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THE ART OF THE NORTHERN REGIONS OF CENTRAL ASIA*

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Contents

The overall cultural situation

Starting in the early twentieth century, the appearance of new, European art forms, including easel and monumental painting, sculpture, drawing, theatre, ballet, symphonic music,

* See Maps 1 and 2

cinema and television, radically changed the art, culture and mindset of the peoples living in the region. At the same time, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries traditional art forms continued to flourish, among them artistic handicrafts, oral poetry, traditional popular musical genres and the performing arts. The history of traditional artistic handicrafts and European fine-art forms in the region during this period can be divided theoretically into three historical phases, as described below.

LATE NINETEENTH AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURIES

With the tsarist conquest of Turkistan, the area became the focus of strategic assimilation and was subject to ethnographic study. In Turkistan, artistic handicrafts underwent natural and intensive development and local artisans were able to satisfy fully the demands of the local population for household goods and religious paraphernalia. As with colonial architecture, new fine-art forms in the area begin to infiltrate the region's major cities, creating in the process small local centres where European aesthetic forms were reinterpreted.

FROM THE 1920S TO THE 1980S

This period saw the creation of national republics and their absorption into the unitary state of the USSR, whose policies radically altered the development of popular arts and crafts. Small-scale and cottage production, which hitherto had formed a unique area in the manufacture of traditional artistic crafts, now gradually began to die out. The dynamics by which the style of fine art developed were determined by socio-political and ideological factors.

FROM THE 1990S ONWARDS

During the 1990s the former Soviet republics of the region obtained national independence and pursued an independent policy in all areas of public life, including that of artistic culture. A new, highly reverential attitude to national history and to the cultural heritage encouraged the development of a new approach to national culture and art. Traditional festivities, customs and rituals, as well as a number of forgotten trades and crafts, began to enjoy a renaissance.

Fine art now entered a period of freedom. Artists were free to express themselves creatively and were liberated from state censorship and the need to keep within the restrictive boundaries of socialist realism. There was an atmosphere of stylistic pluralism, which also gave rise to a new avant garde, particularly in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

Pottery

In the nineteenth century in what is today Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and part of Turkmenistan (Charju) there emerged the main schools and centres of what was to become Central Asia's ceramics industry, a sector with traditions that reach back centuries. These were: the central or Bukhara–Samarkand school with centres in Tashkent, Samarkand, Urgut, Bukhara, Gijduvan, Shahr-i Sabz, Kitab, Kattakurgan and Denau; the north-eastern or Ferghana school with centres in Rishtan, Gurumsaray, Khujand, Chorku and Isfar; and the south-western or Khwarazm school centred in Urgench, Khiva and the towns of Madyr and Kattabag. While developing in accordance with more general trends in the region, the pottery produced in each centre retained strong localized features.

Pottery of the Ferghana and Khwarazm schools is characterized by a colour scheme that employs cold dark blue, white and light blue. This similarity of colour scheme is due to common techniques used in application: the use of alkaline, or *ishkor*, glazes that lend a special dark- and light-blue tinge to the painting they cover. In all other respects, however – the shape of the wares, and the content and treatment of ornamentation – the pottery of these two schools is essentially different. Khwarazm is the only area where one can find distinctive large dishes with vertically raised sides known as *badiya*s.

Pottery in the north-eastern and eastern regions of Central Asia is more diverse in terms of the form and content of the decorative motifs it employs. The range of wares includes large and medium-sized chalices, large dishes, small jugs, vessels of various shapes for dairy products, mugs, wash-bowls and so on.

Pottery of the Bukhara–Samarkand school differs radically in its colour scheme from the dark-blue–white–light-blue pottery of Ferghana and Khwarazm. It features a warm yellow–brown colour scheme that combines brush painting (Gijduvan, Shahr-i Sabz, Urgut) with an engraved design (Denau, Kitab and Karatag).

The craft workers of Central Asia made mostly glazed tableware and non-glazed ware (generally for everyday use, such as large vessels for water and food products) that was classified by form as bowls (*kosa*s) or jugs (*kuza*s), with each artisan specializing in the manufacture of one or the other. A *kosa* potter would produce bowls of various types such as *kosa*s, *shokosa*s and *piyala*s, as well as flat dishes called *lagan*s (Fig. 1), *tavok*s, *togora*s, *badiya*s, etc. A *kuza* potter, on the other hand, would manufacture jugs and earthenware pots varying in shape, size and function. Ware was normally made on a potter's wheel, less often pressed or moulded by hand. The shapes were extremely simple, yet highly practical. Brush painting (*qalami*) and a method of incision through the slip (*chizma*) were the most common techniques used to decorate glazed wares.

FIG. 1. Gijduvan. *Lagan*-dish. Ceramic. End of the nineteenth century. (Photo: Courtesy of A. Khakimov.)

By the beginning of the twentieth century, Rishtan ceramics had a reputation for being the finest in the region on account of the high quality of their artistry and the technology involved in their manufacture (Fig. 2). Rishtan's craft workers developed a particularly lyrical style of painting. At the same time, the depiction of specific objects now became part of the ornamentation, from *choi*-dishes (tea-dishes), jugs and musical instruments to guns and knives. Rishtan is currently reviving the technology of manufacturing the *ishkor* glaze and all craft workers there now use it as a mandatory part of the design process (Fig. 3).

Another recognized centre of Ferghana ceramics is Gurumsaray, which in the 1970s and 1980s was home to three master craftsmen: M. Rakhimov, M. Turapov and S. Khakimov. By the early 1990s the traditions of this school had begun to wane and today not a single master craftsman remains. Gurumsaray ceramics are noted for their strong conservatism and for their greater adherence and loyalty to old traditions: one craft worker alone, for example, performed the entire process of manufacturing an artefact from start to finish. Modern-day pottery manufacture in Rishtan and Gurumsaray has retained the nineteenth-century tradition of decorating everyday objects such as vases and knives.

On account of its style and the techniques employed in its manufacture, specialists correctly classify the pottery of northern Tajikistan with the northeastern school of Central Asian ceramics. The northern regions of Tajikistan have a number of major ceramic centres: Khujand, Kanibadam, Isfara, Uratepe and Chorku. In the south-eastern regions of

FIG. 2. Rishtan. *Shokosa* (large bowl). Ceramic. 1970s. Master I. Kamilov. (Photo: Courtesy of A. Khakimov.)

FIG. 3. Rishtan. *Lagan*-dish. Clay glaze (*ishkor*). 1980s. Master Sh. Yusupov. (Photo: From *Atlas of Central Asian Artistic Crafts and Trades*, 1999.)

Tajikistan, pottery was also produced by hand. In Darwaz, Karategin, Kulab, Faizabad and Pripamir, hand-made ceramics are noted for their diversity of form and type and include, among others, bowls, water vessels, jugs and churns.

The glazed pottery of the Bukhara–Samarkand school has its own particular style. One potter of this school who was to enjoy a period of fame in the 1920s was Usto Ishbabaev from Kattakurgan. A characteristic feature of Gijduvan ceramic ornamentation

in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the abundance of animal motifs. The products made by the craft workers of Shahr-i Sabz featured a rich, warm colour scheme combined with free-style painted illustrations (Fig. 4).

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, potters in Khwarazm manufactured ceramic ware and sought to create elements of architectural decor. This tradition is still alive today. The ornamentation used in Khwarazm pottery has a restrained and noble quality about it, reflective of the relative isolation of the region's cultural development. Khwarazm pottery has preserved its classical geometric ornamentation and the richness of its vegetal patterns. In the late twentieth century, potters in Khwarazm were producing ware glazed with only *ishkor* enamel. Today the main centres of Khwarazm pottery are the village of Madyr, near the district centre of Khanka, and the settlement of Kattabag, near the district centre of Yangiaryk.

The downturn in the fortunes of traditional pottery production can be dated to the late 1980s and the early 1990s, when the countries of the then USSR were hit by a general economic crisis. Tajikistan suffered particularly heavily on account of its civil war. In Uzbekistan things started to settle down in 1993, with the greater stability in the socio-economic situation. A major source of help in reviving the traditional ceramics industry has come in the form of grants from international organizations to master craftsmen to

FIG. 4. Shahr-i Sabz. *Shokosa* (large bowl). Ceramic. 1979. Master A. Muzafarov. (Photo: Courtesy of A. Khakimov.)

set up schools where the appropriate skills can be learned. Examples of the positive input made by these organizations can be seen in the regeneration of the Gurumsaray and Gijduvan schools of traditional ceramics.

Copper embossing

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Central Asia's leading centres manufacturing embossed goods (mostly dishware) were Bukhara, Khiva, Kokand, Samarkand, Karshi, Shahr-i Sabz, Tashkent, Ura-tepe and Khujand, all of which, while sharing a common artistic style, had their own distinct features. Aspects of this common style included a marked tendency for vegetal and geometric ornamentation, as well as a woven design that covered the surface of wares differing in form and function (Fig. 5).

Domestic utensils included trays, bowls for fruit, drinks and juices, vessels for tea, pails, containers for transporting food, water scoops, braziers, containers for cups, vases, jugs, water vessels, washing bowls, various household articles – vessels in which to keep change, caskets, smoking paraphernalia, snuffboxes and writing sets – pencil boxes and ink

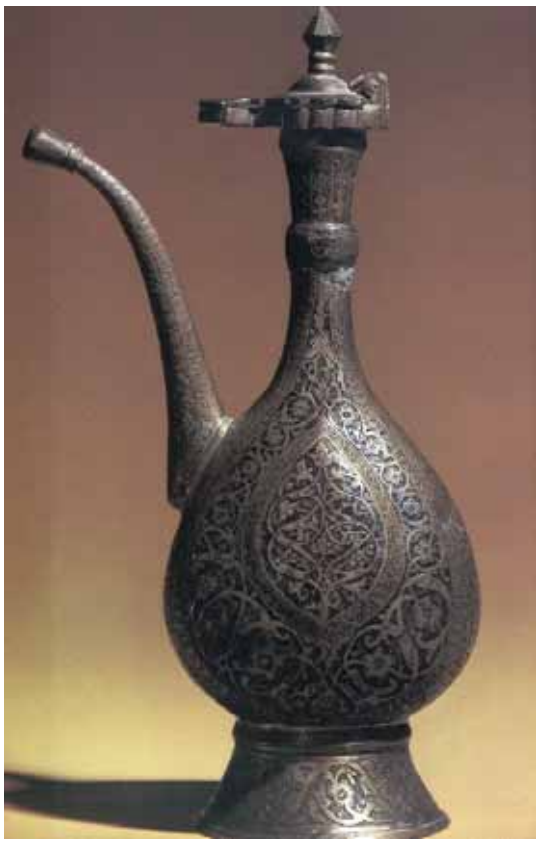

FIG. 5. Khiva. Jug. Copper. Nineteenth century. (Photo: Courtesy of A. Khakimov.)

pots, lamp pots, as well as ritualistic artefacts such as bowls for alms and incense-burners, hunting drums, etc.

Embossed copper products were made by craft workers trained in one of three types of expertise: coppersmiths responsible for shaping and tinning, founders who cast the vessels and parts of the total shape (handles, lid tops, spouts) and embossers who decorated the products with embossing and engraving. The techniques used in the various Central Asian centres were more or less identical: embossing, engraving and openwork. To enhance the effect of the patterns, craft workers began finishing wares by applying a punch and gauze to the background. The nineteenth century saw the establishment of local schools of artistic embossing in Uzbekistan.

In the nineteenth century the most well-known products were those made by embossers in Bukhara and Khiva. These were noted for their high levels of artistry and expressiveness of form, their classical sense of balance and proportion and the durability of their ornamental motifs, which were fashioned using deep-embossing techniques. Similar in style to those of the Bukhara school were the embossed copper goods of Samarkand. The design of Karshi and Shahr-i Sabz work included painted backgrounds and inlays using turquoise, coral and brightly coloured glass. Products of this type were characterized by a smooth engraving style that was achieved using a fine and delicate pattern. The vessels are complicated in outline and cumbersome in appearance. Shallow engraving and inlay were also used by craft workers in Kokand. The shape of the products, as well as the ornamentation and decorative techniques applied, were richer here than in Karshi and Shahr-i Sabz. The Kokand method involved openwork ornamentation. Embossing in Tashkent was, in terms of its artistic qualities, less prominent. The city mainly manufactured large dishware for everyday use and only rarely was it decorated with intricate designs.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, embossers in Ferghana and later in Bukhara and Samarkand began to illustrate their wares with architectural monuments, while in Kokand they started to use fantastical creatures. It became common for wealthy townspeople to have the interiors of their houses adorned with ornamented metal utensils. In the 1950s and 1960s the everyday, functional aspect of traditional metal products all but disappeared. By the second half of the twentieth century, artistic embossing in Uzbekistan was in danger of vanishing completely.

