



# HISTORY AND STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT OF ARTISTIC CRAFTS IN KASHKADARYA REGION

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**Abstract:** This article scientifically analyzes the formation, historical development and stages of artistic crafts in the Kashkadarya region. It separately considers the main types of crafts - jewelry, embroidery and metalworking, highlighting their specific features, technological processes and the symbolic meaning of patterns and ornaments. It also studies the impact of socio-political changes in the 20th century on traditional art, the threat of extinction of crafts and the processes of their revival in modern times. The study substantiates the role of artistic crafts in society as a centuries-old cultural heritage of the Kashkadarya region, as well as its spiritual and practical significance.

**Keywords:** Kashkadarya region, artistic crafts, embroidery, jewelry, metalworking, patterns and ornaments, tradition, symbolic content, socio-political changes, cultural heritage.

**Introduction.** The artistic culture that developed in the Kashkadarya oasis in the 19th century stood out as a separate local center with its own unique features, embodying the rich and unique features of folk art traditions. During this period, various branches of craftsmanship developed in the major cities of the oasis, Karshi and Shahrisabz, as well as in rural areas. In particular, copper-plated vessels, ceramics, various fabrics, embroidery products, and carpet weaving were widely developed.

The Kashkadarya region is recognized as one of the main craft centers of Uzbekistan for the production of metal utensils. Along with common traditional features, the products created in Karshi and Shahrisabz have also formed a unique local stylistic direction. Therefore, the products produced in this region are significantly different from the works created in other famous craft centers and have acquired their own uniqueness.

**Main part.** Brass was widely used as the main raw material by Kashkadarya craftsmen, and the manufacture of various household items from it was one of the important directions of traditional crafts. The types of these items were quite diverse, including teapots, sundials, kumgans (vessels for storing and pouring water), hand-washing sets, plates, tufdons (vessels intended for spitting), candlesticks, hookah utensils, cups, and various other household items.

In terms of processing technologies, Kashkadarya craftsmen also demonstrated a high level of skill. They widely used methods such as smooth and relief drawing, engraving, and demonstrated skill in creating complex decorative patterns. On this basis, various types of ornaments were created - madahi patterns, mihrab images, "chashma bulbul" (nightingale's eye), dome shapes, traditional Islamic and semi-Islamic patterns, as well as artistic images such as "kirmak" (worm-shaped lines).

The use of these patterns and decorations not only enriched the aesthetic appearance of the objects, but also strengthened their symbolic meaning, ensuring the continuity of folk art traditions.



Although Islamic gilded jewelry patterns or openwork carving were not as widely developed in the Kashkadarya region as in other major schools, local craftsmen were able to use unique and artistically impressive methods in creating decorative ornamentation. Among their technical skills were the creation of printed patterns using seals and special molds, the processing of individually stamped medallions and rosettes, the coloring of the surface of the object with enamel paints, as well as darkening with mastic.

At the same time, the practice of inlaying silver, colored glass, and turquoise stones in the decoration of objects was also widely used. Such decorative elements were usually placed on the rim of the jug, on the edges of the lid, on the neck, and at the base of the spout. The famous master from Shahrisabz, Olim, introduced the technology of artificially imitating serdolik and turquoise by using ordinary glass and placing colored paper under it (1, p. 81).

As a result of these different technical approaches, a unique local style was formed in the metal vessels created by Kashkadarya craftsmen. Despite their simple expressiveness, they demonstrated harmony, integrity, and a high level of artistic skill in the overall artistic landscape.

This type of craft usually had a narrow specialization and a strict division of labor, and the processes of creating the shape of the object and working on its decoration were usually performed by different masters. However, due to the somewhat provincial features of the Kashkadarya school, one master often took on the task of creating both the shape of the object and its decoration. Among the owners of such “universal” skills, the names of the artists from Karshin - Usto Nizomiddin (1871–1931) and Usto Sa’diy (1860–1920), as well as Jalol Sobirov from Shahrisabz (1, p. 74) deserve special attention.

