

MEDIEVAL KHOREZM CRAFTSMANSHIP: HISTORY OF STUDY AND RESEARCH PROSPECTS

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Abstract

The study of medieval Khorezm craftsmanship explores the rich history of artistic and artisanal traditions in the Khorezm region, highlighting its cultural and economic significance. Research in this field has evolved over time, with scholars examining archaeological findings, historical texts, and preserved artifacts to understand the techniques, materials, and socio-cultural contexts of craftsmanship. Key areas of focus include pottery, metalwork, textiles, and architecture, which reflect the region's unique blend of local and foreign influences. Despite significant progress, many aspects of Khorezm's craftsmanship remain underexplored, offering promising avenues for future research. This article reviews the history of studies on Khorezm craftsmanship and outlines potential directions for further investigation.

Keywords: Khorezm, craftsmanship, medieval, archaeology, pottery, metalwork, textiles, architecture, cultural history, research prospects.

Introduction

Khorezm of the Middle Ages was one of the centers of civilization in the Eastern world, where trade, handicrafts and cultural life flourished. The fertile soil of the oasis led to the development of specialization processes of production in many sectors of the economy due to the productive labor of the local population.. However, the medieval economic production relations of Khorezm, handicrafts and their types of products, sources of raw materials, which were important in the economic and cultural life, have not yet been fully studied as an object of special scientific research in archeological, historiographical and ethnographic studies. Only short, limited, and repetitive general information are found in medieval Arabic-Persian sources, in the works of Russian ambassadors, travelers and researchers, as well as in historiography, ethnography of the XVIII-XIX centuries about the types, products, workshops, and sources of raw materials of Khorezm handicraft. The main task of the research study is to create a historical plate, combining this information on the basis of scientific analysis. It is expedient to divide the written sources reflecting the history of Khorezm handicraft in the Middle Ages into separate groups depending on the characteristics of the geographical area or data.

Methodology

The great state of Khorezmshahs was established in the first stage of the glorious Middle Ages, i.e. in the IX-XIII centuries, after long political struggles in Khorezm, as in other

regions of Central Asia. Mamun ibn Muhammad (992-997), Ali ibn Mamun (997-999), Mamun ibn Mamun (999-1017), and later Khorezmshah-Anushtegin (1097-1231) were among the representatives of the dynasties who were awarded the title of Khorezmshah. can be cited. Forming the 'Great Khorezmshah Empire', the borders of the Khorezmshah state stretched from Iraq in the west to India in the east, from the shores of the Mangyshlak and Aral Seas in the north to the shores of the Indian Ocean in the south at that period. The history of the empire has been covered on the basis of historiography in line with the traditions of historical self-awareness in medieval Muslim society. Under-research written Arabic-Persian sources provide information on the administrative and geographical location of the ancient oasis, historical and toponymic sites of the oasis, types and products of handicrafts, trade relations, cultural life, distribution of cultural crops, descriptions of minerals and other information. Brief but clear interesting information about the history of Khorezm crafts was provided by Ibn Rusta (903-913), one of the Arabic-Persian authors, in his boo 'Kitab al-Alaq al-Nafisa' (The Precious Values), Al-Istahri (930-933) in "The Book of Masalik wa-l-ul Mamalik" ("The Book of the Ways to the Countries"), Al-Muqaddas (985-1000) in "Ahsan-at-taqasim fi ma'rifat al-aqalim" ("The Best Guide to the Study of Climate"), in a Persian-Tajik geographical work "Khudud al-Alam" (982-983) by an unknown author and others. In particular, al-Muqaddas wrote in his historical work that Khorezm exported copper, daggers and armor, as well as locks and bows and arrows, which could be pulled only by strong people to Bulgaria as a foreign trade. [MITT, 1939, p.202]. So, based on the above written source, it is possible to understand that Khorezm exported the military weapons, saddles, horseshoes in a foreign trade at the beginning of the 13th century.

