

DOI:10.29013/EJA-25-2-134-139



THE PLACE AND SCIENTIFIC SIGNIFICANCE OF UZBEKI APPLIED DECORATIVE ART IN ARCHITECTURAL MONUMENTS

*Shukurova Lobar Sherbayevna*¹

¹ Named after Kamoliddin Behzod National Institute of Art and Design, “Fine Arts” Department at Tashkent State Pedagogic University named after Nizami

Cite: Shukurova L.Sh. (2025). *The Place and Scientific Significance of Uzbeki Applied Decorative Art in Architectural Monuments. European Journal of Arts 2025, No 2.* <https://doi.org/10.29013/EJA-25-2-134-139>

Abstract

Artistic thinking, which is an integral part of human conscious activity, and, accordingly, artistic and creative activity have acquired great importance in the process of historical development of mankind. According to written sources, decorative and applied art is one of the most remarkable components of folk art, created on the territory of Uzbekistan since ancient times. In its development, it passed many years and centuries, sometimes it developed, sometimes it fell into decay, but the transfer of artistic traditions from generation to generation never stopped. Central Asia, which has raised Muslim scientists, thinkers, and master architects, attracts the attention of people with its architectural monuments. The article is about the role and scientific significance of artistic painting and girih in architectural monuments.

Keywords: *Central Asia, architectural monuments, pattern, girih, master architect, practical decor, geometric solution, tile, copy, lines, ganch, monumental*

Uzbek folk applied decorative arts are one of the most ancient types of art and have been known to the world since time immemorial. The types of applied art that are the part of applied decorative arts enchant with their antiquity, beauty and charm and occupy a deep place in people's hearts. Patterned compositions that combine elements of Islamic and geometric patterns symbolically add beauty to practical works of art. Along with this, applied decorative arts are as important as theater, cinema, music, and fine arts. As the name suggests, applied decorative arts mean art used in everyday life. They are associated with the decoration of vari-

ous objects, streets, squares, parks, manufacturing plants, educational institutions, and sports facilities. In addition, this type of art is very important for the decoration of clothes and jewelry. Applied decorative arts are widely used in our life. Practical works of art require compliance with the purpose of use, shape, decoration, material, color, and dimensions. Only then, these items will surprise and attract people, that is, they will give people aesthetic pleasure.

By the present time, applied decorative art is developing in two directions:

The first. Artistic crafts. This direction covers the art of goldsmithing in Bukhara,

carpet weaving in Khiva, pottery enterprises in Rishton.

The second. Folk decorative art. In this direction, it is possible to include the activities of master craftsmen who work mainly independently.

While decorative items of the first direction are made in large numbers in production enterprises, the number of practical art items is quite limited in the activities of individual master craftsmen. This leads to their high skill level. There are also such enterprises in the fields of furniture making, cutlery, and embroidery.

Folk decorative art exists in every nation. As we noted above, they differ from each other in terms of genres of applied art, material used in the preparation of our used items, shape, structure, color, decoration, dimensions. Another characteristic feature of folk decorative art is artistic traditions that have been used in the work of folk masters for thousands of years. This feature is mainly based on the living environment, nature, and climatic conditions of each region. Because the master of practical art, while creating his creative work, takes beauty from his surroundings, i.e. from nature. For example, Uzbek folk craftsmen use images of mare, lamb, and peacock in their works, and craftsmen of northern countries use images of deer. Uzbek masters use ganch, clay, and copper for the material of the work, while the northern peoples use wood and animal bones more. As we mentioned above, the climate has a great influence on the color of the work. Since the climate of the northern countries is cold, the masters there use more cold colors, and the masters of Uzbekistan, with a warm climate, use warm colors. Thus, each nation forms its own traditions in applied decorative arts.

Applied decorative art differs from other types of art in that it is directly adapted to people's needs and is connected with the content of objects used in human life. It features real life objects (such as trees, flowers, birds, still lifes, etc.). They do not have an independent character, but are connected with the content and form of a certain item and serve to decorate it. Practical works of art are created somewhat freely – as a product of creative thinking, and it is aimed at bringing joy to the environment. For example, colorful patterns

and reliefs used on the exterior and interior of walls, doors, gates, and columns are examples of this.

Applied art was formed in very ancient times and developed in the form of folk crafts. In the works of applied art of the Uzbek people, almost open flower beds and gardens are reflected. Because it has been a custom of the Uzbek people to turn their neighborhood into a flower garden since ancient times. In Uzbek folk decorative art, along with wood carving, pottery, embroidery, satin, bekasam and various accessories with patterns have gained great fame among the peoples of the world.

