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THE SEMANTICS OF SYMBOLS IN TRADITIONAL NATIONAL UZBEK CRAFTS

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ABSTRACT

The author is analysing the issue of semantics of forms and decorations used in traditional Uzbek crafts. It is shown that the patterns took place in various handicraft products were not just art forms, but also they were an important source of ethnographic source reflecting religious ideas and beliefs of the people.

INTRODUCTION

The problem of semantics of figures and adornments in Uzbek national crafts is one of the particular problems in studying some issues of not only the art, but also ethnology. Especially, in crafts, that's, in public practical art any image and colour had a certain mean. Similarly, in the symbols, images, and in the elements depicted and expressed in them the people's moral, religious and spiritual thoughts, their complex outlook about the natural events were depicted. Adornments, things, embroideries have the peculiarities saving the forgotten features of the symbols about the natural events in themselves by the time passing. These figures and semantic images (depictions) gather such a lot of information in themselves that they will have to be classified and described in time.

Geometrical and zoomorphic symbols

The art of practical adornment, that is, the engraved or painted designs depicted in the productions of the types of crafts are not considered just figures, but also one of the important ethnographic sources. These designs are connected with the religious beliefs and imaginations of the nation. According to their features the engraved or painted designs are divided into the following types: geometrical, in the form of plants, zoomorphic, anthropomorphic designs (Gyul E, 2005).

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In the art of nomadic people ornomorphic themes were also widespread (Bogoslovskaya I. 2009). Among them the zoomorphic designs include real or imaginary animals' pictures (such kind of designs are usually called "wild style"). The zoomorphic designs can be often met especially on the products of textile and embroidering. In the compositions of jewelry-making things the anthropomorphic, zoomorphic and plantlike designs were depicted. On the carpets and rugs of Central Asia the designs were mainly based on imaginations, especially, plantlike, geometric, zoomorphic designs: tiger and camel footprints, dog's tail, apple flowers, grape stalks, scorpion, camel's neck, shield and curative plants were depicted (Dudin, 1928). The most used among them are the signs horns. In the culture of Turkic nomadic people the tradition of portraying the animals has existed from the ancient times (Moshkova. 1970). On the carpets, cloth and clothes of Sugd the images of cottonflowers in the middle of the round pearls can be often met (Suyunova, 2012). Reflecting the particular local features, these designs formed strong geometric figures. Red colour is the superior on such carpets and rugs with various images. Besides, the local features of these regions are that the geometric figures or images were depicted strongly. Especially, different designs, zoomorphic pictures were depicted on the hand-knitted carpets in Uzbekistan, and they expressed certain meanings. Water, horse, bird, flowers and geometric figures symbolize good fortune and happiness, blessings, bright future, friendship, sustenance (Nizomov, Nizomova, 2003). As the time passed the original symbolic essence of the figures changed, began to

be considered as a beautiful design (Faxretdinova, 1988). In this place one of the designs widely spread in the nomadic people is the rhombic crucifix design which is decorated with horns. The popularity of these designs shows their genetically closeness (Vaynshteyn, 1991). This style later spread widely in the settled-agricultural communities too. The figure rhomb was considered as the symbol of “productivity” and having many children from the ancient Eneolithic Age. Our ancestors considered it as the symbol of Mother Nature, Eve (Esbergenov, 1989). On the household things of Central Asian people the designs like ram’s horn are often met. Such kind of designs were called “Qochqorak” in the local settled and nomadic people of Central Asia, “Qayqalak” among Kyrgyz living in Ferghana valley, “Muyiz” among the Uzbeks of Nurota region, and “Choch buyiz” among Turkmen. This design was composed of two bended spirals and placed in the central part of the composition (Suxareva, 1983).

