to this day, create amazingly perfect works which have not lost their importance in the life of modern Uzbeks and Tajiks (Picture 13). The national dish, *pilaf*, is still served on the painted flat *lagans*; *shurpa*, a lamb soup, in deep colorful spherical bowls called *kosa*; *shokosa*, tea in *piala*.

One should also mention touching clay crafts, such as children's toys, and in particular whistles. Today, art critics consider clay toys an independent kind of folk art, and they are likely to have once been molded by the elderly and children for fun out of clay residues (for reasons of economy). Whistles were sculpted in the shape of birds, in the body of which air

holes were pierced so that they could produce sound. What is most surprising is that one had to have an idea about the nature of the occurrence of sound.

Such whistle devices are now used in folk ensembles as folk musical instruments. A few examples are the Kazakh *yskirik* and *saz-syrnay* (Picture 14). The sound of the *yskirik*, shaped like a soaring bird, is similar to the sound of the wind, hence its name: *yskirik* means "wind whistling." The *saz-syrnay* has a soft, warm tone; it was first discovered in the ancient city of Otrar. The *saz-syrnay* was renovated and added to the list of musical instruments of Kazakh folklore and ethnographic ensembles.

The renowned toy manufacturing centers in Tajikistan are Karatag and Ura-Tube. Continuing a long tradition, craftsmen of these areas make toys and whistles (*khushtak*) in the form of bizarre dragons, horses, birds, and monkeys (Picture 15).

Picture 13. *Lyagan plates of masters of Fergana, Khorezm and Bukhara-Samarkand ceramics schools*





Source: Author's photos (the first photo (page 12) is from the author's personal collection of the Fergana school of ceramics; the second and third photos are the lyagans made by artisans from Khorezm (O. Matchanov) and Bukhara (A. Karim), presented at the exhibition "Legends of Uzbek ceramics," Tashkent, 2014).



Picture 14. *Kazakh saz-syrnay, yskirik*



Source: Museum of national musical instruments named after Ykylas. (Author's photo.)

Picture 15. *Khushtak whistles. Karatag, Istaravshan (Ura-Tube), Tajikistan, 1971*



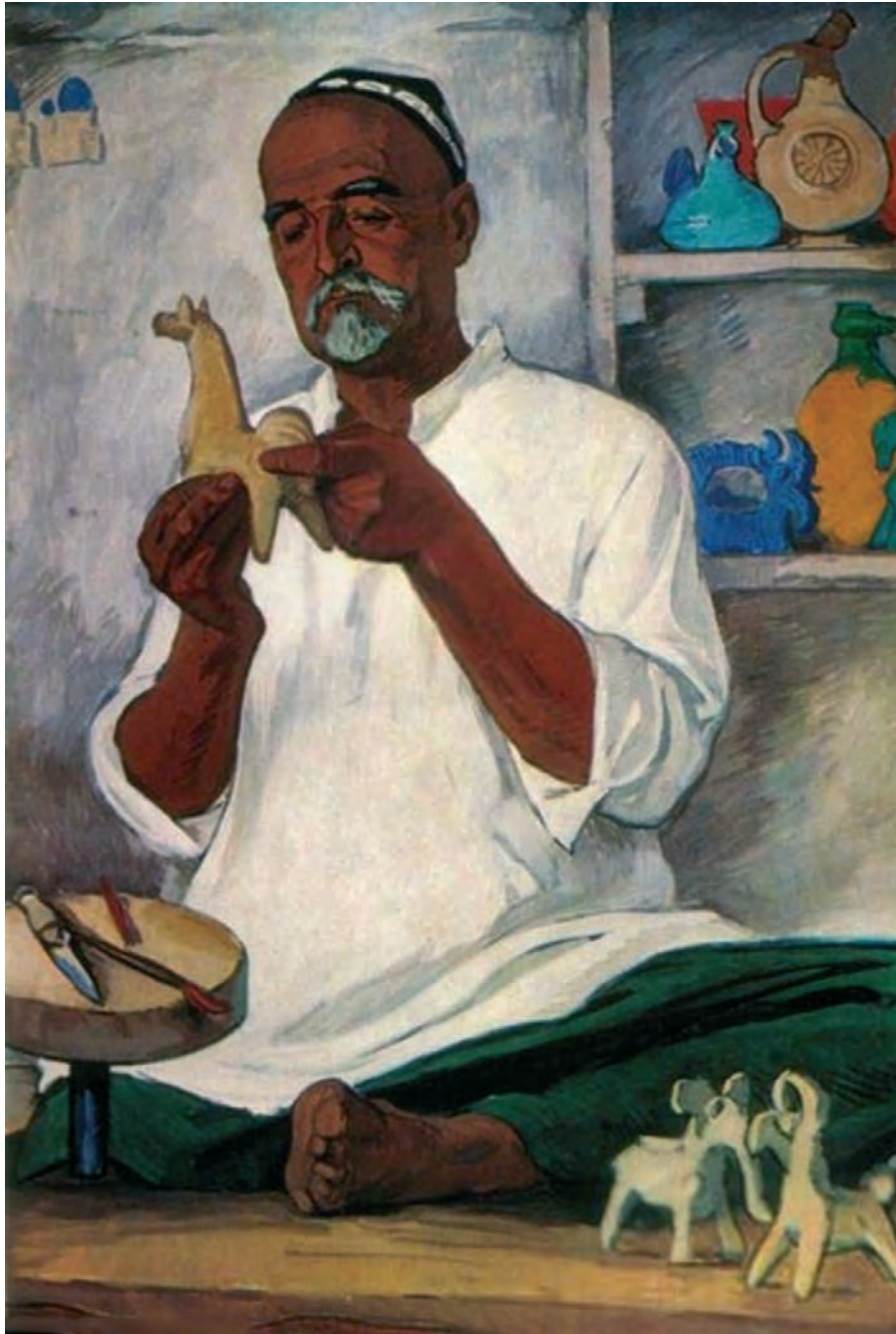
Source: L. Dodkhudoeva, ed., *Narodnoe iskusstvo Tadzhikistana (traditsionnye remesla)* (Dushanbe, 2011).



In Uzbekistan in the twentieth century, the whistles called *churchurak* or *hushpulak* were made by the folk masters of Rishtan in the village of Uba, where the craftsman Khamro Rakhimov lived and worked. In Samarkand, the national master ceramist Umar Djurakulov (Picture 16) created a whole line of small terracotta plastics, continued

today by modern ceramic artists. In their works we see funny story compositions on the themes of the national way of life: scenes from a tea-house and a bazaar, clowns (*maskaroboz*), and old men on donkeys. To this day, these ethnographically accurately conveyed images of the Uzbek folklore characters are very popular and full of lyrical humor.

Picture 16. G. I. Ulko, "Folk Artisan of Uzbekistan U. Dzhurakulov." Canvas, oil, 1950



Source: E. M. Nikiforova, comp.; Vorontsova V. N., trans., *Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv Uzbekskoy SSR. Zhivopis'. Al'bom* (Leningrad: Avrora, 1975).

## Monuments of the Art of Jewelry

The development of decorative and applied art in Central Asia is also evidenced by jewelry, which was discovered on the territory accidentally or during archaeological excavations. This jewelry, having first emerged due to utilitarian, practical or magical needs (“all jewelry items without exceptions have served as amulets for a long period of time and were endowed with specific symbolic meaning<sup>14</sup>”) gradually acquired certain artistic and aesthetic value.

On the territory of ancient Khorezm, the earliest decorations are considered to be the ones found on 15 Kokcha settlements (2000 BC). Women’s burials dating from the fourth century BC to the second century AD reveal bronze pieces of jewelry: temporal wire and cast rings, finger rings, bracelets with open ends, pins with globular tops, and various beads<sup>15</sup>. One real masterpiece of fine plastics is a hairpin representing a hand holding an apple (Picture 17).

Picture 17. A pin in the form of a woman’s hand with a pomegranate (or an apple). First–second centuries



Source: I. V. Savitskiy, comp., *Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv Karakalpakskoy ASSR* (Moscow: Sovetskiy khudozhnik, 1976).

The composition of the hand is supplemented with a bracelet in the form of a snake. Images of snakes are found on other pieces of jewelry as well; for example, temporal rings in the form of a clotted snake or bracelets with a snake’s head on the open end found in Dingildzhe. The ancient notion of snakes as apotropaic creatures is probably the reason for such images. Many Central Asian nations still consider the image of a snake an averter. A snake, as the embodiment of water, still attracts modern masters of pattern creation: the most common signs of a snake, zigzag shapes, are transformed to geometrical and vegetative forms.

Pins were also discovered on other territories of Central Asia. As arts experts suggest, they could have served as an accessory used to pin or fasten a hairdo or a head-dress. Such pins could also serve as an awl, performing both utilitarian and magical functions<sup>16</sup>, just like any piercing object. The sacral power of an amulet was enhanced by the finial, whose beauty allowed the pin to be also considered a piece of jewelry.

The works of the so-called Amu Darya and Dalverzin treasures discovered on the territory of Central Asia can rightfully be considered examples of high art.

The Amu Darya treasure<sup>17</sup> (“Treasure of the Oxus”), a treasure of gold and silver pieces of art of the Achaemenid period (fifth to third centuries BC), was found in 1877 on the banks of the Amu Darya (called “Oxus” in ancient times), in the vicinity of Takhti Kubad, on the territory of modern Tajikistan. The treasure includes miniature models of carriages with horses, figurines of people and animals, jugs, coins and jewelry: bracelets, locket, and rings. The academic E. Rtveladze states that among the selected five groups of gold and silver objects of the treasure, he identifies highly artistic works of local Bactrian origin and items made in the Scythian-Siberian traditions (a horse head, over thirty thin gold plates with a profile image of a standing figure holding a bundle of twigs and jewelry; rings with a variety of images of animals — horses, camels, and lion griffons<sup>18</sup>) (Picture 18).

The Dalverzin treasure discovered in 1972 on the site of Dalverzin-Tepe (the Surkhandarya region in the south of modern Uzbekistan) dates to the Kushan period (first century BC to the third century AD).



The treasure consists of 115 gold objects, weighing in total about 36 kilograms. Archaeologists and art historians consider a golden pectoral to be the work of local craftsmen. The pectoral consists of three welded hoops opening in the center where a buckle is placed, which has a gemma inserted into it; an intaglio with in-depth image of a bearded man; and a buckle frame made of granulated beads (Picture 19).

Picture 18. Bracelet from the Amudarya treasure.  
Gold. Mid-fourth century BC



Source: Victoria and Albert Museum. Collections, vam.ac.uk/item/0140678/armlet-unknown/.

Picture 19. Pectoral from the Dalverzin treasure.  
Gold, carnelian. First century AD



Source: G. A. Pugachenkova, et al.; Rempel, L. I., exec. ed., *Dalverzintepa — kushanskiy gorod na iuge Uzbekistana* (Tashkent: Izdatel'stvo Fan UzSSR, 1978).

Another local product is believed to be a neck decoration — a torc with open ends and a closed-loop bracelet with spirally twisted ends. A big curly plaque with a high relief figure of a mythical-eared beast in the frame with gemstone inlays is associated with the Saka “animal style”<sup>19</sup> (Picture 20).

Picture 20. A plate with an image of an animal from the Dalverzin treasure. Gold. First century AD



Source: G. A. Pugachenkova, *Khudozhestvennyye sokrovishcha Dalverzin-tepe* (Leningrad: Avrora, 1978).

A genuine masterpiece of jewelry is the clothing of the “Golden Man” (Picture 21), also made in the Saka “animal style.” It was discovered by archaeologists in 1969 in Kazakhstan in one of the 45 mounds of the Issyk burial ground (fifth to fourth century BC), located 50 kilometers east of the city of Almaty.

“The Golden Man”, according to archaeologists, is a Saka leader approximately 17–18 years old (the image has been recreated by Kazakhstani conservators). He is dressed in a luxurious garment, adorned with four thousand gold plates and plaques in the form of flat relief images of a horse, leopard, mountain goat, and birds. On his head sits a tall (65 centimeter), cone-shaped helmet (*kulah*) with the image of a mountain argali at the top, golden arrow-shaped ornaments, and two plates with twelve sun images representing the twelve months. The neck is covered with a gold torc, a decoration in the form of a hoop (protective ring).

Picture 21. Issyk “Golden Man” (copy)



Source: State Historical Cultural Reserve-Museum of Issyk. (Author's photo.)

The leather coat is trimmed with golden triangles and trefoils with a belt covering them with 16 gold plaques depicting a reclining deer and an elk head. There is a long sword on the right side of the belt and a dagger (*akinak*) on the left, richly decorated with gold plates in the form of horses and a deer. On the fingers of his right hand there are two gold rings: one with a mirrored shield — a symbol of

power; the second — a signet ring — is a symbol of supreme power (*tamga*) (Picture 22). Here is also a *kamcha* (whip), a cloth-bag with a bronze mirror, and a silver bowl with 26 written characters (the undeciphered “Issyk letter”). Today, the “Golden Man” on the winged snow leopard is one of the most famous symbols of the Republic of Kazakhstan.



Picture 22. Rings of “Golden Man.” Gold plaques on the suit and plates on the sheath of the dagger (copy)



Source: State Historical Cultural Reserve-Museum of Issyk. (Author’s photo.)

Discoveries of another “Golden Man” (seventh to sixth centuries BC) were made in 2003 on the territory of the Shiliktinsk mound in east Kazakhstan. Inside the tomb, 4303 gold items were found with unique gold plaques in the form of an arch, a deer and a leopard among them (Picture 23). All gold items were also crafted in the “animal style.”

Among all the Saka burial mounds, one is especially prominent — the Berel mound (East Kazakhstan), where in 1998 the burial sites of no-

bles were discovered (dating back to the fourth century BC) (Picture 24). The uniqueness of the burial sites is that the ancient nomads, taking into account the climatic conditions of the terrain, knew how to create artificial permafrost inside the burial structures. This ensured the excellent preservation of artifacts: clothes, various objects, utensils, leather, felt, horse gear (badges, cheek pieces, pendants, and strap dividers, covered with 5-microns thick gold foil and tin), and a large amount of jewelry in the “animal style.”



Picture 23. Argali, leopard, plaques.  
Shilikty (copy).  
Fourth–third century BC



Source: State Historical Cultural Reserve-Museum of Issyk.  
(Author's photo.)

Picture 24. Deer in the dragon's beak; mythical  
animal; fork in the form of a moose. Berel mound.  
Fourth–third centuries BC



Source: State Historical Cultural Reserve-Museum of Issyk.  
(Author's photos.)

The Saka's distinguishing features of the “animal style” are the images of local animal species: horses, sheep, camels, deer, leopards, tigers, eagles, and wolves, which Saka craftsmen used to adorn their clothing, weapons, horse harnesses, boilers, altars, and others.

Also unique are the decorations of the Kargaly treasure (second century BC to the first century AD) for their artistic and aesthetic value (found in

1939, 30 kilometers west of Almaty city). There are about 300 pieces of gold jewelry: rings, earrings, and relief plates. Of particular note is the diadem in the form of rectangular openwork plates, which depict various scenes, such as that of an elk with an inverted head, a female elk, and a crouching winged tiger with a man sitting atop. On a postament there is a winged horse, a bear, two men riding an ibex and an argali, and others (Picture 25).

Picture 25. *Fragment of a gold diadem from the Kargaly treasure*



Source: Central Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan, [www.heritagenet.unesco.kz](http://www.heritagenet.unesco.kz).

The jewelry of the treasure has elements of the technical and artistic features of the “polychrome style”: inlay-work consisting of multi-colored inserts of precious and semiprecious stones (the eyes of animals are made of carnelian and colored almandine), and granulation — the brazing of small golden beads to the item.

All of these unique jewelry findings indicate a high degree of cultural development of the ancient tribes that inhabited the territory of modern Kazakhstan.

Based on the material presented, we can conclude that ancient Central Asia created a highly

developed and unique art culture. Its objects — rock paintings, fine art, ceramics and jewelry — show that the origins of the art culture of Central Asian peoples go back to ancient times, to the days preceding the birth of the Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Karakalpaks, Uzbeks, Turkmens, and Tajiks as ethnics groups. All these heritage sites confirm the idea that the beautiful was regulated by certain canons and aesthetic principles, which were passed on from generation to generation and were further reflected in the decorative and applied art of the above mentioned peoples.



## Chapter 2.

# The Aesthetic Features of the Decorative and Applied Art of Central Asia

The most vital area of the material and spiritual culture of the peoples of Central Asia is decorative and applied art. It is of great aesthetic and historical value due to its diversity in types and genres, wide range of themes, richness and variety of motives, emotional artistic structure, national identity, and color.