In particular, Artistic painting and girikh are one of the foundations of folk art and have been known since ancient times as an integral part of human daily life and as the unique culture of each nation. Petroglyphs in caves and rocks, evidence of human civilization and early cultural life, can be considered among the first formless works of art. It is known that the oldest petroglyphs date back to the Stone Age – the Paleolithic period, and they were presumably drawn about ten thousand years BC. Many petroglyphs have been found in Central Asia, and the oldest of more than five thousand petroglyphs in the Sarmishsay historical, cultural and natural landscape museum-reserve in the Nurata district of the Navoi region date back to the ninth millennium BC.

Here it is necessary to distinguish the art of wall painting, i.e. painting, from fine art. Painting is part of the architectural solution of a building or structure and in most cases is intentionally combined with its interior and forms a complete composition. Bright examples of monumental and decorative art of the post-Sarmishsay period are reflected in wall inscriptions and patterns found in the palaces of Varakhshi, Fayoztepa, Dalvarzintepa, Tuprokkala, Bolaliktepa and Afrosiyob, and Buddhist temples (Gulyomov K., 2007).

In the 8th century AD, due to the introduction of Islam into Central Asia along with the Arab invasion and submission to its demands, the depiction of people and animals disappeared from fine and applied art, and painting developed. Arabic writing was mastered, and a style of writing with decorative headings (epigraphy) appeared (Bulatov S., Mansurov O., 2005).

The word pattern comes from the Arabic word for image, flower. This is an ornament consisting of stylized images of plants, birds, animals, etc. It is used in various things, such as objects, weapons, fabric, furniture, books, as well as in the interior and exterior decoration of architectural structures. In particular, in architectural monuments one can find more perfect, original and highly artistic copies of the pattern. These complex patterns, widely used in the architectural monuments of Central Asia, are called girih. Girih – from Persian means tangled, knot. Geometric pattern is a type of geometrically complex pattern consisting of rectangles, triangles and other elements. In this case, girih will have its own convention, subject to straight, curved and mixed lines. The widespread use of this type of pattern opened up new opportunities for development of decorative art. World-famous scientists – Abu Ali ibn Sina, Beruni, Firdavsi and Rudaki contributed to the development of Uzbek culture. At this time, the world-famous Somoni Mausoleum, protected by UNESCO, was built. It was built in 1127 under the supervision of the architect Arslan Muhammad Khan using various combinations of fired bricks. The bricks were collected and made in the summer from the purest ganch.

The patterns of gyrikh, having such a complex geometric solution, cause controversy not only among representatives of Uzbek art, but also among European scientists. In particular, the scientific article “An invention that waited for recognition for five centuries”, published in the 2007 issue of the journal “Science and Life”, tells about the discovery of geometric laws by Sir Roger Penrose, the author of the twistor theory, a British physicist and mathematician who worked in various fields of mathematics, general relativity and quantum theory. The article states: “The article by American scientists Peter Lu and Paul Steinhardt on medieval Islamic architecture, published in the February 2007 issue of the journal Science, became a scientific sensation. According to the authors of the article, the geometric laws discovered by the European scientist Roger Penrose in the 1970s are based on the patterns of tiles decorating the walls of medieval mausoleums, mosques and palac-

es. Consequently, medieval architects were several centuries ahead of their European colleagues. Like many discoveries in modern science, this invention occurred by accident... The fact is that Harvard University graduate student Peter Lu came to Uzbekistan in 2005 as a tourist. When he looked at the paintings of the monuments of Samarkand, Penrose's complex geometric figures appeared before his eyes. Upon returning home, he told his supervisor, Professor Paul Steinhardt from Princeton University, about his assumptions. After this, a careful study of the structure of wall decorations and patterns of monuments of medieval Muslim architecture confirmed the correctness of Peter Lu's assumptions and led to the creation of the above-mentioned scientific article (Egamberdiyev Sh., 2007). “The author of the article also notes that this discovery aroused great interest in the scientific and cultural circles of our country and led to heated discussions”.

As we have already mentioned above, history testifies that the decorative art of Central Asia and the Middle East flourished in the 9th-12th centuries. According to archaeological science, the appearance of the convolution motif in Central Asian jewelry dates back to the beginning of the 8th century, and illustrative examples are the carving of Varakhsh ganch, finds on Mount Mug – Sogd fortress. Girih was widely used in archaeological finds in the Zerafshan Valley, Khiva (9th–12th centuries), in mosques, mausoleums and palaces of Bukhara, Samarkand, Khiva cities of the 14th–17th centuries. Achievements of the exact sciences and construction paved the way for abstract geometric forms in this decorative art. Girih is repeated on the basis of complex forms with strict regularity. Thus, each circle is created on the basis of geometric laws. Girih differs from other types of patterns in its complexity, clear regularity and beauty.