The 1980s and 1990s witnessed the revival of the art of embossing in Bukhara, now home to scores of new craft workers (Fig. 6), and in Marghilan, Khiva and Tashkent. The products manufactured by these modern-day specialists are mainly purchased as souvenirs or for display in exhibitions. These days the craft workers tend to focus their attention on

FIG. 6. Uzbekistan. Metal craft worker. (Photo: © V. Terebenin.)

the artistic properties of the artefacts they produce, such as the beauty of their form or the type of ornamentation employed in the final product (Fig. 7).

While the development of metal processing among the Kazakhs, Turkmens and Kyrgyz meant the manufacture of essential artefacts and the adornment of horse harnesses, it also brought even greater artistry in the shape of jewellery, more specifically in the production of women's ornaments, but also in the design of weaponry and armour.

Jewellery

Much of the work done by Central Asian jewellers involved applying filigree finishes to sabre scabbards and dagger hilts, and the production of parts for harnesses and men's belts with silver-gilt plates and platelets studded with precious stones. Their main job, however, was to manufacture different types of women's jewellery. From early youth to old age, every important event or rite of passage in the life of a Central Asian woman was reflected in the type and choice of gold, silver and other ornaments. By and large they were divided into wedding or festive and everyday categories, although they were also determined by considerations of age, social class, etc. Girls between 3 and 7 years old were usually given silver earrings and bracelets or inexpensive coral ornaments by their parents. The set of adornments worn by brides-to-be were particularly beautiful.

Larger pieces of jewellery were mainly made from silver (sometimes gilded), while gold was used to make earrings, rings and bracelets. The Central Asian jewellers used

FIG. 7. Uzbekistan. Tea service. Brass. 1990s. Master M. Madaliyev. (Photo: From *Atlas of Central Asian Artistic Crafts and Trades*, 1999.)

virtually all the traditional techniques of metal processing at their disposal: forging, casting, punching, threading, engraving, embossing, impressing, as well as applied and openwork filigree.

Classifications of Uzbek, Tajik and Karakalpak jewellery are commonly based on whether a given ornament adorns the head, the forehead or the temples. Generally speaking, classification of this type, albeit with a small degree of regional specificity, can be applied to ornaments worn by Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Turkmen women.

UZBEKISTAN AND TAJIKISTAN

In the nineteenth century the main jewellery-producing centres of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan were Bukhara, Khiva, Tashkent, Samarkand, Kokand, Qarshi, Shahr-i Sabz, Kitab, Chimbai and Turtkul. Other centres were Urgench, Gijduvan, Andizhan, Namangan, Marghilan, Chust, Urgut, Baisun, Denau, Khodjeily, Kasansai, Nurata, Shirabad, Ura-tepe and Asht.

An elegant diadem, known either as *mokhi-tilla* or *kosh-tilla*, crafted from gilded silver and studded with turquoise, semi-transparent and transparent stones, adorned the head of Uzbek and Tajik brides. It was normally worn together with an ornament on the temples, called a *gajak*, which was lavishly studded with colourful stones. A popular adornment worn on the forehead by women in the southern regions of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan was a loose system of fine threads with embossed silver platelets called a *sil-sila* or *shokila*. In Bukhara metal pins were produced called *zhiga*s or *sarsuzan*s. Their blunt ends were fashioned into lamellate medallions or platelets and were sometimes made to look like a bird. Khwarazm had its own distinct type of gilded silver cupola-shaped crown that was either multifaceted or rounded in form, studded with stones and glass, and sewn onto a girl's hat. This was called a *takya duzi* (referred to in Turkmenistan as a *gupba*). A bright, multicoloured and inlaid style is characteristic of the various types of necklaces worn by Uzbek and Tajik brides. Each had a p articularly poetic-sounding name, e.g. *nozi-gardan*, *zebi-gardan*, *zebi-sina* (literally meaning 'tenderness and beauty of the neck and breast'). In the mountain regions of Tajikistan and in the south of Uzbekistan necklaces made of coral beads combined with silver platelets or coins (called *rokhti mugra*s) were very popular. The top fastening on a woman's dress was also the responsibility of the local jeweller. Particularly distinct items of jewellery characteristic of southern Tajikistan were brooches in the shape of round, openwork silver medallions. The pendants attached to such medallions created the impression of a sun-like orb with rays shooting out in all directions (*guliband*s or *guli-yaka*s). Brooches of this kind were also popular with women in Turkmenistan, where they were known as *guli-yaka*s (neck flowers).

By the beginning of the twentieth century, jewellers sought increasingly to cover their wares with as many coloured stones as possible, and revealed a marked tendency to more intricate designs and to a certain eclecticism where style was concerned. This was partly due to the impact made in Turkistan by Russian and Tatar ornamentation, which local craft workers consciously imitated in a bid to satisfy the tastes of the more prosperous members of the community.

The 1920s witnessed a new stage in the development of Uzbek and Tajik jewellery. During this decade the general appearance of jewellery products changed, acquiring more simple and modest forms and colour schemes. As for the more intricate traditional forms, this period saw the revival of a type of earring known as *kashgar-boldok*, which is made from gold.

From the 1950s to the 1970s Tashkent, Bukhara, Samarkand, Kokand and Khiva remained the principal centres of Central Asia's jewellery industry. While products continued to be manufactured with the same diversity of form characteristic of the past, new

forms began to appear, including golden earrings shaped like five-pointed stars with a turquoise or a pearl set in the centre. It was during these years that changes were made in the way jewellery production was organized. With the founding in 1963 of a jewellery factory in Tashkent, production ceased to be organized along the lines of a cottage industry. During this period traditional-style craft workers continued to manufacture items of jewellery in Bukhara, Tashkent, Samarkand, Marghilan and Urgut.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s most of the region's craft workers and professional jewellers sought to combine in their products the old traditions of jewellery-making with a sense of their own individual creativity (Fig. 8).

KAZAKHSTAN

Kazakh traditions of metalworking and jewellery manufacturing date back to the time of the nomadic tribes who inhabited the main regions of what is today Kazakhstan. The most famous centres were the towns of the Syr Darya and the settlements of central Kazakhstan and Semirechye. Throughout the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries travelling smiths and jewellers would set up workshops in winter and summer encampments.

FIG. 8. Uzbekistan. Earrings. Silver and coral. 1990s. Master F. Dadamukhamedov. (Photo: Courtesy of A. Khakimov.)

Kazakh craft workers smelted iron, zinc, lead, gold and silver, and made alloys from zinc and copper, silver and gold. They employed a number of different techniques of metalworking, such as casting, forging, embossing, engraving, impressing, gilding, blacking, aluminium-magnesium processing, silver-line metal hatching and filigree. To cast their products craft workers would use *kalyp*s (moulds) made out of stone, metal, clay and wax. In a number of regions, impressing was used (Mangystau). Engraving and embossing were highly popular with Kazakh jewellers.

The products that brought the Kazakh jewellers true fame, however, were ornaments for harnesses and weapons, the range of which was vast indeed. The Kazakh craft workers made magnificent curved sabres called *kylysh*s, a double-edged sword (*selebe*) and a weapon similar to a sword (*sapy*), daggers (*khanjar*s), a long spear with a steel point and a tassel made out of horsehair, and so on. The Kazakhs called their most valuable possessions *asyl buiym* (treasure or valuable item). They included decorations for horses, e.g. saddles (Fig. 9), reins, saddle-cloths, saddle-girths, belts with stirrups suspended from them, as well as breast ornamentation.

Kazakh jewellers used gold, silver, precious and semi-precious stones, coral and pearls to make ornaments for women and in doing so utilized the entire range of methods and

FIG. 9. Kazakhstan. Saddle. Metal, leather and wood. Mid-nineteenth century. (Photo: From Margulan, 1986, p. 177.)

FIG. 10. Kazakhstan. Woman's pendent. Silver and agate. Mid-nineteenth century. (Photo: From Margulan, 1986, p. 183.)

techniques at their disposal. Women's jewellery is noted for its wide variety of shapes and sizes and for its use of traditional vegetal and animal designs (Fig. 10).

KYRGYZSTAN

Kyrgyz jewellery was made from silver. The jewellers did not have any special premises of their own, but would find a space for themselves and their basic equipment in a tent or go about their business in the open air. Jewellers would normally work sitting down. Beside them would be a small furnace, bellows made from animal hide, as well as an anvil and their tools. The most prevalent technique was that of applying silver to metal using silver wire. In addition, the jewellers used forging, casting, filigree, impressing, granulation, studding using coloured stones, embossing and engraving. Gilding was also practised.

Kyrgyz jewellery was not noted for its range or wide variety of forms. Many items, such as forehead adornments and coil and flat bracelets, are the product of a long history of interaction between the Kyrgyz people and their neighbours, the Tajiks and Uzbeks of the

FIG. 11. Kyrgyzstan. *Söikö* earrings and pectoral. Silver and coral. (Photo: From *Atlas of Central Asian Artistic Crafts and Trades*, 2002.)

Ferghana valley. Other examples include *söikö* earrings, which are covered with granulated beads and have pendants made from coral and silver chains (Fig. 11).

The Kyrgyz style derived from the distinct traditions of the Kyrgyz jewellers: these were particularly visible in *Jelbirööch* ear adornments and in the ancient, understated yet expressive, ornamentation employed in round brooches used to hold together parts of a woman's dress and similar to the Uzbek, Tajik and Turkmen *gulyakka*. Necklaces made from small coloured beads and coral beads were also popular.

An important aspect of Kyrgyz jewellers' work involved producing decorative artefacts for harnesses. These included different types of silver platelets, blacked plates with engraved designs, and small bells with openwork.

There were Kyrgyz ornaments (Fig. 12) for plaits, the breast, the neck, the ears, the hands and the arms. One particularly popular type of women's ornament was the *shökülö* (cf. the Karakalpak *saukele*), a conical headdress decorated with pearls, mother-of-pearl and brocade, as well as silver and gilded figurines. Sometimes a large silver plate called a *kalkan* (shield) would be attached to the hat. Headgear was covered with a net made out of

FIG. 12. Kyrgyzstan. Amulet. Silver, coral and semi-precious stones. (Photo: From *Atlas of Central Asian Artistic Crafts and Trades*, 2002.)

tiny coral beads (*marjan*s). As of the middle of the nineteenth century, *shökülö*s were worn only at weddings by the bride when she left for the home of the bridegroom. The hat would be worn for a period of five days, after which it was kept as a souvenir until the occasion of another wedding.

The rich and distinct artistic traditions of the Kyrgyz people were embodied in their jewellery. Nowadays Kyrgyzstan's professional jewellers are using their talents to develop these traditions on a new creative basis.

TURKMENISTAN

Turkmen jewellery is distinguished by the unity of its artistic style, reflected in the monumental and majestic, one-dimensional and yet sophisticated forms of its products, which are characterized by low-key colour schemes combined with rich and flowing designs. The adornments of Turkmen women were made chiefly from silver, which featured a flowing gilded floral design.

A much-loved (and virtually the only) semi-precious stone was the orange-purple cornelian. A traditional diadem worn on the forehead, the *egme*, was made in the shape of a rectangular, uniform and slightly curved plate decorated with cornelians, gilded ornament and openwork carving, features that carried the signature of the Saryk and Teke craft workers.

Heart-shaped pendants, called *asyk*s, which embodied the poetic idea of faithfulness and pure love, were a favourite ornament worn in the hair by Turkmen girls. These were often worn in twos or threes with a cylindrical amulet added on top. Such pendants were adorned with cornelian studs, gold plate, fine filigree and an open-cut design (Fig. 13). The compactness and abundance of the cornelian studs and gilded ornamentation distinguish silver Turkmen breast and shoulder amulets from their Uzbek and Tajik counterparts. A very typical Turkmen ornament was a compact, irregularly shaped plate that was decorated with cornelian studs, patterned with gilding and openwork engraving and finished with light, ringing pendants that softened the impression of bulkiness. The collar on the dress typically worn by Turkmen girls was adorned with a *gulyaka*, an elegant clasp consisting of a round silver-gilt disc with cornelian studs and sometimes with coloured glass and a heavy tassel of ringing pendants. A wide and sturdy pair of bracelets called *bilezik*s covered the lower arms from hand to elbow (Fig. 14).

By the middle of the twentieth century traditional jewellery products had lost their former social function and the traditions hitherto maintained by the Turkmen master jewellers began to disappear. Professional craft workers in the field are now trying to revive the art of jewellery-making. Their attempts to date have frequently proved unsuccessful and have suffered from an excess of eclecticism.

Felt products

KAZAKHSTAN AND KYRGYZSTAN

From time immemorial, *koshma* (felt) was an indispensable part of everyday life in Central Asia. Unlike other materials that demanded intricate technologies, the production of *koshma* required almost no additional tools and retained the features of the ancient past (Fig. 15). In the nineteenth century, felting was a common practice mainly among the Kyrgyz, the Kazakhs and the Turkmens. *Koshma* with rolled-on designs was also used in the daily lives of certain parts of the Uzbek population (Kashka Darya, Surkhan Darya, et al.). On the other hand, felt products made by sewing together cut-out patterns and appliqués, as well as by means of embroidery, were exclusive to the Kazakh and Kyrgyz industries.