Decorative and applied art was an organic part of everyday life of the Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Karakalpaks, Uzbeks, Turkmens, and Tajiks, and primarily performed practical functions. At the time these everyday items, which were created in artistic way, were not perceived as art by their creators and consumers. It's only now that we have started to perceive them as such, giving them a high aesthetic appreciation and trying to revive them. This phenomenon can be explained by changes in the conditions of their existence. G. Spencer wrote: "As with the development of society, we gradually move away from the habits, customs, way of life and all material and intellectual products of the past centuries, and as the difference increases between the past and the present — all this gradually starts looking poetic to us and becomes an ornament."<sup>20</sup> It can also be explained by the fact that the best examples of folk decorative and applied art — decorative wood carving, patterned weaving, carpet weaving, embroidery, applications, and metal art — were created based not only on their practical use, but also on the "laws of beauty."

The aesthetic value of the decorative and applied art of Central Asian people is primarily in the great attention paid to the characteristics of the material from which an item is made. It is also in the ability to draw maximum artistic effects from the material's natural properties.

In addition to their utilitarian purposes, the items made from available materials (stone, clay, wood, metal, cotton, silkworm cocoon, wool,

leather, and others) also had a significant aesthetic component that was determined by the form of the items, their expressive proportions, silhouettes, and decoration. The craftsmen tried to reflect the whole world in the decorative motifs of the products they created. Therefore, in the ornamentation of all kinds of folk art we can observe cosmogonic, geometric, floral, zoomorphic and subject-themed motifs.

Central Asian cosmogonic motifs are primarily associated with the sun giving life, warmth, and crops, as well as with the moon and stars. They can be easily combined with geometric patterns: straight lines, curves, broken lines, shading, checks, rhombs, zigzag, rosettes, circles, semicircles, triangles, and polyhedral or meandering patterns.

Floral motifs are common. To identify a vegetative ornament of some people of Central Asia (in particular Uzbeks and Tajiks) the term *islimi* is used. Its main elements include a stem, a leaf, a bud, a rose, a tulip and others.

In zoomorphic ornamentation, the main motif is the stylized image of sheep horns (known to Kazakhs and Karakalpaks as *koshkar muyiz*, which were linked to the concepts of happiness and prosperity). There is a widely-known Kazakh belief that states, "Where there are ram bones or horns, there are no evil spirits; it is the purest animal that existed before human beings. They bear a certain vitality, luck, and happiness."<sup>21</sup> This Kazakh belief coincides with similar concepts of other peoples of Central Asia. Apart from sheep horns, there are images of individual parts of animals, birds and insects: Kazakh ornaments include camel necks, camel humps, camel outlines, dog tails, bird wings, bird necks and beaks, goose feet, snake heads or bellies, and fly wings.<sup>22</sup> Karakalpak ornaments include ducks, crow claws, ant bodies, scorpion tails,

and mouse outlines<sup>23</sup>. Tajik ornaments include outlines of cats, chickens, wolves, and tiger claws.<sup>24</sup>

Special ornamental forms were developed for each type of the applied arts, depending on factors such as textile techniques, woodworking, metal processing, the material properties and pliability during processing. Still, the unity of style expressed in these forms is striking. This is particularly noticeable in the case of Central Asian yurts, in which all kinds of folk art are found in the same

object: wood carving, patterned weaving, and carpet weaving.

### The Yurt as an Architectural and Artistic Ensemble

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The yurt (Kazakh *kiiz ui*, Kyrgyz *boz ui*, Turkmen *ak ou* or *gara ou*, Karakalpak *kara ui*, Uzbek *o'tov*) not so long ago was the only type of shelter of the Central Asian nomads (Picture 26).

Picture 26. U. Tansykbaev, "Nomad territory." Canvas, oil, 1931



Source: I. V. Ginzburg, comp., *Tansykbaev Ural. Komplekt reproduktsiy* (Leningrad: Avrora, 1977).

The advantages of the yurt over other types of dwellings were portability, mobility and seasonality. The yurt can be quickly installed and disassembled; it's easily ventilated; stays warm

and equally protects against cold, heat, and wind. The Russian historian, ethnologist and orientalist L.N. Gumilyov in his book "Ancient Turks" wrote: "There is no proof that a stone shack or a clay hut



is the highest form of dwelling compared with a felt tent — warm, spacious, and easily portable. For nomads, closely connected with the nature, life in a tent was not a whim, but a necessity. Summer steppe burns and cattle should pasture on *zhailau* — alpine meadows located on the slopes of the

Tien Shan, Altai, Khangai, and Khentei [mountains]. In winter, it snows a lot in the mountains and the herds return to the plains, where the snow cover is thin so the cattle gets dry and quite nutritious grass underneath. With such a way of life, a portable home is the best.”<sup>25</sup> (Picture 27).

Picture 27. V. V. Vereshchagin, “Kyrgyz Migrations.” Canvas, oil, 1869–1870



Source: L. M. Demin, *S mol'bertom po zemnomu sharu. Mir glazami V. V. Vereshchagina* (Moscow: Mysl', 1991).

The size of the yurt and the color of its felt cover gave evidence of the substantiality of its owner. Since the old days, the Kazakhs highly appreciated a yurt covered with white felt *ak ui* (“white yurt”), which was considered a symbol of wealth and prosperity; its area could be double that of a “dark” yurt.

Central Asian people managed to create a remarkably rich and balanced type of decoration that strictly conformed to the yurt construction and took into account both the living conditions and climate, as well as the features of materials used. The yurt’s wooden frame, which played an import-

ant constructive role, was at the same time very decorative. The dome was made of thin, curved poles crowned with a semi-sphere (*shanyrak*) (Picture 28). These poles provided an amazing visual impression of the dome’s height.

The aspiration to create a figurative and poetic model of the world inside the yurt was most clearly manifested in the construction of the *shanyrak*, the spherical dome of the yurt, correlated with the firmament, through which communication took place with celestial bodies — the sun, the moon, and the stars (Picture 29).

Picture 28. *Shanyrak* of the Kazakh yurt. Wood, metal, carving, arching, steaming, through holes.  
Second half of the nineteenth century



Source: B. I. Seraliev, exec. ed., *Kazakhskoe narodnoe prikladnoe iskusstvo. Katalog* (Almaty: Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv imeni A. Kasteeva, AO ABDI Company, 2010).

Picture 29. E. Sadyrbaev, “*Shanyrak*.” Oil on canvas, 2014



Source: Personal site of E. Sadyrbaev, [www.esengaliart.kz](http://www.esengaliart.kz).



The outlines of the *shanyrak* — a cross in a circle — is a sign of perpetual motion, evolution, fertility, and rebirth. The Kazakh word *shanyrak* is associated with the concepts of home and family. *Shanyrak koterdi* is said about newly married people who have built a new family; they also say: “*shanyraktaryn biik bolsyn, keregelerin ken bolsyn, bosagalaryn berik bolsyn*” — “may your dome be high, may the walls be wide, may the threshold be a strong protection.”

The inner space of the yurt is strictly zoned. The key sacred center is the hearth. The extinction of the fireplace was identified, according to the philosopher A. Nysanbaev, with the destruction of the family. “Therefore, it was forbidden to interfere with the ash, spill water in the hearth, light from it or take the fire out, otherwise the family was threatened with misfortune.”<sup>26</sup>

Over the fireplace, opposite the entrance there is a special place for guests and the oldest in the family. To the left of the entrance from the threshold stood the men’s half, where the horse harness, saddles, lassos, and hunting weapons were hung and stored. To the right of the entrance was the women’s half, a household area often separated with a screen or a mat. “The headman’s place in the yurt was called ‘the tiger,’ the personification of power; the housewife’s place was ‘the rabbit,’ an expression of humility.”<sup>27</sup>

According to the well-known artist, restorer, art historian, ethnographer and founder of the Museum of Art in Nukus, I.V. Savitskiy, the Karakalpak yurt is one of the most ornate in the traditions of the Central Asian peoples<sup>28</sup> (Picture 30).

Picture 30. G. Abdurakhmanova, “In the Yurt.” Carboard, oil, 1979



Source: Collection of the State Museum of Arts of the Republic of Karakalpakstan named after I. V. Savitskiy, museum-kr.uz.



The yurt, undoubtedly, can be considered one of the most important achievements of human material culture. It also played a special role in maintaining traditions and served as a unifying place for communication: here dwellers from *auls* got together to listen to visiting narrators and performers of folk epics, known as *dastans*. Young men and women met each other here and songs-competitions were performed. On such days, yurts were unusually decorated; the appearance of people who participated in

such holidays was different from their everyday appearance (festive clothes and jewelry were put on) (Picture 31). In such an environment, the emotional impression created by performed *dastans*, songs, and fairytales was intensified by the whole complex of the aesthetic objective environment: from the ornamentation of different wooden items, carpets, woven articles, and embroidery on women's clothes to embroidered tea sacks that were secretly presented by girls to their beloved ones.

Picture 31. B. Serekeev, "Karakalpak Tea-Party. A Young Man and a Girl." Canvas, oil, 1991



Source: Collection of the State Museum of Arts of Karakalpakstan named after I. V. Savitskiy. Exhibition "Mgnovenie i vechnost'" 2014. Gallery of Fine Arts of Uzbekistan.

The yurt is still commonly used nowadays (Picture 32) as a location for various celebrations (national holidays and family events such as wed-

dings and funerals) and as a secondary summer shelter (in hot weather the yurt can be put next to the house).

Picture 32. Kazakh yurt



Source: Collection of the Central State Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan.  
(Photo courtesy of the staff at the Center for Anthropology and Ethnology.)

The yurts of Kazakh and Kyrgyz people, as well as the traditional knowledge and skills of making them, are on the UNESCO World's Intangible Cultural Heritage List.

### Woodcarving

Woodcarving was actively included in the ornamentation of the yurt and is an exceptional phenomenon in the art of Central Asian peoples. Different types of wood were used, including white willow, pointed willow, Boleana poplar, birch, and mulberry. The qualities of wood such as plasticity, softness, lightness, durability and flexibility significantly contributed to the growth of the popularity of this craft and promoted the wide use of wooden objects in the everyday life of Central Asian peoples.

All wooden objects in the interior of the yurt had more than just utilitarian functions. Each object adorned by a carved ornament was a deco-

orative element of the single-style ensemble of the dwelling.

Based on their functional features and ornamental-and-compositional properties, the wooden items present in the yurt can be divided into three major groups.

The first group includes household items including different dishes and utensils varied in shape, size and purpose. This group includes such items as Kazakh chiseled tableware (*astau*, *tabak*, *tegene*) for serving cooked meat; a deep bowl (*shara*) for koumiss (a fermented drink made from mare's milk); curve-handled scoops (*ozhau*) for pouring koumiss into piala-bowls (*tostagan*); twirling sticks with a crosspiece on the end for mixing koumiss (*pispek*); tobacco grinders (*sapty-ayak*). The Karakalpaks had tools, boxes for knives, boxes for tools, loom frames (*sazgab*), devices for winding yarn (*kelep agash*) (Picture 33), tables and boards for rolling dough (*astakta*) (Picture 34).



Picture 33. *Kelep agash* for winding yarn, wood



Source: I. V. Savitskiy, comp., *Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv Karakalpakskoy ASSR* (Moscow: Sovetskiy khudozhnik, 1976).

Picture 34. *Astaqta*, reverse side, wood



Source: I. V. Savitskiy, comp., *Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv Karakalpakskoy ASSR* (Moscow: Sovetskiy khudozhnik, 1976).

Over the years, sustainable methods were developed to produce wooden objects and the artistic form was improved to become more distinct and expressive. They were richly decorated by artistic carvings, complemented by painting and inlaid with bone and silver.

The special world of creativity of the national artisan is captured in the work of the Kazakh artist Antoshchenko-Olenev (Picture 35).

The decorative processing of household utensils was performed by folk craftsmen with a two-fold purpose. First of all, the purpose was to ennoble them and to make their processing more pleasant. An example is the Kazakh carved and painted mugs called *sapty-ayak* (Picture 36), or mother-of-pearl and silver twirling sticks inlaid with carved bone known as *pispek*. As I. E. Fadeeva suggests, “The image is not only determined by the function, but also determines it itself, but certainly not from the utilitarian, but from the aesthetic and spiritual point of view. From this we can say that a decorated spinning-wheel and a spinning-wheel without painting are qualitatively different things, and the difference concerns not only the surface, but also the meaning and the relationship with reality. It is not just that the decorated spinning-wheel is a work of art, and the other is not; it’s that the organization of utilitarian sense is qualitatively different with regard to the image: for example, the utilitarian meaning of the spinning-wheel with certain images on the surface is placed in on a par with the world of aesthetically meaningful phenomena and human emotions which are reflected in the painting or carving.”<sup>29</sup>

The decoration of household utensils was also designed to harmoniously fit them into the overall prevailing decorative composition of the yurt. For example, round table-boards for dough rolling called *astakta* were fastened on the wall of the yurt from their decorated side, thus they became an integral part of the artistic decoration enriching the ornamental decoration of the yurt.

The second group of objects covered by ornamental décor is furniture. The nomadic peoples of Central Asia had small-sized and transportable furniture which could be easily disassembled. Some examples include Kazakh beds (*tosekagash*)

Picture 35. V. I. Antoshchenko-Olenev, "National Artisan." Paper, colored linocut, 1969



Source: R. A. Amirov, comp., Valentin Antoshchenko-Olenev (Alma-Ata: Oner, 1983).

(Picture 37) with headboards (*zhastykagash*), which were used as a shelf for the bedding during the day and for pillows during the night; hangers (*adalbakan*); storage chests (*abdire*); cabinets for storing utensils, tablecloths, napkins, towels, and musical instruments (*asadal*); boxes for food storage (*kebezhe*) (Picture 38); and stands for bedding (*zhukayak*) (Picture 39).

The elements of furniture ornamentation acted as a sort of link between the ornamental decoration of utensils and the more monumental, architectural decoration of the yurt.

The double-leaf braced doors of the yurt (Picture 40), as well as the crossbars separating them and the long side of the lintel directed to the inner part of the yurt, were covered with carving. The carving on the lintel of the door also carried a

semantic meaning, performing the function of an amulet.

Central Asian craftsmen mastered all kinds of carving techniques (contour, trihedrally-notched, bas-relief and chiseling the background of stencil-drawn patterns). The surface was covered with a thin layer of natural paint obtained from clay<sup>30</sup>, roots, bark, leaves, fruit pits from various trees (willow, poplar, pine, oak, apple, apricot, and others) in beautiful red and brown shades.

Thanks to painting, the main composition and the entire ornament were easy to interpret. Every wooden object decorated with carving in the Central Asian yurt was unique and artistically picturesque, but altogether they created a single artistic composition in the yurt's interior.



Picture 36. *Mug sapty-ayak*. Wood, carving, painting, nineteenth century



Source: B. I. Seraliev, exec. ed., *Kazakhskoe narodnoe prikladnoe iskusstvo. Katalog* (Almaty: Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv imeni A. Kasteeva, AO ABDI Company, 2010).

Picture 39. *Stand (zhukayak)*. Wood, bone, nails, carving, painting, inlay, nineteenth century



Source: B. I. Seraliev, exec. ed., *Kazakhskoe narodnoe prikladnoe iskusstvo. Katalog* (Almaty: Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv imeni A. Kasteeva, AO ABDI Company, 2010).

Picture 37. *Bed (tosekagash)*. Wood, bone, nails, carving, painting, inlay, nineteenth century



Source: B. I. Seraliev, exec. ed., *Kazakhskoe narodnoe prikladnoe iskusstvo. Katalog* (Almaty: Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv imeni A. Kasteeva, AO ABDI Company, 2010).

Picture 38. *Box for food storage (kebezhe)*. Wood, bone, nails, carving, painting, inlay, nineteenth century



Source: B. I. Seraliev, exec. ed., *Kazakhskoe narodnoe prikladnoe iskusstvo. Katalog* (Almaty: Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv imeni A. Kasteeva, AO ABDI Company, 2010).

Picture 40. *Ornamental carving on the door of a Karakalpak yurt*



Source: I. V. Savitskiy, comp., *Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv Karakalpakskoy ASSR* (Moscow: Sovetskiy khudozhnik, 1976).

## Felt Products

Felt products are widely present in the interior of the Kazakh and Kyrgyz yurt. Felting occupied a significant place in the household of peoples associated with nomadic cattle breeding. As a result of the centuries-old practice, Kazakhs and Kyrgyz reached a high degree of perfection in this kind of creativity. Felt was used to cover the yurt, to lay floors and to insulate walls. To cover the yurt, a very dense yet light and waterproof felt was made of the wool of special breeds of sheep, shorn in the autumn.

Felt products, thanks to their high degree of insulation and practical value, were also used for decorative purposes. They were distinguished by the diversity of techniques that allowed the creation of different textures, color scales and patterns.

Traditional wall felt carpets (Kazakh *tus kiiz*, Kyrgyz *tush kiiz*) were decorated with mosaics, velvet appliqué, woolen cloth (with a U-shaped

border) or embroidery made with colored thread made of different materials (woolen cloth, velvet, cotton) which was then sewn on the felt base. *Tuskiiz* differ in that they, apart from solar signs, featured “unusually rich and colorful flora (winding stems, leaves, trefoils, lotus flowers, buds, trees, pomegranates) that were to magically foster happiness and prosperity of the family.”<sup>31</sup>

*Tuskiiz* (a front carpet that was hung on a specific side of the yurt) served as an indicator of the prosperity of the owners and at the same time, the skills and mastery of the housewife; the *tuskiiz* was embroidered by a young bride before the wedding and was part of her dowry (Picture 41).

