SEMANTICS OF TATAR ORNAMENTAL MOTIVES

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ABSTRACT

The decorative and applied art of the Kazan Tatars includes ornamental motives which are studied in the article from the point of view of the art semiotics. The relevance of the work is associated with realization of the relationship between the formation of ornamental elements with gesture and sound which in the process of evolution promoted to the creation of a pictorial language. The detected interaction is revealed through the description and ornamentation analysis method in all its forms: geometric outline, zoomorphic, plant, combined, religious, epigraphic, heraldic embodied by the Kazan Tatars in the objects of decorative and applied art. A review of the museum and collection base exhibits of ornamental art objects helped to classify them according to the types of ornamentation: visual, combined and non-visual. The aim of the paper was to analyze the ethno cultural features of Tatar art through the semantics of ornamental motives.

Keywords: Ornament. Semantics. Tatar culture. Artistic motive. Islam. Applied art.

RESUMEN

El arte decorativo y aplicado de los tártaros de Kazán incluye motivos ornamentales que se estudian en el artículo desde el punto de vista de la semiótica del arte. La relevancia de la obra está asociada a la realización de la relación entre la formación de elementos ornamentales con gesto y sonido que en el proceso de evolución promovió la creación de un lenguaje pictórico. La interacción detectada se revela a través del método de análisis de descripción y ornamentación en todas sus formas: contorno geométrico, zoomórfico, vegetal, combinado, religioso, epigráfico, heraldico encarnado por los tártaros de Kazan en los objetos de arte decorativa y aplicada. Una revisión de las exhibiciones del museo y del acervo de objetos de arte ornamental ayudó a clasificarlos según los tipos de ornamentación: visual, combinada y no visual. El objetivo del trabajo fue analizar las características etnoculturales del arte tártaro a través de la semántica de motivos ornamentales.


INTRODUCTION

The growth of urbanization and intercultural communication leads on the one hand to the loss of ethnic traditions and the leveling of artistic values and on the other hand to the assimilation of cultures and the uniformity of modern life. The relevance of the topic is in order to increase national self-awareness which promotes to the appeal to traditions in various areas of cultural life.

Indeed, among many types of creativity ornamental art has a deep semantic content and artistic fullness despite the lack of independence and transformation into a separate work. Sintsov E.V. noting the syncretism of decorative art writes that "... ornament is one of the most ancient products of human creative activity <...> which has passed through time, culture, civilization by the very fact of its imperishable existence designed to be a reminder of the cradle from which art came out" (SINTSOV, 2003, p. 8). The system of constructing patterns has been formed by peoples since ancient times. In the course of the genesis of decorative and applied art a compositional ornamental organization in which a rhythmic alternation of elements with mathematical logic developed and the process ultimately led according to Y.Y. Gerchuk to the "art of order" manifested by "the correlation of the whole with its parts, endowing the thing with the ability to generate the rhythms of time embodying the deep ideas of era about the structure of the surrounding world" (GERCHUK, 1998, p. 32). The motive of the ornament plastically shaped into unified whole has evolved from the realistic character of the image to the symbolically stylized one which can be equally attributed to the ornament in general and to the ethnic traditions in the decorative and applied art of the Tatars.

OBJECTIVES

For the peoples of the Turkic group ornamental art is almost of paramount importance due to the lack of painting with Western European traditions in their culture. Tatar culture is organically linked with Muslim art. Tatars are considered to be the Turkic-speaking tribes as well as peoples of Siberia, Central Asia, Crimea, Middle Volga and Ural regions. The most numerous Volga-Ural group includes Kazan Tatars, Mishars, Teptyars, Kasimov Tatars, etc. The decorative and applied art of the Kazan Tatars includes ornamental motives which are studied in the article from the point of view of the art semiotics. The study of the semantics of archetypal traditional ornamentation motives as a projection of human consciousness from the standpoint of modernity is the purpose of our article. This presupposes the formulation of the following tasks: 1) identification in the course of the empirical analysis of the material of the semantically typical features of the Tatar ornament; 2) determination of the essential meanings of ornamental motifs in historical development; 3) identifying the plot and compositions.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The subject matter of the work was the museum collections of the State Hermitage (St. Petersburg), the State Museum of Fine Arts and the National Museum of the Republic of Tatarstan (Kazan), the City Museum of Local Lore in Menzelinsk, the Museum of Applied Arts of the village Deukovo of the Menzelinsky District and private collections of inhabitants of the Republic of Tatarstan. The visualization technique helps to achieve the task of identifying the plot and compositional specifics of materials set in the paper.

