

Pottery making

Pottery making is one of the widespread traditional crafts of the Tajik people. Potteries produced in the workshops located in the urbanized centers and cities always had a distinctive feature in quality and variety. In rural places pottery making was practiced mainly by women. They produced various household objects by hand without using wheel or other professional tools employed in city based workshops. The pottery items in villages were dried in the shade and baked in regular oven, which usually were for baking breads. For firewood the main fuel used was a cow patty.

Pottery making was a popular thing-to-do in the summer season. The clay was chosen from special location where the dirt would have the texture and component for making pottery. The soil was brought and dried thoroughly afterwards than a mixture was prepared. To give the pottery sturdy texture sometimes sand was added too. If the pottery objects were large jars or pots the masters would add also goat hair to add the strength to the structure of the clay.

When the pottery mixture (clay) was prepared, usually by mixing with hand and stomp; the clay than was wrapped and left in the shade for up to ten days. When the clay was ready it was taken than to the preparation table where different objects were crafted and refined on the wheel by coating and ornamenting them.

Main tool for pottery making is pottery wheel, which has following parts *charkh* (wheel), *tir* (shaft), *sandon* or *sumba* (fly wheel). When the clay was put on the wheel a thick liquid mixture of clay was poured on it that would help when the clay was shaped into an object. When the object was shaped various sharp objects including strings were used to ornament the object prior it was set to dry and baked. The ornaments of the local potteries are not very complex and primarily consist of geometric patterns. More decorative elements and designs were applied after the objects were baked using different natural pigments.

Prior to the initial drying of the object before it being baked it would be processed with



a cloth soaked in red loam slip, which is called «maimolkuni» or «gilobchakuni». In workshops they would also use different types of glazing elements of different color. After initial drying process the objects are rubbed by a dry and then damp cloth a process which is called «saiqalzani». After this process the objects are left in the sun for complete drying before they are taken to the oven for baking.

The pottery firing ovens are called «khumdon» and depending on the size of the potteries fired on them they were designated as «kalon» (big) or «maida» (small) khumdon. These ovens had special hole on the top «dahani khumdon» (a mouth of oven) used to put the pottery inside and the walls had multiple small holes called «murghak» for the smoke to come out. Pottery objects were either piled on one another during the baking or held in a metallic net to allow the fire to go through. The «khumdon» during the firing process would be sealed completely to allow the temperature to rise into the maximum possible.

The pottery objects prepared based on the surviving samples include a vast array of the household and luxury objects of diverse functionality. This included also pots and dishes for cooking food or storage of large quantities of liquid or grain products.

Pottery making was practiced among the local population of Tajikistan till the middle of the twentieth century and gradually it has declined and the ceramic products were replaced by china or other porcelain objects.

Miniature painting

Miniature painting is one of the traditional forms of the fine arts of Tajik people. Miniature is a small, finely wrought portrait executed on vellum, prepared card, copper, or ivory. The name is derived from the minimum, or red lead, used by the medieval illuminators. Arising from a fusion of the separate traditions of the illuminated manuscript and the medal, miniature painting flourished from the beginning of the 16th century down to the mid-19th century.

In Tajik culture it has a very old history, attested in early medieval rock painting, wall

murals and other material culture products. In the history of the Tajik statehood, many different miniature schools have emerged and are known, such as the miniature school of Herat, whose famous representative is master Kamoluddin Behzod. Miniatures are significant for the traditional and classical Tajik poetry and book culture and it is impossible to imagine the Tajik literary sources without their elaborate and rich miniatures. In particular, the medieval Tajik book culture employed miniatures to decorate the manuscripts and works of poets and philosophers and these miniatures depict the nature, landscapes, sport games, martial arts, entertainment, music and cuisine etc.

Miniature art still continues in modern Tajik fine art. In Dushanbe, the famous miniature school is that run by famous Tajik artist Olim Kamolov and his students. In Olim Kamolov's school miniatures are depicted on ceramics, wood panels and other materials. The artistic features presented are imitations of the medieval miniature school but also fusing them with contemporary themes.

In the past miniature painting would have a two-layer ground. The bottom layer would be a mixture of glue, plaster, and grape treacle; on top of that would be a layer of white lead and oil-varnish. Currently, artisans are actively involved in the introduction of ancient traditions of miniature executions with use of modern technology. O. Kamolov's miniature pieces, «Navruz», «Silk Road» and «Race» are among the best miniatures, which has received international awards and recognition.

The miniature execution knowledge and skills today in Tajikistan are transferred through the school of O. Kamolov called «Mino».