The mosaic technique was performed using a floor carpet (Kazakh *syrmak* and Kyrgyz *shirdak*). The same patterns are cut from two different color fabrics of felt and sewn swapping places, which results in two different felted carpets. For example, if two colors are used, white and brown, the same *syrmak* or *shirdak* brown pattern is on a white

Picture 41. Kazakh *tuskiiz*. Eastern Kazakhstan. Cloth, plush, colored threads, tambour stitch, twentieth century. Artisan T. Moldasbanova



Source: B. I. Seraliev, exec. ed., *Kazakhskoe narodnoe prikladnoe iskusstvo. Katalog* (Almaty: Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv imeni A. Kasteeva, AO ABDI Company, 2010).



background, while on the second a white pattern is on a brown background; obtained this way, different *syrmaks* and *shyrdaks* are then sewn together: color patterns are sewn with lacing, usually different in color from the pattern that gives special expressiveness of the drawing (Pictures 42, 43).

The art of making traditional Kyrgyz felt carpets (*shyrdak*) is included on the list of the World's Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO.

The process of making another piece of floor felt, known as *tekemet* (Picture 44), was very time-consuming and required large labor costs, patience and skill. It was prepared using patterns of colored wool on the half-finished base.

To make a pattern, craftswomen used woolen yarn of many colors: brown, red, green, or golden yellow. The abundance of color and ornament do not produce an excessive mottle; the tones of the wool are soft and create the feeling of harmonious combination in the pattern.

Picture 42. *Kazakh Syrmak*.  
Wool.



Source: B. I. Seraliev, exec. ed., *Kazakhskoe narodnoe prikladnoe iskusstvo. Katalog* (Almaty: Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv imeni A. Kasteeva, AO ABDI Company, 2010).

Picture 43. *Fragment of Kyrgyz shyrdak*. Wool



Source: T. M. Baltabaeva, comp., *Narodnye sokrovishcha Kirgizii* (Frunze: Kyrgyzstan, 1974).

Picture 44. *Kazakh felt tekemet*. Artisan  
N. Moldabaeva. Wool, felting. Chimkent region,  
1960



Source: B. I. Seraliev, exec. ed., *Kazakhskoe narodnoe prikladnoe iskusstvo. Katalog* (Almaty: Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv imeni A. Kasteeva, AO ABDI Company, 2010).

Behind all these types of felt products there is diligent, multi-day (ranging from a few days to a few weeks) work by Kazakh and Kyrgyz craftswomen. Their production was preceded by preparatory work. First, the village women stocked up on wool, then, having gathered and placed the wool on a dried skin (*tulak*), they worked it with sticks (*sabau*) carved from tamarisk (*zhyngyl*), cleaning it of impurities and making it fluffy and light. Then they laid a thin layer of wool on the mat and rolled it up. Having wrapped it with a rope, they would then sit in a row and roll it using their elbows, repeatedly spraying the roll with hot water (Picture 45). When

the craftswomen sensed that the felt was ready, it was removed from the mat, folded and tied up. It was then watered with cold water and stretched and the rough edges were cut off (Picture 46).

The technique of producing reed mats is also original, which covered the walls of the yurt: each reed of the mat (*shim shi*) was enlaced with a stripe of colored wool according to a given pattern, which resulted in a rich ornamental composition. *Shim shi* mats were laid over the lattice walls of the yurts. They served as a screen which covered the utility part, and were sewn into the felt cover of the yurt door (*shim esik*) (Picture 47).

Picture 45. M. S. Kenbaev, "Felt Making." Canvas, oil, 1958



Source: Collection of the State Museum of Arts named after A. Kasteev. N. A. Polonskaia, comp., *Moldakhmet Kenbaev. Al'bom* (Almaty: Oner, 1983).



Picture 46. E. Sadyrbaev, "Noon in the Village." Canvas, oil, 2009



Source: Personal site of E. Sadyrbaev, [www.esengaliart.kz](http://www.esengaliart.kz).

Picture 47. *Shim esik*. Steppe reed, silk, weaving, 1930



Source: B. I. Seraliev, exec. ed. *Kazakhskoe narodnoe prikladnoe iskusstvo. Katalog* (Almaty: Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv imeni A. Kasteeva, AO ABDI Company, 2010).

## Carpeting

Carpeting is also part of decorative elements of a single style ensemble of the Central Asian yurt. There are many similarities in some of the technical methods and main types of carpets used in the external decoration and interior of the yurt, from woven ribbons and patterned strips (Kazakh and Karakalpak) to the hanging and saddle bags with two compartments for clothes and food (Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Turkmen). Despite these similarities, the carpets of the Central Asian peoples are completely original and possess their own unique artistic language and means of artistic expression.

Central Asian carpets are normally divided by researchers into two groups: tufted carpets and napless carpet fabrics. The intermediate position is occupied by items in which a tufted ornament<sup>32</sup> was created on a napless cloth.

Kazakh weaving of tufted carpets (*tukti kilem*) was mainly performed, as stated by the scientist and ethnographer U. Janibekov, in the southern Kazakhstan region of Semirechye: “Perhaps this is due to the settled and half-settled lifestyle of the much of the population of these areas. An important role in the development of this craft was played by apparently direct contacts in the past with the areas of developed carpet weaving, in particular with Iran, Eastern Turkestan. This possibility is indicated by the presence among the Kazakhs and Turkmens of tufted carpet *kalyklem*, whose name comes from the Persian *galy*, meaning a carpet<sup>33</sup>. It decorated the walls of dwellings and was part of the bride’s dowry; it served as a sign of “the highest honors rendered to persons worthy of universal respect, and was used as a prize in the most important horse racing (*bayge*)<sup>34</sup>.

Karakalpak large carpets were woven comparatively rarely. They are mostly small carpets *esik-kas* (“eyebrows of the door”), which were hung above the door and as a kind of a lambrequin which adorned the entrance of the yurt from the inside. The same technique is found in the front sides of bags for clothes and household (*kerigi*) (Picture 48), and saddle-bags (*qorzhyn*), which replaced many necessary furniture pieces. At the same time, these bags played an important role in yurt decoration and the organization of the aesthetic environment:

they were hung on the wall and they made the yurt beautiful and decorated.

Napless weaving was found throughout the entire territory of Kazakhstan; a solid-woven carpet and a stitched carpet were used both as wall and floor carpets. A stitched carpet was woven on a narrow beam warping machine from 40–50 centimeter strips of sheep and camel wool. Then they were cut into appropriate pieces and sewn to obtain a carpet of necessary dimensions. This technique was used by the Karakalpaks, Kyrgyz, and Uzbeks.

Picture 48. *Front side of the Karakalpak bag kerigi. Wool*



Source: I. V. Savitskiy, comp., *Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv Karakalpakskoy ASSR* (Moscow: Sovetskiy khudozhnik, 1976).

The technique of napless weaving was applied by the Kazakhs to make *kyzyl-basqur* (“main red belt”), which was 60–70 cm in width and wrapped around the yurt with the front side facing its inner side (Picture 49), as well as *qyzyl-qur* (“red belt”), narrow ornamented strips of carpet 12–15 cm in width, which fastened roof felts from the inside and interlaced over the honorary place of the yurt (*tor*).

A combined technique in which nap ornaments were applied on a background of smooth fabric was performed when making the mentioned patterned



Picture 49. *Kyzyl baskur* of a Kazakh yurt.  
Detail, wool



Source: B. I. Seraliev, exec. ed., *Kazakhskoe narodnoe prikladnoe iskusstvo. Katalog* (Almaty: Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv imeni A. Kasteeva, AO ABDI Company, 2010).

Picture 50. *Ak-baskur* of a Karakalpak yurt. Detail,  
cotton base, wool



Source: I. V. Savitskiy, comp., *Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv Karakalpakskoy ASSR* (Moscow: Sovetskiy khudozhnik, 1976).

strips of carpet. Belts known as *ak-baskur* (“main white belt”) 12–13 m long and 40–50 cm wide were placed on the overhead cover of the yurt with the front side facing the inner part of the yurt (Picture 50). The outside of the yurt was decorated by two vertical carpet strips setting the door off from the outside and two symmetric strips trimmed at the bottom with a long fringe (Karakalpak *zhambau*).

Picture 51. *Zhambau* of a Karakalpak yurt.  
Cotton base, wool



Source: I. V. Savitskiy, comp., *Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv Karakalpakskoy ASSR* (Moscow: Sovetskiy khudozhnik, 1976).

Picture 52. *Iinbau* of a Karakalpak yurt. Cotton  
base, wool, silk threads



Source: I. V. Savitskiy, comp., *Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv Karakalpakskoy ASSR* (Moscow: Sovetskiy khudozhnik, 1976).



These were fastened with one end to the door jamb and the other to the skeleton of the yurt in the upper side of it (Picture 51). The inside of the yurt was adorned by two narrow symmetric carpet strips made in the same technique (called *iinbau*), with one end sewn to a rug (*yesik-kas*) and the other end tied to one of the roof poles of the yurt, thus forming two outgoing elegant carpet strips with peculiar garlands (Picture 52). All these patterned carpet strips gave the yurt an extremely elegant appearance.

It's important to note one principal feature of Central Asian patterned weaving, which became an aesthetic principle: the absence of uniformity

and monotony. A craftswoman seemingly did not make any discoveries in each new composition but constantly varied the ornamental elements and color range selected for a particular carpet, thus obtaining new compositions each time.

Competition in crafts was peculiar to folk traditions; according to researchers: "people would send a horseman to a craftswoman who created something unusual, and were looking forward to getting her embroidery in order to admire it, copy and study it." All this contributed to the self-affirmation of the craftswoman, the manifestation of the initiative and the search for new ideas.

Picture 53. E. A. Kim, "Spinner." Canvas, oil, 2012



Source: E. A. Kim, *Byt kazakhov XIX– nachala XX veka*, <https://forum.artinvestment.ru/showthead.php?p=3674791>.



Today, looking at these items one can imagine the specific world of artistic creation of the object environment, when the artisan carefully processed the yarn, colored it with preliminarily prepared paint, then spun the thread on the spindle while watching the hasty movement of the fly-wheel assisting the smooth twist of the thread (Picture 53).

Then came leisurely work on a simple loom (*ormek*), placed outside the yurt in the summer (Picture 54) and under the light of a torch in the winter.

Carpets and patterned weaving articles were not designed for sale. They were traditionally made by young women, each of whom was supposed to master this art and complete her work before marriage (Picture 55). The ability to weave carpets was considered one of a young woman's most attractive attributes.

Before marriage, a Kazakh bride embroidered, as already noted, *tuskiiz*, which then was part of her dowry, so the attitude towards it was particularly favorable. It served as a kind of talisman that protected the hearth and family; it was treasured and passed down from generation to generation.

The secrets of the craft were passed across generations from mothers to daughters, from grandmothers to granddaughters. Kazakh women and mothers, as written by A. I. Levshin, certainly were "to train their daughters in various arts essential in family life, such as: spinning, weaving, sewing clothes, cooking meals, making various patterned curtains, silk embroidery, gold work and so on..."<sup>35</sup>

The Karakalpaks introduced girls to the tradition of carpet spinning at the age of five or six. They say in Karakalpak folklore:

*Segizde apan pakyrdy,  
"Oynau uyat, uyge kel-dep shaqyrdy!"  
Zhip shaylashap, boz toqyudy tapsyrdy.*<sup>36</sup>

When you were eight, your mother called you:  
"It's a shame to play, go home!"  
She assigned you weaving and spinning.

Picture 54. N. G. Khudov, "A Weaver by the Ormek Machine." Canvas, oil, 1905



Source: Nikolay Gavrilovich Khudov. *Katalog proizvedeniy: zhivopis' i grafika* (Almaty: TOO Effekt, 2003).

Picture 55. A. E. Kim, "Girls in a Yurt." Canvas, oil, 2016



Source: E. A. Kim, *Byt kazakhov XIX — nachala XX veka*, <https://forum.artinvestment.ru/showthead.php?p=3674791>.

Gradually a girl mastered all the necessary skills and as a result she could reproduce almost any of the patterns she had seen.

Everything in the yurt, starting from narrow carpet strips resembling braids and up to the rugs hanging above the door or on the honorary place in the yurt (*tor*) was saturated with one color and one ornament. Craftswomen selected colors for each article themselves, which is why almost every composition was distinguished by its independent color choice. At the same time, the color range created an impression of richness and diversity despite its strictness, modesty and paucity. This impression is created due to the conscious introduction and "infusion" of background color into ornamental motifs which allows the unification of all shades, subordinating them to one color shade. Experts in fine art note that "even the sun is unable to darken the beauty of woven carpets; burning down, the red color becomes pink-beige which

creates an even more subtle combination toning with brown."<sup>37</sup>

This is especially noticed in the Karakalpak yurt. The Karakalpaks rejected bright colors and large decorative planes. As a color base, they took a calming yet saturated range of brown, red, and brown-and-ochre colors with cold and warm red, blue, light blue and green spots created on the basis of half-tints and organically included in the general decorative image<sup>38</sup>.

The same can be said of the Turkmen carpeting. When dyeing yarns the Turkmen carpet makers (Picture 56) used natural dyes derived from leaves, roots and fruits of plants, shrubs and trees which were local or growing in the desert and the foothills of the Kopet Dag: madder, for the main dark red color; buckthorn fruits; grass known as *sarychop*, for yellow tones; pomegranate peels produced beige and brown ink; and white, black and gray yarns were spun from undyed sheep wool.



Turkmen carpets, amazingly beautiful, strong and durable, feared neither the scorching sun nor water nor time; over the years, they acquired new properties, with color combinations softening and be-

coming more distinguished. Today, the manufacturers of Turkmen carpets adhere to classical technologies, preparing and dyeing the yarn according to old recipes.

Picture 56. B. Y. Nurali, "Portrait of Khalidhza" ("Carpetmaker"). Canvas, oil, 1920



Source: The State Museum of Oriental Art, [www.orientmuseum.ru](http://www.orientmuseum.ru).

In the early twentieth century the art historian, curator of gems of the Imperial Hermitage and subsequently its director, A. Falkerzam, wrote of the

high quality and unsurpassed beauty of Turkmen carpets: "As for the Turkmen carpets, they are undeniably the most beautiful of all other nomad-

ic carpets. Only those who feasted their eyes on luxurious colors of the ancient Turkmen carpets, who were enchanted by the charm of these amazing products and experienced a mood evoked by their harmony, finesse and silky shine, could form an idea of the beauty of these usually small size products, honed by centuries of skill: shiny black and red carpets with silk ornaments in ivory and crimson roses colors, or matte hazy carpets with the same white color and interspersed blue on the red-brown background, or shining with its rich red tones, or strewn with large stylish ornament, and finally, adorned with colorful stripes on the almost white background.”<sup>39</sup>

The artistic merits of the Turkmen carpet are determined by the nature of the material (wool, silk, etc.), the ornamental range, the composition of the picture and the color scheme. The Turkmen carpet uses a special wool from the Sarja sheep sheared in the spring; it stands out for its ability to easily absorb moisture from the air and release it (hygroscopy), low-pass heat (protection against cold), strength and flexibility.

The artistic value of the Turkmen carpet also depends on the nature of knotting and high density at which the pattern of the carpet turns clear and expressive (Picture 57).

Picture 57. A. Amangel'dyev, "Carpetmakers." Canvas, oil, 1961



Source: Amangel'dyev Aman. *Vystavka proizvedeniy* (Moscow: Sovetskiy khudozhnik, 1982).

The density of a good carpet, according to specialists, goes up to 250 — 400,000 knots per square meter. This means to make a carpet of six square meters, a craftswoman will need to tie over 1.5 million knots. This process required a lot of physical strength and patience — a Turkmen proverb says: “It is easier to dig up the sand with a needle than to weave a carpet.”