The same kinds of designs are used on the carpets and felts of the people who deal with livestock breeding and raising in the districts of Guzor and Dekhqonobod even now. People thought that animals were the protector of their houses and had a divine power bringing them good fortune. They regarded horse, cow, dog, ox, ram, camel as sacred animals, even goat and sheep were regarded as the animals connected with heavenly powers (Karmisheva, 1955). The unjoined circle reminding of “horseshoe” on the embroideries are connected with shamanistic thoughts too (Bogoslovskaya, 2008). Generally, according to the ancient religious thoughts, a sheep was regarded as the animal protecting against demons and jinns (Snesev, 1969). The image of ram’s horns functioned to protect “evil” forces. Sometimes they were made of woods and sewn on the caps of boys and girls. Also on the surface of tandoor ovens the pattern picture of ram’s horn was drawn. It can be seen that not the animal itself, but also its certain part of body turned out to be a means of protection (IMKU, 1961). Also on the skullcaps made by the craftsmen of Boysun district in Surkhandarya we can see the ram’s horns. This is also considered to be a magic power protecting the human from any kind of misfortunes (Field notes, 2011). In Qashkadarya too the suzanis (a type of decorative wall hanging) which designed with ram’s horns were hung on the walls of the room or bed curtains of young married couples. The reason why hanging them was to protect the young couples from different evils (Field notes, 2010).

Besides, hanging these products of practical crafts served as decoration. And even now this tradition remained among the people of Qashkadarya villages as the symbol of prosperity. Besides, depicting the sheep’s head has been used in the folk art from the ancient times. The picture of ram’s or sheep’s head (it is called “tuchok” in Turkmen) “this design looks like as if a man stands keeping his arms half circled down his waist and it is considered to be a symbol of the beginning of manhood” (Kadisheva, 2013) and also, it means productivity and continuation of generations (Kate Fitz Gibbon and Andrew Hale, 2007). Generally, among the tribes who deal with livestock the divine forces were traditionally recognized as a totem animal or bird. Therefore, the picture of a ram’s horn or a bird’s nail could be often met in the niched portals of their house, and on the carpets as well. The symbolic signs of the totem animals indicate their divine power conditionally (Gyul, 2001). Especially, these traditional themes in the designs on Kashkadian carpets are more connected with concepts of contentedness and good fortune. The reason why

depicting such traditions remained more among the livestock breeders indicates that they knew the organic structure, anatomy of the animals very well according to their household activity. On the Arabic carpets of Qashkadarya the zoomorphic designs are not used as a decoration. In the culture of nomadic Turkish people the tradition of depicting the animals has existed from the ancient times (Moshkova, 1970). In the culture of Surkhandariya Qungrats (Qungrat was the Uzbek tribe in the past) the zoomorphic motives reflected, and among them “a ram’s horn”, “frog orchid” designs have a distinct place. Also, they have triangle, rhombic, meandr figures, whirlwind signs, celestial bodies, various flower designs (Binafsha Nodir, 2013). Especially, the carpets of Qungirat consist of geometric figures too, and they are in rhombic, meandr themes, W and S- like signs, stella octangulas, triangle shapes, celestial and mystic symbols are crucifix, square in shape, and the group of zoomorphic designs composed of the pictures of birds, wild and domestic animals. In these designs only some parts of the animals such as horns, soles, nails, eyes are depicted. In the oasis these designs are called ram’s horn or kuchkorak, a camel neck, a dog track, a partridge chest, frog orchid, ox eyes (Xakimov, Gyul, 2006).