At the same time, the influence of natural and climatic conditions on the development of monumental design in the architecture of Central Asia was strong. Short winters and long hot summers led to the need to build large and spacious houses in the architecture of the region. For this reason, it is difficult to imagine residential and public buildings without a yard and porch. Sometimes the area of the porch was wider than the living

room and bedroom area. Residents spent most of the year on these verandas, and they were decorated along with the living room (Azimov I., 1987).

Although the invasion of Chinggis Khan in the 13th century destroyed the cultural life of the region, it could not destroy it completely (Ko'hna va boqiy Buhoro. 2006). During the period of Timur and the Timurids, all forms of art, including decorative patterns, were greatly developed (Usmonov O., 1997).

In the 15th century, the kundala method appeared in painting, in which patterns knocked out with red clay on special clay were painted with blue paint, thinly covered with gold water, and patterns were painted. By the 16th–17th centuries, fresco plot paintings were almost abandoned, instead, kundala pattern compositions were used (Azimov I., 1987). In particular, among them are the Baland Mosque and the house of Khoja Zayniddin, built in Bukhara in the 16th century, the Abdulaziz Khan Madrasah of the 17th century.

After the political and economic restoration of the Uzbek khanates, which were formed on the territory of Uzbekistan in the 18th century, by the 19th century a general process of development took place in all aspects of cultural life, especially in painting.

At the beginning of the 19th and 20th centuries, schools of artistic painting were formed in the territory of the Khiva, Kokan Khanates and the Bukhara Emirates, and masters of folk art began to gather in these capitals.

As a result of studying the architectural monuments built in the 19th century, we are sure that they were created in almost the same style. One of the main reasons for this is that the artists of that time went to other cities in search of work or were called to decorate buildings. Artists from Bukhara, Margilan and Kokan were often called to decorate buildings in Samarkand and Tashkent. This played a significant role in the exchange of experience and the development of painting schools, the creation of unique compositions, and the enrichment of the color range. Although their patterns are similar to each other as a result of interaction, each master had differences in their color complex, style and composition (Bulatov S., 1991).

The Fergana valley school of painting is unique, its paintings widely use girih, plant Islamic and floral girih motifs in their decoration. The patterns are very close to nature, they are free, the colors are contrasting, the compositions are subject to the rules of symmetry. In addition, the valley directly used petals, buds and other elements, mainly pistachios, pomegranates, roses, willows and almonds. They preferred red and green oranges with Islamic motifs on the edges.

The ornaments of the Tashkent school of painting are distinguished by their elegance and smooth transition of colors into each other, strict adherence to a certain color scheme. It is distinguished by the frequent use of geometric and plant patterns in its compositions, often using a green range. In plant patterns, the moon flower, cotton, three-leaf clover, shukufta, leaf flower and other elements are simplified (Ganchkor va naqqosh usta Baqoyev Shodijon Shokirovich bilan suhbatdan (Buhoro viloyati 1971 y.t.)).

The Khiva school of painting differs from other schools in that it predominantly uses yellow and green colors and fills the entire surface with geometric patterns. Islamic design often uses branches, margola, shukufta, leaves, peas and simple flowers. In the composition, the branches are often twisted in a spiral between the girihs, forming a complex shape and differs from other schools in the mobility of its patterns. In most cases, Khiva motifs are made on the basis of madohil, and then small Islamic motifs are made in a spiral form (Abdullayev M. S., 2018).

The Samarkand school is distinguished by the richness of its patterns, their artistic mobility and liveliness. The Islamic pattern and the complex gyrix are repeated in a certain rhythmic setting. The composition is close to Bukhara painting in its wide space and the fine treatment of the flower placed in the jug (Ganchkor va naqqosh usta Baqoyev Shodijon Shokirovich bilan suhbatdan (Buhoro viloyati 1971 y.t.)).

The Bukhara school differs from other schools in the richness and complexity, perfection and attractiveness of its compositions. It is noteworthy that the Bukhara motifs are made in complex and precise sizes with precise calculations, and the Islamic plant motifs are made with a unique taste. It differs

from Islamic motifs in that special attention is paid to the rhythm of leaves, fruits, flowers, leaves, muja and tanob (Bulatov S., 1991).

The scientist B. O. Buronov, who studied the patterned art in residential architecture of Bukhara, said: "Bukhara painting of the late 19th – early 20th centuries is a product of the experience of many generations of folk artists. In a certain sense, it can be noted that Bukhara painting, along with other regions of Uzbekistan, is distinguished by artistic perfection and integrity of method. Compared with other artistic schools of Uzbekistan, the Bukhara school is distinguished by its fidelity to the past. Alternatively, today it is a traditional school. "It remains a dynamic school, the quality of which has not changed," he said (Buronov B. O., 2007).

