

G. L. CHEPELEVETSKAYA
SUZANIS OF UZBEKISTAN

STATE ART LITERATURE PUBLISHING
HOUSE OF THE USSR
1961

Translated by Adam Smith Albion
THE SUZANI MUSEUM AND RESEARCH CENTER
2020



Institute of Art History of the Academy of Sciences of the UzSSR
State Museum of Oriental Cultures

NATIONAL DECORATIVE EMBROIDERY



TASHKENT 1961

G. L. CHEPELEVETSKAYA

SUZANIS OF UZBEKISTAN



STATE ART LITERATURE PUBLISHING
HOUSE OF THE USSR

Academic editor: L. A. Zhadova

Photographs by
M. N. Zasytkin, Ya. M. Klempert, S. S. Rakushev

Color plates by
B. M. Ayerova, I. M. L'vova, V. V. Parfenova, M. F. Prutska

Diagrams and drawings by
Z. Basitkhanov, T. Ikramov, I. Rakhmanov

Republished by

THE SUZANI MUSEUM AND RESEARCH CENTER

Translated to English language by
Adam Smith Albion

Research by
Zeinab Shahidi Marnani

New York 2020



INTRODUCTION



Over the course of many centuries, the peoples of Uzbekistan created wonderful decorative art which has become famous across the world. This art is extremely rich and variegated. Carving and painting on plaster and wood, architectural and household ceramics, metal engraving and jewelry, patterned weaving and printing, gold and silk embroidery – this is a far from complete list of the varieties of decorative art that developed in Uzbekistan.

In a country with a long history of silk production, silk embroidery was one of the most popular and widespread forms of folk art. In all other branches of decorative art, specialized artisans had to go through a long apprenticeship to master their craft, whereas silk embroidery was something

within the ability of the majority of the country's female population.

Designers of architecture necessarily had to reckon with the tastes of their clients, who were secular feudal lords and Muslim clergy. The outlook and aesthetic tastes of ordinary people were expressed more directly in embroidery, fabric printing or household ceramics.

Colorfully embroidered bedspreads and curtains (which served also to decorate the walls of homes), skullcaps, scarves and other embroidered items were widespread among most of the Uzbek and Tajik population of the Central Asian oases, and remain so to this day.

Embroidery is one of the most popular kinds of national applied art in Uzbekistan today. Large decorative embroideries

adorn the homes of workers, collective farmers, and the intelligentsia; ornate embroidered skullcaps are a contemporary item of clothing for men, women and children alike, adding a unique dash of national color to their outfits.

Nowadays large decorative embroideries adorn not only private residences but public buildings. They are used to beautify the rooms of government institutions, clubs, libraries and teahouses. When nationwide elections for government offices are held, polling stations are embellished with decorative embroideries (illus. 1).

Such artistic displays, ensconced by longstanding tradition in the life of the nation, are without a doubt one of the finest achievements of Uzbekistan's decorative art.

There are many types of embroidery art. They include large decorative *suzanis*; pieces entirely covered in cross stitch, unique in technique and design, found in Shahrissabz and Kitob; skullcaps which differ from region to region; and gold embroidery which has been traditional to Bukhara for centuries.

Every branch of the art of embroidery has its own history, and is so extensive as to require its own special study.

The present work is devoted to one of the most significant creative achievements of Uzbekistan's folk art – the large decorative embroideries of the 19th and early 20th



1. Polling station in Tashkent, decorated with embroideries.

centuries.¹

Large decorative embroideries were produced in cities and sizeable villages where trade and crafts were carried on – the centers of Central Asia's ancient agricultural, sedentary culture.

In the 19th century the populations of

¹ The author expresses deep appreciation to colleagues O. A. Sukhareva, A. S. Morozova, M. A. Bikzhanova, M. F. Kaplunova, B. S. Sergeev, N. A. Avedova and V. A. Faleva for their help with the work on this book.

Central Asian cities were mixed: they were composed of different groups of the Uzbek nation – descendants of the nomadic Uzbek tribes who arrived in Central Asia in the 16th century and settled here, and descendants of the country's ancient Turkic population. A significant proportion of the urban dwellers were Tajiks, who have inhabited the region since antiquity.

Both Uzbeks and Tajiks are heirs to a sophisticated, ancient culture. Close contact between the two peoples over the course of many centuries and their common historical destinies led to mutual cultural enrichment and the creation of similar forms of art.

This fact accounts for the unity of style between the large decorative embroideries made by Uzbeks and Tajiks on the territory of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic (UzSSR) and by Tajiks from the non-mountainous part of the Tajik SSR.