Хоразм қўшини қўшни давлатларни забт этиш давомида ҳам янги турдаги замонавий қуролларга эга бўлиб борган. The historical value of 'Sirat as Sultan Jalaladdin Mankburni' by Muhammad al-Nasavi, who lived in the 13th century, is that in addition to the usual weapons, such as swords, spears, bows and arrowheads, made by Khorezm's specialized gunsmiths, interesting information is given about the use of military vehicles such as catapults, dabbabat (wall piercers), tir-charkh (self-propelled guns), mataris, salalim, etc.[MITT, 1939, 473, 475]. The Khorezm army also acquired new types of modern weapons during the conquest of neighboring countries.

The authors of the Eastern written sources provided a brief but factual information about the settlements of the Khorezm oasis, i.e. the cities and villages, people's occupations, the scale of growth of cultural crops in the area, the source of raw materials for handicrafts, the location of minerals. It is known from history that the agriculture of the region and its development have played a key role in the economic life of the region since ancient times. For this reason, some cities of Khorezm have become centers of diversified production. Al-Muqaddas wrote the followings about it: "Mizdahkan is a large city, surrounded by 12,000 rustaks (cultivated villages), Dargan, the second large city of Khorezm after Gurjonia, where 500 vineyards stretch along the river for 2 farsakhs (about 11.2 km), raisins are exported; There are arable lands and gardens in about 2 farsakhs away used by the people of the city between the city (Dargan) and the Jeyhan River." This is important that this information is

confirmed in other historical and geographical sources also. [MITT,1939,419 6]. Therefore, it is thought that the outer, large territory (rabods) of the medieval Khorezm city structure was surrounded with the vast area of fields with cultural crops. [MITT. 1939, 188 b]. Another historian and traveler, Yaqut al-Hamawi (1179-1229), in his 'Mujam ul Buldon', wrote that he had visited Khorezm (1219-1220) "this prosperous country, with its villages connected to each other", and states that there was sericulture by claiming that "most of the trees are mulberry and poplar... if the poplar is used for building, mulberry is food for silkworms kept" [MITT, 1939,419 b]. This opinion of the author is proved by the notarized document stamped in Old Crimea in 1298-1299, when the raw silk fibers called "carusmizna" and "organinum" from Khorezm were sent to Italy by water by Genoese traders [Bratianu, 1937]. The historical evidence mentioned above has been confirmed by archaeological research. Archaeological investigations have revealed that the traces of vineyards, orchards and other agricultural cultures belonging to medieval urban and rural areas. In particular, traces of agricultural lands were found and studied around Shoxsanam fortress 800 ha, Zamakhshar 500 ha, Kavatkala 40 ha, Big Forty-forty fortress 20 ha. Also, 708-709 archeo-topographic points were discovered on the banks of the Daryalikool and vineyards in the rural fortresses of Buron 1, Qum-kala, and Tuzkir villages. Traces of the above mentioned agricultural culture belong to the beginning of X-XIII centuries and XIII-XIV centuries [Kdyrniyazov, 1999 a, 82-83p: 1999 b, 102 p]. It confirms the conclusion of Zakaria al-Qazvini (1203-1283), one of the representatives of the Persian historiographical literature, that "At that time the great city is connected with vineyards, orchards and fields" [Buniyatov, 1986, 101 p]. Qazvini's writings confirm the facts about Khorezm found in the works of Arab authors, such as al-Maqdisi and Yaqut al-Khamavi.

Al-Qurashi, one of the authors of the work belonging to the 13th century, noted that "At that time, there were about 50 main types of specialized handicrafts in the capital of Khorezm. The people of Urgench were skilled craftsmen especially the blacksmiths and carpenters were the best among their contemporaries." [Buniyatov, 1986, p.102]

An Nuwayri, ibn Abda-Zahr, one of the Arab authors of the XIII-XIV centuries, noted that gold-plated saddles and quilts from rare products were exported from Khorezm (to Egypt) and highly valued abroad. According to Muhammad ibn Mansur, Abdul Messiah (author Ione Shawteli) and Shahabaddin al-Umari (13th-14th centuries) wrote that the turquoise, serdolic stone and other minerals were exported from Khorezm to Nish-bur, Khazan and Kerman. [Book, 1928, 10 p]. Indeed, geological surveys and mining in the Sultan Uveys mountain ranges revealed that the centers of medieval craft turquoise, pieces of serdolic, rings, tumor-stones and raw materials made by Khorezm jeweler craftsmen were found in Jampik-kala fortress and Mizdakhkan [Yusupov, Manylov, 1968, 62 p: Manylov, Kdyrniyazov, 1984, 77 p].