In 1931, the art historian O. Ponomarev wrote: “In the summer days a carpet maker gets so exhausted by the work that she falls off her feet... A craftswoman produces up to 3,000 units per hour and a huge number of strokes by the *darak*. It is

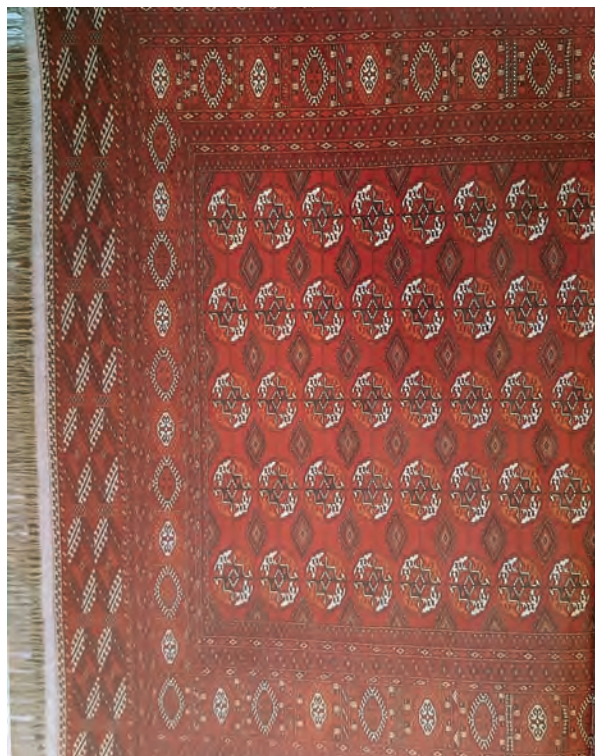
easy to imagine that doing this job for 8 hours now and 10–12 hours in past times, every day during the long Turkmen summer, a woman gets exhausted to the limit... Swinging with a metal comb weighing 1 kilogram about ten thousand times a day — and not just swinging but stroking with full power, each time receiving the reflected strikes back in the arm — is capable of tearing off the arms of any...”<sup>40</sup>

Turkmen carpets are classified according to tribal affiliation (Tekin (Picture 58), Yomud (Picture 59), Ersarin (Picture 60), etc.)

The carpet’s tribal affiliation is characterized by a tribal sign called a *gel* (rose), a square, hexagonal



Picture 58. Fragment of Tekin carpet khaly. Wool, 1960



Source: E. Medzhitova, comp., *Turkmenskoe narodnoe iskusstvo. Al'bom* (Ashkhabad: Turkmenistan, 1990).

Picture 60. Fragment of Ersary carpet khaly. Wool, 1960



Source: E. Medzhitova, comp., *Turkmenskoe narodnoe iskusstvo. Al'bom* (Ashkhabad: Turkmenistan, 1990).

Picture 59. Fragment of Yomud carpet khaly. Wool, 1940



Source: E. Medzhitova, comp., *Turkmenskoe narodnoe iskusstvo. Al'bom* (Ashkhabad: Turkmenistan, 1990).

or octagonal shape that fills the central field of the carpet. For each tribe, the *gel* differs in shape, location and inner filling. On what a *gel* can possibly represent, the Turkmen art critics and designers are of the opinion that the *gel* is a stylized image of the Earth in the Universe<sup>41</sup>.

In Turkmen yurts the carpets replaced all basic interior decoration (Picture 61); large carpets called *khaly* covered the floor of the yurt, a small U-shaped carpet known as *ojag-bashi* surrounded the hearth in the center of the tent, and a *germech* rug served as the threshold (Picture 62).

Therefore, the richness and harmony of the ornamentation, the color, the diversity and beauty of textures (wood, wool, leather) of decoration items created an integral artistic and aesthetic image of exceptional expressiveness in the Central Asian yurt.

Picture 61. R. Mazel, "In a Yurt." Canvas, oil, 1930



Source: N. Apchinskaia, *Ruvim Mazel'. Ocherki zhizni i tvorchestva* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennyy muzey Vostoka, 2004).

Picture 62. *Fragment of gapylyk carpet. Wool, first half of the twentieth century*



Source: E. Medzhitova, comp., *Turkmenskoe narodnoe iskusstvo. Al'bom* (Ashkhabad: Turkmenistan, 1990).



## The Household Items

For the peoples of Central Asia, all items of utilitarian necessity — tools and household items, everything that surrounded people in their dwellings and on the road — served as aesthetic objects. The most common items — sacks for flour, cereals, tobacco, tea, millet, mortar and pestle, sheaths, cases for tea bowls and teapots (Picture 63), *kumis* transferring containers (Picture 64), buckets for milking mares and camels, as well as harnesses — showcased the desire of masters to create aesthetically perfect objects (Pictures 65, 66).

It is worth mentioning decorations for horses, the riding friend of the steppe-dwellers and a life-long companion. Kazakhs decorated all parts and details of horse harnesses ([Picture 67] — saddle [Picture 68], saddle blanket [Picture 69]), bridles, breast collars, cinch straps, stirrups, and lining under the stirrups, which were decorated with wood carvings and paintings, or inlaid with bone, embossing or leather appliqué. These were stamped in shapes or treated with engraved small stamps, overhead silvered metal plates, or silver plaques of different configurations (triangles, rectangles, multi-lobed rosettes, S-shaped, hornlike curls, and others). When making them, Kazakh artisans used all known metalworking technologies: forging, casting, embossing, blackening, silver notching, colored stones or glass inlay.

Picture 63. *Karakalpak shynykap* — a tea bowl case. Leather, copper wire, tape



Source: I. V. Savitskiy, comp., *Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv Karakalpakskoy ASSR* (Moscow: Sovetskiy khudozhnik, 1976).

Picture 64. *Kazakh Torsyk for kumis* Leather, wood, embossing, twentieth century



Source: B. I. Seraliev, exec. ed., *Kazakhskoe narodnoe prikladnoe iskusstvo. Katalog* (Almaty: Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv imeni A. Kasteeva, AO ABDI Company, 2010).

Picture 65. T. T. Togyzbaev, “Still-life on a red Background.” Canvas, oil, 1967



Source: Collection of the State Museum of Arts named after A. Kasteev, gmirk.kz/ru/.

Picture 66. G. M. Ismailova, "Kumys." Canvas, oil, 1967



Source: Collection of the State Museum of Arts named after A. Kasteev, [gmirk.kz/ru/](http://gmirk.kz/ru/).

Picture 67. Kazakh *er turman* — a set of horse harnesses



Source: B. I. Seraliev, exec. ed., *Kazakhskoe narodnoe prikladnoe iskusstvo. Katalog* (Almaty: Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv imeni A. Kasteeva, AO ABDI Company, 2010).

Picture 68. Kazakh male saddle with stirrups. Artisan A. Abdzhapparov. Wood, leather, metal, bone, bone carving



Source: B. I. Seraliev, exec. ed., *Kazakhskoe narodnoe prikladnoe iskusstvo. Katalog* (Almaty: Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv imeni A. Kasteeva, AO ABDI Company, 2010).

Picture 69. A saddle blanket of a Kazakh horse. Leather, felt, metal, carving, notching with silver, stamp, chasing, stamping. Early twentieth century



Source: B. I. Seraliev, exec. ed., *Kazakhskoe narodnoe prikladnoe iskusstvo. Katalog* (Almaty: Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv imeni A. Kasteeva, AO ABDI Company, 2010).



The famous *Akhal-Teke* horse was decorated with the same attention. *Akhal-Teke* is the national heritage of the Turkmen people; its picture is on

the state emblem of Turkmenistan and in its honor the Turkmen Horse Festival is celebrated on the last Sunday of April each year (Picture 70).

Picture 70. A. N. Glukharev, “*Akhal-Teke*.”



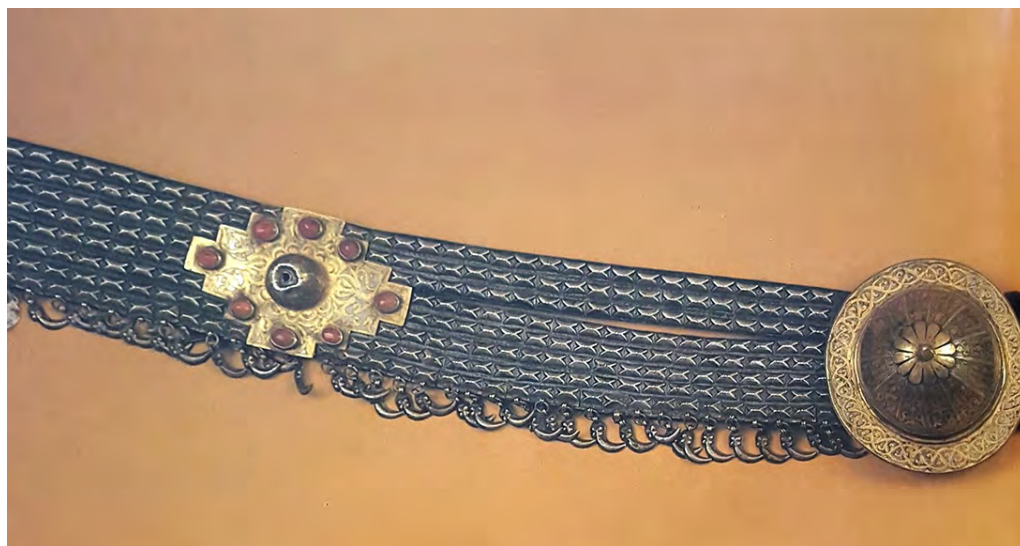
Source: *Zhivopis' i grafika. Al'bom-katalog khudozhnika A. N. Glukhareva* (Moscow: NITS Print, 2009).

In the decoration of the *Akhal-Teke* (Picture 71), one should note the ornaments of the forehead, the chest harness with a carnelian or turquoise in the center, acting as a kind of an amulet; a set of multiple (narrow and wide) collars covered with silver plates, and silver pendants along the entire length of leather straps, which produced a melodic sound when walking. There are also hand-made items of carpet, silk and felt (saddle blankets), plus a wide carpet cape-scarf with a fringe on the horse's

neck. All the decorative techniques used in the decoration of the horse work together to represent a complete artistic ensemble.

Through these examples of household items of the Central Asian peoples, one can see how the concept of the aesthetic literally charged the very essence of their material culture. They projected aesthetic principles in all spheres of life, and the criterion of beauty was always present in any sphere involving the creative process.

Picture 71. Fragment of Turkmen horse decoration (at shaiy)



Source: E. Medzhitova, comp., *Turkmenское народное искусство. Альбом* (Ashkhabad: Turkmenistan, 1990).

## Traditional Costumes

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The costume of the Central Asian peoples constitutes an entire artistic ensemble that has a certain figurative content explained by its purpose and established traditions. The artistic expressivity of Central Asian folk costumes centers around the unity of such elements as fabrics (the beauty of texture), coloristics (the harmony of color combinations), and ornamentation (the richness of decoration). Featuring amazing technique and subtle taste, the folk costume represents a unity of harmoniously coordinated items of clothing and jewelry. It was created according to the “laws of beauty” and exerted a truly aesthetic effect on a person.

The aesthetic solution of the costume is, to a large extent, determined by the beauty of material. Nature was the single source and supplier of materials for the costume. Initially, all elements of the costume were made solely from plant and animal components of nature: leather and fur, cotton, silk, half-silk and wool fibers.

## Garments made of wool, leather and fur

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Thin felt (homespun woolen cloth made of camel or sheep wool) leather, and fur are the traditional materials for the Kazakh national costume. This costume was created under the influence of harsh climatic conditions in the steppes, with their piercing winds and severe frosts in winter (Picture 72), and sudden changes in temperature into hot summer.

For their garments, Kazakhs used the skins of sheep, goats, colts, saigas, and tigers. The skins were used for making coats, vests, trousers, hats (fox fur hat) (Picture 73).

Kazakhs especially appreciated the fur of animals such as raccoons, foxes, weasels, martens, and sables. They made fur coats covered with silk, brocade and woolen cloth, often trimmed on the edges with otter or marten fur. Silk-covered coats were the most expensive part of a bride’s dowry; coats covered in blue woolen cloth were worn by the nobles.

Animal skins were used by Kazakh craftsmen to make fine suede and to sew soft, waterproof coats (*zhargak ton*, Picture 74) and trousers (Picture 75).



Picture 72. K. Telzhanov, "Atameken (Forefathers' Land)" (fragment). Canvas, oil, 1958



Source: Collection of the State Museum of Arts named after A. Kasteev; L. F. Marchenko, *Kanafia Telzhanov. Al'bom* (Alma-Ata: Oner, 1982).

Picture 73. A. G. Shkolniy, "Shepherds." Canvas, oil, 1960



Source: Collection of the State Museum of Arts named after A. Kasteev.  
The 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary personal exhibition of Ariy Shkol'nyy, 2016.



Picture 74. *Kazakh zhargak ton.*  
Colt leather, suede, floss, tambour stitch.  
First half of twentieth century



Source: B. I. Seraliev, exec. ed., *Kazakhskoe narodnoe prikladnoe iskusstvo. Katalog* (Almaty: Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv imeni A. Kasteeva, AO ABDI Company, 2010).

Picture 75. *Kazakh men's trousers.* Suede, silk thread, tambour stitch.  
Beginning of the twentieth century



Source: B. I. Seraliev, exec. ed., *Kazakhskoe narodnoe prikladnoe iskusstvo. Katalog* (Almaty: Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv imeni A. Kasteeva, AO ABDI Company, 2010).

On Kazakh fur products, in the sixteenth century, the historian Seyfi Celebi wrote: “Their coats are made of sheepskin; they are painted in different colors and become similar to satin. They are brought to Bukhara and sold at the same price as the coats made of satin — that’s how elegant and beautiful they are. They also have wonderful wraps made from the same sheepskin. They are absolutely water and damp-proof.”<sup>42</sup>

The Russian artist V. V. Vereshchagin in his painting “A Rich Kyrgyz Hunter with a Falcon” ethnographically accurately reproduced the traditional costume of Kyrgyz men<sup>43</sup>, as well as carving on a whip (*kamcha*), inlay work on a short hunting knife (*kanzhar*) hanging on a belt, and the interior of the yurt (Picture 76).

The early form of Karakalpak men’s wear — a sheepskin (clothes worn by shepherds and horseherds) — was sewn from the tanned skin of a colt with wool outwards, the skin of a goat or sheepskin. Women’s fur coats were amazingly beautiful and were made from fox paws and necks, with the skirt and coat-breasts lined with otter fur.

The Turkmen *karakul* is world-famous. The objects of special pride of the Turkmen were expensive parade coats made of six-month old Karakul unshorn ewes, which were worn on solemn occasions. Simpler coats were made of sheepskin with the wool inwards, while the outside of the coat was dyed with pomegranate juice into brown and yellow. Unlike the men’s floor-length coats, women’s fur coats were shorter and were made from the

Picture 76. V. V. Vereshchagin, "A Rich Kyrgyz Hunter with a Falcon." Canvas, oil, 1871



Source: L. M. Demin, *S mol'bertom po zemnomu sharu. Mir glazami V. V. Vereshchagina* (Moscow: Mysl', 1991).



skins of small animals or fox legs, with the top covered with silk or velvet.

Coats made of fox, wildcat, sheepskin and other fur were also worn by Uzbek women. In Uzbekistan, leather tanning was highly developed; entire neighborhoods of artisanal tanning workshops could be found almost in all towns. Leatherworkers produced black and red leather from cowhide; soft and white dog-skin from sheepskin; strong, black leather for shoe uppers from goat skin; shagreen skin dyed green from the croup of a donkey or a horse; and also produced solid, yellow suede.

### Production of fabric. Clothes made of silk

Uzbekistan was also famous for the production of fabrics, which by the nature of the raw material and the type of manufactured products were divided

into two main types: cotton, which was more affordable, and silk, which was more expensive and rich.

Cotton fiber, refined from the cotton seed, was spun by women using hand spinning wheels (Picture 77). The production of silk and half-silk fabrics was performed by men; special proficiency was required in unraveling and steaming cocoons in the boilers; considerable power was also required to catch the edges of threads hung above the boiler. The art of dyeing fabrics was also in the hands of professional dyers known as *buevchi*.

There were local centers of artistic weaving. Tashkent artisans were engaged in the production of cotton fabrics: *carbos* (undyed calico), *basma* (red printed calico), and *alacha* (striped cloth).

The largest area of silk farming was the Fergana Valley. Among its towns, back in the tenth century Marghilan was famous for its silk fabrics, which

Picture 77. P. P. Benkov, "Girl from Khiva." Oil on canvas, 1931



Source: M.U. Leshchinskaia, ed., *Ben'kov Pavel Petrovich (1879–1949). Al'бом* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennyy muzey Vostoka, 2009).

were exported to Byzantium, Egypt, Syria, and others via the Great Silk Road. Even today, Margilan, Namangan, and Kokand are the center of rich traditions of silk production with their characteristic types of products, techniques, and unique style of fabrics design. Silk (*kanoviz*, *shoii*, *khanatlas*) and half-silk fabrics (*bekasab*, *adras*) were used to make clothes worn by noble people. The Ferghana Valley, with its one and a half thousand year tradition of textile production, is considered the silk center of Uzbekistan (Picture 78).