FIG. 13. Turkmenistan. Pendants. Silver filigree and coral beads. (Photo: From the Turkmen journal *Turkmen Medenieti*, 1993.)

Kazakh and Kyrgyz *koshma* also incorporated shades of orange and crimson, and the graphic design was normally made to contrast sharply with the background. Three techniques were employed to decorate the *koshma*. The first of them involved rolling a coloured wool design onto the felt base. The Kazakhs called this type of carpet *tekemet*, the Kyrgyz – *ala kiyiz*. The second technique was that of appliquÉ, which involved sewing a pattern using dyed felt or fabric on the felt base. The third and last technique consisted of sewing together the elements of a pattern that had been cut simultaneously from two different coloured pieces of felt (Fig. 16). Carpets that were produced in this way were known to the Kazakhs as *syrdamak*s, and to the Kyrgyz as *shyrdamal*s or *shyrdak*s (sometimes referred to as mosaics) and were a marked example of the artistic features of this technique (Fig. 17). Felt used in mosaic-style *koshma* was generally more compact, which is why it had to be processed longer. The designs incorporated three or four colours – red, dark blue, yellow or orange. They were cut and sewn together using felt of different, mainly contrasting, colours and were then usually sewn onto plain felt and quilted using woollen thread. It was of paramount importance that a mosaic carpet be of high quality as it formed part of a

FIG. 14. Turkmenistan. Twin bracelets. Silver and cornelian. Late nineteenth century. (Photo: From *Museum Guide of the National Museum of History and Ethnography of Turkmenistan*.)

bride's dowry and was never offered for sale. Mosaic *koshma*s, bordered and embroidered at the edges with braid, were mostly used for keeping the yurt warm (Fig. 18). To decorate felt products, Kyrgyz crafts-women made skilful use of appliqué, using not only felt, but also leather, velvet, cloth and other kinds of fabric.

In the general character of their ornamentation, the felt carpets of the Kyrgyz are similar to those of the Kazakhs. The most common motif in ornamental art and in religious contexts was that of a ram's horn (*kochkorak*) (Fig. 19).

A variation on the Kazakh *syrmak* was the *bitpes* felt carpet. The very name *bitpes* (meaning unfinished, unachievable) suggests the type of intense labour involved in creating this kind of ornamental design, which was made by applying a cord composed of motley-coloured woollen threads to a felt surface. Along with the spread carpets of the *tekemet*, *syrmak* or *bitpes* kind, the Kazakhs were particularly fond of felt wall carpets called *tus-kiiz*s, onto whose white background were sewn multicoloured patterned figures from felt, cloth or, more rarely, silk or cotton fabric. This appliqué; technique was widely practised in the northern regions of Kazakhstan, where the most beautiful *tus-kiiz*s were produced.

FIG. 15. Kyrgyzstan. Woman preparing the *koshma* (felt). (Photo: © V. Terebenin.)

Although nowadays the small quantities of felt products manufactured tend to be for souvenir purposes, felt carpet products continue to find a market among the members of the local population, and not only in rural districts; on account of their colourfulness and the ornamental appeal, town-dwellers also like to use them to adorn their flats.

TURKMENISTAN

Turkmen ornamental felts (called *keche*s) possess a distinctive quality all of their own and are fascinating on account of the type of designs used. The main design that frames the central area is common to all Turkmen tribes and is known as *sary ichyan* (yellow scorpion), *sailan* (the elect) or *gochak* (ram's horns). The process of making felt is essentially the same as that in other parts of Central Asia. Among the Turkmens, felt manufacturing is the exclusive domain of women (Fig. 20). Turkmen products are dominated by fiery red and warm light-yellow tones, although sometimes dark blue and green are used. Moreover, owing to the gradual change of colours with similar tones, the design blends smoothly into the background.

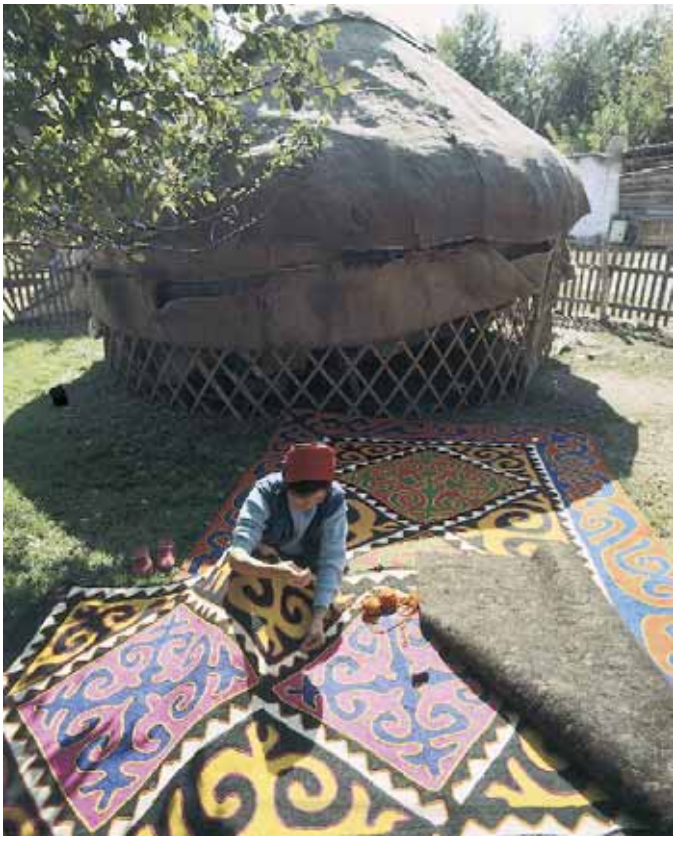

FIG. 16. Kyrgyzstan. Sewing together of elements of felt carpets. (Photo: © V. Terebenin.)

Carpet-making

Carpet-making is one of the most labour-intensive of the artistic industries, with traditions in Central Asia reaching back to ancient times. Nevertheless, it is carpet products from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that are most fully represented today in museums and private collections. During this period all the nations of the region engaged in the manufacture of flat-woven rugs, while it was the Turkmens and, to some extent, the Kazakhs, Kyrgyz and nomadic Uzbek tribes who chiefly engaged in knotted carpet-making.

The carpet products of Central Asia – both knotted and flat-woven – were produced for a whole range of different functions. The most common varieties included flat-woven spread rugs and short-pile runners and prayer-mats (*joy-i namaz*s), as well as curtains for inside the yurt. Objects for everyday use made from carpet fabric were notable for their artistry and the care with which they were manufactured. These included oblong sacks suspended on cords from the walls of the yurt called *chuval*s that were used for storing clothes, utensils and food products. Various types of carpet articles were designed for the

FIG. 17. Kyrgyzstan. *Shyrdak* carpet. (Photo: From *Atlas of Central Asian Artistic Crafts and Trades*, 2002.)

saddle: girths, horse-cloths (Fig. 21) and saddlebags (*khurjin*s) that were often made using striped flat-woven fabric.

The Turkmens placed great stress on the decorative finishes applied to the carpet used to adorn the camel that walked at the head of a wedding caravan. For it was on this camel that a young newly married wife would be taken to the house of her husband; its sides would be hidden from view by five-cornered rugs (*asmaldyk*s), its head would also be covered with patterned rugs and its knees had carpet bands wound around them.

In the manufacture of carpet products much importance was attached to the type of wool used, and to the dye, dying methods and weaving technique. Central Asian carpet-makers preferred long, light-coloured, soft wool taken from sheep that had been sheared in the spring and which was not very coiled, was strong and had a specific shine to it.

Until the 1870s it was the custom in Central Asia to use durable colour-intensive dyes of vegetable origin. From the late nineteenth century onwards the use of cheaper and brighter aniline dyes had a detrimental effect on the quality of carpet products: the magnificent range of cherry-red and red-ochre tints found in the carpets of times past was now replaced

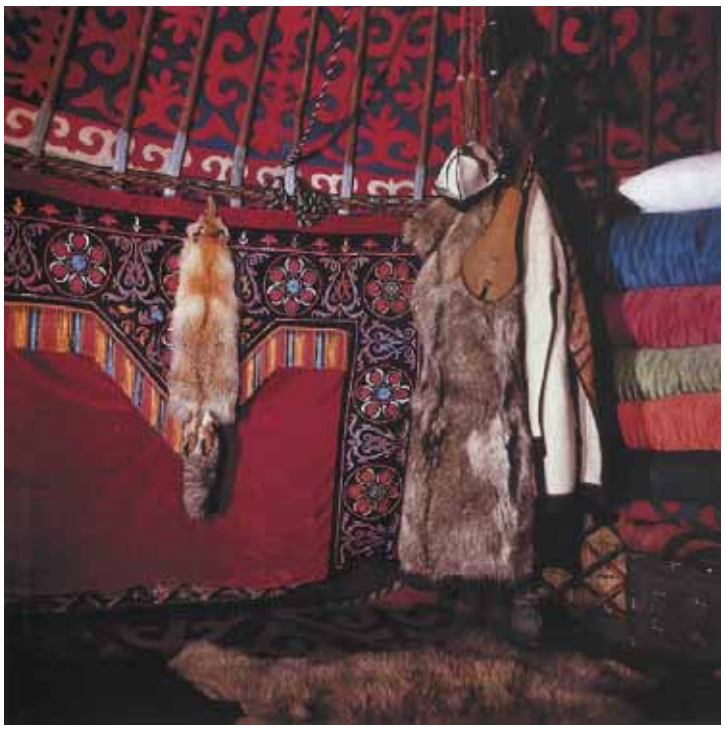

FIG. 18. Decoration of the interior of a yurt.

FIG. 19. Kazakhstan. Felt carpet. (Photo: From Margulan, 1986, p. 159.)

FIG. 20. Turkmenistan. Felt carpet. (Photo: © V. Terebenin.)

by dazzling and garish colours that quickly lost their initial appearance because of the inferior dyes.

In Central Asia carpet products were woven on primitive horizontal looms of two types: narrow or wide. The archaic character of the looms and related appliances contrasts strongly with the great beauty and high quality of the carpet fabrics produced on them. The narrow, easily assembled and disassembled looms were used to make carpet strips for yurts and other narrow strips from which rugs and carpets would then be sewn. The wide looms were permanent fixtures which did not stand outside in the yard but were kept either in a room in the house or in the yurt for purposes of manufacturing large, usually knotted, spread carpets.

Over many centuries of carpet-making in Central Asia, generations of craftswomen perfected the principles of formulating and arranging designs and the choice of colour schemes common to all schools in the region. The central layout was usually framed with a patterned border. Inside the main area were design motifs that were repeated and arranged with biaxial symmetry in vertical or horizontal rows. It was only in smaller products that the design was central. Two techniques were applied when colouring designs: right-angled

and diagonal. A balanced, static design was produced using the first technique, which was more characteristic of Kyrgyz carpets. With diagonal colouring, which was often used by Turkmen carpet-makers, the surface of the design acquired a certain dynamism and the ornamental rhythm was particularly expressive.

TURKMENISTAN

Central Asia's reputation for fine carpet-making owes much to the Turkmen craftswomen, whose products are rightly considered classic examples of the art of carpet manufacture. For the Turkmens, carpets held both a practical and a ritualistic significance. Newborn babies were laid in carpet cradles, while rugs, baskets and bags were all part of a bride's dowry; the deceased were mourned on special funeral carpets that were later left on the grave in accordance with custom.

The key features in Turkmen carpet design were *gol*s (tribal designs on carpets). In the past these had been tribal emblems, but later they were used as decorative elements in carpet ornamentation. Various in form, often rhomboid or polygonal medallions, they occupied the central field of carpets arranged either like chess pieces or in orderly rows, and framed at the edges by patterned strips (Fig. 22a-b). The number of local schools in Turkmen carpet-making reflects the multiplicity of the Turkmen tribes, including, among others, the Salors, Tekes, Saryks, Yomuts, Chaudurs, etc.

FIG. 21. Uzbekistan. Horse-cloth. (Photo: Courtesy of A. Khakimov.)

a

b

FIG. 22(a-b). Turkmenistan. Carpet-making. (Photo: © V. Terebenin.)

Salor products were particularly prized. They have come down to us in the form of museum pieces. Each reflects what were the characteristic techniques of Turkmen carpet-making: a dark-red background, medallions coloured diagonally and blending with the colours of the background, the central field framed by a patterned border, and geometric

floral ornamentation. The assortment of Teke carpets was basically the same, although the red background tended to be less nuanced. Bright yellow dominated the colouring of the medallions studded around the design. Teke carpets were generally decorated with geometric shapes, although vegetal motifs were also to be found. Saryk carpet products had a dark, red-brown background on which an ornamental design was emphasized using fine lines drawn in light-coloured tones. Yomut carpets, like those of the Teke tribe, tended to feature primary colours, as well as a design involving rhomboid *gol*s, the sides of which took the form of hooked figures. Ersarin carpet products, whose designs reflect the influence of Uzbek and Tajik *abr* (meaning 'cloud') fabrics and a wider and freer interpretation of colour motifs, represent an intermediate group.

