

## Section 5. Theory and history of art

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### TRADITIONAL ORNAMENTS AND COMPOSITIONS IN THE ARTISTIC COPPER EMBOSsing OF UZBEKISTAN IN THE XIX–XX CENTURIES

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#### Abstract

The article analyzes the patterns and compositions of one of the oldest forms of Uzbek applied art – artistic copper embossing, which developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and became a traditional method of artistic expression. The classification of ornaments used in copper embossing, the structure of compositional solutions, the dynamics of their development in this period are presented.

**Keywords:** *copper embossing, applied art, handicraft, metalworking, ornament*

#### Introduction

The finds discovered in Uzbekistan belong to different periods and different areas of applied art, reflecting the cultural, political, and economic situation of their time. In this paper, we will focus on the development processes of one of the most common types of applied art – the art of artistic metalworking, its artistic originality, and patterns.

The processing of copper products was relevant in almost all regions and eras. E. M. Peshchereva notes that decorated products were popular mainly among the wealthy urban population. They are both utilitarian and artistic in nature, depending on their function. Copper items were recognized as property (they were saved for minting coins if necessary) and were placed on shelves in

the house, which, in turn, indicated the financial stability of the family. The figurative language of all objects created before the Islamic era was focused on original expression; that is, the objects reflected plot compositions and images of people and animals.

The art school of the 19<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> centuries was distinguished by its local characteristics. These characteristics are reflected in the form of objects, the nature of the drawing, and the technical solution. Although local schools had their own characteristics, the artistic principles of Uzbek chasing were common. These principles were reflected in the styles of ornamentation, traditional compositional solutions, and the planar transfer of images of the created artistic ornaments. Ancient carved copper items were made with-

out additional painting. The charm of these items lies in the skill of the master carver to create a play of light and shadow using the technique of deep and flat carving. Complex and intricate details – precious stones and silver plates – were included in accordance with strict rules. Sometimes the variety of colors was achieved by using different grades of copper in the product and the technique of bleaching individual parts of the product with tin. When engraving a pattern, the main color of the copper was visible on the bleached part. This process is similar to the “sgraffito” technique, in which the carved pattern is made on a background of a different color, which enhances the expressiveness of the ornament.

The second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was a period of ideological changes. As a result, new artistic features began to appear in the work of masters: the technique and content of the pattern changed, and interest in color increased. The chiaroscuro of carved patterns did not particularly satisfy the masters, and many carvers switched to the technique of coloring the background, sometimes decorating the patterns with sealing wax or colored varnish. Excessive and primitive use of paints not only reduced the artistic value of copper products but also devalued the skillful designs of the master. An example of this are the works of Kokand and Shakhrisabz's masters of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Although new features appeared, the main artistic criteria of minting – the complexity of the decor and the compositional order of the ornaments – remained unchanged. One of the main rules of coppersmithing is that the main circular pattern is complemented by a border – a girdle pattern. The side walls of trays and bowls were always finished with carved borders. Even water vessels such as “oftoba”, “obdasta”, “kumgan” and jugs were divided into sections by thin strips, which were then decorated and used as a frame in the composition. In Uzbek copper embossing of the 19<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> centuries, there are no cases of the main circular patterns being executed entirely without bands of girdle ornament. This feature is reflected in all types of Uzbek applied art.

The wide and narrow stripes that make up the composition of the pattern consisted of rows decorated in several ways. Some-

times the borders consist of rows of the same width, but usually the central row is wider than the edge rows. Among the widely used compositions: striped – in which the patterns are located on the basis of horizontal and vertical stripes; central – the volume and scale of the ornament increase towards the center of the composition; rapport – the formation of a composition of rosettes, medallions and other geometric figures.

In the art of copper chasing, there are 6 main compositions for tray ornamentation: “gardish”, “davra”, “turundzh”, “mehrab”, “sitara”, “ishkalak” (Abdullaev, T., 1970). The ornament systems are structured and classified according to the placement of patterns on the tray. The motif, located mainly in the center of the composition, was relatively large and complex. The sequence of motifs in the composition is carried out in accordance with the goal set by the master. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Bukharan masters created a composition called “sitara” (Bulatov, S., 1991). In the central part of the tray, a “sitara” star is placed, the circumference of the figure is filled with a floral pattern.

