



THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ART OF BOOKMAKING IN THE KOKAND KHANATE: SOURCES, SCHOOLS, AND CRAFTSMEN

Mubinabonu Zokirova

International Islamic Academy of Uzbekistan

E-mail: zokirovamubinabonu004@gmail.com

Scientific adviser: Senior Lecturer X.Nuriddinov,

Department of Arabic Language and Literature (al-Azhar)

Abstract. *This article examines the formation and development of the art of bookmaking in the Kokand Khanate, its role in the socio-cultural life of the period, and its contribution to the advancement of science and education. The study highlights the creative activities of calligraphers, illuminators, painters, and manuscript decorators who worked within the khanate, while also analyzing the emergence and development of bookmaking centres. Particular attention is paid to manuscript sources, libraries, madrasas, and the court environment that influenced the growth of the art of book production. The article explores the bookmaking traditions and calligraphic schools that developed in major cultural centres such as Kokand, Margilan, Namangan, and Andijan, emphasizing their distinctive characteristics. Based on historical and scholarly sources, the research demonstrates that the art of bookmaking in the Kokand Khanate constituted an important component of the cultural heritage of Central Asia and played a significant role in the development of national written culture.*

Keywords: *Kokand Khanate, art of bookmaking, manuscripts, calligraphy, calligraphers, manuscript illumination, miniature painting, libraries, madrasas, scholarly heritage, manuscript sources, calligraphic schools, Fergana Valley, cultural heritage, Islamic book arts.*

INTRODUCTION

During the Kokand Khanate (1709–1876), the art of bookmaking occupied an important place in the cultural life of Transoxiana (Mawarannahr). As a result of the development of science, literature, and art within the khanate, the activity of the calligraphers (khattats), illuminators (muzahhibs), and bookbinders engaged in creating, copying, and decorating manuscript books became widespread. Especially during the reigns of Umarkhan (1810–1822) and Muhammad Alikhan (1822–1842), the literary and cultural milieu rose to a higher level, and a new stage in the development of the art of



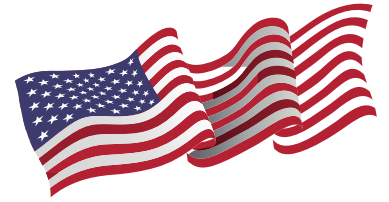
bookmaking emerged (Azimova, 1995:112–118). The art of bookmaking in the Kokand Khanate served as an important means not only of preserving religious works but also of preserving historical, literary, and scholarly sources and transmitting them to later generations. For this reason, the study of the bookmaking heritage of this period remains one of the relevant scholarly questions today.

MAIN PART

Paper-Making in the Kokand Khanate

The art of bookmaking occupies an important place in the development of the cultural life of the Central Asian khanates. This field, connected with the creation and decoration of manuscript books, flourished to a considerable degree during the existence of the Kokand Khanate. It is known that during the reign of Umarkhan in Kokand, science advanced and the distinctive Kokand literary milieu took shape, and many schools and madrasas were built. These processes, in turn, led to an increase in the demand for books in the khanate, and thus a number of fields connected with the art of bookmaking developed. First of all, the craft of preparing paper – the material necessary for making books – took root. Owing to the political crisis and turmoil that occurred in the Central Asian states in the eighteenth century, cultural life throughout Central Asia, and paper production as one of its components, fell into decline; in particular, the various wars, uprisings, and conflicts among the khanates brought the Samarkand school of papermaking to ruin. By contrast, papermaking began to flourish in politically stabilizing Kokand, to which masters from Samarkand migrated. Thus the paper-production workshops of Kokand came to control the paper supply throughout Central Asia – that is, throughout Turkestan, in the territory stretching from the Aral Sea to the borders of China (Ibragimov & Esonov, 2010:39).

Paper produced in Kokand was considered famous throughout Central Asia and was prized among the learned. At the beginning of the eighteenth century there were two paper-production enterprises in Kokand, one located near the city's "Mo'yi Muborak" gate and the other in the village of Chorku near the city. Kokand paper was distinguished by its quality, durability, and fineness, and was one of the prized commodities of the khanate's markets. In the 1870s, merchants bought a quire of twenty-four sheets of paper at the Kokand bjuvoz (paper workshop) for 15 kopecks and sold it in the market for



20–30 kopecks. The two enterprises in Kokand produced 150,000 sheets of paper a year, worth 2,000 roubles (Madrahimov, 2009:72). Because of the high demand for quality Kokand paper, the creative figures of Bukhara mainly used this paper, and rulers, too, wrote their letters chiefly on Kokand paper. In particular, a collection of the letters of Amir Haydar (1800–1825), comprising 279 letters on 139 sheets written in nasta’liq script on Kokand paper, has survived to our time (Tilavov, 1997:142).

Calligraphers and Calligraphic Schools

The establishment of paper production created the ground for the development of the art of bookmaking in the khanate. Manuscript books came into being through the collaborative labour of several craftsmen. First, the papermaker prepared the paper in a particular format and in various colours; the calligrapher, who had mastered several styles of script, then copied the text onto the paper. Calligraphers approached their work with high taste. As in the other cities of Central Asia, there were many talented calligraphers in the city of Kokand as well. They formed their own school of calligraphy, for they possessed their own styles and were distinguished from the calligraphers of other cities. Another of their features was that many of the Kokand calligraphers were also poets, historians, and miniaturists; through their works they raised the calligraphic craft of Kokand to the level of a national art (Isaboeva, 2006:57).