Most of the embroideries studied in the present work are held in museum collections, and their provenance has not always been recorded precisely. Therefore, it is often not possible to determine in each specific case which nation the woman who made this or that embroidery came from. The understudied nature of the material makes it possible to give only a general outline of the local schools of embroidery which arose in separate centers in Uzbekistan in the 19th century. A special chapter of this book is devoted to analyzing them.

Embroideries that people have in their possession nowadays were made, as a rule, no earlier than the 1880s. Earlier pieces which are 100 years old, or perhaps even 150 years old, can be found among the population only very rarely; they make up valuable collections in the museums of the Soviet Union.

The best and most extensive embroidery collections are held in the State Museum of Art of the UzSSR in Tashkent, the National Museum of the History, Culture and Art of the Uzbek SSR in Samarkand, and the State Museum of Oriental Cultures in Moscow. The Museum of the Ethnography of the Peoples of the USSR, in Leningrad, possesses a valuable collection. There are a number of good embroideries in the State Hermitage Museum and the State Russian Museum, the Museum of History of the UzSSR, the Bukhara Regional History Museum, and a number of other central, republic-level and regional museums in our country.

Decorative embroideries from Uzbekistan are also held in museums in Western Europe such as the Ethnological Museum of Berlin, as well as in many private collections. They were brought out of Central Asia in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Information is lacking that would justify dating particular embroideries to earlier than the 19th century. At the same time, the outstanding artistic quality of 19th-century embroideries, and their decorative images with roots going back to antiquity, indicate that this type of folk art went through a

long process of development.

To form a conception of embroideries from past centuries one must rely on isolated finds from archeological excavations, information in written sources, and indirect evidence such as depictions of ornate fabrics in ancient paintings and medieval manuscripts. The common character of Central Asian decorative art during a given historical period means it is occasionally possible to compare and contrast not only the ornamentation of textiles, but the ornamentation of architecture, ceramics and other kinds of art as well.

Scholars have noted that Central Asia was renowned for its artistic textiles even in antiquity. They are referred to in the Avesta; by historians describing the expeditions of Alexander the Great; by Roman authors; and in Chinese sources.

Medieval historians provide particularly extensive information about textile production – Istakhri, ibn Hawqal, Narshakhi, and others.² They describe the

2 A. Semyonov, *Certain Special Features of the Material Culture of Past Eras in Central Asia*, Reports of the Central Asian Committee on Museums and the Conservation of Antique Monuments, Art and Nature, 3rd ed. (Tashkent: 1928), pp. 18–19; A. Semyonov, “An Historical Review of the Artistic Handicrafts of Uzbekistan,” *The Literature and Art of Uzbekistan*, vol. 4–5 (1937), pp. 125–126; R. B. Serjeant, “Materials for a History of Islamic Textiles up to the Mongol Conquest,” *Ars Islamica*, vol. XI–XII, 1946.

superb cotton and wool textiles that were produced in Merv, Bukhara, Samarkand and many other trade and craft centers of Central Asia and were then exported to other countries.

The sources usually make no special mention of embroideries. Interest was that much greater, therefore, when ancient embroidered wall hangings made of wool were discovered in the burial of a Hun chieftain in Noin-Ula, northern Mongolia, with depictions of riders, a human face and floral ornamentation. The images are rendered in a very lively fashion with great skill. Researchers suggest the wall hangings may have been embroidered in the 2nd century B.C. by ancient Bactrians occupying the territory of present-day southern Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.³ Interestingly, these wall hangings are embroidered in couched satin stitch, the same as *suzanis*.

It is possible to visualize Central Asian ornamented fabrics from a later period thanks to wall paintings discovered by Soviet researchers on the territories of the Uzbek and Tajik republics, in the ancient cultural centers of the agricultural regions of Khorezm and Sogdia. The paintings in question are in the palace of the kings of ancient Khorezm at Toprak-kala (3rd

3 K. V. Trever, *Monuments of Greco-Bactrian Art* (Moscow-Leningrad: Academy of Sciences of the USSR Publishing House, 1940), pp. 141–148, plates 39, 40, 42; *A History of World Art*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Art Publishing House, 1956), p. 412; *The History of the Uzbek SSR*, vol. 1, bk. 1 (Tashkent: 1955), p. 92.

century A.D.);⁴ in the temple at Balalyk-tepe (5th century A.D.) in Surkhandarya Province;⁵ and, dating from the 7th–8th centuries A.D, in the palace of the rulers of Bukhara in the town of Varakhsha⁶ and in buildings in the town of Penjikent.⁷

It is hard to determine what techniques were used to produce the decorations on the clothes, carpets and draperies shown in the ancient paintings of Khorezm and Sogdia. One can only surmise that they are images of patterned textiles, various styles of embroidery, and carpets.

