

## THE JEWELER'S ART OF THE SACRED BUKHARA EMIRATE: LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURIES

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### ABSTRACT

It's amazing how many different kinds of ornamental designs there are. This specific pattern, called a vegetable "islimi" pattern, stands out for its distinct aesthetic and well-defined geometric lines. Sometimes decorations include themes of zoomorphic fish. The calligraphic inscription of prayers, other texts, including passages, sayings, and suras from the Koran was highly valued. Articles written in Arabic have a certain elegance and passion. The ancient masters especially liked to work with Iranian turquoise and sard stones, which they would elaborately engrave with the owner's name and other inscriptions, along with aphorisms from the Koran. Precious gemstones like rubies (yokut), pearls (marvarid), and even diamonds were often used to embellish valuable items. Red rubies and pearls were highly prized. The symbolic language of precious jewels permeates all of East Asian poetry. Usually, the stones were said to possess magical properties.

Glass with artistic craftsmanship was quite popular, especially when combined with goods in the "entire insertions" category. There was demonstrated perfect resemblance with analogies. Ornaments may function as markers of age and gender differences in people. For example, ladies wore ornamental items from the age of three to four until they were elderly. The extravagant and diverse clothing of an urban bride was especially noteworthy, often weighing up to eight kilos. In addition to other features, the decorations were meant to encourage reproduction and family growth. Bridal clothing included a wide range of jewelry, including items for the head, neck, and chest. Diadems, particularly the "bolo-abru," "tilla-bargak," "mokhitillo," and "koshitillo" (golden eyebrows) were the head decorations with the most influence and significance. The initial version of "koshitillo" had gold eyebrows in place of real eyebrows. Stones were added one at a time to the decorations, and a metal ring covered in stones was then braided throughout. The decoration known as "tilla-bargak" is made out of stamped, stylized leaves. The piece of art shows a wreath made of flowers and leaves, symbolizing the life and renewal of the natural world. According to its definition, a "Bibishak" is "an object or possession that is specifically associated with a woman." The term "silsila" or "sinsilla" refers to head ornaments that have two different meanings: 1) a short chain of related connections; 2) ancestry and ancestral history.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Bukhara Architecture-artistic museum has a very rich collection of jewelry and metal articles. These articles mainly belonged to the family of the Emir of Bukhara and included women's, and men's and children's, jewelry ornaments, harness, orders, and medals, gold and silver coins, seals, weapons, the crockery of the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century AD.

The flourishing of the jeweller's art as well as many other decorative arts in Bukhara was predetermined by the locality of the city and political and economic life in Central Asia as a whole. Bukhara was very important commercial, religious and cultural centre of that region. It was the very place where ancient commercial ways leading from Europe to the East – India, Afghanistan, and China- crossed. An interaction of different cultural traditions took place in Bukhara more intensively than anywhere else. The jewellery of the craftsmen from Bukhara was world-renowned.

## ANALYSIS

The earliest archaeological discovery of gold and silver articles found in the territory of present Bukhara relate to the Bronze Age (the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> centuries BC). In the museum one can see graceful bronze rings and bracelets, necklaces and beads made of semiprecious stone and stained glass with which the ancient Zaman-Baba's dwellers saw off their dead tribal fellows to the final journey.

Among the museum's unique collections there is a gold embossing and gold women ear-rings of Kuyumazar that were made by antique craftsmen (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC). The face of a goddess is printed off on the embossing. The ancient craftsman had reproduced the delicate and refined features of the spiritual face with a wonderful understanding of the image. The tradition of sewing silver and golden metal plates on women's clothing was kept up to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The main purpose of the plates is to protect women from illness and "evil spirits".

Gold and silver were the principal materials with which craftsmen worked. As it was many people's tradition, gold was endowed with magic strength of the sun and considered to be the metal of divine beings, rulers and men. As for silver, it was ascribed to the strength of the moon. Silver ornaments were correlated with femininity.