The work used analytical and descriptive methods as well as the method of retrospective analysis of the development of the Tatar culture which testifies to the antiquity of the appearance of their ornamental art beginning from the Turkic-speaking nomadic tribes, the Ugric population of Volga-Kama region settled in the territory of Volga Bulgaria (XII-XIII centuries), Golden Hordes (XIII-XV centuries), Kazan Khanate (XVI-XVI centuries) up to the Russian state origin. The study of the ornament in general and the decorative and applied art of Kazan Tatars in particular was carried out by domestic and foreign researchers: S.G. Batyreva, Myagnmarsaykhan A. (BATYREVA, MYAGMARSAYKHAN, 2019), Belyaeva O. A., Minenko L. V. (BELYAEVA, MINEIKO, 2017), Valeev F. Kh., Valeeva-Suleimanova G. F. (VALEEV, VALEEEVA-SULEYMINOVA, 1990, 2002), Donina L.N. (DONINA, 2018), Vagapova F.G. (VAGAPOVA, 2015), Bonner J. (BONNER, 2017).

DISCUSSION

In most studies of the Kazan Tatars' ornamentation ornament is considered primarily as an element of folk aesthetics. In the article the issue is investigated from the standpoint of symbolic functions which implies an attitude to the ornament as a sign. Lithuanian folklorist Greimas A.J. asserted that "there is a close relationship between an object and a sign" (GREIMAS, 2004, p.15) which allows interpreting the semantic content of an ornament through the evolution of signs and according to the French scientist Benois L. understand "their
functional connection with the environment the world with the help of analyzers (BENUAS, 2004, p.6).

Ornamentation endowed with semantics gives an ethnic characteristic of the ornamental culture in the form of numerous compositional sign variations and allows to highlight the universal and unique features of a particular ethnic group. Kapar P.E., Goryacheva O.N. emphasize that “The sign model <…> conveys the geometry of symbolic space” (GORYACHEVA, KAPAR, 2015, p.311). Even the simplest geometric motives have polysemantic symbols which are often transformed into legends then into history. They give additional value to a material object and help to unite the plurality.

The commonality of ethnic ornament was laid at several levels note I.A. Babich, R.M. Valeev, R.R. Fakhrutdinov (BABICH, VALEEY, FAKHRUTDINOY, 2016, p. 37): 1) magic-protective defining the initial functionality, complicated motives were used in the form of "armlets". 2) plastifying (structural) when a conditional code was developed for the use of arranging elements among themselves methods from ribbon elements to carpet ones or from central beam elements to heraldic ones. 3) decorative with the predominance of the aesthetic function over the utilitarian one. Chaotic lines, spots began to be arranged in a rhythmic order. There was an increased interest in the form and motives detailing. 4) shape creating (syncretic) is the fusion of a plastic surface and décor which led to a new shaping - the drawing applied to the surface began to emphasize the architectonics of the container and correlate with its anthropometrics, for example, "head", "handles", "body". The specific features of the Kazan Tatars’ ornamentation make it possible to single out the pictorial, combined and non-pictorial types of ornament.

**RESULTS**

The pictorial type of ornament is presented most widely including geometric, zoomorphic and plant motives. Initially in the process of the development of ornamental motives geometric concepts which express the meaning-generating consciousness of a person who exists in 'space' and 'time' were familiarized. Geometric ornament included natural patterns of symmetry and rhythm, order and continuity. In a symbolic embodiment it is a circle, a square, a cross and their derivatives (see Fig. 1).