On the carpets of the oasis the W like designs – partridge’s chest and S like designs – curls or ram’s horn can be met. Geometric figures are called bride’s eyebrow, the square grating-like organs (parts) are called erganak (obstacle, the yurt door), the figures of horns in a row are called tugdonagul, black and white lined small talisman (amulet), chessboard-like designs are called dog’s track. Besides that, on the carpets of Qungrats of Surkhan oasis triangular, stair-like or rhombic geometric figures can also be met. The niches depicted on the bald (barren) carpets are often knitted with kuchkorak designs, they are sometimes in the shape of simple stairs or curlicue, and surrounded by hexagon and polygon. They are usually situated in one, two or several lines in the middle of the carpets. Since ancient times the picture of the moon and the stars were depicted on the mooncarpets, and they express the elderly women’s surprise at the Moon and stars and their feelings of belief for them. Later different designs and figures were depicted on these carpets and began to lose their value. These mooncarpets, which consist of the pictures of the moon and stars knitted on the surface and coloured with natural paints are very rarely made nowadays, and their ancient look remained a little (Personal observation, 2008-2013). The designs of Qungrats carpet weaving shows their relation (belonging) to the culture of livestock breeding people. Such kind of geometric and animals-like complex characterizes the practical art of Qungrat group (Gyul, 2005).

If we look attentively at the Qungrat carpets, especially, at the designs of gajari carpets, we can see how Qungrat group’s intellectual ability is high and deep. Together with classical fine drawings, high sense, skill and talent, intellectual depth and intelligence find their reflection in these designs. Geometric figures, mathematical calculations, the beauty and amazements of animal and plant world, geographical pictures, the art of drawing are embodied in different ancient classical designs. Carpet weaver women made every design in a symbolic meaning expressing their thoughts and dreams. When it was drought, expecting the rain, they made designs depicting the rain drops. In the war times they looked forward to their brothers, fathers or husbands who went to the war and made designs depicting joined crosses. Or they made spiral designs like ram’s horn (Field notes, 2005). They also thought

of designs like simple herbs and depicted them on the carpets they were knitting. In such kind of designs we can see the process of step by step developing of human's mind. So, on the national carpets the depiction of the expression of astonishment from the beauty of the nature, which has been the initial inspiration of the creator since the ancient time, is not for nothing, of course. In the embroidering of Qungrat the embroidered designs such as a ram's horn, the image of three clawed double feet, and also a snake track, a dog track, a horse hoof, a small amulet, the picture of plants and flowers, which are also common to another type of practical art, can be often met (Fitz Gibbon K., Hale, 2007).

The S-like designs are often met on the paranjis of the women in Chirokchi district and it is the emblem indicating which tribe the wearer belongs to (Field notes, 2011). The folk crafts includes in itself the national characteristics of each nation's social life developed over the centuries. On the carvings and earthenwares found in the historical archeological relics, metal and golden adornments, various textiles and embroideries, coins and in the attractive symbols depicted on the wall arts the whole social life (in the ceremonies held by the participation of some people and different animals and on the panels describing life) is described. The embroideries unique to the Qungrat tribe in the southern oases of Uzbekistan are also zoomorphic, especially, birds are described. Seamstresses call these pictures peacock designs (Nosirova, 2008). Draftsmen adapted the geometric figures, plant and animal pictures on the designs of skullcaps and embroideries. Besides that skullcaps were also made from pieces of cloth, velvet, flowery and nonflowery cloths. And it depended on the skills, knowledge and outlook of the skullcap maker women (Tursunaliev, 1991). In the embroidering of Laqays (Laqay was the Uzbek tribe in the past) symbols and signs are described, solar and astral motifs take the leading place. Most of the embroideries describe circle designs as the symbol of the Sun or Moon in the centre (Nazarov, 2007).

In embroidering of Turkic people depicting the sun has historical-traditional importance, and it has been passing from generation to generation as the symbol of hopes and dreams, ethnohistoric value. In practical art depicting the pictures of the sun, moon and stars is particular to the Turkic people from the ancient time and it is proven by a number of archeological findings. The transformational form of these traditions, which embraces the positive sides of each historical period and culture, is remaining. As a bright apotheosis of crafts, in embroidering esthetic world as well as religious and worldly imaginations firmly took their place. As an art of practical decoration embroidering is a form of hand work for women knitting and sewing flowers and designs skillfully with needles and hooked awls. Also, different figures, celestial bodies, fruits and flowers, animals found their reflections in embroideries. According to the specialists' acknowledgements, embroidering began from the ancient times when people wore clothes made from animal skins, and formed in the result of social-historical development. The archeological, ethnographic relics found in the territory of Uzbekistan give full information about totemism at that time. For example, the snake was a symbol of commencement of goodness and cruelty (Sirojiddinov, 2008). It was also considered to be a guardian of wealth and treasure, a defender of home and family. The pare pictures of snakes remained on the rocks and different things made from metal and stone. Twisted silver bracelets were found a lot. The first form of bracelets was in the shape two