Around the beginning of the twentieth century, market demand for Turkmen carpet products rose, which led to a slight deterioration in their overall quality. In 1929 a carpet factory was set up in Turkmenistan. The factory incorporated an artistic and experimental workshop that later was to develop into a company called 'Turkmenkover'. In a bid to come up with new solutions, during the 1930s and 1940s efforts were focused on theme-based carpets, heralding the appearance of portrait and narrative illustrations that often included inscriptions with the designs. As in other cases where essentially alien illustrative forms were introduced into local folk art in the region, the result was frequently eclectic.

UZBEKISTAN

Carpet-making among the Uzbeks featured long-pile, short-pile and non-pile products. Compact short-nap carpets were particularly popular with the people of Samarkand, Bukhara, Shahr-i Sabz, Khiva and other towns. During the 1920s and 1930s carpet production in Uzbekistan was developed in industrial *artel*s (cooperative associations of workers or peasants), while in 1960 carpet-weaving factories were set up in Khiva, Shahr-i Sabz and other towns. At the same time, the domestic production of carpets by hand was generally encouraged throughout the republic.

In the 1990s home-based carpet-weaving was continued in the towns and villages of the Ferghana valley, Nurata in Mejdugorye, the Syr Darya region and Karakalpak. Uzbekistan's principal carpet-weaving areas are, however, the Kashka Darya and Surkhan Darya (Fig. 23) regions and Khwarazm.

Today, carpet manufacture in Uzbekistan is developing in three main fields: traditional, small-scale home weaving, the manufacture of carpets by hand in state enterprises, and the production of carpets by private companies. The many years of using aniline dyes has had a detrimental effect on the aesthetic properties of homemade carpets by turning them from objects of high art into a run-of-the-mill everyday product. Today work is under

FIG. 23. Uzbekistan. Surkhan Darya *oblast'*. Women weaving a carpet. (Photo: Courtesy of A. Khakimov.)

way to revive the technology of colouring woollen threads using natural dyes. Samarkand, Bukhara and Marghilan are seeing the revival of techniques for the production of silk carpets.

KYRGYZSTAN

In the past, carpet products were a very common aspect of everyday Kyrgyz life. Pamiro-Alai and Ferghana Kyrgyz tribes, as well as Kyrgyz living in the south-western parts of the Xinjiang–Uighur Autonomous Region of China, have been engaged in the manufacture of nap carpet products for a long time.

In addition to *kelim*s (floor carpets), bags of various types can still be found with an outside carpet covering (*chabadan*s, *kosh jabyk*s), carpet strips for decorating yurts (*terigich*s), saddlebags (*kurjun*s) and saddle rugs (*eger kepchuk*s). In olden days, Kyrgyz carpets, including a particularly famous variety made by the Khydyrsha tribe, were average in size (1.5 × 3 m), but from the late nineteenth century, when they began to be sold at local markets, carpetmakers started to make enormous spread carpets of up to 100 m^2 in size that had previously been unknown in Central Asia.

Kyrgyz carpets are made on the same type of horizontal loom (*dukon*) as Turkmen and Uzbek carpets. The pile is between 5 and 7 cm in height, the knot 1.5 cm and tied by hand. A Kyrgyz carpet has on average a weave of 900–1,000 knots per dm^2 (square decimetre). Larger carpets are usually a combination of two or more. The carpets are woven with sheep's wool, but the warp is made of camel and goat's wool.

Red and blue were the major colours featured in knotted carpets, although they were complemented by shades of brown, black and yellow. Yellow, brown, green and white were more rarely encountered. In terms of their ornamentation and the p articularities of their colouring, Kyrgyz carpets are much closer to the carpets of Xinjiang and to Uzbek (Andijan) carpets.

For a variety of reasons, Kyrgyz carpet production in the early twentieth century fell into decline. Today, the ancient carpet-making regions are attempting to organize a cottage carpet-weaving industry. In addition, there are trends that indicate a revival of the methods of the past and the use of old dyes and design techniques.

KAZAKHSTAN

In the nineteenth century all carpet products were manufactured by the Kazakhs on vertical and horizontal looms (*ormek*s). The most famous traditional Kazakh flat-woven carpets were called *alasha*s. Strips of 30–40 cm in width were woven on narrow-beam looms and decorated with a design. Afterwards they were sewn together as a carpet 4 × 2 m in size.

Another type of larger flat-woven carpet was the *takyr kilem*. Designs in blue, white, yellow or brown were blended on a crimson-red background. Flat-woven carpets made by the Naiman tribe were produced in the form of smooth fabric with a raised illustration of their tribal emblem. In flat-woven carpets the most common motif was that of a ram's horns, which were restylized as geometric ornamentation.

The Kazakhs attached great value to carpets (Fig. 24). They considered them to be the most expensive and most valuable part of a bride's dowry. Like other peoples in Central Asia and the Caucasus, the Kazakhs refer to a pile carpet as *kilem*. A large, more closely woven, more luxuriant carpet is known as *orda kilem*.

Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Uzbek carpets have a number of similarities in ornamentation, lay-out and colouring. The Turkmen school of carpet-making developed with a certain degree of independence and consequently has little in common with the principles of carpet production found in other schools of Central Asia.

FIG. 24. Kazakhstan. Carpet. (Photo: Courtesy of A. Khakimov.)

TAJIKISTAN

Carpet-weaving (*qolibofi*) was never a common decorative applied art in Tajikistan. It was practised only by Jirgital Kyrgyz living in Tajikistan, who mainly manufactured various types of short-pile products such as wall bags (*khurjin*s) and saddle-girths, as well as (in smaller quantities) spread carpets. The ornamentation of all these products was similar to that of the Alai Kyrgyz. Women from a number of semi-nomadic Uzbek tribes inhabiting the south of Tajikistan wove small carpet products (mostly *napramachi*s and *khurjini*s). In the early years of the twentieth century, Tajikistan began to manufacture carpets in *artel*s, the drafts for which were made by artists based on the motifs of Tajik embroidery, as well as of Caucasian and other carpets. Thus it is mainly the designs and motifs of folk embroidery and textiles that are used in the carpet-making of the Tajiks.

Artistic fabrics

Nineteenth-century Central Asia produced a wide variety of plain and patterned fabrics from cotton, wool, silk and silk mixtures. (See Fig. 25 a-b-c-d.)

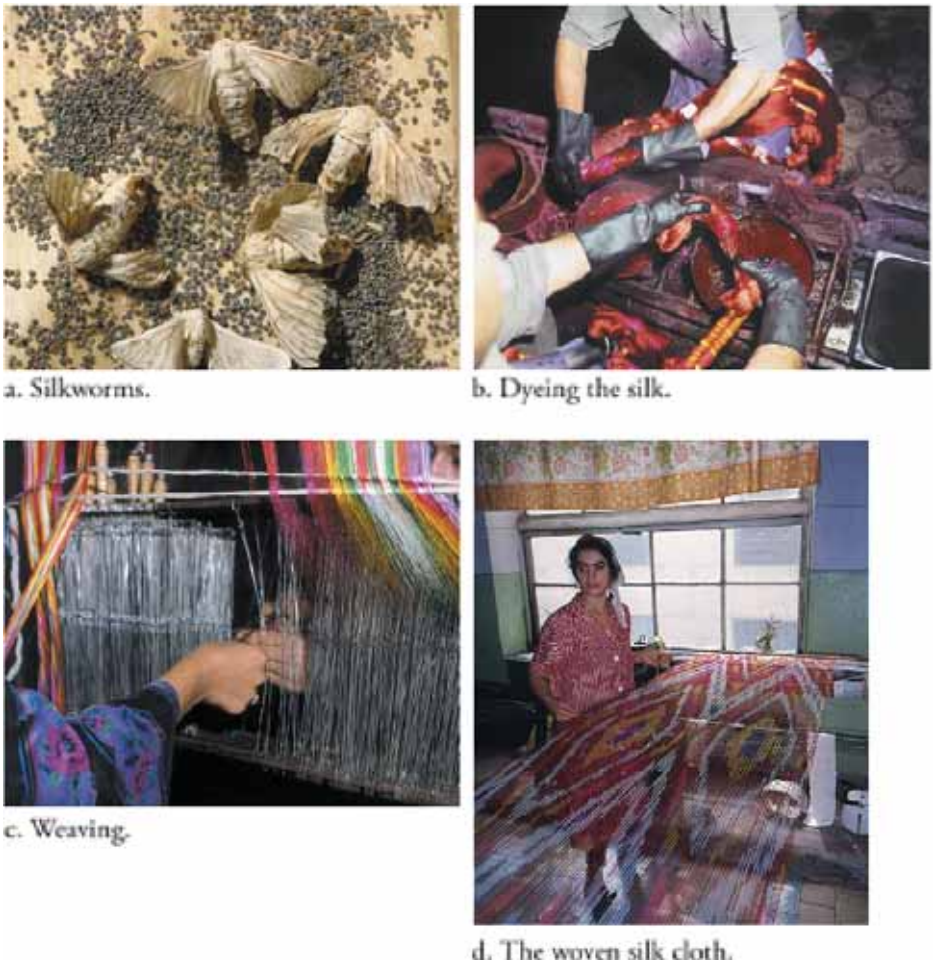

FIG. 25(a-b-c-d). Uzbekistan. Preparation of silk fabric. (Photo: © V. Terebenin.)

UZBEKISTAN

In the second half of the nineteenth century, weaving in Uzbekistan was the most developed area of the crafts. Famed for their fabrics were Bukhara, Namangan, Marghilan, Samarkand, Shahr-i Sabz, Kitab, Karshi, Khujand, Urgut and Khiva. The most popular fabrics were those made from cotton (*kalami*, *alocha*, *susi*, *chit*), part-silk (*bekasab*, *banoras*, *pasma*, *adras* [Fig. 26], *duruya*, *yakruya*, *atlas*, *bakhmal*) and silk (*shoi*, *atlas*, *khan-atlas*). With the exception of silk (*atlas*) and velvet (*bakhmal*), very simple weaves were used: linen and rep. Woollen fabrics for outer clothing were also produced. Among the various fabrics, the part-silk velvets from Bukhara and Kokand, covers from Samarkand and Ferghana, as well as very fine transparent silk shawls (*kalgai*s), were particularly popular. Most of these fabrics were decorated with strips or an *abr* design. The design of *abr* silk, part-silk and – much more rarely – cotton fabrics was a fascinating process.

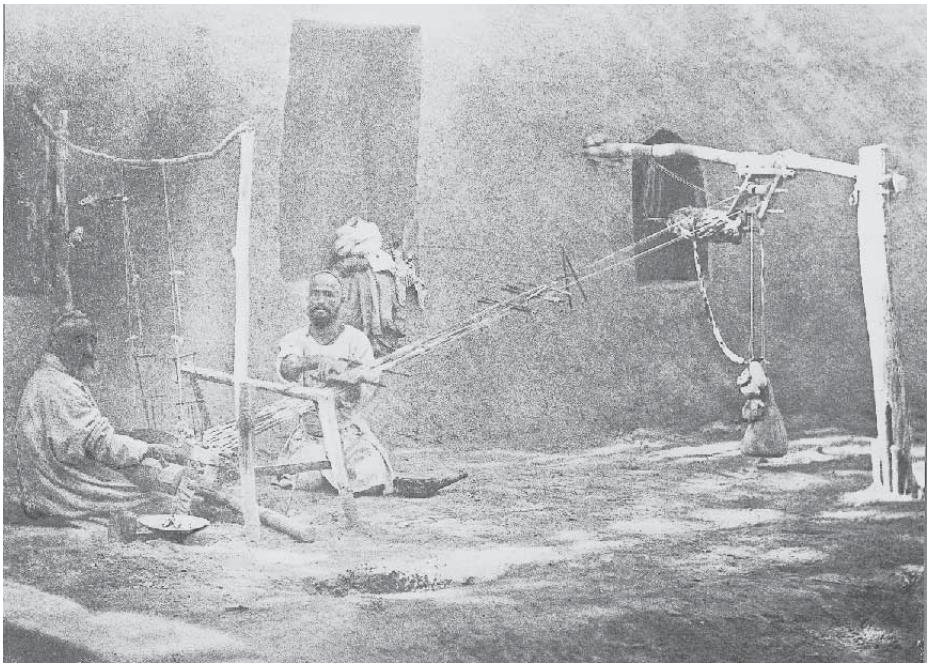

FIG. 26. Uzbekistan. Loom for weaving *adras*. End of nineteenth century. (Photo: Courtesy of A. Khakimov.)

The production of cotton fabrics was a truly popular and widespread activity (Fig. 27). Specialists who have studied cottage industries in the late nineteenth century describe many kinds of local cotton fabrics: *mata*, *khosa*, *buz*, *kalami*, *janda*, *astarchei*, *susi*, *alacha* and variations of them: *damkhaba*, *misri*, *chapanakhi* and others. However, even in the first half of the nineteenth century, in the heart of what appeared from the outside to be a thriving industry, there were already signs of decline. The reason was the inability of the cottage industries to compete with machines. Central Asia was overtaken by the more technically sophisticated fabricated cotton, silk and brocade fabrics on which the designs common to oriental fabrics were reproduced with reasonable success. These products proceeded to edge out from the market Uzbek cotton fabrics, and the production of *kimkhob* and *bakhmal* suffered irretrievably as a consequence. Only local silk and part-silk fabrics adorned with strips and *abr* patterns survived the competition.