Bukhara and Samarkand were also famous for silk fabrics (Pictures 79, 80). In the tenth century, historian A. M. Narhashi in his book “History of Bukhara”, in the section “A story about the weaving institution, which was and still exists in Bukhara...”, writes the following: “All of these fabrics were held in such high esteem that one could give the entire land tax of Bukhara for a curtain. ...Merchants came to Bukhara...from here fabrics were exported to Sham, Egypt, and the cities of Rum.”<sup>44</sup>

Indeed, Uzbek silk is completely original. It is called *khan-atlas* (“Khan silk”) and decorated with unusual blurred patterns known as *abr* (cloud). There is a legend among the people about the origin of the pattern’s name. It tells of how one day the ruler of Marghilan saw a beautiful daughter of a silk weaver and fell in love with her. He decided to take her as his fifth wife. The father got very upset and asked the Khan to give up the idea, to which the Khan said that if the weaver created a fabric more beautiful than his daughter by the morning, he would change his mind. Frustrated, the weaver was sitting at the shore and suddenly saw the reflection of the clouds and all the colors of the rainbow in the water. Inspired by what he saw, the weaver went home and created a fabric of extraordinary beauty and, as they say, “light as a cloud, cool as the mountain air.” When the Khan saw the silk the next morning, he was so struck by its beauty that he refused to marry the weaver’s daughter. This is how the fabric’s name *khan-atlas* appeared.

Nowadays, modern Uzbek girls still like to wear rainbow dresses made of traditional *khan-atlas* (Picture 81).

Semi-silk fabrics were not inferior in appearance to silk fabrics. In such fabrics, the silk thread

Picture 78. *Shoii and bekasam silk. Ferghana. End of the nineteenth — beginning of the twentieth century*



Source: N. Sadykova, *Natsional'naiia odezhda uzbekov (XIX–XX vv.)* (Tashkent: Shark, 2003).

of the base completely covered the cotton weft so that the entire surface of the fabric was silk from both sides and the invisible weft increased the thickness of the fabric.<sup>45</sup> Clothes made from these materials were particularly pliant and attached a certain stateliness and exaltation to their owners.

Picture 79. *Shoii silk, alacha gold-cloth. Bukhara. Late nineteenth — beginning of the twentieth century*



Source: N. Sadykova, *Natsional'naiia odezhda uzbekov (XIX–XX vv.)* (Tashkent: Shark, 2003).



Picture 80. Fabrics in the shopping stalls of Bukhara, 2015



Source: Author's photo.

Picture 81. A. G. Kozlova, "A Girl with Fruits." Paper, watercolor, 2009



Source: Personal site of A. G. Kozlova, <https://arts.in.ua/artists/allaadin/>.

Also unique is the Turkmen homespun silk fabric known as *keteni*, featuring green and red with golden stripes along the edges. It was used to make traditional women's dresses and women's robe-capes, which covered the head. The red *keteni* was especially valued and used to make festive and wedding clothes. There was a tradition to include two or three dresses of *germezi keteni* into the girl's dowry; this tradition has survived to this day. Men also wore clothes made of *keteni*, usually shirts or robes. Modern Turkmen craftswomen still make *keteni* by hand using a textile machine called *tara* and stain it with natural dyes.

The quality of the fabric indicated the purpose of the costume: whether it was for holidays, everyday life or work. The peculiarities of using a folk costume, the requirements to observe decency, appropriateness and compliance with certain situations and events (festivals, ceremonies, weddings, or funerals) speak of the moral and aesthetic norms and rules. These norms and rules, which were long-established and respected among the people, formed a kind of household etiquette.

#### *Features of the traditional costume cut*

The cut of a traditional costume was preceded by several stages of preparatory work related to the production of the needed material: the sowing, cultivation and processing of cotton or steaming cocoons, followed by the unwinding and twisting of yarns on special equipment. These processes were lengthy and laborious, therefore a craftswoman had a feeling of special reverence towards the fabric born in her hands. The fabric had an almost sacred significance for her, a factor that in many ways defined the logic of the cut of a national costume: using no cutting tools, a craftswoman cut it out with such precision that all the details were added like puzzle pieces without a single piece of waste.

A characteristic feature of Central Asian clothing was uniformity of the cut; the types and forms were identical for both sexes and for all ages. The Central Asian tunic garment was traditionally cut from a straight piece of cloth, folded in half on the shoulder line, with the main panel passing

through the central part of the chest and the back. The sleeves were made straight and wide, also from the square-cut cloth, folded in half and sewn to the main piece of clothing; into the joining place of the sleeves with the sides was inserted a triangular gore to protect it from disruption. The stitching places, as the most "weak" and vulnerable, were protected by ornamental designs. Embroidery on the collar (Picture 82), the sleeves and on the hem was designed to protect the owner from penetration of hostile forces.

Picture 82. *Ez yaka collar of Turkmen tekin men's shirt. Silk, cotton, 1940*



Source: E. Medzhitova, comp., *Turkmenskoe narodnoe iskusstvo. Al'bom* (Ashkhabad: Turkmenistan, 1990).

Central Asian shoulder clothes had two main varieties: throw-open and non-throw-open. The main type of non-throw-open clothing was an under shirt, men's and women's (Picture 83) with a vertical or horizontal collar. The form of the collar had a functional value: the vertical neckline was typical for mothers' clothes to breast-feed a child, whereas a shirt with a horizontal neckline was worn by men, women, and young married women before the birth of their first child.



Picture 83. Women's dresses of Kashkadarya, Surkhandarya, Uzbekistan



Source: Sadykova N. *Natsional'naya odezhda uzbekov (XIX — XX vv.)*

A new Kazakh dress emerged by the end of the nineteenth century (Picture 84), which was most likely influenced by the Russian and Tatar cultures. The dress was now made cut through the waist, with a wide gathered or layered skirt sewn to the bodice. The skirt of the fitted dress ("double hem") was trimmed with a large flounce with two or three rows of ruffles. The ruffles also decorated the wide and loose sleeves of the dress.

Throw-open clothes were characterized by a front slit and a detachable collar. Its main types were a variety of robes, with lining or without. The robes of Kazakh women (*kamzol*) were framed along the neckline and hems with satin stitching and chain stitch embroidery, gold and silver thread, lacing, and edging. The robes of married women were buttoned by a metal buckle (Picture 85).

The Turkmens had throw-open women's robes (*kurte, chyrpy*) and men's and women's robes, called *dons*, which were wrapped over with a woolen sash with tassels, or a scarf.

The Uzbek robes consist of two types: cotton quilted (*tun* or *chapan*), and non-quilted robes

(*kamzul*) (Picture 86). The women's robes are similar, only with a more open and wide collar, and slightly shorter and loose than those of men's.

The robes are still a mandatory part of Uzbek men's clothing today. Uzbeks of any age, young and old (Pictures 87, 88) wear them on special occasions, whereas a women's robe is almost out of use.

Of particular note are the famous Bukhara gold-embroidered robes, which were made in the nineteenth century for Bukhara emirs and noblemen in special court manufactories. A variety of gold embroidery was used for their production: a solid gold embroidery for the background, sewing using a pattern cut out of paper, and combined sewing. They were often decorated with precious stones (diamonds, emeralds, and sapphires), as well as gold, silver and gilded plates of different shapes.

The Bukhara school of gold embroidery is considered one of the most interesting types of folk applied art of Uzbekistan, unique designs of which can be seen in the expositions of the largest

Picture 84. *Kazakh women's dress. Cotton, floss, tambour stitch, 1960*



Source: B. I. Seraliev, exec. ed., *Kazakhskoe narodnoe prikladnoe iskusstvo. Katalog* (Almaty: Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv imeni A. Kasteeva, AO ABDI Company, 2010).

Picture 85. *Kamzol of a Kazakh woman. Velvet, silver, carnelian, turquoise. Twentieth century*



Source: B. I. Seraliev, exec. ed., *Kazakhskoe narodnoe prikladnoe iskusstvo. Katalog* (Almaty: Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv imeni A. Kasteeva, AO ABDI Company, 2010).

museums of Uzbekistan and Russia. Today, with the revival of national traditions, gold-embroidered robes (Picture 89) are very popular. They are presented to guests of honor and are part of the groom's wedding attire.

Central Asian traditional clothing for the lower body were represented by two types: trousers and skirts. Kazakh men's and women's trousers did not differ in cut. They were wide in the upper leg with an inserted gore for comfort when riding, and nar-

row at the bottom. They were a necessary part of clothing for Kazakh women, who used to ride a lot on horseback in the past. The trousers were made of sheepskin, homespun cloth, and dense cotton fabrics.

Karakalpak women wore straight trousers, which also narrowed downwards. Inserted in the waistband of such trousers was a cord belt, woven from cotton and wool, with tassels of colored silk threads in the ends.



Picture 86. Uzbek kamzul. Tashkent. End of the twentieth century



Source: N. Sadykova, *Natsional'naia odezhda uzbekov (XIX-XX vv.)* (Tashkent: Shark, 2003).

Kyrgyz men's trousers made of suede, roe deer leather or wild goats were often embroidered with silk threads and wool work.

The wearing of closed trousers by Uzbek women was obligatory; not wearing them was considered extremely rude. Girls started wearing them at the age of two to three years. Very often women's trousers were made from two types of fabrics: the upper part, which was invisible under a shirt, was made of a more simple fabric and of a different color, often white (over time the white color came to symbolize the magical means securing fertility), while the lower part was made of a more expensive and elegant fabric.

Picture 87. U. T. Tansykbaev, "Portrait of Tashkenbaev" (portrait of an Uzbek). Canvas, oil, 1927



Source: I. V. Ginzburg, comp., *Tansykbaev Ural. Komplekt reproduktsiy* (Leningrad: Avrora, 1977).

Picture 88. R. Charyev, "Portrait of an Old Man from Sayrob." Canvas, oil, 1981



Source: E. R. Akhmetova, *Zemlia i liudi Uzbekistana. Ruzy Charyev* (Moscow: Sovetskiy khudozhnik, 1982).



Picture 89. Uzbek gold-embroidered robe. Bukhara.  
Nineteenth century



Source: N. Sadykova, *Natsional'naya odezhda uzbekov (XIX–XX vv.)* (Tashkent: Shark, 2003).

Picture 91. Kazakh women's trousers. Embroidery,  
beads, passementerie, trimming



Source: B. I. Seraliev, exec. ed., *Kazakhskoe narodnoe prikladnoe iskusstvo. Katalog* (Almaty: Gosudarstvennyy muzei iskusstv imeni A. Kasteeva, AO ABDI Company, 2010).

Picture 90. Turkmen women's trousers.  
Embroidery, silk, cotton



Source: E. Medzhitova, comp., *Turkenskoe narodnoe iskusstvo. Al'bom* (Ashkhabad: Turkmenistan, 1990).



A characteristic feature of women's trousers in Central Asia was the design of the leg hem; for example, Turkmens decorated it with embroidery (Picture 90), whereas Kazakhs trimmed it with a wide patterned ribbon, beads and passementerie (Picture 91).

The second type of lower body clothes was a wrap skirt, which was found mostly among Kazakhs and Kyrgyz. The Kazakh skirt (according to the assumption of scientist-ethnographer U. Dzhanibekov, dating to the time of the Huns<sup>46</sup>) was made of velvet or broadcloth and was crocheted or trimmed with expensive fur. It was gathered at the waist by a wide belt and fastened with buttons or a buckle. The Kyrgyz skirt was not just an accessory of married elderly women. In the past, as researchers note, it was also an essential part of men's clothing. It is mentioned in the Kyrgyz national epic *Manas*<sup>47</sup> as warrior's combat clothing.

### Color scheme of the folk clothing

A factor determining the beauty of the costume of Central Asian people is coloristics that fully reflected the uniqueness of their interpretation of the color richness of the world.

Red colors are dominant in the clothes of girls and young women. As researchers suggest, red was considered protective from evil forces and therefore served as protection of women's fertility. Red symbolized life and pulsing blood and fire. The perception of these elements was always intriguing to humans (the very concept of beauty was associated with red; in the languages of Central Asian people the word *kyl* or *gyl* meaning "maiden, girl," and *kyzyl* or *gyzyl*, meaning "red" are single-rooted).

That is why red was used in making Karakalpak silk head mantles with false sleeves put behind the back and a sleeveless head mantle reaching the heels from behind. This mantle was worn when a girl was getting married. "A bride would first put it on during the wedding and wore it until old age when she was no longer fertile."<sup>48</sup> When reaching this age, the women replaced red mantles with white ones and combined them with white dresses. In this case, white has the positive meaning of purity. It's the color of an elderly woman who had become pure physically and spiritually (Pictures 92–94). At the

Picture 92. A. Galimbaeva, "An Elderly Woman." Cardboard, oil, 1968



Source: Collection of the State Museum of Arts named after A. Kasteev; Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstva imeni A. Kasteeva. Galereya "Zhaukhar," [www.zhaukhar.kz](http://www.zhaukhar.kz).

Picture 93. N. Nurmukhamedov, "Visiting Grandmother." Canvas, oil, 1963



Source: I. A. Rybakova, *Nagim-Bek Nurmukhamedov* (Moscow: Sovetskiy khudozhnik, 1979).

Picture 94. K. Shayakhmetov, "Noon." Canvas, oil, 1959



Source: L. P. Usacheva, *Kamil Shayakhmetov. Zhivopis'. Al'bom* (Moscow: Sovetskiy khudozhnik, 1986).

Picture 95. Kazakh head wear *kimeshek*. Cotton, silver plates, corals, wire-ribbon, gold embroidery. Early twentieth century

same time, it symbolized the coldness and emptiness (the loss of fertility) of physical or ritual death. Pure white symbolized mourning.

Semantic representation of grief and death in Karakalpak clothes is related to blue as well, which is why women preferred not to wear dresses of solid blue colors. An exception was made with regard to the Karakalpak festive dress *kok koylek* — a blue dress-shirt that was worn on solemn occasions. In combination with a red-crimson gown, it served as a composite element of the color image of a young girl.

After the wedding, the bride wore the same clothes up until the birth of her first child: a blue dress supplemented with a red cloak (*zhipek zhegde*) and red head wear (*kyzyl kimeshek*).

The *kimeshek* was also included in the traditional costume of the Kazakhs (Picture 95–97). It was made of white fabric for all ages (age differences were shown in the amount of jewelry).

The authentic Kyrgyz turban of white cloth (Picture 98) is worn by a young woman for the first time after moving to her husband's house, thus



Source: B. I. Seraliev, exec. ed., *Kazakhskoe narodnoe prikladnoe iskusstvo. Katalog* (Almaty: Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv imeni A. Kasteeva, AO ABDI Company, 2010).



Picture 96. N. G. Khludov, "Portrait of a Young Kazakh." Canvas, oil, 1910



Source: Nikolay Gavrilovich Khludov. *Katalog proizvedeniy: zhivopis' i grafika* (Almaty: TOO Effekt, 2003).

Picture 97. N. G. Khludov. A Kazakh girl of Talgar. Paper, watercolor, 1911



Source: Nikolay Gavrilovich Khludov. *Katalog proizvedeniy: zhivopis' i grafika* (Almaty: TOO Effekt, 2003).

symbolizing her transition from one age and social group to another. The well-known researcher of Kyrgyz traditional culture K.I. Antipina divides turbans into the following groups (based on their shape and winding): a turban with a large forehead projection; one with a smaller projection, which was created by winding obliquely laid pieces of fabric in the front; and a rounded, fairly tall turban of the third form, in which the cloth was wrapped around the head. Embroidered with ear coverings on the sides and a fillet, a small cap was worn under the turban<sup>49</sup>.

Depending on the financial situation of the owner, a turban could be as long as twenty or thirty meters. Although the turban was decorated with stripes of silver, pearls, coral, or feathers, it could have a practical application: if a pregnant woman

suddenly gave birth outside the house, she could unwrap the *elechek* and swaddle a child in the white cloth; it could also serve as a shroud for the deceased during migrations.

In the Turkmen tradition, white head wraps (Picture 99) were worn by elderly women who had reached the "age of the Prophet", while women of a more mature age wore yellow mantles (Picture 100), the color of autumn or the harvest. Young women wore red mantles, which according to the people, symbolized the life-giving forces of nature contributing to good health, as well as the ability to bear children and protect against the evil eye. A woman whose daughter or son was getting married changed her "color category", and even if she was in the "yellow" color age she proceeded to the "white."

Picture 98. T. A. Musakeev, "A Woman in a Turban."  
Paper, watercolor, 2005



Source: Temirbek Musakeev. *Reproduksii: komplekt otkrytok* (Bishkek: START Ltd, 2014).

Picture 99. Fragment of a white head wrap.  
Silk, cotton, 1893



Source: E. Medzhitova, comp., *Turkmenskoe narodnoe iskusstvo. Al'bom* (Ashkhabad: Turkmenistan, 1990).

Picture 100. Fragment of a yellow head wrap.  
Silk, cotton, 1917



Source: E. Medzhitova, comp., *Turkmenskoe narodnoe iskusstvo. Al'bom* (Ashkhabad: Turkmenistan, 1990).

The image and color aspects of the Central Asia traditional costume were related to the age of its owner. At the same time, the costumes of young girls and women symbolized the prime of life, differing in brightness and color saturation. The combination of red, pink and green was used in making elegant headdresses as well as silk or woolen cloth gowns, decorated with wonderful embroidery in combination with gold, silver, coral, turquoise and carnelian stone.

The ascetic restrictions in the color range of an elderly woman's costume in combination with a minimal and strict traditional set of jewelry symbolized old wisdom (Pictures 101, 102).



