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Decorative Art of the Karakalpak as a Historical Source of the IX-X Centuries

Esboganova Baxit Daribaevna

Nukus State Pedagogical Institute named after Ajiniyaz

Abstract

The origins of the art of the Karakalpaks are connected with the heritage of the nomads of the Aral Sea region of the Massagets-Asiatics of the 6th-4th centuries. BC. and Sarmatian-Alans of the 6th century. BC. - IV century. AD This is confirmed by the original headdresses saukele, borik, as well as bronze ornaments reminiscent of the "animal style" - bronze anshyk and zhez bilezik, gilded plaques kyran.

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At the same time, a feature of the art of the Karakalpaks is the reflection of the centuries-old mutual influence with the urban civilization of Khorezm. Especially close to Karakalpak art is Turkmen applied art: jewelry art, carpet weaving, embroidery and musical instruments.

This is determined by the genetic and territorial proximity of the Karakalpaks and Turkmens.

The traditional crafts of the Karakalpaks developed in the area of vital household items and materials available to the semi-nomad: wool, leather, bone, wood, homespun types of fabrics made of cotton and wool, silk fiber was also used. In jewelry art, silver was mainly used, less gold, copper, tin, bronze alloy, etc.

Characterization of the content that is conveyed in patterns is one of the most difficult issues in the study of ornamental art. The symbolic nature of medieval art in general and ornamentation in particular reflects a person's symbolic awareness of his era. This symbolism is accepted as a basis for clarifying the content side of a particular ornamental material, or it is specially proved on the basis of not only the ornament, but also written, ethnographic and other sources. The roots of the symbolic essence of the ornament lead to the early fine art of Mesopotamia [1].

It is the symbolism, the semantic saturation of the ornament is considered as one of the factors that determined the wide distribution of various motifs, in particular plant ornamentation, in Eurasia in the early Middle Ages.

A feature of medieval perception was the absence of a conscious opposition between nature and culture, and ultimately man. That is why the image created by culture was perceived as an image and reflection of nature and carried the same symbolic load associated with ideas about universal, eternal and self-generating life.

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The natural environment is that natural base on which not only the economy and economy develop, but also social phenomena, features of religious beliefs, customs, rituals, as well as folk art (and in particular, ornaments and decorative arts), associated with both the material and spiritual aspects of society. Folklore, archaeological and ethnographic material, written sources reflecting various aspects of the life of human groups can help in revealing the semantics of the ornament.

According to ethnographic data, the Karakalpaks had beliefs associated with ideas about the animation of the surrounding nature and its forces, about the inextricable connection of man with them and dependence on them. Nature was spiritualized. Animals and plants are revered. Among the ancient Turks, the cults associated with the veneration of the surrounding nature had the common name "Zher-suy" ("earth-water") [2]. Another ancient Turkic cult, widespread practically throughout the entire territory of Central and East Asia, is the cult of the Sky (Tengri) and its inhabitants, the cult of heavenly bodies. The sky, the sun, the moon, the stars were deified, and the main thing was Tengri (Sky) [3].

In addition to the deification of nature, the animation of all its forces and manifestations, the Karakalpaks are characterized by animatism - one of the early forms of worldview. Inanimate nature, objects created by man are endowed with spirits and soul, life. An ornament could also give a special vitality to objects, a number of motifs of which, probably, were perceived as the materialization of spiritual ideas associated with certain beliefs and cults. The easily recognizable symbol of a readable object gave the object a sacred power.

The solar symbols, reflecting the considered heavenly cults, include a number of geometric motifs: rosettes, crosses, circles.

The cult of fire is inextricably linked with solar symbols. Many peoples attributed miraculous powers to fire. The rite of cremation among the Zoroastrians, the obligatory presence of fire in wedding rituals testify to its special significance in beliefs. Ideas about the special power of heavenly and earthly fire associated with it were also reflected in the ornament.

The sky was revered as the beginning, giving life, the father, and the earth - the mother. For the Karakalpaks, who had highly developed agriculture and cattle breeding, the veneration of the life-giving forces of Heaven and Earth, on which the well-being of people depended, also took place. The veneration of plants and trees is associated not only with the cult of the productive forces of nature, but also with local cults and with cosmogonic ideas about the "tree of life", the "world tree".