The early years of the twentieth century saw the return of many types of traditional Uzbek fabrics in workshops of the cottage industry, then in *artel*s and in factories. In the 1920s a shortage of prefabricated fabrics in the country led to an increase in the cottage manufacture of cotton fabrics. During this period fabric production in Uzbekistan underwent no significant changes. The same plain linen fabrics (*kalami*, *sarpinka*, *astarchit* and *alacha*) continued to be manufactured and traditional knots and colour schemes were retained, as were local styles and characteristics (Fig. 28). The main cotton-producing

FIG. 27. Uzbekistan. Preparation of cotton thread. End of nineteenth century. (Photo: Courtesy of A. Khakimov.)

centres were Samarkand, Urgut and Nurata, and settlements in the Bukhara region (such as Gijduvan, Vardanzi and Zandana), in the Ferghana valley (Namangan) and the district of Besh-Aryk.

More low-key than those found in Bukhara, dress fabrics from Ferghana proved to be more in keeping with the aesthetic requirements of the day. The older centres witnessed a revival in the production of *bekasab*, *banoras* and other striped part-silk fabrics, which retained their local distinctiveness in terms of colouring and rhythm.

In the 1930s industrial enterprises began to operate in Samarkand, Tashkent and Marghilan and the network of small producers started gradually to diminish. Manual production of cotton and plain part-silk and silk fabrics was scaled down, and the *artel*s of Tekstilpromsoyuz now limited their output to *bekasab*, *shoi* and silks. Popular fabrics came to lose their unique appearance. In addition, numerous traditional methods of manufacturing and decorating fabrics were lost.

In the 1990s, thanks to the revival of traditional customs and festivals and a heightened interest in national dress, the demand for handmade artistic silk fabrics increased. Throughout Uzbekistan, and especially in the towns of the Ferghana valley such as Marghilan and Kokand, handmade silk fabrics began once more to be produced.

FIG. 28. Baysun. Loom for the preparation of *alacha*. (Photo: Courtesy of A. Khakimov.)

Printed cloth

In the mid-nineteenth century, a common Central Asian tradition was the manufacture of printed cloths. They were used to make dresses, shawls, tablecloths, curtains and covers. While Bukhara was recognized as the centre of printed-cloth production, other locations such as Samarkand, Ferghana, Khujand and Tashkent were also key players. Printed cloth made in Khwarazm was noted for its extremely refined patterns. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, cloth was still printed in a rich variety of colours: in addition to the usual design of black and red on a pink background, for example, dark-blue indigo prints on a light cream background were also popular. In the early twentieth century, blue-black was to disappear, and in the 1920s and 1930s the production of red-black printed cloth was sharply scaled down. It was only by the middle of the 1970s that Uzbekistan saw a return to this traditional art form.

Master printers produced metre-length printed cloths from which they sewed clothes, as well as tablecloths, curtains and bedspreads. Only cotton was used to make printed cloth. This was soaked in a special solution, then a design was applied to the cotton using wooden stamps known as *kalyb*s. Designs were mostly vegetal: luxuriant bushes, elegant buds intertwined with stems and leafy shoots that rhythmically alternated with pomegranates and almonds.

Between the 1920s and 1960s, almost in spite of the slump in printed cloth production, new printed patterns were created in the small workshops, *artel*s and factories alongside the manufacture of fabrics. In the 1980s and 1990s the ancient traditions of cloth printing were revived. By making creative use of traditional motifs and techniques, modern craft workers were able to create new red-black and yellow-black printed cloths in Tashkent and red-black ones in Marghilan.

Embroidery

Almost all peoples living in the region used embroidery to decorate clothes and everyday items. The embroidery of the Tajik and Uzbek populations inhabiting the plains of Central Asia had much in common. In fact, so popular is this traditional form of artistry that to this day houses that are veritable museums of embroidery are to be found throughout the rural areas of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The walls of rooms (normally those of newly weds) are adorned with embroidered friezes (*zardevory*s) (Fig. 29) and decorative wall hangings (*suzani*s). Embroidery was used to ornament everyday items such as bedspreads (*bolinpush*s, *takyapush*s), sacks for keeping tea (*choikhalta*s), mirrors (*oinakhalta*s), as well as women's and children's robes (*tuncha*s), dresses, men's sashes (*belbog*s), headgear (*tyubeteika*s) (Fig. 30), small finishing braid (*jiyak*), etc.

The main designs used in embroidery were shoots, buds, pomegranates and almonds, as well as other vegetal designs. Large rosettes were a popular feature of decorative panelling (Fig. 31); these were sometimes of an astral nature (for instance, the Pskent *oi-palyak suzani*s).

Before the end of the nineteenth century, silk and woollen threads were used to embroider handmade cotton fabrics in white or cream-yellow (Fig. 32). Later factory-made fabrics of different colours and threads coloured with artificial dyes were to appear that had a detrimental effect on Central Asian embroidery as a whole. The designs became motley and faded quickly.

In different regions and centres embroidery styles and designs took different forms. Characteristic of Samarkand and Ura-tepe ornamental embroidery, for example, is a contrasting combination of flowers and large images. Designs for Bukhara (Fig. 33), Ferghana and Pskent panelling, on the other hand, are lyrical and subtle with a large variety of crimson, light-green and purple shades.

In the 1970s and 1980s traditional embroidery began to disappear and it is only now in Uzbekistan (Fig. 34) and, to some extent, in Tajikistan that attempts are being made to revive the former centres of traditional embroidery (Fig. 35).

FIG. 29. Bukhara. Gold embroidery for wall hanging. 1980. (Photo: From *Atlas of Central Asian Artistic Crafts and Trades*, 1999.)

THE MOUNTAIN REGIONS OF TAJIKISTAN

Darwaz, Kulab and Karategin have a distinct type of embroidery. The artistry and imagination of the inhabitants are most clearly visible in the adornment of women's and children's clothing. Festive and elegant, invariably in rich red or yellow-cream colours, young women's dresses were simple and loose fitting. Their entire front section and wide sleeves were embroidered with green, yellow, red and white threads usually in the form of large, round multi-row rosettes with coiled shoots.

Craftswomen made richly embroidered pieces of clothing and everyday articles using red, yellow and white silk thread on red or black cloth. The embroidery on a woman's blue dress was unique in that it featured a design made up of a combination of geometric patterns and stylized religious images.

KYRGYZSTAN

Until the 1870s and 1880s Kyrgyz craftswomen mostly embroidered with leather, suede and felt, as well as homemade woollen fabrics, using the raw materials of their own

FIG. 30. Tajikistan. Women selling headgear (*tyubeteikas*). (Photo: © V. Terebenin.)

FIG. 31. Tashkent. Decorative embroidered panel. 1960. (Photo: Courtesy of A. Khakimov.)

economy. By the late nineteenth century new materials for embroidery appeared, such as cotton, red woollen cloth, red, dark-blue and yellow satin, coarse calico and black velvet. During this period women's and children's clothing was lavishly embroidered, as were

FIG. 32. Nurata. Decorative embroidered panel. 1880s. (Photo: Courtesy of A. Khakimov.)

FIG. 33. Bukhara. *Suzani* embroidery. Nineteenth century. (Photo: Courtesy of A. Khakimov.)

various felt parts of yurts, wall carpets (*tush kiyiz*s), carpet strips, leather, felt, velvet and woollen cloth bags for clothes and utensils, felt saddle and horse-cloths.

Kyrgyz embroiderers used a large number of different stitches (Fig. 36). The technique they most commonly employed was chain stitch, but they also satin-stitched. Designs were dominated by motifs depicting stylized leaves, bushes and flowers, while zoomorphic and geometric ornamentation featured only rarely.

FIG. 34. Baysun. Women embroiderers at work. (Photo: Courtesy of A. Khakimov.)

FIG. 35. Tajikistan. *Suzani* embroidery. 1970s. (Photo: Courtesy of G. Ratushenko.)

KAZAKHSTAN

Kazakh embroidery (*keste*) is very similar to that of the Kyrgyz in terms of its application, as well as its technical and artistic characteristics. For many centuries Kazakh women

FIG. 36. Kyrgyzstan. Chamois embroidery. (Photo: From *Atlas of Central Asian Artistic Crafts and Trades*, 2002.)

used embroidery to adorn their clothing and household articles. They embroidered using wool and were familiar with gold and bead sewing. The basic techniques were chain stitch and satin stitch. They embroidered towels, bedspreads, bags of various kinds, women's headgear, wall carpets and covers for boxes and chests, and used silk, woollen and cotton thread on felt, cotton and woollen fabrics (Fig. 37). In modern conditions, where in many ways the need for the artefacts of a nomadic way of life has vanished, embroiderers in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan work only on decorative wall carpets, pillowcases, items of headgear and, as souvenirs, women's skirts, kaftans and purses, in whose production traditional techniques and artistic styles have been retained.

TURKMENISTAN

Traditional Turkmen embroidery was connected mainly with decorating national costume. Hand-woven wool and silk and, from the late nineteenth century, various types of industrially produced fabrics were the basic materials used in embroidery. A favourite colour for clothing was red, which since time immemorial had symbolized life, youth and the

FIG. 37. Kazakhstan. Embroidered wall carpet. (Photo: Courtesy of A. Khakimov.)

fecund powers of nature; however, it was meant to be worn mostly by young girls (Fig. 38). Clothes for women and girls of other ages were embroidered with blue, green and yellow. Like Kyrgyz embroiderers, Turkmen craftswomen often used loop stitch and satin stitch. For each piece of clothing they used a special stitch and embroidered a suitable design.

THE CENTRAL ASIAN REGION

A unique and, to some extent, independent area of Central Asian embroidery is gold-thread sewing, which came into its own in the mid-nineteenth century in Bukhara. This had always been an exclusively male trade, the skills of which were passed down from father to son. Numerous everyday domestic items were embroidered with gold and silver thread: *chimillik* (a curtain dividing a room into two parts), *joy-i namaz* (prayer-mat), *takhmonpush* (bedspread), small items such as bags for money, tea, seals, scabbards for knives, and various horse paraphernalia: *zinpush* (saddle-cloth), *dauri* (horse-cloth) and *yolpush* (saddle cover). Designs incorporating gold-thread sewing were used to adorn numerous individual pieces of a woman's festive costume: *peshonaband* (hair fillet), *sarandoz*, *rumol* (headscarf or mantle), *kal'tapushak* (headgear worn by a married woman), *kurtu* (dress), *zokhi-kurtu* (gold-thread braid for edging the front cut of a dress), *kaltachu* (woman's outer smock), *duppi*s (*tyubeteika*s), *poicha zarduzi*s (women's wide trousers), *makhsi*s (velvet or woollen

FIG. 38. Turkmenistan. Young girl in national costume. (Photo: From: *Tourism & Development*, 1997. Ashgabat.)

cloth boots with soft soles), *kaushi*s (shoes with low counters), *popush*s (shoes with narrow turned-up ends) and *paranja* (outer clothing similar to a smock, worn over the head).

Gold-thread embroidery was used on velvet of dark, rich tones such as violet, dark blue and green. The process of embroidering with gold thread was carried out in the following manner: first, a basic design was sewn using spun or drawn gold thread; then the detailed work was done with twisted or drawn gold, and finally with silk. There were five kinds of gold-thread embroidery: *zarduzi-zaminduzi* – uniform embroidery of a background using gold thread; *zarduzi-gulduzi* – sewing of a design that had been cut out of paper; *zarduzi-gulduzi-zaminduzi* – a sewing technique that combined the two previous kinds; *zarduzi-berishimduzi* – combination sewing; and *zarduzi-pulyakchaduzi* – a combination of gold-thread embroidery with sewn sequins.

In the twentieth century a gold-embroidery factory was set up in Bukhara, the employees of which were nearly all women. The function of gold-thread products changed: they came to be seen mostly as souvenirs, as well as large decorative panels and curtains for theatres and folklore ensembles. In the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s the local populations of

Tajikistan and Uzbekistan surprisingly developed a new interest in everyday gold-thread goods, and in many towns that had previously been unaware of such an industry, traditions connected with the art of gold-thread embroidery began to enjoy a renaissance. Today it is one of the most popular forms of national enterprise in these countries.

Leather goods

The artistic processing of leather was widespread not only among the nomads, but also in the larger towns of Central Asia. In the noisy bazaars of Samarkand and Bukhara skilful *charmduzi*s (leather dressers) would embroider suede hunting trousers, fur-lined leather boots, cushions, purses and men's belts while customers looked on. Horse paraphernalia was colourful and smart: saddlecloths and leather harnesses were ornamented with blackened silver platelets and small bells, and studded with cornelian and turquoise. An elegant and refined tooled ornament was applied to bindings and cases for papers (*juzgir*s), which were used by theologians and scholars of the day. By the beginning of the twentieth century, however, leather products had become overburdened with ornamentation and design features.