One such calligrapher was Muhammad Latif, who in 1813 copied Navoi’s Chor Devan (“Four Divans”) in nasta’liq script. The divan is exceedingly fine in hand, with ornate ruled frames and gilded illuminated headpieces (Murodov, 1971:108). Mirza Sharif Dabir, too, was a famous calligrapher of his time who lived in the first half of the nineteenth century and was a master of bookmaking script comparable to the renowned Mir Imad. In 1836, by order of Muhammad Alikhan, he copied the divan of Fuzuli in nasta’liq script with exceptional beauty in Kokand; in 1837 he also copied, with great care, the selected ghazals of Fuzuli in elegant nasta’liq. The ghazals on each pair of copied pages are placed within a single circle; the circle, made to resemble an image of the sun, is decorated with radiant flowers and adorned with gold leaf. Mirza Bobokalon Khoqandi, the son of Muhammad Riza Parvanachi Ista-Ravshani, copied in beautiful nasta’liq the book entitled Tazkira-i Sultani, written in masnavi form in Persian by



Abdulvasit Manzur in 1870 and dedicated to the Kokand khan Khudoyarkhan. Mir Afzal Khoqandi copied, in beautiful nasta'liq in the margins, the dictionary Nisab al-Sibyan by Abu Nasr al-Farahi. Besides these, the names of many other calligraphers could be cited. Calligraphers also copied the books used as textbooks in schools and madrasas.

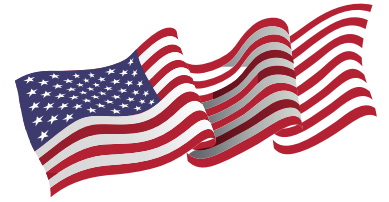
Illumination, Painting, and Bookbinding

Books copied by calligraphers passed into the hands of ornamentalists (naqqash) and painters (musavvir), who worked various ornaments on the pages of the book, executed miniatures based on the content of the work, and surrounded the pages with margins. Especially precious manuscripts were also handed to the illuminator (muzahhib), who decorated the pages and margins with gilding. After these tasks were completed, the binder (sahhaf) bound the book (Axunjanov, 2011:94). Bookbinding, too, was a developed craft in Kokand, and in nineteenth-century accounts it is said that “the best bookbinders are in Kokand.” According to the data of P. I. Pashino, in the 1860s simple bookbinding tools were produced in Kokand, and such tools were difficult to find even in Samarkand, which was Kokand’s rival in this field. Namangan, like Kokand, was one of the cities where the binding craft was developed, and the bindings made there from leather and paper were not inferior to those produced in the great centres of Central Asia, Samarkand and Khiva (Madrahimov, 2009:135).

Libraries and Manuscript Collections

The flourishing of the art of bookmaking in the Kokand Khanate and the creation of many manuscript books served as a basis for the establishment of libraries in the khanate. As recorded in the sources, in the Kokand Khanate, as in the other states of Central Asia, libraries were established attached to the khan’s palace, to madrasas, and to mosques. There are also accounts that wealthy landowners, enlightened state officials, and the governors of certain provinces established private libraries on their estates.

In the Kokand Khanate, palace libraries and madrasa libraries were an important centre of scholarly life. The libraries held copies of the Qur’an, collections of hadith, and works on jurisprudence, history, literature, and medicine. As researchers note, the library of the Kokand palace was considered one of the richest manuscript collections in the Fergana Valley (O’rinboyev, 2005:33–40). Many of the works held in these collections



are today preserved in the manuscript treasury of the Abu Rayhan al-Biruni Institute of Oriental Studies.

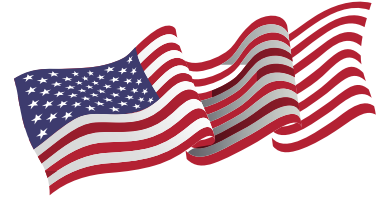
The manuscript books created during the Kokand Khanate are important sources reflecting the scholarly and artistic thought of their time. Through these works, not only historical events but also the traditions of calligraphy, miniature, and decorative art have reached us. The Kokand school of bookmaking is an inseparable part of the bookmaking culture of Central Asia, and its heritage is today one of the important objects of scholarly research. The cataloguing, digitization, and introduction into scholarly circulation of these manuscripts is creating the possibility of studying this heritage more deeply.

CONCLUSION

During the Kokand Khanate, the art of bookmaking developed as an important component of cultural and educational life. Within the khanate, the traditions of calligraphy, illumination, bookbinding, and the copying of manuscript books were raised to a high level. The formation of the literary and cultural milieu under the patronage of Umarkhan, Nadira, and other enlightened rulers had a positive effect on the development of the art of bookmaking. The manuscripts created by the calligraphers and other masters who worked in such cities as Kokand, Margilan, Andijan, and Namangan are today recognized as the invaluable cultural heritage of our people. The Kokand school of bookmaking is an organic continuation of the bookmaking traditions of Central Asia and occupies a distinct place by virtue of its artistic and scholarly significance.

Recommendations

- The work of digitizing the manuscript sources of the Kokand Khanate period and of creating their electronic catalogues should be expanded.
- It is advisable to carry out special scholarly projects for the in-depth study of the representatives of the Kokand school of bookmaking and their works.
- Special courses on the art of bookmaking and on manuscript studies should be organized in higher education institutions.
- It is recommended that exhibitions and scholarly-practical conferences devoted to the bookmaking heritage of the Kokand Khanate be held regularly in museums, libraries, and scholarly centres.



- The possibilities of transmitting this cultural heritage to future generations should be expanded by introducing modern technologies for the restoration and preservation of manuscript works.

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