The schematization of plant palmettes sometimes makes them look like the common and most popular motif of the "ram's horn", which, for example, in ornamentation is considered a symbol of well-being and prosperity, the meaning of which is to promote an increase in the number of livestock.

In the same way, the semantic meaning did not change if the motif of the "tree of life" of complex forms was replaced by shamrocks, palmettes with the image of a pomegranate fruit.

The pomegranate is a Buddhist sign, symbolizing the beneficial effects of the forces possessed by the pomegranate tree and its fruits. From Greece to China, the fruit of the pomegranate symbolized fertility and offspring. In Central Asia, this is also a common plot, which is associated with its belonging to the attributes of the fertility goddess Anahit. The pomegranate fruit is known as an element of plant ornamentation [4].

In the art of many peoples, the image of the "tree of life" is accompanied by paired images of satellites - birds or animals. These symbols arose in the prehistoric period in the cultures of the productive economy between Mesopotamia, Egypt and Northern Europe. They are connected with the theme of

the fruitful beginning and the productive forces of nature. The image of mountain goats, roe deer, horses echoes the important role of these animals in the lives of people who are engaged not only in agriculture, but also in cattle breeding and hunting.

Cattle breeders and hunters were interested in increasing the number of these animals. It is known that for the Turks of the early Middle Ages, it was typical to compare the images of animals, beasts associated with mythological representations, with the images of people. Bogatyrs, brave warriors were credited with the distinctive properties of animals, their qualities, which a person should also possess.

An interesting zoomorphic plot associated with the "tree" is the winding of pins in the form of a bird. The preservation of the motif of a bird on a tree in the ethnography of many peoples speaks of its strong semantic basis. This motif is comprehended as a mythical solar bird on the top of a cosmic tree. Afghans, for example, believe that "this image should attract good influence, provide mercy and protection to a person in difficult times." The protector of people, protecting them and their children, was considered by both the ancient and modern Turkic-speaking peoples the celestial woman Umai, who is also associated with the cult of fertility.

The name of the goddess, according to researchers, is borrowed from Persian, where it means a bird - an inhabitant of the "world tree" [5].

The images of the horse were associated with cosmogonic ideas. Since ancient times, among many peoples, as is known, the horse was associated primarily with the solar cult. The image of horses with their inherent magical properties is characteristic. Usually these are winged horses, an image popular with many peoples. Heroes fly on them, overcoming high mountains and reaching clouds. In addition, horses may have been considered a symbol of victory.

The harness of a horse is a talisman against evil spirits for the horse. The tradition of decorating the bridle is very ancient. Many nations generally perceive patterns as a masking tool. Bridle decorations make people believe that they protect the horse and rider from any harm [6].

The main consumers of ornamented products, represented mainly by decorations for horse harness and belts, were horsemen. Their main goal was to win the battle, to stand, and this means to have a lot of necessary qualities and strong vitality. Well-known representations associated with the veneration of the forces of nature, their animation and belief in their power, as well as with the animation of inanimate objects, suggest that the ornamental decor of jewelry, especially floral, could be perceived as a means to give eternal, power that is not subject to disappearance to these ornaments, and therefore to a person.

Many zoomorphic motifs symbolized the necessary physical and moral qualities of a warrior, embodied the features of a heroic ideal. Together, they were designed to provide the life force of the rider and horse, to help him in battle and in life.

The decoration of a horse harness among the Mongolian-speaking peoples is considered a symbolic wish of good luck and longevity to the rider and the speed and tirelessness of his horse.

For Central Asia, the 6th-10th centuries is an era of turbulent events. The formation of the First Turkic Khaganate (552-630) was accompanied by the establishment of close political, economic and cultural ties with the largest states of the world - Byzantium, Sasanian Iran, China. During the period of existence of the Second Eastern Turkic Khaganate (682-745), these ties were not interrupted. The main trade route from Western Asia to China since the 7th century. passed along the southern slopes of the Tien Shan through Kashgar, Kucha and Aksu past Issyk-Kul to the Chu valley. Along this path,

Chinese silk fabrics, metal products, and lacquer penetrated East Turkestan, Semirechye, Sogd and Iran.

There was also a reverse exchange, which was perfectly reflected in mutual influences in the field of art. The role of an active intermediary in it was played by Central Asia, Sogd [7].