Studying the decorations found in paintings of the 3rd– 8th centuries A.D., one notices kindred features with items of folk art, particularly embroideries from the 19th century. S. P. Tolstov, leader of the Khorezm Expedition, drew attention to these common factors:

“The decoration in Khorezm paintings is totally unique... It is most closely associated with the world of images used to decorate the national textiles of the

4 S. P. Tolstov, *In Quest of Ancient Khorezmian Civilization* (Moscow-Leningrad: Academy of Sciences of the USSR Publishing House, 1948).

5 L. I. Al’baum, *Balalyk-tepe* (Tashkent: Academy of Sciences of the UzSSR Publishing House, 1960).

6 V. A. Shishkin, “The Archeological Work of 1947 in the Town of Varakhsha,” *Reports of the Academy of Sciences of the UzSSR*, no. 5 (1948), pp. 62–70.

7 *The Painting of Ancient Penjikent* (Moscow: 1954); *The Sculpture and Painting of Ancient Penjikent* (Moscow: Academy of Sciences of the USSR Publishing House, 1959).

peoples of Central Asia – Uzbeks, Tajiks, Karakalpaks and Kazakhs. We find much in common here with the designs of Khivan prints, Uzbek and Tajik *suzanis*, and Karakalpak patterned *koshmas*.⁸

Naturally no one imagines that the entire system of ornamentation from the 3rd–8th centuries was transmitted wholesale to the folk art of the 19th century. That could not happen, despite the well-known tendency of decorative elements to remain stable over time. The similarities are manifested in distinct ornamental motifs and principles of composition, and in favorite color combinations passed on from century to century and from generation to generation. In the analysis of 19th-century embroideries offered below, individual examples will be offered of similarities between decorations in 19th-century embroideries and those appearing in paintings of the 3rd–8th centuries.

The close connection between the folk art of the 19th–20th centuries and the art of the ancient Sogdians and Khorezmians confirms once again that there was direct continuity of cultural development from antiquity through the medieval period up to present times.

Artistic textiles and embroideries attained particular richness and splendor in medieval Samarkand, the capital of the feudal state of Timur and the Timurids in the 14th–15th centuries. The Spanish ambassador to Timur’s court,

8 Tolstov, *In Quest*, p. 181.

Ruy González de Clavijo, describes these vividly in his book. Here are a few excerpts: “Many tents were pitched in the garden with awnings, some of colored carpets and others of many-colored silk textiles embroidered with inserted pieces of cloth”;⁹ “[I]nside and outside the pavilion were fabrics of many colors with flowing patterns and swirls embroidered on them”;¹⁰ “In front of the table was a couch of mattresses made of silk textile and embroidered with flowers, oak leaves and other patterns.”¹¹

Judging by these descriptions, luxurious decorative textiles were a common feature of court life in the 14th–15th centuries, used to erect tents, pavilion and enclosures in the gardens outside Samarkand. The frequent mention of embroidered pieces taken from different textiles is reminiscent of the technique of colored felt inlays, used in Kyrgyz and Kazakh *koshmas* and evidently applied to embroidery. There are hints at the character of the textiles’ decorative motifs: flowing patterns, swirls, flowers.

The furnishings associated with Central Asian court life, particularly decorative textiles, are reproduced to a certain degree in the miniatures of the Herat and Bukharan schools of the 15th–16th centuries.

9 Ruy González de Clavijo, *The Life and Deeds of the Great Tamerlane*, Studies of the Department of Russian Language and Literature of the Imperial Academy of Sciences, vol. XXVIII, no. 1, p. 257.

10 Ibid., p. 287.

11 Ibid., p. 309.

Miniatures painted by the famous artist Behzad and other masters of the Herat school portray richly ornamented tents, awnings, enclosures, carpets, horse and camel tack, etc.

Thus, for example, in Behzad’s miniature painting in the *Zafarnama* (1467), “Timur on the Throne,”¹² the tent is covered in patterned cloth with multicolored geometric medallions that look as if they have been stitched together. Elsewhere large parts of the design are ornamented with flowers and leaves on slender, curving stalks. A similar design of geometric medallions decorates the covering and walls of the tent in a Herat miniature, painted in 1486, “Dances in Front of Timur” (in the Evkaf Museum in Istanbul).¹³ Costumes worn by representatives of the nobility in miniatures are also patterned all over and often embroidered in gold. Everywhere we see sumptuous, colorful ornamentation combined with large geometric medallions. Ornamentation of the same nature can be observed in the embellishments of manuscripts and in medieval architectural decoration.