One of the evidences of the high status of the Karshi school of craftsmanship is that many craftsmen from Shahrisabz moved to Karshi in search of work, and even Bukhara craftsmen recognized the superiority of Karshi craftsmen (1, p. 75). At the same time, the intricate copper products created by Kashkadarya craftsmen also had a significant impact on Bukhara craftsmanship. In particular, in Bukhara, the shapes of Karshi suntaba and tufdon, as well as some examples of lidded dastshuyliks, were adopted as copies. The lids of these dastshuyliks were specially designed and equipped with a mechanism that automatically opened when the tool was lifted (2, p. 33).

The influence of the art of the Karshi masters was also noticeable in the Bukhara school, and it was based on their experience that Bukhara craftsmen began to practice the technique of coloring the background with enamel paints, as well as the use of colored glass and turquoise stones as decorative ornaments. Even by the emir's decree, the most skilled Karshi masters were transferred to Bukhara, among whom the name of Master Sa'diy Sharaf Asad is mentioned (1, p. 74).

The uniqueness of the Karshi metalwork school is manifested, first of all, in the integrity and to a certain extent monumentality of the form of the product, in the simple and concise solution of the volume, and in the artistic style expressed in the variety of colors of the decorations. In the work of local masters, red, blue and black varnishes were widely used, to which various additional decorative elements were harmoniously added. Almost all elements of the decorations were decorated with special borders, and this principle is an important artistic feature that distinguishes Kashkadarya metalwork from other regional schools.

Among the typical examples created by the craftsmen, the wide-based but low-bottomed Kumans (Kuvshins) stood out. Such forms were significantly different from the high-



stemmed Kumans typical of Bukhara, Samarkand, Khiva and other centers. The products of the Karshi masters had a more modest but solid shape, and their basic structure was characterized by a more spherical (ball-shaped) body and a cylindrical neck.

By the first decades of the 20th century, the artistic level and quality of metalware products in the Kashkadarya region had significantly declined. The artist V. Rozvadovsky, who visited Karshi in 1915, wrote the following based on his observations: The level of workmanship of copper vessels made in Karshi is low, their patterns are rough, and their decorations are far from artistic charm. He also, describing the general picture, notes that the traditions of craftsmanship in Karshi and Bukhara have lost their vitality, and the taste and originality inherent in artistry and folk art are almost imperceptible (p. 3, 33).

This idea is also confirmed by the French researcher Le Coq, who emphasizes that the remaining traditions of local crafts were gradually squeezed out by the pressure of low-quality industrial products imported from Europe (4, p. 324).

According to the scientific research of modern Uzbek scientists O. Sukhareva and T. Abdullayev, the decline of handicrafts, especially the metalwork industry, accelerated after the socio-political events of 1917.

From the point of view of jewelry art, this craft in the Kashkadarya region is not as highly developed as in the cities of Bukhara, Samarkand, Khiva or the Fergana Valley. Jewelry made by local craftsmen is much simpler in form, and most of it was created mainly by craftsmen who were engaged in coppersmithing. For example, simple round gold jewelry called "sitora" was decorated with stamped patterns resembling flower rosettes and was sewn onto women's clothes.

One of the major centers of pottery in the oasis area was Shahrisabz, which was distinguished by the combination of yellow and brown colors typical of the traditions of the Bukhara-Samarkand school. Karshi pottery products had a completely unique style and color palette, different from the Shahrisabz school. Describing this process, the artist V. Rozvadovsky writes: "In the recent past, even in the middle of the 19th century, dishes made in Karshi were decorated with paints and had an elegant appearance. However, currently, products imported from Khujand look much more beautiful. Although there are high-quality clay reserves and economic needs for local pottery, this industry is poorly developed due to the lack of qualified craftsmen, insufficient material support, and the indifference of the beklik authorities" (3, pp. 32–33).

In the early years of the 20th century, only four pottery workshops operated in the Karshi region, two of which had open-air kilns. These workshops mainly produced household items - kuza (large water containers), kuzacha (small pipes), obdasta, bowls and other types of vessels. Polychrome pottery with decorative ornaments was created in the form of plates, vases and various ceramic jars. A blue lead-tin-based glaze was used for their glazing, and patterns were drawn with a brush. The color palette was often resolved in blue and blue-brown tones.