Plant motifs, rosettes, a number of zoomorphic plots owe their origin to Central Asian influences. Borrowed elements are adapted, rethought and enrich the original ornament. As a result, its own style is created, in which influence and borrowings are organically merged with the traditional ancient art of the people and their ideas.

The most decisive thing is not individual borrowings, but a soil ready for perception, favorable for their assimilation, inclusion in one's culture and for processing in accordance with one's own traditions.

In the era of the early Middle Ages, a new style of ornamentation spread throughout the steppe belt of Eurasia, which is characterized by the leading role of plant ornamentation, which has a mostly geometrized appearance and implies a subordinate role of zoomorphic images.

The geometric style of floral ornamentation in the art of the Turkic nomads, which has some features of an arabesque, was the stream that revolutionized the Islamic ornament, and in it from the beginning of the 9th century. the features of true arabesques appear, the most characteristic feature of ornamentation in Islamic art. The influence of the ancient Turkic culture on the culture of Sogd is known: the spread of Turkic things associated with horsemanship, the content similarity of ornamentation, a number of motifs of which were returned by the steppe tribes to the south in a transformed form, and the expressiveness of style [8].

Transitional steps from the floral ornament of the 9th-10th centuries are traced. to the geometric X-XII centuries. The process of change occurs with the main motifs of floral ornament: shamrocks, palmettes, tree-like compositions in the form of elements strung on one axis and structures with heart-shaped figures and a mental axis of symmetry.

In Mongolian times, there was also a second group of patterns in the ornament - vegetative. The main motive is a wave-like curved stem with shoots. The widespread distribution of the motif in the 13th-14th centuries is probably associated with general trends that characterize the style of art of the Mongolian era, which has similar elements among different peoples [9].

Thus, the connection of the modern folk ornament of the Karakalpaks with ancient history and the continuity of its development is undeniable.

The most common is the complex, which includes palmettes, half-palmettes, cruciform and horn-shaped motifs, climbing shoots, etc.

According to researchers, it took shape in the 9th-12th centuries. Its distribution among many peoples: Kazakhs, Uzbeks, Tajiks, Karakalpaks, Turkmens, Bashkirs, as well as the spread among a number of peoples of the technique of silver inlay on iron, is not accidental and testifies in some cases to kinship, in others — about the close contacts of the ancestors of these peoples [10].

The applied art of the Karakalpaks consisted of very ancient and diverse forms of products and technologies.

It was the core of material culture and reflected the spiritual nature of the ethnic group.

Historically, the nature of the artistic crafts of the Karakalpaks developed around the nomadic dwelling of the yurt - karauy, and especially the festive yurt for newlyweds - otau, which includes all the traditional details of decoration.

The yurt was an important indicator of the life support of the people and the development of applied arts.

The yurt was perceived as sacred - a refuge from "evil spirits - zyyan", its space was protected by the most rounded perimeter of chickens and countless amulets.

Almost all items of the yurt decoration - carpet weaving, wood carving, as well as embroidery, jewelry, musical instruments, etc. endowed with the function of a talisman. This can be judged by their names, the symbolism of the ornaments, the color and purpose of the objects themselves.

The sets of jewelry and clothes were divided into age groups: bride-girl, mother-woman, mother-mothers (youth, maturity, old age). This was due to ancient beliefs in the goddess of fertility. The crown of this division was the wedding complex.

The richness of the bride's costume was dictated by ideas about her special vulnerability (all jewelry was magical amulets) and the "eastern" look at the woman-daughter and woman-mother (an indicator of the wealth of the father and husband).

Color symbolism in wedding clothes and jewelry expressed an ancient and already forgotten idea of the Universe in the 20th century (yellow, gold - the sun; white, silver - the moon; red - fire; blue and blue - sky and water).

Jewelry was distinguished by large shapes, a discernible ornament and a light spot of silver and large carnelian against the background of the smallest rich embroidery.

However, as a result of a wide transformation of the life and way of life of the population, the demand for products of folk craftsmen was sharply reduced, strong competition for factory goods set in, fashion for European types of clothing, jewelry and household utensils gained popularity.

Today, in the world of globalization and the Internet, in the most remote corners of the planet, national cultural characteristics can be erased and we can lose, along with the traditions of material culture, the beauty of folk traditions, expressing belonging to the centuries-old history of philanthropy, mercy and hospitality.

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