Picture 101. R. Akhmedov,  
“A Girl from Surkhandarya.”  
Canvas, oil, 1959



Source: *Vystavka proizvedeniy R. Akhmedova. Katalog vystavki* (Moscow: Sovetskiy khudozhnik, 1983).

Picture 102. R. Charyev,  
“Portrait of Zieda-Momo.”  
Canvas, oil, 1983



Source: N. Valiulina, *Ruzy Charyev. Al'bom* (Tashkent: Izdatel'stvo literatury i iskusstva imeni Gafura Guliyama, 1983).

## The Art of Traditional Embroidery

The beauty of the Central Asian folk costume is to a large extent determined by ornamental décor that attaches certain expressiveness to it. Central Asian embroidery is traditional, just like the applied arts in general. However, even within the tradition a craftswoman's creative individuality was shown.

Every girl had to master the art of embroidery as well as carpet making and patterned weaving (Picture 103). Mastery of these arts was considered one of her main advantages.

Embroidery was used to decorate clothing, household items (men's waist scarves, skull-caps, tablecloths and napkins), and to create independent decorative panels, ranging from small size covers known in Tajik as *borpush* (Picture 104), to carpets embroidered in satin, silk or velvet known as *suzane* (Uzbek *so'zana*, Tajik *suzani*) (Pictures 105, 106). These panels formed part of a bride's dowry and were hung out during a wedding in a traditional guest room. It is in these products that one can find the long preserved traditions of Tajik patterned embroidery, which are kept to this day (Pictures 107, 108).

Picture 103. Y. P. Daneshvar (Konovalova), "Needlework." Canvas, oil, 1947



Source: Collection of the Museum of Fine Arts of Turkmenistan; U. Khalminskiy, *Dorogami legend* (Moscow: Sovetskiy khudozhnik, 1978).

Picture 104. *Tajik borpush.*  
*Kulyab, twentieth century*



Source: L. Dodkhudoeva, ed., *Narodnoe iskusstvo Tadzhiqistana (traditsionnye remesla)* (Dushanbe, 2011).

Picture 105. *Tajik suzani. Istarafshan.*  
*Twentieth century*



Source: L. Dodkhudoeva, ed., *Narodnoe iskusstvo Tadzhiqistana (traditsionnye remesla)* (Dushanbe, 2011).



Picture 106. R. Falk, "Against Suzane." Canvas, oil, 1943



Source: I. V. Savitskiy, comp., *Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv Karakalpakskoy ASSR* (Moscow: Sovetskiy khudozhnik, 1976).

In the mountainous region of Tajikistan, embroidery decorated mainly clothes such as dresses and wedding face veils. The embroidery composition of mountain Tajik dresses stands out for the monumentality in the approach; there are dresses, the fronts of which are ornamented with only two major rosettes, which can reach a diameter of seventy centimeters or more. Another distinctive feature of these dresses is also their wide borders, rich in patterns, which run along the hem and sleeves (Pictures 109–111).

One should also note the embroidery on completely original wedding face veils, which were unique to the mountainous Badakhshan. For the mountain Tajiks, as well as for the nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, and Turkmens, the wearing of women's veils (*chachvan*,

*paranja*) was not widely practiced, unlike the sedentary peoples (mostly Uzbeks, who considered it strictly mandatory [Picture 112] and violations of this rule could cost women their lives).

The face veil of Uzbek women (*chachvan*) was a thick, rectangular net made of black horsehair covering the face. It was worn in combination with the *paranja*, a robe thrown over the *chachvan*. The *paranja* of wealthy women was made of velvet and other expensive fabrics, and decorated with embroidery in gold and silk (Picture 113).

The tradition began to disappear at the end of the nineteenth century; the turning point was the Hudzhum campaign in 1927–1929, when Uzbek women publicly tore off and burned their veils<sup>50</sup>. It was preceded by a long, difficult, and tragic history: there were cases of women being beaten

Picture 107. Z. Khabibullaev, "Bazaar." Canvas, oil, 2004



Source: Zukhur. *Al'bom fotografiy kartin Z. Khabibullaeva* (Dushanbe: Fond Sadridina Aini, 2012).

Picture 108. *The shopping stalls of Bukhara*, 2015



Source: Author's photo.



Picture 109. Tajik dress *kurtai gulduzi*. Rasht, early twentieth century



Source: L. Dodkhudoeva, ed., *Narodnoe iskusstvo Tadjikistana (traditsionnye remesla)* (Dushanbe, 2011).

Picture 110. Tajik dress *kurtai chakan*. Kulyab, 1961



Source: L. Dodkhudoeva, ed., *Narodnoe iskusstvo Tadjikistana (traditsionnye remesla)* (Dushanbe, 2011).

Picture 111. A. G. Kozlova, "A Girl from Kashkadarya." Paper, watercolor, 2012



Source: Personal site of A. G. Kozlova, <https://arts.in.ua/artists/allaadin/>.

Picture 112. V. V. Vereshchagin, “*An Uzbek Woman in Tashkent.*” Canvas, oil, 1873



Source: L. M. Demin, *S mol'bertom po zemnomu sharu. Mir glazami V. V. Vereshchagina* (Moscow: Mysl', 1991).



Picture 113. Uzbek *paranja* and *chachvan*; the front and the back view.  
End of nineteenth — beginning of twentieth centuries



Source: N. Sadykova, *Natsional'naia odezhda uzbekov (XIX–XX vv.)* (Tashkent: Shark, 2003).



Picture 114. M. I. Kurzin, "Going on a Visit. The Old and the New." Paper, gouache, tempera, 1930



Source: I. V. Savitskiy, comp., *Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv Karakalpakskoy ASSR* (Moscow: Sovetskiy khudozhnik, 1976).

and even murdered by their husbands, brothers, and fathers. The final rejection of the *paranja* occurred only in the 40–50's of the twentieth century (Picture 114).

The headdress of the Central Asian peoples occupied a special position in the traditional costume ensemble. It performed various functions (such as protective, productive, or emotive); it reflected different views (cosmological, ethical, and aesthetic), and was an indication of the social status, marital status, and the age of the wearer.

The headdress also had a symbolic meaning. For example, among Turkmens, who considered being bareheaded an indecent act, the public snatching of a man's hat from his head was the highest insult, which was often paid for with

blood. The maiden hat was a symbol of girlhood, and on the day of the wedding it was taken off the bride's head, who had to fight for it back. The captured hat was then ransomed by the relatives of the groom.

Of all the Central Asian hats, a special mention should be made of a "skullcap" (*takiya*, *toki*, *tahya*), which were an obligatory article of clothing for men, women and children. There are significant differences between girl's and men's skullcaps: men's skullcaps were not as deep as the girl's ones and were characterized by modest ornamentation and color shades. The skullcaps of Tajik girls (*toki*) show patterned compositions from rosettes, palmette, crosses, or zigzags (Picture 115), while Kazakhs wore an *ukili takiya*, a velvet cap with owl



Picture 115. *Tajik toki. Dashtijum, Southern Tajikistan, 1949*



Source: L. Dodkhudoeva, ed., *Narodnoe iskusstvo Tadzhikestana (traditsionnye remesla)* (Dushanbe, 2011).

Picture 116. *Kazakh ukili takiya. Velvet, carnelian, malachite, glass, feather owl. Twentieth century*



Source: B. I. Seraliev, exec. ed., *Kazakhskoe narodnoe prikladnoe iskusstvo. Katalog* (Almaty: Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv imeni A. Kasteeva, AO ABDI Company, 2010).

feathers and trimmed with silver plates, carnelian, and malachite (Picture 116).

The traditional Kazakh hats are portrayed by outstanding masters of Kazakh art: opera and stage singer Rosa Baglanova, and dancer Shara Zhienkulova on their picturesque portraits by famous Kazakhstani artists O. D. Kuzhelenko (Picture 117) and G. M. Ismailova (Picture 118).

There is a wide variety of Uzbek skullcaps, each associated with regional differences (Chust, Margilan, Kokand, Shakhrisabz, Samarkand, Bukhara, Khorezm, Uratyubinsk), as well as with the age and gender of the wearer. They differ in shape (flat-bottomed, four-sided, semi-spherical, peaked, and cone-shaped), background, color shades, ornamental features and composition. The most popular forms are capsicum, almond, mesh and sparks, ram's horn, and "birds of happiness" (Pictures 119, 120).

Skullcaps, more than any other traditional costume accessories, have retained their pristine character and remain popular today (Picture 121).

The traditional Kyrgyz men's headdress with contrasting colors, known as the *ak kalpak* (Picture 122) is the national pride. A special holiday is established in the country in its honor, "The Day of the Kyrgyz White Hat" (*Ak kalpak Kyrgyz kunu*). It has long since been made of four white felt strips extending downward and not stitched on the sides, which allows the wearer to raise or lower the brims of the hat to protect the eyes from the bright sun.

The Karakalpak embroidery decorated the headdresses (*kyzyl kimeshek, ak kimeshek and saukele*), throw-on robes (*zhipek zhidde and ak zhegde*), and dresses (*kok koilek*). The original elements of Karakalpak garments are attachable oversleeves for robes (*chapans*) and fur coats (*zhense*) (Picture 123).

More subtle embroidery, predominantly in the form of a purple semi-cross, was applied to the clothes of elderly women (here we observe the same age divisions as in the coloristic techniques used in costume making), and richer embroidery was applied to the clothes of young women and girls. This is particularly noticeable with the exam-

Picture 117. O. D. Kuzhelenko, "Portrait of Roza Baglanova." Canvas, oil, 1951



Source: Collection of the State Museum of Arts named after A. Kasteev. G. Syrlybaeva, *Energiia tvorchestva. K 105-letiiu Ol'gi Kuzhelenko (1911–2001)*, madenimura.kz.



Picture 118. G. M. Ismailova, "Kazakh Waltz." Canvas, oil, 1960's



Source: Collection of the State Museum of Arts named after A. Kasteev; G. K. Shalabaeva, *Gulfayrus Ismailova. Al'bom* (Almaty: Atamura, 1999).

Picture 119. Skullcaps for men and women



Source: Collection of the Museum of Applied Arts of Uzbekistan, muzeyart.uz.



Picture 120. N. V. Kashina, "Skullcap." Canvas, oil, 1960



Source: Collection of the State Museum of Art of Uzbekistan. Album: *Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv Uzbekskoy SSR. Zhivopis'* (Leningrad: Avrora, 1975).

Picture 121. R. Akhmedov, "Portrait of Folk Hofiz (Singer) Umirzakov." Canvas, oil, 1957



Source: The exhibition *Nasledie Rakhim Akmedova, ili vse ostaetsia liudiam. 90 let so dnia rozhdeniia*, 2011, art-blog.uz.

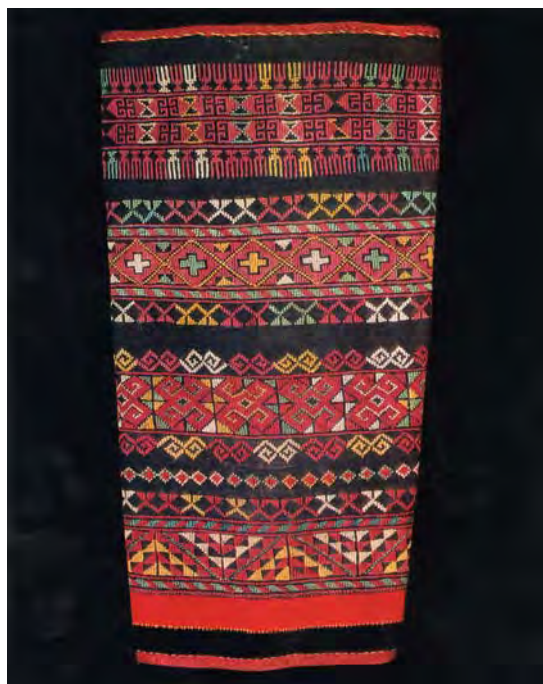


Picture 122. T. Musakeev, "Horse Wrangler." Paper, watercolor, 2010



Source: *Temirbek Musakeev. Reproduktsii: komplekt otkrytok* (Bishkek: START Ltd, 2014).

Picture 123. *Karakalpak chapan zhense* — oversleeves for women's robe. Cotton home-made fabric, woolen cloth, thread silk



Source: I. V. Savitskiy, comp., *Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv Karakalpakskoy ASSR* (Moscow: Sovetskiy khudozhnik, 1976).

Picture 124. A fragment of *Karakalpak's kizil kimeshek*. Cloth, silk threads



Source: I. V. Savitskiy, comp., *Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv Karakalpakskoy ASSR* (Moscow: Sovetskiy khudozhnik, 1976).

ple of the wedding dress known as *qyzyl kimeshek* or “red *kimeshek*” (Picture 124).

Ethnographers believe that Karakalpak women did not wear clothes without breast collars that probably served as protection: we can see these on the maiden clothes *onirshe* (Picture 125), on the women's clothes *qyzyl kimeshek aldy*, and on the old women's clothes *aq kimeshek aldy* (Picture 126). These breast collars were a focal point of the garment, which is why they were particularly decorated with embroidery.

An accentuated center defining the beauty of the folk costume was the front part of the already mentioned Karakalpak blue dress *kok koilek* (Picture 127).

The color scheme of the dress in indigo tones is softened by red and crimson embroidery, sprinkled with white and yellow. The embroidery pattern of the front side of *kok koilek* has a unique name: “the chain armor pattern.” According to experts, it was a response to traditions of the ancient costume of

Picture 125. *Girls' breast collar onirshe*. Woolen cloth, coins, silver plates, thread silk



Source: I. V. Savitskiy, comp., *Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv Karakalpakskoy ASSR* (Moscow: Sovetskiy khudozhnik, 1976).



Picture 126. *Ak kimeshek aldy of an elderly woman. Cotton homemade fabric, silk threads*



Source: I. V. Savitskiy, comp., *Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv Karakalpakskoy ASSR* (Moscow: Sovetskiy khudozhnik, 1976).

women-warriors glorified in Karakalpak folk epos “Forty girls” (*Kyryk kyz*). Ornamental stripes of diamond-shaped figures on the chest somehow resemble a coat of mail or chain armor. “This makes it possible to suggest that with a gradual cessation of female participation in military activities, the girls of massagets (assumed Karakalpak ancestors), became skillful embroiderers, and transferred certain features of military clothes onto the peaceful festive attire.”<sup>51</sup>

### Jewelry Culture and Symbolism

Jewelry was an essential element of a Central Asian traditional costume. In combination with the costume, it represented a single artistic and compositional system, interrelated with a single artistic and aesthetic design.

The clothing ensemble of girls included many different types and forms of jewelry: plait adornments; temporal, ear, neck, back of head, chest, armpits, or waist decorations; hand jewelry; and decorations attached to the clothes and on top of hats.

Of the latter, one should note Karakalpak *gumys takhya*, a skull-cap with sewn-on figured

plates with embossment; *tobelik*, an elevated gilded tiara with a backward-sloping top; Uzbek *tak'ya tuzi*, a figured plate applied on a cap and covered with long metal and stone pendants of different shapes (Picture 128); and similar Turkmen *gupba*, a silver cupola on a girl's cap trimmed with silver plates around the edges forming a solid fringe of pendants (Pictures 129, 130).

There is a wide range of forehead, and forehead-temporal-neck ornaments. Among them are Uzbek and Tajik *tilla-kosh* (Picture 131); *silsila* (Picture 132); *shokila*, with numerous pendants and inserts of precious and semi-precious stones (Picture 133); Turkmen *egme* (Pictures 134, 135); Tajik and Uzbek *kadzhak* (Picture 136); Kazakh *shekelik*; Turkmen *chekelik*; *tenechir*; and Uzbek *uk-ei* (Picture 137).

There are also various neck and pectoral ornaments: the Uzbek and Tajik *peshihalta* (Picture 138); the Kazakh *onirzhiek* (Pictures 139, 140), consisting of large plates connected by delicate chains and finished off with spire-shaped pendants; and the Karakalpak *onirmonshak* (Picture 141), hemispheric pieces of jewelry resembling domes with many jingling chains and rhombs and bells at the bottom, which fastened on the lower part of chest embroidery.

Picture 127. *Karakalpak kok koilek*. Cotton homemade fabric, woolen cloth, silk thread, metal thread



Source: I. V. Savitskiy, comp., *Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv Karakalpakskoy ASSR* (Moscow: Sovetskiy khudozhnik, 1976).



Picture 128. *Tak'ya tuzi* of Uzbek girls. Silver, cornelian, turquoise, coral; forging, embossing, gilding. Twentieth century



Source: D. A. Fakhretdinova, *Iuvelirnoe iskusstvo Uzbekistana* (Tashkent: Izdatel'stvo literatury i iskusstva imeni Gafura Guliyama, 1988).

Picture 130. N. V. Kashina, "Kazakh Girl of Turkmen-Aday Origin." Canvas, oil, 1930



Source: Exhibition of works by national artist of Uzbekistan N. V. Kashina. Catalog: *50 let tvorchestva* (Tashkent, 1973).