When this sophisticated style of ornament is compared with many 19th-century pieces of folk embroidery, the elements they have in common are the predominance of floral

12 F. R. Martin, *The Miniature Painting and Painters of Persia, India and Turkey*, vol. 2 (London: 1912), plate 69.

13 A. Sakisian, *La miniature persane du XII au XVII siècle* (Paris et Bruxelles: 1929), plate 64, fig. 109.

patterns, kindred approaches to the use of color, and certain similar floral motifs.

Further close affinities can be observed in various, relatively simple compositions such as the design on the saddlecloth in Behzad's miniature "Camel and Driver."¹⁴ That said, it would be misleading to suggest that the complex, refined, arabesque-like style of the 15th–16th centuries, taken as a whole, is reproduced completely in the embroidered folk art of Uzbek women in the 19th century.

By comparing the ornamentation of antique and medieval art works with the folk embroidery patterns found in 19th-century Uzbekistan, we can trace the latter's historical course of development and outline the periods when different motifs and compositions were originally adopted in embroidery. This question will be examined in more detail later, as part of the analysis of embroidery's aesthetic features in the 19th century.

Uzbekistan's marvelous folk embroideries, stored in museums, held by individual collectors, and in use among the people at large, have been hardly studied before now. The literature on the embroidery of Uzbekistan is extremely limited.

Even though Central Asian art remained little known to the art community in the 19th century, the great Russian art critic V. V. Stasov, who ardently loved and

14 Ibid., plate 49, fig. 84.

understood folk art, was able to write in 1883 (on the occasion of the publication of N. Simakov's volume *The Art of Central Asia*): "It seems to me that, regarding woven, embroidered and braided items, we have to seek out the most original indigenous examples of the art and style of Central Asia."¹⁵

Every now and then, pictures of embroideries appeared in pre-1917 publications on decorative art.

For instance, an Uzbek embroidery (incorrectly identified as "Persian material") was published among objects of applied art from the collection of the Stroganov School.¹⁶ A book about the Second Handicraft Exhibition in Petersburg in 1913 contains reproductions of two *suzanis*.¹⁷

Collections abroad started to get some publicity, such as the exhibition of F. R. Martin's extensive collection of Central Asian art in Stockholm at the end of the century. It included Nurata and Bukhara-type *suzanis*. A description and photographs of the exhibition were published in a catalogue.¹⁸

15 V. V. Stasov, art edition of *The Art of Central Asia*. Collected Works, vol. 2 (St. Petersburg: 1894), pp. 695–702.

16 *Golden Fleece* [periodical], no. 3–4 (1908), p. 23.

17 *Russian Folk Art at the Second Handicraft Exhibition in Petrograd in 1913* (Petrograd: 1914), plate XLVII.

18 F. R. Martin, *F. R. Martins Sammlungen aus*

The volume by Bossert on the ornaments of different nations has four color plates with details of thirteen *suzanis* from Bukhara, Nurata, Shahrizabz, Tashkent and other areas of Uzbekistan, held in the Ethnological Museum of Berlin.¹⁹

Only Soviet researchers have begun to study the embroidery of Uzbekistan in a focused, scholarly manner, treating it as a branch of folk art.

Embroideries are mentioned briefly in publications on the art of Central Asia by B. P. Denike and B. V. Veymarn,²⁰ and in V. L. Voronina's work about the architecture of Uzbekistan.²¹

The principal researcher on the embroidery of Uzbekistan is the ethnographer O. A. Sukhareva.

She worked extensively with the people

who created this art – the embroideresses and the female folk artists who drew the designs. This allowed Sukhareva to date many embroideries and chart their development, while collecting material on embroideries' ceremonial significance and the interpretations which people gave to the designs.

While working in the Samarkand museum Sukhareva gathered a large collection of top-quality embroideries, as well as albums of the ornaments drawn by the oldest draftswomen in Samarkand Province. She wrote an extensive work about the development of Samarkand embroidery, part of which was published in the form of a small article.²²

A second well-known ethnographer, A. K. Pisarchik, did equally important work in collecting and studying embroideries from Nurata, but unfortunately her research has never been published.²³

The history of the development of embroidery in Tashkent was studied by M. A. Bikzhanova, on staff at the Institute of History and Archeology of the Academy of Sciences of the UzSSR.²⁴

dem Orient in der Allgemeine Kunst und Industrie Ausstellung (Stockholm: 1897).

