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Jeweler's art of sacred Bukhara emirate: At the second half of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century

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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 19th century and the beginning of the 20th 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 2nd and 1st 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 earrings of Kuyumazar that were made by antique craftsmen (1st and 2nd 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 20th 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 "mokhitillo".

Discussion

The richness and variety of ornamental patterns amazes one's emanation: it is a vegetable "islmi" pattern, which is remarkable for its bizarre manner and strict lines of geometrical patterns. Sometimes ornaments have zoomorphic motives. A great importance was applied to a calligraphic inscription of verses, sayings and suras from Koran, good wishes, etc. When done in Arabic characters they give a particular expressiveness and elegance to the articles.

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Ancient masters especially liked to use Iranian turquoise and sard on which they used to cut out the aphorisms from Koran, the name of the owner, etc. For dear items they often used ruby (yokut), pearls (marvarid) and even diamonds. Pearls and red ruby were appreciated highly. The whole poetry of the East is pierced with metaphoric words about precious stones. The stones were usually assigned to magic properties.

Artistically worked glass was very popular as well; especially it was used with articles of the “entire insertions” group. There was achieved a complete similarity with analogies.

Ornaments would reflect sex and age differences between people. For example, female ornaments were worn from 3-4 years old up to old age. The apparel of a city bride was especially notable for its richness and diversity, which sometimes weighed up to 8 kilograms. The ornaments as well as other attributes were supposed to be conducive to continue generation, to enlarge the family.

The wedding apparel included all types of ornaments: ones to wear on the head, neck, breast, etc. The most effective and significant were head ornaments, especially diadems “koshitillo” (“golden eyebrows”), “bolo-abru”, “tilla-bargak”, “mokhitillo” (golden moon).

An original form of “koshitillo” was presented by gold eyebrows, which were put on in the place of real ones. The ornaments gradually was “enlarged” with an insertion of stones and then they were braided with a stone-strangled metal band. The “tilla-bargak” ornament is consisted of stamped stylized leaves. It is an image of the wreath of flowers and leaves symbolizing the life and renewal of nature. “Bibishak” literally means “something that belongs to a lady”. The head ornaments “silsila” or “sinsilla” has two meanings: 1) a small chain; 2) dynasty, genealogy.



Fig 1: Poicha- a necklace, Khalka – ear ring, Bilakuzuk a bracelet. Bukhara, 19th 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”, “mukhammadi”, “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 “dasponapanjara” 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.

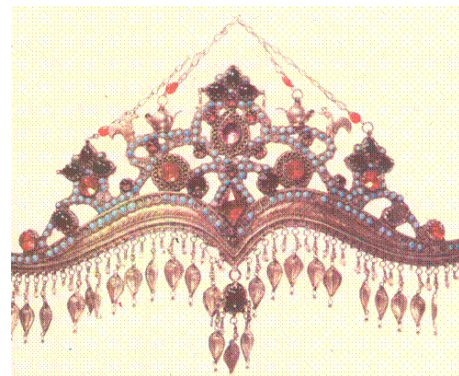


Fig 3: Tilla qosh-head disine. Tashkent. The end of XIX cent.

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.

Conclusion

The museum also contains a great deal of wonderful silver

crochery and other domestic items (up to 400 pieces) once belonging to the Emirs. These are tea sets, covers and kitchen-ware consisting of cups, saucers, wine-glasses covered with coloured enamel “minokori”; caskets for Koran, ferrules for rolls, small chests and many other things. Very unique are two caskets weighing 6 and 12 kilograms. The décor of all these items reflects workmanship of the most prominent Bukhara masters. These silver masterpieces maximally saturated with engraving, enamel and cuttings, inscribed with precious stones-diamonds, rubies and turquoise are brilliant evidences of the richness and refinement of the artistic methods of the Bukhara school, which had no match in the Central Asian region.

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