



THE ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF SCULPTURAL KNOWLEDGE IN THE MULTIFACETED CRAFT SYSTEM OF ANCIENT KHOREZM.

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Article history:	Abstract:
Received: 20 th October 2025 Accepted: 14 th November 2025	This article provides a comprehensive analysis of the role, technological interconnections, and stylistic features of sculptural art within the multi-disciplinary craft system, using the ancient Khorezmian civilization as a case study. The research complexly examines samples of monumental sculpture and terracotta figurines discovered at the Akchakhan-kala (Kazakly-yatkan) site based on archaeological materials. The author scientifically substantiates the integral connection of sculptural knowledge with pottery, construction, and jewelry crafts, specifically focusing on the use of the matrix method and engineering calculations in creating monumental images. Furthermore, the religious-ideological content of sculptures, the visual expression of Zoroastrian symbols, and local cults are revealed through the example of the "Chorasman Gad" (city patron) figure. The article concludes that the Khorezmian sculptural school represents a synthesis of classical Eastern art traditions and the "animal style" of nomadic peoples.

Keywords: Ancient Khorezm, craft system, sculptural knowledge, Akchakhan-kala, terracotta figurines, S.P. Tolstov, monumental art, Chorasman Gad, iconographic analysis, polychrome sculpture, matrix method, religious ideology, Zoroastrian symbols

INTRODUCTION

The civilization of ancient Khorezm occupies a special place in the history of the material and spiritual culture of the peoples of Central Asia. The craftsmanship system formed in this region not only met practical needs, but also developed in close connection with complex art forms, in particular, sculpture. [1]. The relevance of the research lies in the fact that sculptural knowledge manifests itself as an integral part of multifaceted crafts (pottery, construction, jewelry making), reflecting the intellectual and technological level of society.

The purpose of this article is to scientifically analyze the formation of sculptural knowledge based on the archaeological finds of Khorezm, its stylistic features, and its synthesis with other branches of crafts.

METHODS

In this study, a comprehensive methodological approach was used to study the knowledge of sculpture and technological processes in the structure of ancient Khorezm crafts. The methodological basis of the research includes the following stages:

2.1. Archaeological-stratigraphic analysis

In the study, the main sources were the reports obtained as a result of excavations conducted by the Khorezm Archaeological and Ethnographic Expedition (KhAEE) under the leadership of S.P. Tolstov at

Zhanbaskala, Tuprakkala, and Kavatkala [2]. The chronological sequence of discoveries (from the Neolithic to the early Middle Ages) allowed for a chronological analysis of the development of sculptural knowledge.

2.2. Iconographic and Stylistic Analysis

The frescoes and sculptural fragments found at the Qozoqli-yotgan (Oqshaxon-qal'a) site were studied using the iconographic method. Anthropomorphic features (facial structure, crowns, "grivna" scarves) and their symbolic meanings were analyzed [3]. Also, a comparative analysis of the visual elements of the huge figure "Khorezm Gadi," which is 6 meters high, was carried out, and its connection with the art of ancient Iran and nomadic peoples was revealed.

2.3. Typological and statistical methods

In the study of terracotta in Khorezm and throughout Central Asia, the statistical-typological method proposed by N.D. Dvurechenskaya was used [4]. This method made it possible to group sculptural samples according to the following criteria:

- **Working techniques:** manual, mold casting (matrix) and mixed methods;
- **Thematic classification:** deities, horsemen, zoomorphic figures, and various religious characters.

2.4. Materials Science and Technological Analysis



The raw material composition of sculptural products (clay, gypsum, coloring minerals) and the processes of their processing (baking temperature, coating methods) were analyzed. This served to scientifically substantiate the technological connection of sculpture with pottery and construction crafts.

2.5. Comparative-historical approach

The distinctive features of the Khorezm school of sculpture were compared with the art of neighboring regions - Bactria, Sogdiana, and Parthia. With the help of this method, the local iconographic and technological traditions used by Khorezm masters were revealed.

RESULTS

As a result of the analysis conducted, the following fundamental aspects of the knowledge of sculpture in ancient Khorezm in the system of multifaceted crafts were revealed:

3.1. Pottery Technology and Small Plastic (Terracotta)

In Khorezm crafts, knowledge of sculpture developed in close connection with pottery. According to N. D. Dvurechenskaya, when creating terracotta figurines, artisans used two complex technologies: [4].