In some rare examples from the late 18th and early 19th centuries, alkaline glaze is observed on white engobe. For example, a wine pipe kept in the collection of the State Museum of Arts of Uzbekistan is a vivid example of this. Among the patterns of that period, "star-flower" rosettes, spring branches, and stylized images of cotton bolls occupied a special place. Ordinary household ceramic items - pipes or mashrafa-type jars - were more often covered with blue-green glaze and had simple decorative processing.



Nevertheless, the most common products of Karshi pottery are mainly unglazed earthenware, with decoration limited to incised and scratched patterns. This indicates that both simplicity and practicality were the main focus of the local craftsmen's products.

The city of Karshi occupied a special place among the major textile centers of Central Asia. By the beginning of the 20th century, 19 silk weaving workshops operated here, while in Bukhara their number reached 46. Karshi workshops mainly produced semi-silk and paper fabrics. Usually they were prepared in the form of cuts 9 arshins long and 12 vershok wide, often used for sewing robes and put up for sale in the markets. Special silk fabrics were also woven for local beks. Karshi textile products were important not only for domestic needs, but also for foreign trade, and E. Meyendorff reports in his notes that raw cotton, cotton yarn and silk fabrics were exported from Karshi at the beginning of the 19th century.

Although natural dyes were initially used in the dyeing of yarns, from the end of the 19th century, aniline dyes imported from Germany became widespread and gradually supplanted natural dyes. V. Rozvadovsky, in his observations, expressed the following opinion about the dyes used in the Karshi workshops: their excessively bright and sharp colors left an unpleasant impression due to their lack of elegance, and even the masters themselves noticed the shortcomings of aniline dyes and tried to hide them.

The colors of silk fabrics were also chosen with appropriate dyes: fabrics for robes and scarves were dyed in darker colors, considering that they could quickly lose their color. On the contrary, fabrics intended for pillowcases and curtains used relatively calm and soft colors.

The surviving examples of women's and men's clothing - chapans, shirts and other dresses - are no less impressive in terms of quality, decorative style and color harmony than the best works created in such large textile centers as the Fergana Valley and Bukhara. Adras fabrics produced in Karshi were usually used to make chapans, and their uniqueness is manifested in the harmony of large or compact patterns and rich and expressive color combinations. For example, there are red-yellow stripes on a white-blue pattern, red-blue combinations with white patterns, orange background with purple and red patterns, dark green or red background with red-blue patterns, as well as variants made in a combination of white and yellow colors.

The color combinations of Adras fabrics are unique, and each sample has its own aesthetic solution. This clearly demonstrates the creative approach of the masters - abrbands and their artistic skills. The patterns mainly use simple geometric shapes: narrow borders separating wide lines, rhombus shapes arranged in a row, amulet-like triangular patterns reminiscent of gold jewelry (a traditional symbol of protection), edged elongated drop-shaped images, stylized tulip flower shapes, and simple or stepped rhombuses reminiscent of carpet patterns.

In the Kashkadarya region, the art of embroidery is highly developed mainly in the city of Shahrisabz, which has formed the largest embroidery center in this region. In particular, large-scale suzanis, luxurious capes and blankets were created by local women on the orders of the beys and emirs' palaces. Among the main features of Shahrisabz suzanis are the large floral medallion compositions placed in the central part, the abundance and variety of flowers, as well as the special attention paid to the wide border.

In the city of Karshi, embroidery was developed on a relatively small scale, mainly for making jiyak and duppi, as well as small items - taqiya-push (a cover for a pillow) and ruijo (a



bedspread for a wedding bed). Most of these items were influenced by the Nurota embroidery school, and the patterns are dominated by plant, floral and leafy ornaments.

**Conclusion.** Today, the centuries-old artistic crafts of the Kashkadarya region are gaining new recognition in society. Folk crafts perform two functions: on the one hand, they have a practical-utilitarian value and serve to meet everyday needs, and on the other hand, they perform a symbolic-spiritual function and are manifested as signs of belonging to certain cultural traditions.

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