**Fig. 1** Geometrical ornament [1,2]

| **1 a.** Metal badge with carnelian. Metal, filigree, gilding. XIX century | **1 b.** Towel. Homespun piece of linen, wool, loom weaving. Late 19th - early 20th centuries |


**Source:** Prepared by the authors
The main artistic element in geometric ornament is a dot. The sources of its origin lie in the design of ceramics in the form of "dimples" - elements of ornamentation of Volga-Kama tribes of the Mesolithic era "noted Valeev F.Kh. and Valeeva-Suleimanova G.F. (VALEEV, VALEEEVA-SULEYMANOVA, 1987, P.7). The dot symbolism is the concentration of the Creator's energy. It can be expressed "substantively" muffled as well as abstractly full of sound (capable of imitating lines, textures and showing a connection with space).

The circle as a derivative of a dot means wholeness, continuity, perfection and at the same time completeness, coherence and softness. It embodies the essence of human existence: equality, cyclicity, uniformity, infinity. Moral categories were associated with it and therefore correlated with goodness, beauty and love. The shape expressed heavenly perfection like the God, the Sun, Cosmos. The transformation of the circle led to a symbolic sign - a circle with a dot in the center expressing the zero dot of the collective consciousness at the moment of its union with Holy. In real life these ornamental motives often merged together (Fig 1 a). For example, in a metal badge decorated with cornelian of the 19th century made in metal by an unknown master using the filigree and gilding technique from the State Museum of Fine Arts of the Republic of Tatarstan (Fig 1 a). The line is the antipode of the dot, the embodiment of movement, variability and the "Creative energy of Life". Expresed in the form of a wavy guide resembling curls in the form of spirals the semantics of the motive is reduced to the expression of the inner idea of self-enrichment and the combination of metal and stone embodies the idea of compensatory and unity of all things.

A square is generated by the intersection of two horizontal and vertical lines perceived as a limitation of physical material. The horizontal is the embodiment of mortal life while the vertical is the world axis. Merging in the form of a square these directions semantically lead to the idea of the mortal principle where a person lives associated with natural time cycles and spatial directions of the four cardinal points. It is a symbol of constancy, security, balance, strength, gravity and proportionality. The square is the symbol of the Universe as Asifaal-Hallab (1999, p.88) asserts.

Derivatives of a square are a rectangle, trapezoid, rhombus, triangle, meander, etc. The rhomb from the Neolithic period was associated with the idea of well-being and fertility and rhomb with a dot in the center created an allusion with a "sown field" (see Figure 1.b.). A towel made by an unknown master in loom weaving technique of the late 19th and early 20th element is a homespun canvas with the addition of woolen threads in size of 20 x 30 cm from the City Museum of Local Lore in Menzelinsk, Republic of Tatarstan. Pointed corners evoke aggressiveness, convey dynamics and activity and the obtuse angle symbolize instability, lethargy, negativity. Depending on the position the triangular shape can be active or passive. So, an isosceles triangle in a position with its apex upwards conveys stability striving for higher unity and embodying the element of Air. But if the apex is located downwards, it will convey the essence of the earth. If these triangles are combined on one of the sides, then they will represent a rhombus which is a symbol of the feminine and masculine principles as a continuation of the genius and emanation as B. A. Rybakov affirmed (RYBAKOV, 1972, p. 35).

The cross initially includes the sacred meaning of the center ordering a space (top-bottom, right-left). The cruciform figure of a man with outstretched arms was perceived as a living "model of the World axis and coordinate system." We find this ornament on a fragment of a woman's headwear chain-stitch embroidered and made of linen in size of 27.8 x 32.2 (see Fig. 1.c) dating back to the beginning of the 20th century and is located in the State Museum of Fine Arts of the Republic of Tatarstan in Kazan.

Geometric motives are presented in the folk ornamentation of Kazan Tatars in various combinations. So a connected square and a circle is the basic form of a star, rose, lotus, concentric circles. A circle with a central dot represents the final stage in the process of individualization when imperfections and mortal desires are eliminated to achieve spiritual integrity and "paradise". For example, a bronze cast matrix in size of 2x2x0.5 cm in the form of a rhombus of the XIII-XIV centuries from the State Hermitage (see Fig. 1.d) is a complex variant of combining various elements.