Leather goods produced by the one-time nomadic peoples, the Kyrgyz, the Kazakhs and the Karakalpaks, were notable for a constancy of style and adherence to traditional forms.

Like clothing and horse harnesses, leather dishware was an essential feature of everyday life. These utensils were made mostly from camel skin and used chiefly for drinking fermented mare's milk (*kumys*). Leather drinking vessels came in a variety of forms such as enormous water-skins (*saba*s), medium-sized *chanoch*s, small cases for porcelain and faience cups (*piyala-kap*s or *chyny-kap*s), kettle-shaped milk pails and bowls for soured cream (*konochok*s, *konok*s) and jugs (*bulkak*s). Vessels used when at work, such as *saba*s and *chanoch*s, were simple in form and without any type of ornamentation. The most originally shaped and richly decorated vessels were flasks known as *kookor*s, whose form resembled the bent horns of a mountain goat (Fig. 39). *Kookor*s were used to transport *kumys* when travelling to new pastures, while *kumura*s were used to serve *kumys* to guests. *Kumys* dishware was richly decorated with the greatest of care. The production of leather milk pails with spouts (*konok*s) involved a particularly intricate process. They were sewn from camel skin that was noted for being robust and for maintaining its shape when being treated.

Multi-layer leather was used in the manufacture of cylindrical cases in which several cups could be kept, one on top of the other. Also common were *chyny-kap* cases shaped like a hemisphere bearing the outline of an upside-down cup (Fig. 40). *Chyny-kap*s were made

FIG. 39. Kyrgyzstan. *Kookor* and *chyny-kap* for drinking *kumys*. (Photo: From *Atlas of Central Asian Artistic Crafts and Trades*, 2002.)

from a variety of materials: cheegrass, thin switches of meadow sweet, juniper, walnut, leather or felt. Wooden *chyny-kap*s were sometimes covered with leather or decorated with carvings.

Given the constant travelling involved in a nomadic way of life, leather goods were convenient and practical, and thanks to the efforts of their producers they also became magnificent examples of artistic creativity. Today such everyday leather articles are going out of use and are mainly produced to be sold as decorative souvenirs. All the same, certain parts of the leather-processing sector (mostly those involved in the production of clothes) are finding a market for their products.

Bone carving

The origins of bone carving in the region go back to early history. There are many examples of bone being used in the manufacture of artefacts in ancient and medieval times. In the nineteenth century, this tradition was particularly visible in products such as sabre and dagger hilts and scabbards, as well as rifle butts. While the visually elegant national musical instruments of the Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Uzbeks, Tajiks, Turkmens, Karakalpaks, Uighurs and other peoples in the region are made from expensive types of wood, to this day the craft workers who make them inlay them with pieces of bone.

FIG. 40. Bukhara. *Chyny-kap* and leather goods for travelling. End nineteenth–early twentieth centuries. (Photo: Courtesy of A. Khakimov.)

In towns wood carving was used both in the manufacture of everyday articles such as wooden chests for keeping clothes in, children's cots (*beshik*s), small boxes, book stands (*lauh*s), and for decorating fixtures around the home such as doors, columns, built-in wooden alcoves, etc. In Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in the second half of the nineteenth century, there was a fashion for many-sided decorative tables and stools catering to the tastes of the European population in Central Asian towns. By the early twentieth century, Khiva, Bukhara, Samarkand, Kokand, Tashkent and Khujand became centres for the leading schools of wood carving (Fig. 41 and 42). To this day they are famed for their craft workers, who used two main methods of carving: a simple technique of ornamentation using a notched or incised design, and an intricate non-background technique in which the background was removed (Fig. 43). In the mountain regions of Tajikistan, in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, the carvers' art was utilized in the decoration of wooden shoes, chests for domestic utensils and other household items.

The technique involved in non-background carving could be achieved only by professional carvers and was considered to be a highly skilled urban craft. The basis of carved

FIG. 41. Tashkent. Small table. Carved wood. 1927. Master S. Khojaev. (Photo: Courtesy of A. Khakimov.)

FIG. 42. Karakalpak. Small pedestal for vessel. Carved wood. Beginning of twentieth century. Master B. Daliev. (Photo: Courtesy of A. Khakimov.)

ornamentation, as manifested in this particular technique, are *islimi* – a pliant, elastic and dynamic intertwining of shoots covered with buds, flowers and leaves; and *pargori* – a meticulous and static geometric design achieved using a pair of compasses and a ruler. The

FIG. 43. Tashkent. Decorative table. Carved wood. 1991. Master O. Fayzullayev. (Photo: From *Atlas of Central Asian Artistic Crafts and Trades*, 1999.)

FIG. 44. Bukhara. Wood carving decorating the Bala Hauz. (Photo: © V. Terebenin.)

chiaroscuro effect of *islimi* and *pargori* was used brilliantly throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by master wood carvers in Kokand, Bukhara and Khiva (Fig. 44).

Wood painting

Like carving, wood painting was for many years used in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in interior decoration and was likewise connected with the decoration of a variety of everyday objects. An intricate arabesque design would be applied to the primed surface of six- or eight-sided tables, boxes and other objects with a pre-traced pattern and then painted with a fine brush in vegetable or mineral dyes using bronze and silver. Usually red, green and, less commonly, blue were the colours chosen. From the 1920s to the 1980s this art form was given new impetus in the artistry displayed by the leading craft workers of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, whose products, for all their traditional style, also reflect a strong individualism. Uzbek decorative painting does not blend one colour with another but tends instead to use contrasting colour combinations.

From the 1920s to the 1980s, as a result of new building developments and the reconstruction of old towns and district centres, Uzbekistan was to see a significant increase in the use of architectural painting. As in the past, the main centres of ornamental painting include Khiva, Bukhara, Samarkand, Kokand, Marghilan, Ferghana, Andijan, Namangan, Chust, Kuva, Altyaryk, Rishtan and Tashkent.

In discussing ornamental painting, some mention must be made of a special area of activity of the *naqqāsh* (painter): the painting of everyday objects. There are two main techniques, which differ in terms of their artistic properties. The first technique involves the painting of tables, shelves, cases and boxes (Fig. 45 and 46). The second is the simple painting of widely used objects such as cradles, small household utensils and children's toys.

Articles made from specially grown figured pumpkins comprised an original sector of Central Asian folk art (Samarkand was considered a major centre) (Fig. 47 and 48). Particularly popular were snuffboxes (*noskadu*s), which came variously decorated in a number of different shapes and sizes.

Miniatures and other arts

In Uzbekistan in the late 1970s and early 1980s miniature painting and the technique of making and ornamenting papier mâché products (trinket boxes, make-up paraphernalia, etc.) enjoyed a new lease of life. One new ornamental feature was that of motifs and images taken from oriental miniature painting of the Middle Ages. Over the past 10 to 15 years the craft workers of Uzbekistan have achieved outstanding results in this area of decorative art. By creatively interpreting medieval motifs and themes, modern-day artists are breathing new life into the art of traditional miniature painting. Modern miniaturists use a wide range

FIG. 45. Kazakhstan. Chest. Carved and painted wood. End of nineteenth century. (Photo: From Margulan, 1986, p. 199.)

FIG. 46. Tashkent. Casket. Painted wood. 1990. Master M. Boltabayev. (Photo: From *Atlas of Central Asian Artistic Crafts and Trades*, 1999.)

of materials in their work, including leather, papier mâché (Fig. 49), pumpkins, canvas and paper. The style of miniature painting is also used in work on large monumental paintings in the interiors of modern buildings in Uzbekistan (the *Oliy Majlis* building, the State Museum of Timurid History, etc.).

FIG. 47. Samarkand. Painted pumpkins. 1920s–1930s. (Photo: Courtesy of A. Khakimov.)

FIG. 48. Tashkent. Painted pumpkin. 1990s. Master Sh. Rikhsiev. (Photo: Courtesy ofA. Khakimov.)

FIG. 49. Tashkent. Box in papier mâché. 1990s. Master M. Baltabaev. (Photo: Courtesy of A. Khakimov.)

Modern fine arts: painting in the twentieth century

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, tsarist Russia's military and political conquest of the region also brought with it active cultural expansion. The fact that the first Russian artists to come to the region had begun their work in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan played an important role. This process was particularly vibrant in Samarkand, Bukhara, Kokand and Tashkent, cities whose architectural monuments and ethnographic exotica appealed strongly to Russian painters such as Vereshchagin, Yudin, Bure and Kazakov. Through their work there emerged the special genre of ethnographic realism, which often featured elements of social critique (e.g. Vereshchagin). Thus, at the beginning of the twentieth century figurative art forms began to infiltrate the region. However, this process was not universal, nor was it encouraged by local power structures.

State backing for the introduction of figurative art to the masses began in the 1920s. The emergence of painting at the beginning of the twentieth century was underpinned by the new communist ideology, an atheist philosophy and also by a negation of the values inherent in Muslim culture. The first generation of professional painters in the 1920s consisted of visiting artists who contributed much to the emergence and development in the region of new forms of figurative art. In Uzbekistan, this larger group included A. N. Volkov, M. I. Kurzin, O. K. Tatevosyan, A. Nikolaev, V. Ufimtsev, P. Benkov and N. Kashina; in Turkmenistan – R. Mazel, A. Vladychuk and, a little later, O. Mizgireva; in Kyrgyzstan –

FIG. 50. Uzbekistan. N. Kashina: *Children*. 1920s–1930s. (Photo: Courtesy of A. Khakimov.)

S. Chuikov and the artist and teacher V. Obraztsov; in Kazakhstan – N. Khludov; in Tajikistan – P. Falbov.

UZBEKISTAN

Working in Uzbekistan during the 1920s and 1930s was a large group of Russian artists educated in Moscow, St Petersburg and Kiev. The group spent time in Turkistan and their lives were for ever connected with this part of the world. They included: L. Bure, G. Nikitin, O. Tatevosyan, V. Eremyan, A. Nikolaev, A. Volkov, V. Ufimtsev, P. Benkov, N. Kashina (Fig. 50), A. Ermolenko and Z. Kovalevskaya. Each of them was very much an individual, and their work was to become an inalienable part of Uzbekistan's new art and culture. While they were all attracted to the Orient on account of its 'exoticism', they nevertheless expressed their love for the region in a highly individual manner. Some of them subscribed to realist theories of art and sought to give their recreation of characteristic ethnic types, ethnographic sketches and architectural landscapes an overriding sense of academic authenticity. The second school is reflected most vividly in the work of A. Volkov and A. Nikolaev. This school shared much with the search for avant-garde means of artistic expression found in European art at the beginning of the century.

FIG. 51. Uzbekistan. A. Nikolaev, known as Usto Mu'min: *Bridegroom*. 1924. (Photo: Courtesy of A. Khakimov.)

Volkov was drawn more by the picturesque texture of the canvas, the play of form and colour. His stylistic innovations continued the traditions of cubism. In his search for a new form of artistic expression through which to convey his understanding of the Orient, the artist turned to works of Vrubel, Picasso and Matisse. Volkov's greatest gift was his sense of colour, as evident in one of his most famous works, *The Red Teahouse* (1924), which was awarded the Grand Prix at a Paris exhibition. During the late 1920s and early 1930s his work underwent a sudden change: his avant-garde treatment of traditional Eastern themes was replaced by works of a social orientation that testify to a violent rupture in the artist's creative credo. Dependence on social prescriptions had a detrimental effect on the quality of his work.

Another outstanding artist was to meet with a similar fate. Nikolaev was obsessed by his search for a synthesis of the traditions of painting found in Russian icons and Eastern miniatures. He expressed his philosophical and artistic concept of the Orient as a poetic and simultaneously exotic world of dreams; for instance, *Spring*, *Boy* and *Bridegroom* (Fig. 51). By the early 1930s the artist was likewise compelled to switch to employing the theories of socialist realism and created a series of canvasses that were considerably inferior to the works of his previous period ('School of the Old Method').

FIG. 52. Uzbekistan. U. Tansykbaev: *Portrait of an Uzbek*. 1934. (Photo: Courtesy of A. Khakimov.)

The works of Volkov and Nikolaev reflect the general trends in the painting of Uzbekistan in the late 1920s and 1930s, when socialist realism emphatically supplanted the creative searching of the previous decade. Another avant-garde tendency in the art of Uzbekistan in the 1920s was represented by M. Kurzin, an artist who was influenced by cubism and futurism, as well as by V. Ufimtsev and E. Karavai.