19 H. T. Bossert, *Das Ornamentwerk*, 1st ed. (Berlin: 1924); H. T. Bossert, *Ornamente der Völker*, 2nd ed., vol. 23–25 (Berlin: 1956); H. T. Bossert, *Encyclopédie de l'ornement* (Paris: Morancé, 1956).

20 B. P. Denike, "Applied Art of Central Asia," in *The Artistic Culture of the Soviet East* (Moscow-Leningrad: 1931), pp. 68, 69, plate IX-4; B. V. Veymarn, *The Art of Central Asia* (Moscow-Leningrad: 1940), pp. 134–135, illus. 75, 81; B. V. Veymarn, *The Architectural Decorative of Uzbekistan* (Moscow: 1948), pp. 54–57.

21 V. L. Voronina, *National Traditions of Architecture in Uzbekistan* (Moscow: 1951), p. 113, illus. 97.

22 O. A. Sukhareva, "On the History of the Development of Samarkand Decorative Embroidery," *Literature and Art of Uzbekistan*, vol. 6 (1937), pp. 119–134.

23 A. K. Pisarchik, "Nurata Embroidery," manuscript at the State Museum of Art of the UzSSR.

24 M. A. Bikzhanova, "Tashkent Embroidery, 19th–20th Centuries," manuscript at the Institute of Art

B. Kh. Karmysheva, who spent many years studying the ethnography of seminomadic Uzbek tribes, published some small, little-known and very interesting embroideries to hang on the wall, *ilgich*, from museum collections in the Tajik SSR and Uzbek SSR.²⁵

Three articles (part of a dissertation) by A. N. Tarasov should also be mentioned among the works that have been published on Uzbekistan's embroidery.²⁶

A special manual for embroidery circles, covering the techniques used in Uzbek embroidery, was written by R. Rassudova.²⁷

Valuable information concerning Bukharan gold-embroidered pieces and their existence in Bukhara in the 19th–20th centuries is contained in the work of E. M. Peshchereva, *Bukharan Gold*

of the Academy of Sciences of the UzSSR.

25 B. Kh. Karmysheva, *Lokai Mapramach and Ilgich*. Reports of the National Regional History Museum, vol. II (Stalinabad: History and Ethnography, 1955), pp. 146–160.

26 A. Tarasov, "Folk Embroideries of Bukhara," *Decorative Art of the USSR* (anniversary issue, 1957), pp. 58–59; "Decorative Embroidery of Uzbekistan," *Decorative Art of the USSR*, no. 10 (1958), pp. 58–59; "Decorative Embroidery in the Home Furnishings of the Peoples of Uzbekistan," in *Issues in Decorative Art*. Studies of the Moscow Higher School of Arts and Industry (formerly Stroganov School), vol. I (Moscow: 1958), pp. 22–40.

27 R. Rassudova, *Uzbek Art Stitches* (Tashkent: State Publishing House of the UzSSR, 1960).

Embroiderers.²⁸

The Museum of Art of the UzSSR prepared a splendid volume for publication, *Gold Embroidery of Bukhara*, with an introduction by P. A. Goncharova.²⁹

An interesting article by G. Grigor'ev has a direct bearing on Uzbekistan's embroidery.³⁰ In it, the author seeks to uncover the meaning of a common motif in folk art, the ovaloid shape called *bodom* ("almond"), drawing on ethnographical and archeological material, historical sources and Central Asia's rich, ancient mythology.

In recent years the team of the UzSSR Art Research Institute has conducted fruitful research in the area of folk art, particularly embroidery. The first compilation of essays examining art textiles of Soviet Uzbekistan came out in 1954.³¹ The sections of the volume entitled "Embroidery" and "Skullcaps" were written by O. A. Sukareva, and the section "Gold Embroidery" by P. A. Goncharova. Describing how the art developed in Soviet Uzbekistan, the authors briefly

28 E. M. Peshchereva, *Bukharan Gold Embroiderers*, Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography, XVI (1955), pp. 265–282.

29 *Gold Embroidery of Bukhara* (State Museum of Art of the UzSSR).

30 G. Grigor'ev, "Tus-Tupi," *Art*, no. 1 (1937), pp. 121–143.

31 *Decorative Folk Art of Soviet Uzbekistan: Textile* (Tashkent: Academy of Sciences of the UzSSR Publishing House, 1954).

review the position of embroidery at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries. Concurrent with the book's appearance in Tashkent, the State Fine Art Publishing House in Moscow issued a volume compiled by the Institute which also contained sections on embroidery in Soviet Uzbekistan, with a short text and illustrations.³²

The volumes by the Institute are valuable educational resources, offering a wider public in the Soviet Union the opportunity to learn about the folk art of Uzbekistan. However, the works published to date show that Uzbek embroidery remains very inadequately studied, with much work still to be done in this field.