All curved figures that can be classified as a circle: ellipse, oval, parabolas and their derivatives, circles and semicircles embodied the sun which takes the shape of a flower in a floral ornament. Geometric ornamental motives retain their traditional archaic structure, shape, color and other technical characteristics up to now but their original semantic meaning has been lost.

The pictorial (zoomorphic) ornament which was identified with the created image of the animal expressing the generic sign and being an interpretation of the life power attracts a great interest. The images were drawn from natural observations and could be either positive or negative. Their dynamics despite the figurativeness of images logically lined up in a generalized form of poses, states, directions of movement (see Fig. 2).
Figure 2. Zoomorphic ornament [2,3]

2 a. The temporal ring. Gold, granulation, filigree. Late XIIth – early XIIIth century

2 b. Metal badge with stamped ornament. Silver, gilding. Golden Horde XIV century


Source: Prepared by the authors

The motive of the bird expressed the manifestation of spiritual life but at the same time indicated the highest state of being. It was executed in the Tatar ornament in contour with spread wings, two heads and tails branched to the sides. Many beliefs, fairy tales and legends are associated with their images. For example, a gold temporal ring of XII – early XIII centuries decorated with granulation and filigree from Bilyar located in the historical museum in Moscow tells about the cosmogonic myth of the creation of the world by duck (ducks) known from the Bulgarian times (see Fig. 2 a). A flock of ducks is presented in the composition of a silver plate with stamped ornament from the Golden Horde of the 14th century from the State Hermitage St. Petersburg (see Fig. 2 b.) as an illustration of the legend about the creation of the earth formed from an earth-ball taken at the behest of the Almighty (Tengri) from the bottom of an immense ocean.

Archaeologists note a small amount of "animal style" in the ornament of the Kazan Tatars. With the adoption of Islam animal motives became rare and were highly stylized (see Fig. 2c, d). Despite various examples it can be noted that their composition has a conditionally decorative style (generalized realism) depicting the head of the protagonist with a peaceful contemplative face expression which holds meaning of a talisman. This applies equally to ornamental works from the State Hermitage in St. Petersburg and to a bracelet from the National Museum of the Republic of Tatarstan in Kazan.

The plant figurative group of ornaments expresses nature in a stylized form (see Fig. 3). This is the most common basic component in the culture of Kazan Tatars, indicating the important role of agriculture.
**Figure 3:** Floral ornament ![Floral ornament](image)

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<td>Velvet, silver thread, embroidery.</td>
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<th>3 c. Kalfak with coins.</th>
<th>3 d. Kalfak purple. Velvet, golden cross-stitch embroidery, flattened wire, sequins. Late 19th century</th>
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<td>Velvet, golden cross-stitch embroidery.</td>
<td>Early 20th century</td>
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**Source:** Prepared by the authors

The central symbol of Tatar floral ornament is the “Tree of Life” which symbolizes the structure of the world. Ultimately for many peoples floral ornament is the embodiment of world order and the Cosmos. Its prototype was the steppe bush which played an important role in the pagan beliefs of the ancestors of the Tatars - the Bulgars. If the early images of the heavenly tree or tree of life are characterized by symmetry i.e. conveys the symbol of life and death, self-enrichment, center of the Universe then over time semantics goes to the wayside giving a way to a decorative function. For example, an ornament of a heraldic type symmetrical in composition on a velvet bag for the Koran from the private collection of Nizami Ibragimov embroidered with silver thread in size of 15.3 x 21 cm made by an unknown craftsman (Fig. 3.a.). Or a floral asymmetric stylized three-part composition on a silk towel (the so-called “Kazan’s” dated by the early 20th century) decorated with a chain-stitch embroidery with braid gilded thread with sequins from the State Museum of Fine Arts of the Republic of Tatarstan (see Fig. 3.b.). Among the Kazan Tatars the tree of life appears as a harmonious composition consisting of a tree trunk, stems, sprouts, buds, blossoming flowers and fruits. The bouquet symbolizes the unity of masculine and feminine principles embodied in the family. This is the composition of the early XX century on a velvet kalfak with coins of an unknown master decorated with gilded embroidery from the State Museum of Fine Arts of the Republic of Tatarstan (see Fig. 3c). If the composition acquires splendor thanks to the numerous details, then it indicates the everyday troubles of the thing owner (see Fig.3d) as on the velvet kalfak of an unknown master of the late 19th century decorated with gilded embroidery with sequins and flat wire braid from the State Museum of Fine Arts of the Republic of Tatarstan.