In the 1930s all creative aspirations were harshly criticized as manifestations of formalism and Western bourgeois machinations in art. It was during this time that any attempt by the above-mentioned painters to produce a symbiosis of traditional local aesthetics with Western avant-garde practice was finally silenced. Thanks to the efforts of the first group of painters in Uzbekistan, these years saw the creation of a number of different schools and artists' studios which were to prove instrumental in the emergence of national artists. Thus began the careers of artists such as L. Abdullaev, B. Khamdami, U. Tansykbaev (Fig. 52), A. Abdullaev, S. Khasanova, M. Nabiev, A. Siddiki and C. Akhmarov. Their works were, however, to become dominated by realist theories of painting. By the second half of the 1930s the pressure of Stalinist ideology and the imposition of the socialist realist diktat inevitably led to the levelling of individual creative styles throughout the entire USSR, including Central Asia. The war of 1941–5 also affected the development of Uzbek art. During the war and the years that immediately followed it painters' works were closely linked with the theme of war, often lending their art the attributes of a documentary study.

Until the 1980s the ideological formula informing all Soviet art was that 'art should be socialist in content and national in form'. However, in the years preceding 1990 artists were increasingly disinclined to adhere to this dictum. In the 1950s, the decade of socialist realism's total victory, new forms of figurative art were taking shape in Uzbekistan. These included monumental painting and landscape sculpture, as well as various drawing techniques. Yet, as before, painting reigned supreme, although important changes were under way. A new generation of artists was surfacing. They included R. Akhmedov, N. Kuzybaev, V. Zelikov, M. Saidov, T. Oganesov and Y. Elizarov, all of whom had studied at the Repin Art Institute in Leningrad and it is with this group of artists that a new and important stage in the development of a national school of painting is linked.

The founder of the epic landscape, U. Tansykbaev, did not so much depict a landscape as convey the emotions and feelings that nature evoked. His painting *Morning at Kairakkum Hydroelectric Station* is rightly considered a classic of Uzbek landscape painting. The portrait and thematic picture also developed further. Among portrait painters an important name is that of A. Abdullaev, who created a series of remarkable images of prominent representatives of the Uzbek intelligentsia: the actor A. Khidoyatov, the academician K. Niyazov, the film director K. Yarmatov and the writer U. Igun. The pictures created by R. Akhmedov in the 1960s (e.g. *Mother Giving the Breast*) (Fig. 53), *Portrait of an Old Collective-Farm Worker* and *Shepherdess*) laid the groundwork for a new stage in the development of Uzbek portrait painting. Meanwhile artists were beginning to turn increasingly to the heritage of Uzbek art, particularly to the miniature. G. Akhmarov made his own distinct contribution in his paintings in the foyer of the A. Navoi Opera and Ballet Theatre (1947).

A characteristic feature of art between the 1960s and 1980s was the desire to update traditional figurative principles, the search for new forms of expression and the use of an expressive-symbolist style. The beginning of this process dates to the second half of the 1960s, when a new generation of artists burst onto the scene. They included R. Charyev (Fig. 54), B. Babaev, V. Burmakin, Y. Taldykin and N. Shin. In the 1970s the basic tone of Uzbek painting was set by the work of D. Umarbekov, and others,[1] all of whom worked in different styles. It was, however, thanks to their pictures that for the first time Uzbek painting became imbued with a spiritual subtlety, expressed in various colour and stylistic formations.

The growth of national self-consciousness during the late 1980s and the interest it prompted in domestic artistic traditions, such as ancient and medieval art, and folk crafts, revived the use of metaphor and allegory. Paintings became filled with mythological

[1] B. Dzhalalov, M. Tokhtaev, A. Mirzaev, S. Abdurashidov and R. Shadyev.

FIG. 53. Uzbekistan. R. Akhmedov: *Mother Giving the Breast*. 1962. (Photo: Courtesy of A. Khakimov.)

personae and subjects, now in the style of mural paintings of Buddhist monasteries,[2] now in the spirit of miniature painting.[3]

Art in Uzbekistan since the 1990s has been characterized by a vast range of styles that in many ways is linked with the country's newly found independence, engendering an atmosphere of creative freedom. Happily coexisting are a wide variety of schools and trends, such as academic realism, decorativism and national romanticism (often seen in the form of the stylized miniature), together with avant-gardism in the shape of non-figurative painting or installations. To a large extent this can be explained by the intensification and expansion of the creative world-view, and the aspiration of artists to transcend the boundaries of everyday experience.

The social-grotesque and generally social-critical trend in painting in the late twentieth century has come to lose its significance and effectively disappeared. In Uzbekistan in the 1990s a group of artists came together, each with his or her highly individual style, and to

[2] By artists such as L. Ibragimov, M. Kagarov and D. Umarbekov.
[3] By A. Nasretdinov, A. Ikramdzhanov, G. Kadyrov, et al.

FIG. 54. Uzbekistan. R. Charyev: *Portrait of the Producer Sh. Abdusalyamov*. 1967. (Photo: Courtesy of A. Khakimov.)

this day interest from audiences and critics alike is as strong as ever.[4] The works of these artists have undergone a metamorphosis. Phantasmagoria, the blending of mythological and folklore images, subjects, symbols and signs – all are incorporated in a new canvas and are characteristic of their painting today. Innovative features in 1990s art were linked with the appearance of original installation projects produced by the talented painters V. Akhunov, Z. Usmanov and A. Nikolaev. Art in the 1990s was enriched by a new group of talented artists.[5] Their works have enriched contemporary figurative art and in many ways define its main traits for the first years of the twenty-first century.

TURKMENISTAN

Turkmen painting in the 1920s was represented above all by the work of Ruvim Mazel, who had studied at the Academy of Arts in Germany. The creative experiments carried out

[4] The artists include G. Baimatov, L. Ibragimov, A. Nur, G. Kadyrov, Z. Usmanov, I. Mansurov, F. Akhmadaliev, S. Alibskov, B. Dzhalalov, D. Umarbekov, A. Mirzaev, R. Shadyev, A. Ikramdzhanov, V. Akhunov, S. Khakimov and A. Turdyev.

[5] B. Ismailov, T. Karimov, B. Mukhamedov, N. Shoabdurakhimov, T. Akhmedov, M. Dzhalalyan, D. Sadykova, Z. Sharipov and many others.

by Mazel and his followers[6] derived from their interpretation of the decorative features and colours of Turkmen carpets. Like the first wave of painters in Uzbekistan, Mazel attempted to create a new style of Turkmen painting by organically combining Eastern and Western aesthetics. It was to be based upon a conception of the Turkmen carpet with its age-old decorative system and its bright, expressive positive colouring. These artistic quests were reflected in his watercolours *Carpet Tales* (1920–1) and *Around the Carpet* (1925–6). The group's active attempts to seek a new style did not meet with official approval and in the mid-1920s the Shock-Work School of Oriental Arts was closed down.

Primitivism coupled with a folkloric-popular style inform the work of Nurali Byashim, the first Turkmen artist. Although he lacked a professional education, he has nevertheless gone down in history as a dazzling and unforgettable phenomenon, a talented, natural and at the same time self-taught painter. One of his first paintings, *Kurban Bairam* (1921), was devoted to the theme of religious ritual. However, the generally optimistic nature of the work, its colourfulness and the ornamental rhythms of this large-scale painting suggested the ascent of the folk spirit that very much accorded with the social ideas of the time. In the 1920s the artist was also to create portraits in which a socio-psychological emphasis cannot be felt, yet which clearly reflect Byashim's desire to search for a certain feminine ideal in keeping with the epic and folkloric ideas of the Turkmen people.

In the 1930s Turkmen painting, like art throughout the entire region, was dominated by the requirements of socialist realism. The principles of a social philosophy of art had now been established, and their importance was reinforced by the war of 1941–5.

In the post-war painting of Turkmenistan a particularly important role was played by the thematic picture, which glorified peaceful labour and those who performed it – the workers, the rural community and the intelligentsia. The enormous and universal demand for themes involving the post-war regeneration of civilian life often led to certain compositional and stylistic clichés, as well as the neutralizing of national and individual characteristics. During these years, however, several artists such as I. Klychev, Y. Annaurov, A. Kuliev, A. Amangeldyev and D. Bairamov created vivid and interesting works that incorporated unusual styles and themes, attempting, while remaining inside the framework of accepted aesthetic practice, to discover original artistic solutions. This was made manifest with the utmost degree of artistic expression in the works of the greatest Turkmen painter, I. Klychev (Fig. 55). His paintings *In the Encampment*, *Shearers*, *Legend* and *Beludzhi*, created in the 1960s, became classics of Turkmen painting. Popular genres in Turkmen painting such as the portrait, the thematic picture and the landscape were developed further during this period.

[6] O. Mezgireva, S. Beglyarov, V. Volmiev and M. Kuliev.

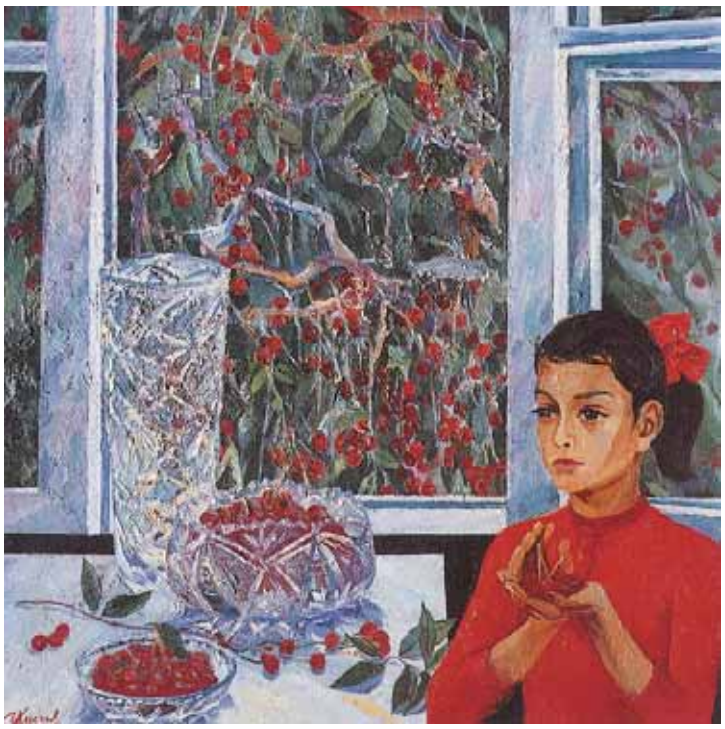

FIG. 55. Turkmenistan. I. Klychev: *Lyalya. Girl with Cherries*. 1975. (Photo: From the Turkmen journal *Turkmen Medenieti*, 1993.)

Turkmen painting of the mid-1970s revealed two main trends: one was lyrical and given to a more spiritual interpretation of a given theme, and the other was social, with a tendency to scrutinize problems of daily life.

Turkmen painting turned a new page in the 1990s, when academic traditions combined with avant-garde experiments in non-figurative abstract art. As in the past, the acknowledged master Klychev continues to work productively. In recent years, he has produced a brightly coloured and metaphoric painting entitled *Magic Patterns* (2002), which recalls the creative experiments conducted by artists in the 1920s such as Mazel and Mizgireva. This same concept of reinterpreting traditional aesthetics can also be seen in *Still Life* (2000) by the talented artist S. Akmukhamedov. Undemanding in style, yet intensely sincere, A. Almamedov's pictures, *Firyuzin Hills* (1997) and *Konekesir* (2000), both of which were awarded the Nurali Byashim prize, are imbued with a profound lyricism. A reworking of the stylistics of primitive folk art is perceivable in K. Nurmyradov's multi-figure painting, *Day of Remembrance* (2001).

Recent years have seen the appearance of a new genre in Turkmen painting – that of abstract art, which is becoming increasingly popular and is already moving in a variety of

different directions. The work of the new generation of experimental painters[7] is characterized by a profound philosophical reinterpreting of the process of reality, vivid psychological images and daring artistic experimentation. The sharply delineated individual manner of their painting is a consequence of specific historical circumstances that have allowed artists to experiment and search for the widest possible range of creative solutions.

KAZAKHSTAN

In the 1920s Kazakhstan did not enjoy the type of environment conducive to artistic endeavour that was found in Uzbekistan or Turkmenistan. This explains why new forms of figurative art did not emerge as dynamically or as variously in Kazakhstan as they did elsewhere.

It was during the 1930s that one of the first national artists, A. Kasteev, achieved recognition. His appearance on the art scene coincided with a period when society was laying the foundations of the socialist state and this is reflected in the tone of his works: *The Bartered Bride*, *Dairy Farm*, *Milking Mares*, etc. By and large, fine art in Kazakhstan in the 1930s was dominated by the official requirements of socialist realism. At the end of that decade an art and theatrical college opened in Alma-Ata at which several national artists were to receive their training.[8] Some of them later graduated from art institutes in Moscow and Leningrad and went on to form the nucleus of Kazakhstan's national school of painting.

In the 1940s Kazakh painting expanded its range of genres and themes. This was particularly true of the post-war period. Even so, the Stalinist ideology of the day did not allow artists to go beyond the acceptable themes and norms of the socialist-realist aesthetic.