32 *Decorative Folk Art of Soviet Uzbekistan* (Moscow: State Fine Art Publishing House, 1955), pp. 101–126.





I. THE IMPORTANCE OF DECORATIVE EMBROIDERY IN THE EVERYDAY LIFE OF THE PEOPLE, TYPES OF EMBROIDERIES. MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUES



In practically every Uzbek house, whether built the old traditional way or new and modern, one can see examples of national applied art.

While these pieces have definite practical purposes, they also serve to beautify the home.

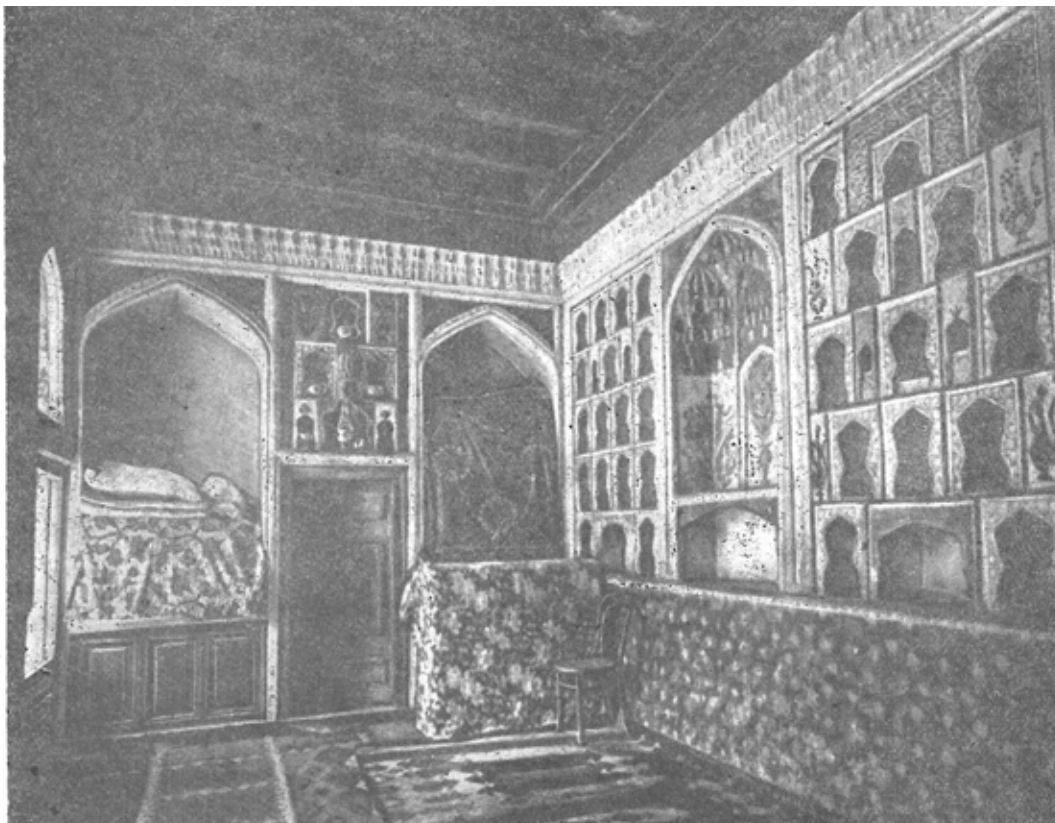
Among the foremost of these are embroideries. Stretching over many centuries, the history of the evolution of decorative embroidery is closely connected with the national lifestyle and the type of house that became traditional among the people.

To understand the importance of embroideries and appreciate their place in

the overall scheme of decorating the home, let us pause to describe the furnishings of a traditionally constructed house, before considering the aesthetic qualities of the embroideries themselves.³³

As soon as one enters the courtyards of many old houses made of rammed earth, which present blank walls to the street, one finds a delightful play of light and dark in the intricately carved patterns on the doors, window shutters, and columns of the open terraces (*ayvan*).

33 The examples of furnishings given here are generic since it is rare nowadays to find the traditional design scheme preserved in its entirety; rather, individual elements are spread across different houses.



2. Living room furnishings. Samarkand.

On ordinary days, and especially holidays, the living quarters are lovingly adorned with artistically designed household items.