snakes clambered up and faced to each other. The pair pictures of snakes have their meaning in art, may be they indicate that the beginning of human life began with Man and Woman. Perhaps, these silver bracelets were the devices protecting women and children from evil eyes. An amulet of two snakes in the shape of spiral horseshoe made of stone is kept in the Uzbekistan History and Culture museum. Every precious stone used in jewelry making had their own peculiarities (Almeeva, 2002). For the shape and decoration of the jewelry things different styles such as *islیمی* (plant-like), *geometric*, *celestial bodies* were taken as a basis. The goldsmiths and jewelers in Surkhandarya region use cowrie shells, which is a traditional symbol in hapamat jewels, and among them there are shells called "jilan bosh" and it is connected with the tradition of Central Asian people that in the past they believed the snakes to be sacred (Binafsha Nodir, 2009). Even nowadays in Surkhandarya they knit snakes on the back of children's coats with an intention against evil eyes, lust and evil powers (Field notes, 2011).

In the ancient art of Uzbekistan bull's, gazelle's images were widely used, and they were the symbols of nature and space powers. The image of a lion was widely spread as a symbol of power and courage. Since the ancient time some birds have been sacred. The rooster, the peacock and the pheasant were regarded as "The birds of the sun". The image of eagle expressed symbolized power and government, the pheasant, the peacock and the pigeon symbolized the bird of happiness. A fabulous bird Anqo (another name is Humo), a mythical bird which bestows good fortune, can be met in the practical art of Turkish people in XI century. It also shows the evidence to our opinion above. It was a favorite symbol of the Turkish people that can protect their families, and symbolized the creator woman being and the goddess of good profit. Our ancestors considered the birds to be sacred and regarded them as "the creature of the sun", they believed the birds to be the symbol of good harvest. During the period up to Islam women in Central Asia worn the feathers and claws of birds on their jewelry. It was believed that they could give a chance of connecting with divine powers. It should be mentioned that the bird's feather was only worn on the hair safety pins and jewelries. A bunch of feather was the best decoration for head. It shows that ancient people had an intention to look like birds in appearance. This phenomenon is closely connected with the ancient religious belief of people (Borozna, 1975).

According to L.Rempel "A bird is a particular image or symbol that people could feel the univers and nature. In it reflects people's mental and spiritual world, feelings and outlooks. For every period of time it has a special artistic form" (Rempel, 1987). According to people's belief, after a man passes away, a bird takes away his spirit into the heaven on its wings. By taking the spirit of the dead away into the sky the birds bring the sprit of the future children from the heaven. According to the nomadic and semi-nomadic people's belief, birds have the power that can protect from evil spirits and bring goodness, prosperity as well. That's why they expressed their different good willings in the symbol of birds. In the practical-ornamental art of Karakalpak geometric (cosmogonic), zoomorphic, plant-like, anthropomorphic, especially, zoomorphic images were embodied (Bogoslovskaya, 2009). As L.I.Rempel mentioned, in the practical art of Central Asia the image of frog was used to to call rain, and as a symbol of happiness and prosperity (Rempel, 1987).