The climatic and natural factors influenced on the uniqueness of the elements of floral ornamental motives in Tatar art. It should be noted that among the steppe motives images of a tulip, carnation, forget-me-not, poppy prevail. As for the meadow motives you can often see stylized images of bells, wild rose flowers and chamomile but in the garden plants motives the asters, peonies, dahlias, and pansies are extremely popular. Floral ornament is widespread in all types of folk art and characterized by an abundance of floral motives, the complexity of their
interpretation, a wealth of color combinations. They reflect the specificity of the local flora and are imbued with the symbolism of fertility. The semantics of plant motives has transformed over time. The "tulip" motive traditionally perceived in medieval society as a man (youth) who devoted himself to God in the modern world means a symbol of rebirth and striving for great achievements but "rose" symbolizing vital and spiritual strength today indicates warmth, love, kindness and mercy.

The combined (anthropomorphic-polymorphic) group of ornaments interprets the communication of a person with higher powers defining the boundaries of "friend or foe". Cultural self-identification led to the birth of anthropomorphic symbols of a stylized image of a person as well as to the appearance of mixed elements with zoomorphic elements – birds exactly (see Fig. 4).

**Figure 4.** Combined group of ornaments[4]

|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

**Source:** Prepared by the authors

Eastern and Western researchers are unanimous in the opinion that Islamic art has no personal interest in man and ignores his carnal nature as an object of study and imitation. The art of Islam did not reflect the problems of a person's spiritual life. The lack of interest in them is due to the mentality of a Muslim living in accordance with the doctrines of the Koran: "Allah knows best" (KORAN, 2012, p. 18). The ban on the depicting of mice and men in the ornament for the Kazan Tatars after the adoption of Islam led to some impersonality and a lack of a subject. It is no coincidence that most of patterns are full of plant motives, plots in a complex hard to guess figurativeness. As a rule the elements of the patterns are woven into each other. Therefore, it is sometimes compared with the "plait" of other peoples of the Scandinavian countries.

The non-pictorial ornament was expressed through the symbols of the view and was associated, first of all, with religious and ethnic views. For example, the distance between the microcosm and the macrocosm was perceived in the form of an ideographic figurative language of nature expressed by the method of concepts developed in the mind. The spiritual world of peoples appears in the form of an inverse picture. Hence there is the duality in the reading of ornaments. On the one hand it is the meaning of the inscriptions on the other it is the external "beauty" of the outline.

The small form where the letters are applied were widely used in the ornamentation of hammered badges (round, square, etc.) from the Golden Horde used in the form of pendants as in the example from the State Hermitage (see Figure 4 a). It has a static composition with a central part and a round rim around the edge made by engraving, stamping, blackening with an inscription of a benevolent message. Textiles for various purposes with Arabic script in the style of "kufi" were very popular in Volga Bulgaria. For example, a silk coverlet satin stitch embroidered with gilded thread and complemented with lace from the State Museum of Fine Arts of the Republic of Tatarstan (see Figure 4 b).

The epigraphic (calligraphic) non-pictorial ornament was intended as a decoration for household items. Included in the composition of jewelry it became a symbolic indicator of belonging to the certain religious belief. Its development was facilitated by the adoption of Islam. In the decorative and applied art of the Kazan Tatars style "kufi" developed from the pre-Mongol period and "naskh" one from the middle of the 18th century. It showed his
characteristic features most of all in the art of books and Shamails. However, they can be found in sufficient quantities in jewelry and textiles.

The "heraldic" combined ornament was the absolute of the principle of geometrization and mirror symmetry. It represents compositions in the form of a shield, heraldic figures, brizours. Here the spiritual, psychic and material zones distribute the spaces between themselves horizontally and vertically. For example, a stick, a scepter, a sword per se express justice and peace.