The Arab authors al-Muqaddas and Shahabaddin al-Umari (1301-1349) wrote that the millstones and cauldrons were made in the village of Barategin and the foothill-city (Jampik fortress) in Khorezm. In particular, al-Umari noted that "The stone-cauldrons made in Khorezm may be used for sixty years" [SMIZO, 1884,242 p]. This stone is talc chlorite, the reserves of which have been identified in the Sultan Uveys mountain ranges. The lamps,

laddles, pans, teapots, cauldrons and other items made from it are found in many medieval monuments in Khorezm.

Results

The medieval authors provide valuable and interesting information in their works about the production of textile as the carpets, quilts, "mulham" sheets, chopon (an outfit as a robe), processed leathers ("kimuxt") made in Khorezm handicraft. In particular, Abdurashid al-Bakuvi (XIV-XV centuries) wrote in his book "Kitab talkhis al asar and adjayb al-malik al-kaxhar" about the "goldsmiths" of Gurganj [Bakuvi, 1971, 91 p].

According to written sources, another important branch of medieval Khorezmian handicraft was leather processing. Ibn Khawkal (second half of the tenth century) states in his book "Kitab al masolik wa-l mamolik" that "the red, dark-red and black lamb skins are sold to abroad for dinars, beans and dirhams from Turkestan and Khorezm region" [MITT, 1939, 181 p]. The author of 'Hudud al-Alam' also writes that karakul skins are produced in Kardar (Kerder). That "beautiful" leather product is still known in Khorezm as "Kamari". Along with the products produced in Khorezm, furs imported from Eastern Europe (Bulgar, Golden Horde) (sobol-suvsar family, gray squirrel, fox, marmot, daytime), kimuxt (reprocessed horses skin) and white birch bark were reprocessed and sold in Eastern countries. According to Professor Yu.A. Yakubovsky, white birch bark was brought to Khorezm from Volga Bulgaria or Russian regions and used for leather processing [Grekov, Yakubovsky, 1950, 151 p]. White birch saplings were discovered during archeological investigations at the monuments of Ayota, Shemaha Qala, Old Urgench, Mizdahkan and Jampiqqala.

The great medieval commander and statesman Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur's "Boburnoma", which complements the historical works dedicated to the Timurid period, contains the following information about the Khorezm warriors: "It is necessary to acknowledge the military skills of the the youth of Khorezm, the skilled Khorezmian archers could pierce the armor and shields. They are so skillful that they never fail to shoot and pierce the shield and armor even two armors"[Bobur,1993, p.171] This information confirms the statement of Anthony Jenkinson, a representative of the Moscow-London company in Kohna- Urgench in 1558, that "the bows, arrows(paykon), swords and spears and other weapons are made in the ancient traditional style in Khorezm" [Angliyskie puteshestvenniki, 1938, p. 178].

Conclusion

There is also some information about metal ore deposits and processing facilities in the oasis in the works of Russian travelers and ambassadors of the new period (XVIII-XIX centuries). However, as in the other Central Asian regions, the sources of the economy in Khorezm, such as mines, raw materials, agricultural products were studied from the point of view of colonialism. This is due to the growing interest in mineral resources in the XVIII-XIX centuries caused by the "industrial revolution" in the developed countries of Europe. Russian state interest in information about mineral resources such as gold, silver, copper and iron has

reached a new level. Many scientific expeditions and embassy trips to Central Asia were organized as a result of Russia's "occupation policy" in the East, in the XVIII-XIX centuries. The main purpose of these expeditions was to collect information about the geographical and geopolitical location, territorial structure and subsoil resources of the khanates.

Based on medieval written sources, it can be concluded that the development of various branches of handicrafts in the Khorezm oasis shows that this ancient land was one of the most economically developed regions of Central Asia.

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