In the 1960s the growth of national self-consciousness in Kazakh society began to appear also in art in the form of an intense and committed attitude displayed by painters towards their own nomadic cultural heritage.[9]

Kazakh painting in the 1970s and 1980s exhibits a wide range of innovations. On the one hand, the tradition of reinterpreting the Kazakh cultural heritage begun in the preceding decade was developed further, while on the other hand the universal Soviet 'severe style' was evident. The 1980s were also a time when ideas concerning stylistics that would come to fruition in the 1990s were already beginning to be developed. This is certainly true as regards a number of works by A. Sydykhanov, such as *Stopping Place in the Mountains* and *Chauken Bazaar* (1983–4), where the style, resembling that of Filonov, creates the basis for further abstracted forms and silhouettes. Subsequently, Sydykhanov rejected all figurative

[7] They are represented by P. Garryev, A. Dzhumaniyazov, O. Lalykov and A. Kulyev.

[8] Among them were S. Mambeev, M. Kenbaev, K. Telzhanov, U. Azhiev, A. Galimbaev and S. Romanov.

[9] This line found expression in the works of painters such as S. Aitbaev, S. Sarieva, A. Sydykhanov and T. Toguzbaev.

FIG. 56. Kazakhstan. Ch. Gulliev: *Mammetir*. 1994. (Photo: Courtesy of A. Khakimov.)

art and took as his models generic graphic signs such as seals (*tamgha*s), interpreting them as the ancient coded messages of remote ancestors.

Developing this idea further in the 1990s, Sydykhanov created something akin to a universal semiotic conception of national painting, projecting this onto all phenomena and objects that were the object of his attention. This concept was to influence the work of a number of young artists and during the 1990s helped to create a greater diversity in Kazakh painting. Among those to have been influenced by this new tendency are original painters such as G. Madanov (*Gold on Silver*, 2002) and the well-known artist A. Akanaev (*Wheel-Khorlo*, 2002).

Modern Kazakh painting is, however, not confined to sign-and-symbol art and variations thereof. Artists working in a variety of forms of figurative art have also been quite productive. Admittedly, their work tends to be rather stylized, but it nevertheless reflects current ideas concerning the search for a national style[10] (Fig. 56).

Unlike the neighbouring republics, Kazakhstan during this period managed to organize a network of galleries, something that was in many ways made easier by the active

[10] In this regard, paintings by well-known artists such as A. Galimbaeva (*Mother and Daughter Marzhan*, 2000), K. Duisenbaev (*Composition*, 2002) and Z. Kairambaev (*Allegory*, 2001) are of particular interest.

development of a market economy. In the 1990s Kazakhstan saw a veritable explosion of art dealing with current themes. This frequently took the form of various types of installation projects and performance art whose creators were often painters by training. In their search for innovative approaches, in the pace and dynamics with which they were implemented, Kazakh artists have in many ways shown themselves to be more progressive than their nearest neighbours in the region. However, this is no real indication of how art is developing in terms of quality; it merely shows where the emphasis is being placed.

KYRGYZSTAN

The work of a large number of politically enlightened institutions played a major role in the development of the artistic life of Kyrgyzstan between the years 1918 and 1924: red yurts and tea houses, red vehicles and caravans, and clubs. They directly promoted public interest in those forms of professional art previously unknown to the Kyrgyz people.

From the 1930s right up until the 1970s Kyrgyz painting was characterized by a firm adherence to the realist tradition, with detailed paintings from life and at the same time a poetic interpretation of the theme of humankind's relationship with nature. During this time painting developed dynamically and by the late 1930s its creative potential had become a force to be reckoned with.

One of Kyrgyzstan's first professional artists was S. A. Chuikov. His picturesque studies of 1917–20 are an important part of his work. He was instrumental in establishing the Union of Artists of Kyrgyzstan (1934) and a picture gallery (1935) that was later to become the republic's State Museum of Fine Art. His studies *Horse beside a Yurt* and *Village* showed the nature of Kyrgyzstan in a variety of aspects and are fresh, sincere and painted with emotion. As such, they lead to a greater understanding of the characteristic features of the new phenomenon of easel painting in Kyrgyzstan.

One of the most prominent representatives of the first generation of artists was G. Aitiev, who made his reputation with memorable portraits and landscapes from the mid-1930s onwards. Other figures who played a conspicuous role in the development of Kyrgyz painting in the 1930s included S. Akylbekov, A. Ignatev and E. Maleina. It was during this period that national painting established its genre and thematic priorities. Although the landscape and scenes of everyday life emerged as the most popular forms, portrait painting also produced some interesting images. The best paintings of this time show artists attempting to avoid the negative impact of dominating ideological directives that were neutralizing individual creativity.

Painting in the 1940s was very much connected with the theme of war and continued to develop the traditions of realism characteristic of the previous period even though painting was now far more dramatic in terms of content.

The 1960s and 1970s were to see the flowering of all genres: narrative and thematic, landscape, still life and portrait. By the late 1970s Kyrgyzstan had a new generation of painters who challenged the established traditions by their use of unusual concepts and by their artistic objectives. The work of S. Bakashev, S. Ishenov, M. Akynbekov, S. Aitiev and M. Bekdzhanov demonstrates an unequivocal rejection of painting from nature. Instead, they set themselves the task of interpreting historical and modern material by association. Much of their attention was devoted to the problem of the national and cultural heritage, as well as to the ethno-cultural distinctiveness of the Kyrgyz people. Painting now began to speak in the language of allegory and acquired a generalized decorative style.

In the 1980s this new orientation intensified on account of the political events in Soviet society, that is to say, perestroika and the concomitant relaxation of socialist-realist principles. Nevertheless, realist painting continued to retain its position in Kyrgyz painting. The end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s was a time of great importance for painting in Kyrgyzstan (Fig. 57). The enthusiasm for new artistic concepts and solutions literally spilled out onto painters' canvasses, bringing a new and highly distinctive look to national painting. It was during this period that scholars noted the emergence of a new artistic phenomenon, Kyrgyz modernism, examples of which were displayed at the exhibitions 'New Wave' (1989, 1990) and 'Wall' (1991).

Having given artists creative freedom of expression, the acquisition of independence has stimulated this process in a new, unprecedented way. Meanwhile the work of new-wave painters[11] combines daring formal experiments with a desire to preserve the fabric of traditional aesthetics, including its monumental, epic connotations and symbolic significance. For all the general innovative orientation of their experiments, they differ from each other in their specific style. The epic breadth of the Kyrgyz epic and the expressive strength of European expressionist painting is a key feature of works by Z. Zhakypov (*Birth of an Epic*, 1994), N. Nurgaziev (*When the Day Came*, 1995) and T. Kurmanov (*Dedication to Sayakbai*, 2001). Western philosophical thought on the discreteness of the historical process in the paintings of Y. Shigaev (*Alai Tsaritsa*, 2001) and K. Davletov (*Composition*, 2001) is expressed using the traditional Kyrgyz symbolic and ornamental system.

As with Kazakhstan, in the 1990s a brisk art market opened for business in Kyrgyzstan, leading to the creation of a whole range of galleries and free groups of artists who came

[11] Such as S. Aitiev, Z. Zhumabaev, A. Asrankulov, Z. Zhakypov, N. Kongurbaev, S. Torobekov, Y. Shigaev, D. Nurgaziev, E. Saliev, T. Kurmanov and K. Davletov.

FIG. 57. Kyrgyzstan. N. Imanalieva: *The Dialogue*. 1990.

together to work on one project or another, whether avant-garde or outwardly traditional. The greatest achievement in Kyrgyz painting in recent years is the appearance of a new and highly original national and ethno-cultural tradition, of new directions in art and a wide variety of original and individual creativities. It is this in particular that comprises the base on which the unique aspects of Kyrgyzstan's national school of painting will be built in the new millennium.

TAJIKISTAN

In 1929, in connection with the formation of the Tajik SSR, a group of professional painters came together in the city of Dushanbe. Thereafter, the republic's Union of Artists was set up in the early 1930s. The story of fine art in Tajikistan is bound up with similar processes in Uzbekistan. One of the first Tajik artists, A. Ashurov, studied in Tashkent. Similarly, the well-known masters E. Burtsev and P. Falbov also began their artistic careers in Uzbekistan. The first exhibitions, held in the 1930s, showed just how much art in Tajikistan was dominated by the realist school of painting and by painters' desire to reflect not individual feelings but the social dimension in society. Thus the socialization of art was a typical characteristic of painting in Tajikistan in the 1930s.[12]

[12] During this time exhibitions in Tajikistan very often featured works by painters such as A. Ashurov, M. Khoshmukhamedov, E. Burtsev, M. Novikov, P. Falbov and G. Timkov.

In the 1940s, during the war years, painting's forward progression was somewhat suspended and gave way to more mobile pictorial representations in the form of political and propaganda posters. It was only in the 1950s that Tajik painting revived. This is particularly noticeable in a series of portraits of workers, teachers and foremen (in the first half of the 1950s).

The 1960s saw a number of innovations in Tajik painting: it was during this period that it acquired its unique features, i.e. the desire to take painting beyond the boundaries of illustrative realism and to focus upon a person's inner world rather than on events as phenomena in process, attempts to create a style that is at once expressive in terms of colour and monumental and generalized in terms of artistry. In these years new talents were to make names for themselves in the artistic life of Tajikistan.[13]

In the 1970s and 1980s the content, style and colour range of Tajik painting was to expand significantly. The combination of contrasting techniques, styles and artistic credos became a noticeable feature of painting in the 1980s. This is particularly evident if we compare the work of S. Kurbanov with that of S. Sharipov. Kurbanov's works are characterized by a faceted, linear manner of painting using planar compositional solutions (*Family Portrait in Interior*, 1976–8, and *I Have Divined all the Mysteries of the World*, 1980). Sharipov's works, on the other hand, use a pasty texture that is full of picturesque nuances and a deep light and airy perspective (*Workday Doctors*, 1979, and *A Letter*, 1983). As well as a return to previous themes and stylistic techniques, this period saw a new aspiration towards reinterpreting folk traditions (although this trend was not so widespread as in other republics in the region). Another painter of this period who should also be mentioned is N. Nikitin, who painted several studies of *Perviy Parad* [First Parade] before the final one that was painted for the state in 1983–4 (Fig. 58).

The situation in Tajikistan started to change during the 1990s. Art began to show the influence of new trends, while – as throughout all the countries and regions of the former USSR – socialist realism was rejected as a universal method. However, the logical development of a national art in Tajikistan was interrupted by the outbreak of civil war. It was only towards the end of the 1990s, after stability had been restored to political and public life, that a renaissance occurred in the world of art. As in the past, the painters Kurbanov, Sharipov and Y. Sangov remain a prominent force, while new art trends were created by younger artists such as N. Khamidova, F. Khodzhev, R. Akhmedov, L. Irismetova and A. Mirshakar.

[13] Among them were V. Boborykin, E. Nosik and I. Lisikov, all of whom had graduated from institutes in Moscow and Leningrad, as well as the young artists A. Abdurashitov, Z. Khabibullaev, A. Amindzhanov, K. Khushvakhtov, A. Rakhimov and V. Sapronov.

FIG. 58. Tajikistan. N. Nikitin: *Perviy Parad* [First Parade]. 1967. (Photo: Courtesy of J. Williams.)

Throughout the recent period there has been a growing interest in Tajik history and in the cultural traditions of the Tajik people, as well as in Tajikistan's customs and way of life. A focus on the everyday life of the people is evident in the painting of Y. Sangov (*Gathering Mulberries*, 1992, and *Autumn in Tajikistan*, 2002). Even so, the manner of his painting can change. If in these works he uses traditional figurative painting techniques, in the diptych *Dissonance I, II* the artist switches to abstract painting and in this way succeeds in conveying a mood of dramatic intensity. Thus in the painting of these artists it is possible to see the different directions they have taken in their attempt at experimentation, as well as the breadth of their stylistic approach.

One of Tajikistan's most talented and original young painters when it comes to style is A. Mirshakar, who uses ironic and highly subtle psychological nuances in his construction of human personae (Fig. 59). In his works a very clear and elegant style of painting conveys a slightly ironic yet impressive picture of characters, who, although defenceless, are, as simple people, resolute and pure where their inner world is concerned. An example is the artist's very light and subtle composition *Friends* (2002), which shows a woman in profile talking with a parrot that sits on top of the cage rather than inside it. Mirshakar's work is undoubtedly one of the most fruitful lines in modern Tajik painting.

FIG. 59. Tajikistan. A. Mirshakar: *Spletni* [Gossips]. 1997. (Photo: © Gallery 'Abris', Dushanbe.)

Conclusion

From the 1930s to the early 1980s, art in Central Asia was dominated by the figurative school of painting and was particularly influenced by the theories of socialist realism. It was only with the coming of independence in 1991 that the art scene underwent a radical change. Independence meant that artists were now able to use art as a vehicle of self-expression: they were free to choose their themes and styles. Art from the 1990s reveals the desire of artists to define their place in history, to show the unbreakable bond that links the past, present and future and to underline the impossibility of expunging history from consciousness. In addition, their work shows the increasing emphasis given to individual ways of looking at the world, something that in the past had no opportunity of expression.