There are four main types of patterns used in metalworking. These include: girih – geometric patterns; islimi – plant symbols; zoomorph – full or partial images of animals and creatures; epigraphy – calligraphic verses, excerpts from sacred books. Patterns and ornaments used by Uzbek embossers are divided into types such as floral, geometric and zoomorphic, as well as calligraphic inscriptions. Sometimes, images of household items were used as motifs. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, narrative scenes were added. Geometric patterns, or “girih” consist of many figures: squares, rhombuses, circles, six- or eight-pointed stars, triangles, polygons, and figures similar to “mihrab”, which were used less often than floral patterns. Narrow stripes with geometric patterns are used at the joints of objects, form complex compositions on the side walls of trays and bowls, and also as a decorative pattern on the edges and bases of some objects. Many geometric patterns found in embossing are named after architectural terms: “khisht” or “gisht”, “mihrab”, “maddockhil”, “gishti haram”, “zanjira”, “nim zanjira”. One of the most beloved and widespread patterns of Uzbek embossing is the “islami”

pattern. These types of patterns have the shape of flowers, leaves, branches, and bushes and are also used as a border and a circular motif in the composition. There are many forms of “islīmi” patterns, and each carver interprets this pattern through improvisation. Even in the most complex compositions with rosettes and medallions, the inner part of the figures is filled with “islīmi” patterns. “Islīmi” are divided into types depending on the purpose of execution in the composition. For example, the encircling patterns in the form of leaves and branches that form the final or dividing stripes on the products are called “nimislīmi”. Plant patterns are depicted very realistically, so that in complex compositions their names can be guessed by their appearance. These include the patterns “lola”, “bodom”, “kalam-pir” and “buta”. Patterns in combination with “islīmi” had complex names: “islīmi koshin”, “gul islīmiy”, “islīmiy gisht”, “islīmiy muhja”, “islīmiy bulbul”. In addition, plant patterns filling the inner part of geometric ornaments also have complex names: “madohili islīmi”, “islīmi turunj”, “islīmi mihrab”.

In copper-chased items, zoomorphic and anthropomorphic ornaments were widely used. Under the influence of the ideology of the Islamic era, realistic images of ornaments with sacred meaning were limited. Now skilled craftsmen depicted animals and creatures in a figurative sense, sometimes with their parts or distinctive features. Only the names of the patterns refer to the creature to which they belong. For example, “chashmi bulbul” (nightingale eye), “kuchkorak” (ram’s horn) and “sirti balik” (fish scales). In addition, there are patterns that by their appearance indicate belong-

ing to a certain creature: “kirmak” (silkworm), “ilon izi” (snake trail) and “zulluk” (leech). The handles, lids and spouts of the products were cast by foundrymen in realistic forms of animals: birds, snakes and dragons.

Epigraphy – calligraphy – requires high skill from the engraver. Since ancient times, sacred texts, scriptures and poems in Arabic and Persian languages were engraved on copper-embossed products using the styles “suls, naskh, raykhoni, nastalik”. Each master marked the product with his initials and the date of production. In Bukhara, letters and poems related to the consumption of water and food were often used.

A separate motif in Uzbek coinage was the image of household items. Motifs in the form of household items can be traced in other types of applied art such as ceramics and embroidery. Such stylized images become obvious upon closer examination. The names of these motifs are also obvious. For example: “guldon” (vase), “katak” (cage), “naqshi muhr” (seal), “elpugich” (fan) (Abdullaev, T., 1970).

In addition, the arsenal of ornaments of Uzbek copper embossing includes cosmological patterns that imitate natural phenomena: “girdob”, “aylanma” – whirlpool, “guli mavzh” – wave, “oftob” – sun, “mokh” or “oy” – moon, “sitara” – star (Rempel, L. Zatlornitskaya, V., 1946).

In conclusion, the study of traditional patterns and compositions of embossing will serve to preserve the traditions of Uzbek artistic embossing and will give a powerful impetus to development in the conditions of a market economy.

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