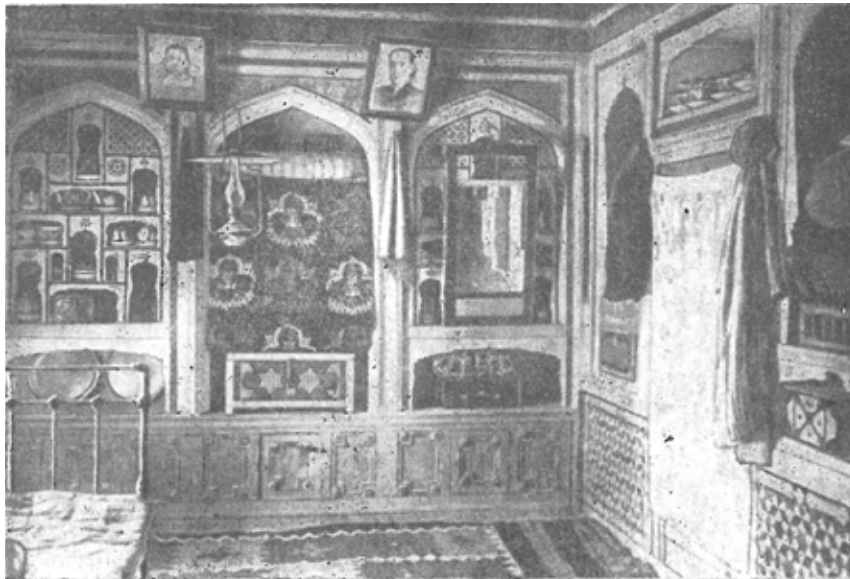
Blankets and pillows, stored in niches during the day, are covered with beautiful embroideries with circles in rings of leaves, bouquets, and flowers. The large ornamental motifs are proportional to the size of the living space and designed to be viewed at a distance. When seen in a shady

room against a background of earthen or white alabaster plasterwork, a colorful silk embroidery shines and shimmers. Heavy earthenware plates and handcrafted bowls sit on shelves set into wall niches (*tokcha*) beside china teapots and tea bowls. Their brightly painted decorations echo the picturesque patterns of the embroideries. Here too one finds elegantly proportioned copper pitchers and trays which are remarkable for their crisply etched arabesque designs. Usually a

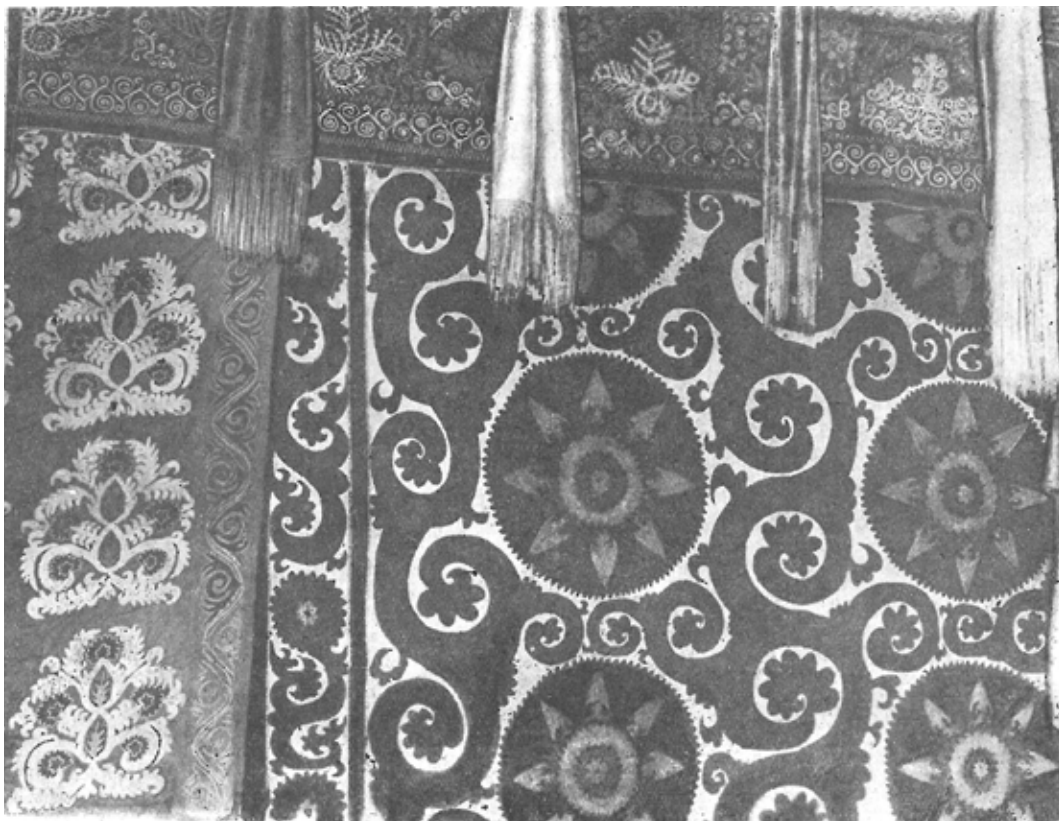
patterned *palas* rug or a red pile carpet is spread on the floor. Hanging on the wall, as if left there casually, the head of the household's striped robe and skullcap, embroidered with a jeweler's precision, add their colors and provide the finishing touches to the décor of the room (illus. 2, 3). The placement of objects around the house aims to embellish every surface of the walls and every available space. This is also a recognized feature of Central Asia's monumental architecture. Even with such a dense concentration of decorative items in the room, they are arranged with fine taste and feeling for the aesthetics of ornament and rhythm of colors. Embroideries are hung in such a way that the best qualities of each are visible, and so that they look well together.