The intricate patterns and tiles created by our ancestors are just one example of their knowledge and ingenuity. After all, the histo-

ry of Central Asian culture is very ancient and has its own examples of applied art. We need to pay attention to the fact that in the article published in the above-mentioned foreign journal, scientists from all over the world praise the intellect of our ancestors and they will witness that this is a country that has raised many great and intelligent people who have made a great contribution to the world science and culture of our land, such as Fergani, Khorezmi, Beruni, Ibn Sina, Ulugbek, and those whose names have not reached us, but their masterpieces still amaze people of the world. One of the urgent tasks of today is to study the secrets of painting and the art of girih, created hundreds of years ago, to preserve architectural monuments inherited from our ancestors, to understand the essence of practical examples of decorative art in them and to pass them on to the next generation.

References

- Abdullayev M. S. The history of the development of Khorezm applied decorative art (16th century – early 20th century): Dissertation for the candidate of arts. ... – Tashkent, 2018. – 136 p.
- Abdullayev M. S. Xorazm amaliy bezak-san'atining rivojlanish tarixi (XVI asr – XX asr boshlari): San'atshunoslik fanlari nomzodi diss. ... – Toshkent, 2018. – 136p.
- Ancient and Immortal Bukhara. Decorative Album / Compiled by: Hamroyev A., Rakhmonova M. et al. Tashkent: Gafur Gulom Publishing House of Literature and Arts, 2006. – 256 p. (In Uzbek)
- Azimov I. Patterns and Designs of Uzbekistan. – Tashkent: Gafur Gulom Publishing House of Literature and Arts, 1987. – 8 p. (In Uzbek)
- Azimov I. Patterns of Uzbekistan. – Tashkent: Gafur Gulom Publishing House of Literature and Arts, 1987. – 142 p. (In Uzbek)
- Boriyev O., Usmanov M. Uzbeks: ethnic history and ethnocultural processes. – Samarkand: 2008. – 243 p. (In Uzbek)
- Bulatov S., Mansurov O. Philosophy of applied art in national architecture. – Tashkent: Science, 2005. – 125p. (In Uzbek)
- Bulatov S., Tolipov N. Philosophy of beauty. – Tashkent: Science and technology, 2008. – 128 p. (In Uzbek)
- Bulatov S. O'zbek xalq amaliy bezak san'ati. _ Toshkent: Mehnat, 1991. – 384 p.
- Buronov B. O. Ornamental art in Bukhara residential architecture at the end of the 19th – beginning of the 20th centuries: Dissertation for the candidate of arts. ... – Tashkent, 2007. – 141 p. (In Uzbek)
- Buronov B. O. XIX asrning oxiri – XX asrning boshlarida Buhoro turarjoy me'morchiligiga naqsh san'ati: San'arshunoslik fa'nlari nomzodi diss. ... – Toshkent, 2007. – 90p.
- Culture and art of the peoples of Central Asia. – Leningrad: Hermitage, 1963. – 144 p. (In Russian)
- Denike B. P. Architectural ornament of Central Asia. – M., – L: Gosizdat, 1939. – 228 p. (In Russian)

- Egamberdiev Sh. An invention that has been waiting for recognition for five centuries. // Science and life. – Tashkent, 2007. – No. 3–4. – P. 54–55. (In Uzbek)
- From an interview with the master of ganchkor and painter Bakayev Shodijon Shokirovich (born in Bukhara region in 1971) (In Uzbek)
- Ganchkor va naqqosh usta Baqoyev Shodijon Shokirovich bilan suhbatdan (Buhoro viloyati 1971 y.t.)
- Gʻulyomov K. Applied art. – Tashkent: Istiqlol Finance Publishing House, 2007. – 96 p. (In Uzbek)
- Koʻhna va boqiy Buhoro. Bezakli albom / Tuzuvchilar: Hamroyev A., Raxmonova M. va boshq. Toshkent: Gʻofur Gʻulom nimodagi adabiyot va sanʼat nashriyoti, 2006. – 256 p.
- Usmanov O. Kamoliddin Behzod and his School of Painting. – Tashkent: Science, 1997. – 13 p. (In Uzbek)
- Weimarn B. V. Architectural and decorative art of Uzbekistan. – M.: Gosarchitect Publishing House, 1948. – 62 p. (In Russian)
- Zohidov P. Sh. Art of design in the works of folk craftsmen of Uzbekistan. (19th – early 20th centuries) – Art of architects of Uzbekistan. – Tashkent: 1962. – 93 p. (In Russian)
- Zohidov P. Sh. The World of the Architect. – Tashkent: Komuslar Main Editorial Board, 1996. – 328 p. (In Uzbek)

submitted 21.02.2025;
accepted for publication 05.03.2025;
published 30.04.2025
© Shukurova L. Sh.
Contact: lobar.shukurova.87@mail.ru