Anthromorphic and mixed symbols

In the Uzbek embroidering sometimes anthropomorphic designs, which reminded man and woman, can also be seen. A woman is a symbol of the Earth, a man and a woman symbolize the union of the Sky and the Earth, the two worlds being united, a family appears (Bogoslovskaya, 2008). These designs are the hints for the two young couples live happy and friendly, and have a child (Field notes, 2010). Today in all the parts of Uzbekistan we can see such kind of simple trinkets. They are worn by the women in all ages as a beautiful ornament. Khapamat (women's chest ornament made of strands of necklaces) and gulbond (women's ornament which was made to look like a flowerstalk) trinkets made by goldsmiths of Surkhan oasis were mainly worn by married women. Because these trinkets were worn on the chest and neck, bead ornaments protect them from different evil powers and evil eyes. They were believed to protect their health in order to continue their generation. These trinkets were made by knitting different colourful threads with beads. Xapamat was taken from Tajik words "xaфа" (sad) and "банд" (band), which means diminishing grief and distress (Binafsha Nodir, 2009). The triangle divine Umay is linked with the name of a mother. In the imagination of ancient Turkic people this deity had a distinct place among the patron spirits, She is a symbol of life, birth, marriage, death, children, patron of mothers and the god of productivity (good harvest).

Triangle, leaf, moon, comb, scissors and spears are the symbol of Mother Umay. Such kind of ornaments are linked with the ancient Turkic Mother Goddess Umay, one of the main icons in the religious belief and the daughter of earth. Mother Umay is a patron of all pregnant women and babies as well. The figure of romb is also a symbol of good harvest (Binafsha Nodir, 2009). In the ornaments 12 hooked rombs were considered to be an emblem. The 12 hook on the emblem represent 12 years, in the calendar of ancient Turkish people not only days, months, but also 12 years of animal cycle were taken into account. That's why each year was named after a certain animal name (Kerimov, 1983). One of the most ancient images used in jewelry making is human hands and head. Certainly, in the ancient time people thought the human hands to be the fundamentals of working ability of a man. The amulets in the shape of hands were called "the hands of Mary" in Christians, "the hands of Bibi Fatima" in Muslims, "the hands of Ishtar" in Babylons, and "the hands of Isida" in ancient Egyptians. As D.Fakhretdinov mentioned, "because the image of head represented in the trinkets looked like a bud, it was believed to be the symbol of the beginning of life, and flourishing of the nature. The images of caelestial bodies such as Sun and stars in the trinkets and jewelries are the symbols of the powers of nature which give people fruit (Fakhretdinova, 1988)".

Like in other countries in Central Asia too the sun was imagined in the shape of a ball or a circle and the images of the ball, the circle, the stars and other caelestial bodies were portrayed side by side. Often, the shape of circle and ball is portrayed in one place together with the shape of romb and a bunch of leaf. In the past in embroidering of nomadic tribes the stars and the sun were the essential themes. It required them to know the map better and to find a right way looking at the stars during the seasonal movements (Gyul, 2012). In the embroidering of all the nations of Central Asia the symbols of the Sun and stras can be seen, it seems as if the sky took them

under its protection. On the Arabic carpets of Qashkadarya many caelestial bodies like moon, stars were shown. It connects with that Arabian believed caelestial bodies up to Islam. It should be mentioned in its turn that such kind of images particularly can be met in each attributes of Shamans and they have special symbolic meanings. According to it, on the drums of shamans the pictures related to "model of the world" in their imagination: that's , the pictures of spirits are portrayed (Smolyak, 1972). Because, one of the main aims of shamanistic practice was health care and treating the sick people and it prepared the to go through the trans position. Especially, nanay people who believed shamanism described heaven spirits and gods in the appearance of a duck, snake and other appearances on papers and cloths (Smolyak, 1972).