Picture 129. *Gupba* of Turkmen Tekin. Silver, gilding, carnelian; engraving. Twentieth century



Source: E. Medzhitova, comp. *Turkenskoe narodnoe iskusstvo. Al'bom* (Ashkhabad: Turkmenistan, 1990).

Picture 131. *Tilla-kosh* of Uzbek and Tajik girls



Source: L. Dodkhudoeva, ed., *Narodnoe iskusstvo Tadzhikistana (traditsionnye remesla)* (Dushanbe, 2011).

Picture 132. *Silsila* of Tajik girls. Early twentieth century



Source: L. Dodkhudoeva, ed., *Narodnoe iskusstvo Tadjikistana (traditsionnye remesla)* (Dushanbe, 2011).

Picture 133. *Shokilo* of Uzbek girls.  
Silver, coral, enamel, embossing.  
Nineteenth century



Source: D. A. Fakhretdinova, *Iuvelirnoe iskusstvo Uzbekistana* (Tashkent: Izdatel'stvo literatury i iskusstva imeni Gafura Guliyama, 1988).

Picture 134. *Egme* of Turkmen Tekin women.  
Silver, gilding, carnelian, engraving.  
Nineteenth–twentieth century



Source: E. Medzhitova, comp., *Turkmenskoe narodnoe iskusstvo. Al'bom* (Ashkhabad: Turkmenistan, 1990).



Picture 135. O. M. Akmuradova,  
“A Woman with a Horse.” Canvas, oil, 2013



Source: Site of S. Akmuradova, [www.art-catalog.com/ru/painter/346](http://www.art-catalog.com/ru/painter/346).

Picture 137. Uzbek *uk-ei* for the back of the head.  
Silver, coral, turquoise, glass, filigree, granules, gilding.  
Nineteenth century



Source: D. A. Fakhretdinova, *Iuvelirnoe iskusstvo Uzbekistana* (Tashkent: Izdatel'stvo literatury i iskusstva imeni Gafura Guliyama, 1988).

Picture 136.  
Kadzhak of Tajik girls.  
Twentieth century



Source: L. Dodkhudoeva, ed., *Narodnoe iskusstvo Tadjikistana (traditsionnye remesla)* (Dushanbe, 2011).

Picture 138. Uzbek *Peshikhalta*.  
Silver, turquoise, coral.  
Nineteenth century



Source: D. A. Fakhretdinova, *Iuvelirnoe iskusstvo Uzbekistana* (Tashkent: Izdatel'stvo literatury i iskusstva imeni Gafura Guliyama, 1988).

Picture 139. Kazakh *onirzhiek*.  
Silver, glass, stamp.  
Nineteenth century



Source: B. I. Seraliev, exec. ed., *Kazakhskoe narodnoe prikladnoe iskusstvo. Katalog* (Almaty: Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv imeni A. Kasteeva, AO ABDI Company, 2010).



Picture 140. E. A. Kim, "A Bride." Canvas, oil, 2013



Source: E. A. Kim, *Byt kazakhov XIX — nachala XX veka*, <https://forum.artinvestment.ru/showthead.php?p=3674791>.

Picture 141. Karakalpak *onirmonshak*. Silver, gilt, coral, turquoise



Source: I. V. Savitskiy, comp., *Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv Karakalpakskoy ASSR* (Moscow: Sovetskiy khudozhnik, 1976).

Buttons and brooches for fastening the neck of the dress were also objects of decoration. Despite having a utilitarian purpose, they often were real works of jewelry art. The Turkmen *gulyaka* (Picture 142), as well as the Kazakh and Karakalpak *tuyme* (Picture 143), were distinguished for their diversity of form (egg-shaped or round, flat shaped, and large cross-shaped buttons known as *shartuyme* (Picture 144). All these silver buttons and brooches were decorated by relief patterns and mounted stones.

The front side of Turkmen women's robes was decorated with monumental *chaprazy-changa*, featuring two strips of fabric with sewn-on round plaques and finishing at the bottom with rhomboid buckles with pendants (Picture 145).

Ear ornaments were rich in their variety. Young women's earrings, decorated with coral, rubies, emeralds, pearls and mother-of-pearl, had a variety of names, depending on the technique and the material used. Ring-shaped earrings (known as *khalka*, or "ring") were especially popular among

Picture 142. Turkmen gulyaka. Silver, gilding, glass, stamp. Nineteenth century



Source: E. Medzhitova, comp., *Turkmenskoe narodnoe iskusstvo. Al'bom* (Ashkhabad: Turkmenistan, 1990).

Picture 143. Kazakh tuime. Silver, scan, stamping. Nineteenth century



Source: B. I. Seraliev, exec. ed., *Kazakhskoe narodnoe prikladnoe iskusstvo. Katalog* (Almaty: Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv imeni A. Kasteeva, AO ABDI Company, 2010).

Picture 144. Karakalpak shartuyme. Silver, gilding, glass, turquoise



Source: I. V. Savitskiy, comp., *Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv Karakalpakskoy ASSR* (Moscow: Sovetskiy khudozhnik, 1976).

Picture 145. Chaprazy-changa of Turkmen Tekin women. Silver, gilding, carnelian, glass, fabric



Source: E. Medzhitova, comp., *Turkmenskoe narodnoe iskusstvo. Al'bom* (Ashkhabad: Turkmenistan, 1990).



Uzbek and Tajik girls (Picture 146); among the Turkmens they were called *gulak khalka* (Pictures 147); *syrqa* earrings were popular among Kazakh girls (Picture 148). The Karakalpaks had peculiar earrings connected to a necklace called *khalqap syrqa*. It consisted of a chain passing under the

chin with rhomb-shaped pendants (Picture 149). Earrings with coral and carnelian resembling the Karakalpak form were worn by Kyrgyz women on special occasions.

The jewelry set of a young Karakalpak woman also consisted of a nose ornament known as

Picture 146. *Khalka of Uzbek and Tajik girls. Bukhara, beginning of the twentieth century*



Source: L. Dodkhudoeva, ed., *Narodnoe iskusstvo Tadjikistana (tradiitsionnye remesla)* (Dushanbe, 2011).

Picture 147. *Turkmen gulak khalka. Silver, gilding, carnelian, glass, stamp. Nineteenth — twentieth centuries*



Source: E. Medzhitova, comp., *Turkenskoe narodnoe iskusstvo. Al'bom* (Ashkhabad: Turkmenistan, 1990).

Picture 148. *Kazakh syrqa. Glass, corals, turquoise, bending. Twentieth century*



Source: B. I. Seraliev, exec. ed., *Kazakhskoe narodnoe prikladnoe iskusstvo. Katalog* (Almaty: Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv imeni A. Kasteeva, AO ABDI Company, 2010).

*arebek*, a thin gold ring that slips into the nostril (Picture 150).

Most Karakalpak jewelry is distinguished for its originality and uniqueness. An example would be the female wedding headgear known as *saukele*, with its form resembling a helmet (Pictures 151, 152).

Picture 149. *Karakalpak khalqap syrga.*  
Silver, gilding, glass



Source: I. V. Savitskiy, comp., *Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv Karakalpakskoy ASSR* (Moscow: Sovetskiy khudozhnik, 1976).

Picture 150. *Arebek, a nose ornament of a Karakalpak woman.*  
Silver, coral, turquoise



Source: I. V. Savitskiy, comp., *Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv Karakalpakskoy ASSR* (Moscow: Sovetskiy khudozhnik, 1976).

According to an assumption made by T.A. Zhdanko, the genesis of headgear like *saukele* is related to battle helmets of *sak-massaget* and *sarmat-alan* female warriors. These tribes had strong matriarchy traditions that allowed their women to act as tribe leaders<sup>52</sup>.

Picture 151. *Saukele of a Karakalpak bride.* Woolen cloth, velvet, cotton homemade fabric, corals, pearls, silver, turquoise, leather, fur, silk threads



Source: I. V. Savitskiy, comp., *Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv Karakalpakskoy ASSR* (Moscow: Sovetskiy khudozhnik, 1976).



Picture 152. A. G. Kozlova, "Karakalpak Bride."  
Paper, watercolor, 2013



Source: Personal site of A. G. Kozlova,  
<https://arts.in.ua/artists/allaadin/>.

The interpretation of the term *saukele* confirms this assumption. Researchers interpret the term *saukele* used by Karakalpaks as a combination of two words: *sha*, meaning king, and either *kulo*, meaning hat or *kalla*, meaning head. They concluded that the warrior's helmet evolved into the headgears of priests and kings, with a subsequent transformation into a commonplace headgear<sup>53</sup>. However, some art critics see this as a metaphorical beginning: "Just like the groom who could symbolically become a 'shah' or a 'khan' on his wedding day, the bride could also transform into a *shah's* wife"<sup>54</sup>, and her wedding headgear was renamed respectively.

The *saukele* of a Kazakh bride is also a tall (about 70 centimeters) cone-shaped hat, with roots going back to the era of ancient Saks (Pictures 153, 154). Most experts believe that its prototype is the above-mentioned peaked cap of the "Golden Man" from the Issyk barrow of Kazakhstan.

The elegance of the *saukele* was epitomized in the long (often reaching to the waist or below) pen-

dants made of coral, turquoise, carnelian and other precious and semi-precious stones attached to the sides. The top was crowned by fluffy owl feathers. The *saukele* was a mandatory and rather expensive part of the bride's dowry (its value was often equal to the cost of a herd of horses).

The *saukele* is considered the highest achievement of the applied art of Central Asian peoples; it is the medium in which their decorative talent was most completely manifest.

Picture 153. *Saukele* of a Kazakh bride. Gilding, glass, engraving. Nineteenth century



Source: B. I. Seraliev, exec. ed., *Kazakhskoe narodnoe prikladnoe iskusstvo. Katalog* (Almaty: Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv imeni A. Kasteeva, AO ABDI Company, 2010).

Picture 154. A. A. Akanaev, "Saukele."  
Canvas, oil, 1992



Source: Collection of the State Museum of Arts named after A. Kasteev, gmirk.kz/ru/.

Picture 155. Bilezik of Turkmen Tekin women.  
Silver, gilding, carnelian, glass, engraving.  
Nineteenth-twentieth century



Source: E. Medzhitova, comp., *Turkmenское народное искусство. Альбом* (Ashkhabad: Turkmenistan, 1990).

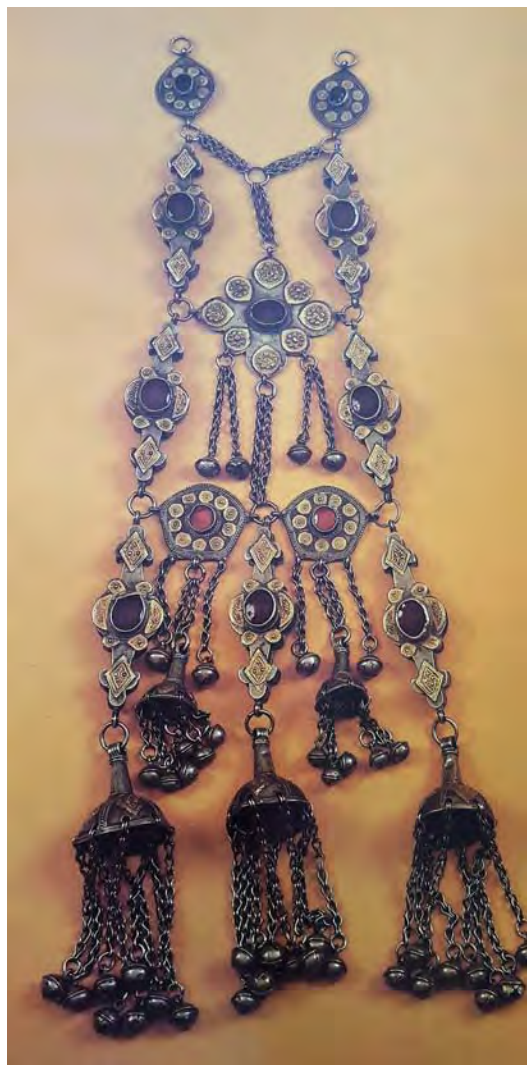
Picture 156. Kazakh bes bilezik. Stamp, grains,  
filigree. Twentieth century



Source: B. I. Seraliev, exec. ed., *Kazakhskoe narodnoe prikladnoe iskusstvo. Katalog* (Almaty: Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv imeni A. Kasteeva, AO ABDI Company, 2010).



Picture 157. *Turkmen sachlyk*. Silver, gilding, carnelian, stamp



Source: E. Medzhitova, comp., *Turkmenskoe narodnoe iskusstvo. Al'bom* (Ashkhabad: Turkmenistan, 1990).

Picture 158. *Kazakh shashbau*. Casting, stamp, weaving



Source: B. I. Seraliev, exec. ed., *Kazakhskoe narodnoe prikladnoe iskusstvo. Katalog* (Almaty: Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv imeni A. Kasteeva, AO ABDI Company, 2010).

Among the variety of bracelets and rings, it is worth noting the Turkmen bracelet known as *bilezik* (Picture 155), and the Kazakh piece of jewelry consisting of rings, simultaneously worn on several fingers and connected with a bracelet by chains known as *bes bilezik* (Picture 156).

An obligatory element of the women's decoration set was ringing pendants, used as plait ornaments. Examples include Turkmen *sachlyk* (Picture 157); Kazakh *sholpy* and *shashbau* (Picture 158); and Kyrgyz *chach uchtuk* and *cholpu* (Pictures 159).

Elderly women wore much less jewelry. Modest earrings and bracelets matched their light-colored garments, which were covered with modest, delicate embroidery.

Sacred functions were attached to jewelry in the past. Precious metals and stones, the shape of the items, as well as the ornamental motifs — everything had a coded security value. According to ancient folk beliefs, silver had cleansing and magical properties; carnelian brought health, prosperity, peace and joy; turquoise gave victory and improved vision; coral brought wealth and abun-

Picture 159. T. Musakeev, "Teenage Girls." Paper, watercolor, 2005



Source: Temirbek Musakeev. *Reproduksii: komplekt otkrytok* (Bishkek: START Ltd, 2014).

dance. Therefore, it is not surprising that jewelry acted as protective amulets and accompanied women throughout their lives, from birth to death. Earrings, simple bracelets or silver-mounted claws of birds or animals were put on girls in the first days after birth (Picture 160).

Girls, future mothers and young women during their fertility period, needed to maintain good health most of all. Beside the temporal, frontal parts of the face, neck and wrists, protection was also applied to the most vulnerable points of the body, such as the solar plexus, chest, underarm area and stomach (Pictures 161, 162).

Amulets were made in the form of a case of silver etui (or less often gold etui), containing an

avertter, a prayer written on paper, which people believed further enhanced the protective properties of the amulet. In Karakalpak chest amulets known as *khaykel*, an etui with a prayer was kept in the middle of the amulet, which could be opened on both sides. (Picture 163).

Over time, the magical ideas associated with jewelry were replaced by social prestige. They began to play the role of particular signs, reflecting the social status of the owner. This social status was expressed through the material, the complexity of the artistic and technical solutions, the number of wearable jewelries, and the completeness of their set.

All pieces of jewelry of the Central Asian peoples were distinguished by the high quality of



Picture 160. Kazakh Pendant Charm *uki ayak* — “owl’s claws” (claws set in silver)



Source: B. I. Seraliev, exec. ed., *Kazakhskoe narodnoe prikladnoe iskusstvo. Katalog* (Almaty: Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv imeni A. Kasteeva, AO ABDI Company, 2010).

Picture 161. Uzbek underarm tumar known as *kultuk-tumar*. Silver, corals, mother of pearl, glass, embossing, niello, gilding. Nineteenth century



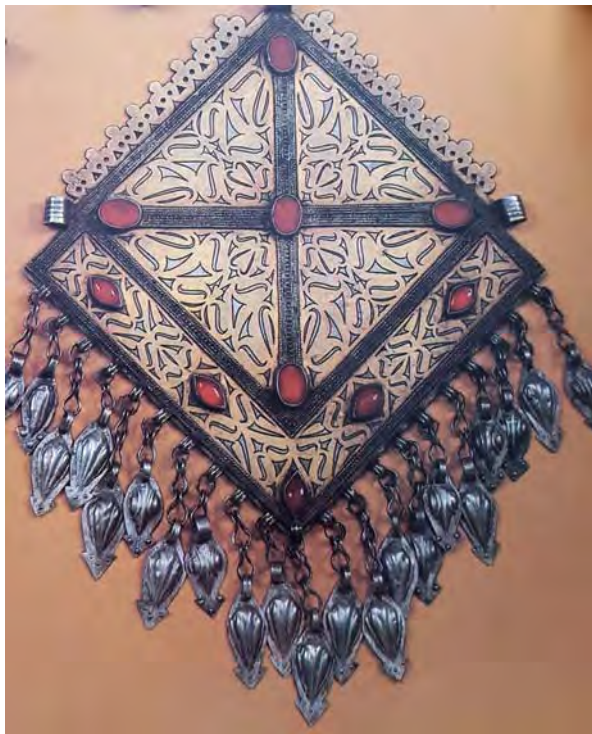
Source: D. A. Fakhretdinova, *Iuvelirnoe iskusstvo Uzbekistana* (Tashkent: Izdatel'stvo literatury i iskusstva imeni Gafura Guliyama, 1988).

jewelry-making techniques, the diversity and originality of forms, and by decoration approaches. Sticking to the forms acceptable to many Central Asian peoples, each of them could find their own approaches to jewelry-making. The jewelry of the steppe-dwellers, Kazakhs and Kyrgyz, unlike the delicate forms characteristic of the urban Uzbek and Tajik jewelers, is more reserved and large-scale, but less monumental than that of the Turkmens. The ornaments of the latter are composed of massive closed forms, while the Uzbek and Tajik ones

have a mobile design with numerous pendants. The Karakalpaks rejected the rigidity of jewelry contours and instead aspired to expressive and continuously changing contours with curls, and to chamfered projections without sharp and rigid corners. Big masses were lightened with the help of open-work cuts, and in combination with a fringe consisting of chains, plaques, and bells they obtained lightness and a plastic softness<sup>55</sup>.

