



FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES IN THE SCULPTURAL ART OF ANCIENT  
KHOREZM AND THEIR TECHNOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

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**Abstract:** *In this scientific thesis, based on archaeological materials and fundamental scientific sources, the fundamental qualitative and quantitative changes that occurred in the sculptural art of ancient Khorezm are analyzed. The study examines the stages of the transition of sculpture from miniature plastic (terracotta) to monumental forms, in particular, using the example of the Akshakhan-Kala and Toprak-Kala monuments. The author scientifically substantiates the technological revolution that occurred as a result of the introduction of the matrix (mold) method in sculpture and the place of this process in the craft system. It also reveals the religious and ideological content of sculptural images, the strengthening of elements of realism in them, and the symbolic significance of monumental figures such as the "Khorezm Gad" in the system of state administration.*

**Keywords:** *Ancient Khorezm, sculptural art, radical changes, Akshakhan-Kala, monumentalism, matrix method, terracotta plasticity, S.P. Tolstov, Khorezm Gadi, iconographic analysis, state ideology.*

## INTRODUCTION

In the civilization of ancient Khorezm, the art of sculpture reached its peak in antiquity. The relevance of the topic is that during this period, sculpture was formed not just as a type of decoration, but as a complex craft system and a visual expression of the state ideology. The purpose of the research - to determine the technological and ideological reasons for the radical changes that have occurred in the knowledge of sculpture, using the example of Aksha-Kala and other monuments.

**Methods** In the research process, the following methods were used: archaeological-stratigraphic analysis (S.P. Tolstov), iconographic method (V. Yagodin), and statistical-typological analysis (N.D. Dvurechenskaya). The main sources are the reports of the Khorezm Archaeological and Ethnographic Expedition (KhAEE) and the latest research on monumental sculpture by Michael Shenkar.

**Results** As a result of the research, four main directions of fundamental changes in the sculpture of ancient Khorezm were identified:

1. The formation of monumentality and engineering solutions: The transition from small ("handmade") figurines characteristic of the Early Iron Age to large monumental compositions of antiquity is the most fundamental change. The figure of the "Khorezm Gadi" (protector of the city), more than 6 meters high, found in the palace complex of Akshakhan-kala (Kazakly-Yatkan), testifies to the synthesis of sculpture with architecture.

According to Michael Shenkar's analysis, to create such giant sculptures, craftsmen relied not only on artistic skill but also on complex engineering knowledge such as

calculating the weight and central axis of the sculpture. During this period, sculpture rose from the level of personal belief to the level of "imperial style" of state significance.

2. Technological revolution: Matrix and polychromy: The technological transformation of sculptural knowledge is associated with the introduction of the matrix (special template) method.

As N.D. Dvurechenskaya noted, this method transformed sculpture into a highly specialized branch within the ceramic craft. The release of hundreds of terracotta figurines of the same pattern led to iconographic standardization of images.

At the same time, the application of knowledge of polychromy (multicolor) in the processing of sculptures - the technique of using gypsum, mineral pigments, and paints - radically changed the visual impact of sculptures.

Iconographic synthesis and realistic portraiture: The archaeological materials of the "Gallery of Kings," studied by V. Yagodin, prove the transition from conditional depictions to realistic portraits in sculpture.

The individual features of the facial structure of the sculptures, anatomical accuracy, and complex details (for example, embroidery on clothing, crowns, and weapons) define the uniqueness of the Khorezm school of sculpture. In this process, a synthesis of classical art of antiquity and elements of the Eurasian Scythian-Saka "animal style" is observed.

For example, the mythological creatures of the eagle, snow leopard, and ram with horns, depicted on the crowns and grivnas of sculptures, testify to the fact that Khorezm was at the crossroads of both agricultural and nomadic cultures.

Change in the religious-ideological function: In the early period, the cult of fertility (the Great Mother) predominated in the sculptures, but by the time of antiquity, complex forms of the Zoroastrian pantheon appeared.

The research of S.P. Tolstov and Michael Shenkar shows that the images of "bird-priests," "Anachita" in the sculptures, and the idea of the deified king confirm a radical change in the religious thinking of society. During this period, sculpture began to serve as a visual bridge between the divine world and humanity.

#### Discussion and conclusion

The obtained results show that the fundamental changes in sculpture stemmed from the need for Khorezm to express its identity as an independent state. Conclusion In other words, sculptural knowledge is the highest intellectual link of the multifaceted craft system, which combines pottery, architecture, and jewelry making. In the future, the study of the polychrome (paint) composition of these sculptures in laboratory conditions will allow determining the level of chemical knowledge in art.

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