The Bukhara artistic school of making gold and silver articles is notable for a number of ornaments and unique technical and artistic tricks. These include forging, casting, sawcut, deep and flat cutting, drawing (savodkori), polishing, gilding, colour enamelling. A "masticfoil" technique is very unique. It allows saving a precious metal without prejudice to the appearance of the ornament. Bukhara is the only place where the method of "broken turquoise" was used. The main feature of the Bukhara jewellery school was a filigree work: open-work bracelets "panjara", "bozbandcha", "katmala" (open-work beads), and "mokhi-tillo".



**Fig 1:** Poicha- a necklace, Khalka – ear ring, Bilakuzuk a bracelet. Bukhara, 19<sup>th</sup> century, Gold, gilded silver (in ear ring), granulated metal, filigree, emeralds, spinal, turquoise.

“Sarsuzan” is a hatpin. The most widespread paired temporal ornament is named “kazhdak”, which has a form of almond (bodom) and is very popular in the East. It symbolizes fertility. Through the small hollow tubes “naicha” or “zilfitillo” they pass a lock of hair from the temples “zulf”. The plait ornaments “tuf”, “sochpupak” consisting of silk laces with various silver hollow elements in the form of tiny tubes, cupolas ornamented with niello with coral pendants, were quite popular. They are supposed to hide hair or to draw away attention from it.

The museum stocks contain all main types of ear-rings characteristic of the jewellery of Bukhara: annular ones - “kundalsozi”, “mukhammadadi”, “kashgaribaldak”, hook-like ones –“oinador”, “yakkirota”, “barg”, “khalka-dukorita”, “shibirma”, etc. The “shibirma” ear-rings are presented to a girl at her full age or at the day of her marriage.

Breast ornaments are represented by various necklaces made of corals (marjon), semiprecious stones with silver and gold insertions “bozbodcha” (amulet), open-work bolls “katmola”, and coins. A traditional type of necklace is “nozigordan” that literally means “a fine neck”. Widely spread ornaments are brooches, pendants “anyk” based on a semiprecious stone or a nacre inscribed with suras from Koran.



**Fig 2:** Zebi gardon uzbek juwerly. Tashekent. The beginning of

There are many bracelets and rings of various kinds in the museum: narrow one-layer non-closed rings ornamented with an engraving “dastpona”: wide closed rings “shabaka”. Of special popularity were the filigree bracelets “daspona- panjara” composed of five bands. Almost every ring has an insertion with an Arabic writing engraved. It is believed that bracelets and rings preserve a ritual cleanness of hands.

Magic characteristics are also ascribed to the amulets “tumor” (rectangular and three-cornered forms), “bozbond” (cylindrical). In the “bozbond” the technique “broken turquoise” imitating a fish scale was used very often. In the arts of many peoples all over the world the image of fish is

associated with the idea of fertility. The “tumor” items are also ornamented very richly.



**Fig 3:** Tilla qosh-head disine. Tashkent. The end of XIX cent.

Only in the Bukhara Museum one can see the best samples of the harness made by order from the Court: the breast, neck, tail ornaments consisting of great number of silver plates, made of turquoise, pearls and precious stones.

## II. CONCLUSION

The museum also houses an extensive collection of exquisite silver crockery and other household goods, totaling up to 400 pieces, which were formerly owned by the Emirs. These items include tea sets, covers, and kitchenware made up of cups, saucers, and wine glasses adorned with colored enamel called "minokori." Additionally, there are caskets for the Koran, ferrules for rolls, little chests, and several other objects. Two caskets measuring 6 and 12 kg are highly distinctive. The craftsmanship of the most renowned Bukhara masters is evident in the design of all these products. These silver masterpieces are intricately adorned with engravings, enamel, and cuts, and embellished with valuable stones such as diamonds, rubies, and turquoise. They serve as remarkable examples of the opulence and sophistication of the artistic techniques employed by the Bukhara school, which was unparalleled in the Central Asian region.

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