The perception of the decorations was not only visual, but also audible. The melodious, silvery

Picture 162. Turkmen abdomen ornament known as *gendzhik*. Silver, gilding, carnelian, glass, engraving. Nineteenth century



Source: E. Medzhitova, comp., *Turkenskoe narodnoe iskusstvo. Al'bom* (Ashkhabad: Turkmenistan, 1990).

Picture 163. Karakalpak chest ornament *khaykel*. Silver, carnelian, glass



Source: I. V. Savitskiy, comp., *Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv Karakalpakskoy ASSR* (Moscow: Sovetskiy khudozhnik, 1976).

peals of chains, plaques, jingles, plates, beads, glass beads and bells constantly accompanied the soft movement of girls and young women.

A Turkmen folk song goes:

“When girls go to fetch water,  
The air is filled with the ringing of their decorations.”

And as Kazakhs say:

“Crystal ringing laughter echoes  
the ringing of the *sholpy*.”

The use of sound in a traditional costume performed both protective and sensually-aesthetic functions, causing certain emotions and drawing attention to its owner.

It is possible to assume that the decorations performed regulatory and educational functions.

For example, Kazakhs considered it indecent for a girl's ornaments to ring loudly when walking in front of people. On one hand, it formed a certain culture of female behavior in society. On the other hand, it contributed to the development of correct posture since the decorations required keeping the back straight so they rang quieter.

In the traditions of the Central Asian peoples, therefore, the garment was intended to transform a person both aesthetically and morally, while harmonizing with the respective type of face and body of the given ethnic group. And ultimately, the whole appearance of a person acted as an ensemble in which the physique, clothes and demeanor were united into a single harmonious image, where the aesthetic is inseparable from the ethic.



## Conclusion

In connection with the formation of the five independent Central Asian states in 1991 after the collapse of the USSR (the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Uzbekistan (with Karakalpakstan as part of Uzbekistan), Turkmenistan and the Republic of Tajikistan), each demonstrates an increasingly growing interest in their traditional culture, its origins, the peculiarities of its formation and its development. There are noticeable positive trends in the revival of folk traditions: folk calendar holidays, wedding customs, folk games and traditional costumes. The revival of the traditional costume is aided by the establishment of local consumer and jewelry industries for the manufacture of traditional fabrics, clothing, and jewelry, which also play an important role in the preservation of the ethnic identity of the people.

When designing modern clothes, accessories and jewelry in ethnic styles, designers and artists use forms, motifs and techniques typical of folk art. In this way they create new collections, which along with feasibility and functionality combine the unique and traditional nature.

Folk arts and crafts also receive new impulses for development and an orientation connected

with modern life. The technique of leather stamping, mosaics, and applications is being revived. Woodcarving is used to decorate architectural forms and details of houses; it is used in the decoration of furniture, woodenware and, of course, in the decoration of modern yurts.

A richly decorated modern yurt is still found in many mansions (located near well-furnished houses) of Central Asia. Yurts are also used in the tourism business as an original object of ethno cultural heritage for recreation and guest reception.

The art of ceramics continues to actively develop in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan: there are new modern forms of dishes that complement the characteristics of the national cuisines. The range of products is expanding and new designs of decorative ceramics are being created (wall plates, panels, floor vases, small plastic figures, and others).

The artifacts of folk arts and crafts are also revived in the educational sphere. The folk tradition of apprenticeship continues in educational institutions of different levels: the best examples of this art are reproduced, while new modern compositions and themes, as well as shapes and colors, are being developed to meet the spirit of the time.

## References

<sup>1</sup> The term “Central Asia” is used to refer to the five former Soviet republics — Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan.

<sup>2</sup> Z. S. Samashev, *Petroglify Kazakhstana* (Almaty: Oner, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> A. G. Medoev, *Graviury na skalakh. Saryarka. Mangyshlak*. Part 1 (Alma-Ata: Zhalyn, 1979); P. Agapov, and P. Kadyrbaev, *Sokrovishcha drevnego Kazakhstana* (Alma-Ata: Zhalyn, 1979).

<sup>4</sup> M. K. Kadyrbaev, and A. N. Mar'iashev, *Petroglify khrebita Karatau* (Alma-Ata: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk KazSSR, 1977).

<sup>5</sup> M. V. Voevodskiy, *K izucheniiu goncharnoy tekhniki pervobytno-kommunisticheskogo obshchestva na territorii lesnoy zony evropeyskoy chasti RSFSR* (Leningrad: Sovetskaya arheologiya, 1936), 51; A.G. Maksimova, *Epokha bronzы vostochnogo Kazakhstana* (Alma-Ata: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk KazSSR, 1959).

<sup>6</sup> Archaeological culture of the Neolithic and Eneolithic periods (fourth to third century BC) discovered in 1939 by an expedition led by S. P. Tolstov in Khorezm. The name is associated with the abandoned Kelteminar canal in Karakalpakstan (a republic within Uzbekistan).

<sup>7</sup> The archaeological culture of the Bronze Age (two thousand years BC) covering Kazakhstan, Western Siberia, the western part of Central Asia, and the Southern Urals. The name comes from the Andronov village.

<sup>8</sup> A. N. Nusupbekov, ed. *Istoriia Kazakhskoy SSR s drevneyshikh vremen do nashikh dney*. Vol.1 (Alma-Ata: Nauka, 1977).

<sup>9</sup> The archaeological culture of the Bronze Age (second half of the second century BC), South Aral region. It is named after the monuments discovered by the Tazabagyab canal in Karakalpakstan.

<sup>10</sup> S. P. Tolstov, *Po drevnim del'tam Oksa i Iaksarta* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo vostochnoy literatury, 1962); M. A. Itina, *Istoriia stepnykh plemen Iuzhnogo Priaral'ia* (Moscow: Nauka, 1977).

<sup>11</sup> The subject is fully disclosed in the works: B. I. Marshak, *Vliianie torevtiki na sogdiyskuyu keramiku VII-VIII vekov. Trudy Gosudarstvennogo Ermitazha*. Vol. 5 (Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Gosudarstvennogo Ermitazha, 1961); B. I. Marshak, *Keramika Sogda V-VII vekov kak istoriko-kul'turnyy pamiatnik* (St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo Gosudarstvennogo Ermitazha, 2012); N. U. Vishnevskaya, “Modeli podrazhaniia metallu v keramike Sredney Azii VI – nachala VII veka” (paper presented at the conference “Ancient Civilizations of Central Asia,” Museum of Oriental Art, December 8–10, 2014).

<sup>12</sup> S. S. Tashkhodzhaev, *Khudozhestvennaya polivnaya keramika Samarkanda IX–XIII vv.* (Tashkent: Izdatel'stvo Fan UzSSR, 1967); L. G. Brusenko, *Glazurovannaya keramika Chacha IX–XII vv.* (Tashkent: Izdatel'stvo Fan UzSSR, 1986).

<sup>13</sup> The Otrar studies were conducted in the late 40s of the twentieth century under the leadership of A. N. Bernshtam; in 1969 by the Otrar archaeological expedition under the leadership of K. A. Akishev, which in 1971 was renamed into the South Kazakhstan Complex Archaeological Expedition of the Academy of Sciences of the Kazakh SSR; and in 1991 by an expedition led by K. M. Baypakov. Since 2001, the studies have been conducted within the framework of an international project under the auspices of UNESCO and under the guidance of the Kazakh - Japanese trust fund “Conservation and preservation of the ancient city of Otrar.”

<sup>14</sup> D. A. Fakhretdinova, *Iuvelirnoe iskusstvo Uzbekistana* (Tashkent: Izdatel'stvo literatury i iskusstva imeni Gafura Guliyama, 1988), 6.

<sup>15</sup> Fakhretdinova, *Iuvelirnoe iskusstvo Uzbekistana*; S. P. Tolstov, *Po sledam drevnekhorezmiyskoy tsivilizatsii* (Moscow, Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1948).

<sup>16</sup> Fakhretdinova, *Iuvelirnoe iskusstvo Uzbekistana*, 9.



<sup>17</sup> The Amu-Darya treasures are currently located in the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

<sup>18</sup> E. Rtveldze, *O prinadlezhnosti Amudar'inskogo klada*, sanat.orexca.com/2000-rus/2000-4-2/edvard\_rtveldze/.

<sup>19</sup> A distinctive feature of the “animal style”, which was formed and widely spread mainly in the steppes and forest-steppes of Eurasia (seventh century BC), were stylized images of animals, their body parts, or fight scenes.

<sup>20</sup> M. F. Ovsiannikov, ed., *Istoriia estetiki. Pamiatniki mirovoy esteticeskoy mysli* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1967), 888.

<sup>21</sup> B. A. Ibraev, “Kosmogonicheskie predstavleniia nashikh predkov,” *Dekorativnoe iskusstvo SSSR* 8 (1980): 40.

<sup>22</sup> The Kazakh ornament (its origin, development, content, and monuments of the ornamental art) are considered in the following works: *Narodnoe dekorativno-prikladnoe iskusstvo kazakhov. Al'bom* (Leningrad: Avrora, 1970); M. S. Mukanov, *Kazakhskaiia iurta* (Alma-Ata: Kaynar, 1981); M. S. Mukanov, *Kazakhskie domashnie khudozhestvennye remesla* (Alma-Ata: Kazakhstan, 1979); A. Kh. Margulan, *Kazakhskoe narodnoe prikladnoe iskusstvo* (Alma-Ata: Oner, 1986–1987); U. D. Dzhaniybekov, *Kul'tura kazakhskogo remesla* (Alma-Ata: Oner, 1982); K. T. Ibraeva, *Kazakhskiy ornament* (Almaty: Oner, 1994); G. E. Tayzhanova, ed., *Kazakhi: istoriko-etnograficheskoe issledovanie* (Almaty: Kazakhstan, 1995); and others.

<sup>23</sup> T. A. Zhdanko, *Narodnoe ornamental'noe iskusstvo karakalpakov. Trudy Khorezmskoy arkheologo-etnograficheskoy ekspeditsii* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1958); A. Allamuratov, *Karakalpakskaiia narodnaia vyshivka* (Nukus: Karakalpakstan, 1977); I. V. Savitskiy, *Narodnoe prikladnoe iskusstvo karakalpakov. Rez'ba po derevu* (Tashkent: Nauka, 1965).

<sup>24</sup> L. Dodkhudoeva, ed., *Narodnoe iskusstvo Tadzhikistana (traditsionnye remesla)* (Dushanbe, 2011).

<sup>25</sup> L. N. Gumilev, *Drevnie tiurki* (Moscow: Nauka, 1967).

<sup>26</sup> A. Nysanbaev, “Kazakhskaiia filosofia i universalii traditsionnoy kul'tury,” *Saiiasat* 2001 (March).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Savitskiy, *Narodnoe prikladnoe iskusstvo karakalpakov*.

<sup>29</sup> I. E. Fadeeva, *Narodnoe prikladnoe iskusstvo i fol'klor* (Leningrad: Akademiia nauk SSSR. Institut etnografii imeni N. N. Miklukho-Maklaia, 1981).

<sup>30</sup> According to I. V. Savitskiy, a natural paint used by the Karakalpaks was called “Zhosa” and was extracted from Krantau and Sultan-Uizdag in Karakalpakstan (Savitskiy, *Narodnoe prikladnoe iskusstvo karakalpakov*, 42).

<sup>31</sup> Sh. Zh. Tokhtabaeva, *Shedevry velikoy stepi* (Almaty: Dyke Press, 2008).

<sup>32</sup> S. M. Dudin, *Kovrovye izdeliia Sredney Azii. Sbornik muzeia antropologii i etnografii*. Issue VII (Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1928), 78; Zhdanko, *Narodnoe ornamental'noe iskusstvo karakalpakov*, 373–410.

<sup>33</sup> Dzhaniybekov, *Kul'tura kazakhskogo remesla*.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> A.I. Levshin, *Opisanie kirgiz-kazach'ikh, ili kirgiz-kaysatskikh, ord i stepey* (Almaty: Sanat, 1996), 334.

<sup>36</sup> A. Tazhimuratov, comp., *Karakalpakskiy fol'klor*. Vol. 5 (Nukus: Karakalpakstan, 1980), 279.

<sup>37</sup> D. Fakhretdinova, “Narodnoe iskusstvo Karakalpakii,” *Dekorativnoe iskusstvo SSSR* 8 (1963): 32–36.

<sup>38</sup> From the album: I. V. Savitskiy, comp., *Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv Karakalpakskoy ASSR* (Moscow: Sovetskiy khudozhnik, 1976), 43.

<sup>39</sup> A. E. Falkerzam, *Starinnye kovry Sredney Azii* (St. Petersburg: Ezhemesiachnik “Starye gody,” 1915), 93–94.

<sup>40</sup> O. A. Gundogdyev, “Kover–dusha turkmen,” *Turkmenistan* 2 (2005).

<sup>41</sup> Gundogdyev, “Kover–dusha turkmen.”

<sup>42</sup> T. I. Sultanov, *Izvestiia osmanskogo istorika XVI v. Seifi Chelebi o narodakh Tsentral'noy Azii. Tiurkologicheskiy sbornik. 2003–2004. Tiurkskiye narody v drevnosti i srednevekove* (Moscow: Vostochnaia literatura, 2005), 254.

<sup>43</sup> “The Rich Kyrgyz Hunter with a Falcon” by V. V. Vereshchagin is the ruler of the Kyrgyz Solto tribe - Baytik Kanaev (Kanay uulu), the artist's friend, whom he met at a reception held by Emperor Alexander III among 17 representatives of Turkestan in 1867.

<sup>44</sup> M. Narshahi (N. Lykoshin, trans.) *Istoriia Bukhary* (Tashkent: Tipolitografiya torgovogo doma “F. i G. Brat'ia Kamenskie,” 1897).

<sup>45</sup> Fakhretdinova, *Iuvelirnoe iskusstvo Uzbekistana*.

<sup>46</sup> U. Dzhanibekov, *Po sledam legendy o zolotoy dombre: ob istorii i etnografii kazakhskogo naroda* (Alma-Ata: Oner, 1990).

<sup>47</sup> K. I. Antipina, *Osobennosti material'noy kul'tury i prikladnogo iskusstva iuzhnykh kirgizov* (Frunze: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk Kirgizskoy SSR, 1962), 219–21.

<sup>48</sup> Zhdanko, T. A., et al., *Etnografiia karakalpakov XIX - nachala XX vv. Materialy i issledovaniia* (Tashkent: Izdatel'stvo Fan, 1980), 80.

<sup>49</sup> Antipina, *Osobennosti material'noy kul'tury i prikladnogo iskusstva iuzhnykh kirgizov*.

<sup>50</sup> R. Aminova, “Iz istorii raskreposhchenia zhenshchin Sredney Azii,” *Istoriia SSSR* 2 (1962): 106–20; B. P. Palvanova, *Emansipatsiia musul'manki; opyt raskreposhcheniia zhenshchiny Sovetskogo Vostoka* (Moscow: Nauka, 1982); O. P. Umurzakova, “Khudzhum” i stanovlenie novykh semeyno-bytovykh traditsiy,” *Obshchestvennye nauki v Uzbekistane* 5 (1987): 24–30.

<sup>51</sup> Allamuratov, *Karakalpakskaya narodnaya vyshivka*, 17.

<sup>52</sup> T. A. Zhdanko, *Ocherki istoricheskoy etnografii karakalpakov* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1950).

<sup>53</sup> M. S. Morozova, “Karakalpakskiy zhenskiy shlemovidnyy golovnoy ubor ‘saukele.’” In *Arkheologiya Sredney Azii, VI. Nauchnye trudy Tashkentskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta*. Vol. 6, Issue 200 (Tashkent, 1963): 136–37.

<sup>54</sup> From the book: Fakhretdinova, *Iuvelirnoe iskusstvo Uzbekistana*.

<sup>55</sup> From the album: Savitskiy, *Gosudarstvennyy muzey iskusstv Karakalpakskoy ASSR*.



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