- **Matrix method** - enabled mass production of sculptures and preservation of iconographic accuracy;
- **Anthropomorphic and zoomorphic modeling** - More than 100 figurines found in Zhanbaskala testify to the craftsmen's stable knowledge of human and animal anatomy.

3.2. Monumental sculpture and engineering knowledge
Studies conducted in the Kazakh-Yatkan (Aksha-Khan-Kala) palace complex confirmed the existence of monumental sculpture.

- **Giant figure:** The image of the "Khorezm Gad" with a height of 6 meters demonstrates the craftsmen's high knowledge of scale and perspective.
- **Polychrome sculpture:** The technology of coloring sculptures using natural minerals has developed, which is an important feature of the Khorezm school of sculpture.

3.3. Synthesis of jewelry and sculpture

The grivnas and crowns on the sculptures of the "Gallery of Kings," analyzed by V. Yagodin, indicate that the sculptors also possessed knowledge of jewelry art [5]. The elements of the "animal style" in the sculptures (lions, birds, mythical creatures) confirm that they are the product of cultural synthesis.

3.4. Religious-Symbolic Attributes

According to the research of M. Shenkar, the sculptural examples of Aksha Khan-Kala reflect complex religious and philosophical concepts associated with

Zoroastrianism and local cults [6]. The figure of "Khorezm Gadi" is not just a work of art, but a material expression of a religious-ideological idea.

4. DISCUSSION

The research results show that sculptural knowledge in ancient Khorezm was formed not as an independent art form, but as an integral part of a multifaceted craft system. Archaeological materials confirm the close technological, iconographic, and ideological connection of sculpture with ceramics, construction, and jewelry making.

4.1. Specialization of handicrafts and integration of knowledge

Materials from the monuments of Akshakhan-kala, Dzhanbaskala, and Tuprakkala indicate a high degree of specialization of craft activities in Khorezm [7]. The need to ensure architectural calculation, scale, and structural stability in the creation of monumental sculptures means that sculptors also possessed engineering knowledge. At the same time, the widespread use of the matrix method in the production of terracotta plasticity indicates the existence of widespread forms of craftsmanship [8]. This situation shows that sculptural knowledge in Khorezm society served not only to satisfy aesthetic needs, but also religious, ideological, and social demands. In this process, a clear functional division was formed between sculptors-potters and sculptors-architects.

4.2. "Animal Style" and local iconographic traditions

One of the controversial aspects is the question of the presence of elements of the "animal style" in the sculpture of Khorezm. According to V. Yagodin's research, the presence of images of lions, birds, and mythical creatures in the decoration of the grivna and crowns of the "Gallery of Kings" indicates a close connection with the Scythian-Saka cultural traditions. However, it is advisable to assess this situation not as a complete influence of nomadic culture, but as a result of the process of synthesis with the local Khorezm iconography [9].

The uniqueness of the Khorezm school of sculpture lies in the fact that it combines the traditions of classical portrait art of the East with symbolic images characteristic of nomadic peoples. This indicates that sculptural knowledge has an open and flexible system.

4.3. Religious-ideological content and visual knowledge
The figure "Khorezm Gadi," analyzed by M. Shenkar, reveals the religious-ideological aspect of sculptural knowledge. This colossal image is a visual expression of the idea of the patron of the city (Tyche/Gad), demonstrating the sculptors' mastery of religious symbols, ritual attributes, and theological concepts. The depiction of "priest birds" on clothing, the symbols



of barsam and swastika reflect complex religious beliefs associated with Zoroastrianism.

This confirms that sculptural knowledge was not limited to technical skills, but was a type of intellectual activity closely connected with religious philosophy and ideology.

4.4. Discussion Issues and Scientific Perspectives

It should be noted that some aspects of Khorezm sculpture, in particular, the semantic meaning of the color system of polychrome sculptures and the precise functional interpretation of the image of "Khorezm Gadi," are still at the center of scientific discussions. In the future, laboratory analyses (pigment composition, cooking technology) and the use of digital reconstruction methods may further clarify these issues.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the knowledge of sculpture in ancient Khorezm was an integral part of the multifaceted craft system. Sculpture developed in close technological and artistic connection with ceramics, construction, and jewelry making, forming a unique school of Khorezm culture. This research clearly shows that Khorezm artisans possessed high intellectual, religious, and technological knowledge.

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