The peculiarities of the composition of Muslim artifacts are especially clearly seen in the ornament of the Kazan Tatars. In the carved art of tombstones of the 16th - 17th centuries the Kazan Tatars revealed a compositional prototype which underlies all types of arts and crafts. The elements used in the ornament are based on the creation of a rhythmic pattern, repetitions, alternation of motives. The most commonly used ornaments are tape (border), heraldic mesh (carpet), central beam (radial) compositions.

The frilling of the ornament consists of rapports with parallel guidings. It can be a pattern composed of various geometric rosettes filled with floral motives or a ribbon pattern with a floral motive in the form of an oncoming wave, one-sided and two-sided arrangement of motives when leaves, flowers, buds are located along a wavy line. Sometimes the lush ornamentation in the form of weaving around the inscriptions in the form of a wide frame decorated the gravestones. It was often perceived as a sky-sign. This motive is found in Moorish art among the peoples of Arabia, Bulgars and Kazan Tatars. It became a favorite one in the applied arts and crafts of embroidery and metalwork. There are complex compositions, for example, with two systems of intersecting wavy lines. Ornaments in the form of a band with knots have protective semantics. The thread strips reveal the normal course of life. A significant place in patterned fabrics is occupied by meshy or carpet rapport. In addition, there is a distinguish between a central-beam or radical rosette composition. In this case the pattern is built on a ray composition with a single center.

If we consider compositional constructions as a whole, then the frequent use of a three-part composition among the Kazan Tatars is the embodiment of a world consisting of three classes of living-beings (birds, animals, amphibians). It includes three temporary concepts [past, present, future], three body parts (head, corpora, legs), three elements (fire, earth, water). Consideration of its decomposition along the vertical can be distributed to roots, trunk, tree crown depicted on metal badges, splints and other objects of decorative and applied art. Typical motives of compositions in woven products are white-red linear ornamentation patterns. The creation of an "image" is usually based on labor skills. It means that motives, elements and compositions may vary depending on the material used and the way it is processed. For example, in weaving ornamentation which sets conventional monotonous motives of the drawing there are rhombuses with rhythmic figures with two parallel lines located across the inside, jagged figures of squares with a cross inside, zigzag patterns of straight lines or with a swastika. This tendency is caused by the similarity of the Finno-Ugric peoples.

According to their compositional structure modern Tatars' ornaments are divided into three groups. Firstly, clearly modeled realistically executed works, secondly, ornaments based on generalizations and allegorical references to the philosophical and traditional worldview, thirdly, patterns suggesting schematischity. Allowing this variation craftsmen sometimes used the same motive in different ways finding various appliances for it.

**CONCLUSIONS**

The increase in the national self-awareness and ethnic identity of the Tatars as a defensive reaction to the standardization of life led to the preservation and revival of their cultural traditions. This trend today is reaching the level of problems associated with the protection of the inner world of a person and the spiritual and cultural values created by him. In their article Kuznetsova E.V., Goryacheva O.N., Patenko G.R. note: "The processes of globalization and integration make the problem of national identity a key in defining of personal identity of a subject <...> that national identity is a basis for the determination of a subject's nationality and his place within the social community." (KUZNETSOVA, GORYACHEVA, PATENKO, 2016)

Typical features of the ornamental art of the Kazan Tatars are the preservation of the visible visual world through the lens of that does not have the character of direct reproduction of phenomena but has figurative incarnations of the Universe, the non-pictorial peculiarities are the author's interpretation of reality, the individual style of master performance (individual style) which brings to the fore the expressive power. The transmission of the surrounding world in this case is carried out by images-signs, images-words. The combined one is a combination of pictorial motives, individual elements as well as abstract forms.

The ornament of the Kazan Tatars has undergone a long evolution from magical ancient ideas through the
religious semantics of elements, plots, motives to universal symbols that are actively used in modern art and design.

It should be recognized that ornamental art is an intellectual art. The semantics lost by a civilized person at a conscious level leads to a semiotic combination of the uninkable, a detached attitude to the history but at the level of unconsciousness the national artistic image is embodied in a veiled incarnation. The authors noticed that the less clear the outlines of the ornamental motive are the more opportunities for their modifications exist.

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