Plant-like ornaments are mainly widely used in architecture, pottery making, embroidering and carpet weaving. In Qashkadarya on wallets, bo'g'joma (a large square piece of material for wrapping clothes and material), camisole, chopon, duppi (skullcap) and other things made by women different ornamental embroideries which have certain meanings are knitted. For example, pepper protects from evil eyes, flowers are the symbols of love and life, pomegranate is believed to be a symbol of sustenance (Field notes, 2007). Especially, the symbol of pomegranate has been studied much in scientific research works. This symbol is connected with the culture of farming in the region and some customs and traditions related to it. Pomegranate is a symbol of fruitfulness. The god of fruitfulness (good harvest) Anakhita was described holding a branch of pomegranate in her hand. The Chinese also paid a distinct attention to the pomegranate. The pomegranate was one of the symbols of male generation (many crops mean many children, many sons; a crop and children were represented by one hieroglyph). That's why it was necessary to be a hair safety-pin with an image of pomegranate in the trousseau of a bride in the weddings (Faxretdinova, 1988). In iroqi embroideries of Shakhrisabz the ornament of pomegranate was knitted in several appearances and it was knitted on the cloth called canvas*. For example, pomegranate was a symbol of fruitfulness, good harvest, pepper was the protector from evil eyes and other different badness, harm, almond symbolized sustenance, blossomed flowers represented love, a bunch of bushy flowers represented flourishing life, sometimes a small jug, birds, trees represented the life-style (Field notes, 2009).

On the embroideries especially plant-like designs, in addition to them the pictures of birds, moon, sun, flowers, complex combinational designs, besides that, in order to protect from evil eyes the pictures of knives and swords were also represented. Therefore, people hang the embroideries in their houses for the protection from evil eyes and also these embroideries play the role of protection or defence. In ancient Iran it became traditional to represent the images of trees, leaves on the headgears too. A leaf was the symbol of life and awakening of nature from the ancient time (Luneeva, 2005).

In the national Uzbek suzanis (a type of decorative wall hanging), zardevors (a kind of embroidered wall hanging) the tulips, pairs of birds, blossomed stalks gave a particular local semantic imagination. Especially, such kind of suzanis, wall hangings were hung on the walls of young new married couples with good intentions. The crescent depicted in the

* Canvas was called "bo'ronboy" in the ancient , it was a special checkered cloth.

articles of crafts represents the connection with animals world and the sun represents the connection with earth, plants and human world. Besides, in these semantic symbols people's ideology, great morality, old traditions, customs, religious and material outlook, life - style, find their reflection and are based on the eternal inheritance of the past ancestors. Especially, zoomorphic designs are connected with the the religious belief of ancient people and have symbolic meanings.

Although the meanings of many designs, ornaments were forgotten at the beginning of XX century, some parts of them are still used as the symbol of protection from evils. Besides that, the embroideries of Tashkent with their colours like red, dark-red, and light-red are different from the other local provinces (Abdullaev, 1976). There are two types of embroideries in Tashkent: palak (wall hanging) and gulko'ra (a type of embroidered wall hanging). The word palak is an Arabic word, it means the heavens (the sky) (Sukhareva, 2006). Tashkent palak embroidery were made from silk or thread, the types such as "oy palak", "tog'ora palak", "yulduz palak" were enriched with the pictures of celestial bodies. Bukhara embroideries were designed with flowered bushes and round designs on a white cloth, Nurota embroideries took great places in Central Asia with their *islamiy* (plant-like) designs. Surkhondaryo embroideries are different with their dark red or yellow sateen cloth designed with round circles places one after the other surrounded by bushes, and their bright colours. In pottery-making of Qashkadaryo high relief sculpted designs on unpainted clay things were wide spread. They were especially zoomorphic, snake-like designs, a woman's breast and a ram's horn designs. It should be mentioned that for developing the pottery-making a distinct spotted designs on painted clay began to be used. Geometrical, styled plant-like epigraphic motives also developed (Pugachenkova, 1981).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the designs on the articles of crafts show the connection between the moral life particular to all the layers of the periods of time and society. They will remain as an eternal source which shows the Islamic traditions and customs, and national cultural-historical process. Today we can see the reflection of such semantic symbols in all the spheres of Uzbek crafts. It is shown that the patterns took place in various handicraft products were not just art forms, but also they were an important source of ethnographic source reflecting religious ideas and beliefs of the people.

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