Even silk scarves and skullcaps, selected for the colors and arranged along the tops of the walls at precise intervals, turn into colorful adornments (illus. 4).

In houses ornamented with carving and painting, the everyday objects furnishing the living room perfectly match its architectural decoration, which also depends for its effect on contrasts between flat and relief surfaces, colors and lines. Bright, intricate paintings decorate the ceilings, cornices and column capitals. Along the walls, carved plaster panels alternate with flat painted ones on which saplings and floral sprays appear to blossom, redolent of the floral patterns on embroideries, while panels with continuous geometric designs run along the bottom.



3. Living room furnishings. Samarkand.



4. Furnishings in the newlyweds' room. Samarkand, 1948.

The various ornamental pieces used to furnish the living quarters and the architectural decoration make a unified decorative system which expresses a national style of decorative art that has been elaborated over the course of centuries.

During holidays, decorative embroideries have an especially important role in beautifying the house. They serve as

coverings and curtains and brighten up the walls. Painstaking attention is paid to decorating newlyweds' rooms in particular.

How embroideries are arranged in a room depends on the living situation and the traditional construction of the house.

The decorative embroidery *takyapush*³⁴ is

³⁴ *Takyapush* is the standard term in Nurata; the



5. Furnishings in the newlyweds' room. Tashkent, 1948.

used to cover blankets and pillows, which are stored in chests during the day in big niches. These big, deep niches (*takhmon*), which start from the floor, are set in the far wall opposite the entrance. Between two big niches is a narrow niche with partitions for storing the linen. Sometimes there is one big niche in the middle with two narrow ones on either side.

Takhmons in Tashkent are completely screened off with an embroidered curtain (*choyshab*) the same size as the niche. Often the whole wall opposite the

entrance is adorned with a uniform set of embroideries – two *choyshabs* and a narrow embroidery (*kirpech*) between them. Over them hangs an embroidered band (*dorpech*), placed above a rack to hang dress clothes on. A long band (*zebidevor* or *zardevor*) acts as the extension of the *dorpech*, running over the other three walls like a frieze. In Tashkent the wall opposite the windows is decorated with two large textiles (*gulkurpa* and *palak*). The backing cloth of the latter is almost completely filled with embroidery (illus. 5).

In other regions the largest embroideries are called *suzani*; all large decorative embroideries from Uzbekistan are

embroidery is called *bolinpush* in Samarkand and *yastykpush* in Shahrissabz.

widely known outside the country by this name. In Nurata and Bukhara, a smaller embroidery (*nimsuzani*) is added to the composition on the large wall.

Sometimes one finds small embroidered pieces on the walls of the room, such as a bag for a mirror (*oyna khalta*), a case for a comb (*shona khalta*), and men's sash belts (*qiyiqcha*, *miyonband*, *chorsu*, *belbok*). Long towels with embroidered ends (*sarpokkun*, *tanpokkun*, *qoziqlungi*)

are also hung around the room.

All these products of folk art accompany people throughout their lives from childhood to old age, shape their taste, and instill in them a feeling for beauty.

The popularity of embroidery among the people can be explained not only by its aesthetic qualities and role in furnishing the home, but by traditional customs and rituals formed over centuries.



6. Visiting the young wife. Tashkent, 1948.

Large decorative embroideries are associated with the most festive occasions in a person's life. They were made principally for weddings by the bride's family and were an indispensable part of the dowry. The quantity of embroideries depended on the means of the bride's parents; in any case they made up a set which included certain specific items. In Nurata, for instance, a dowry included the following embroideries: two *suzanis*, two *nimsuzanis*, two *takyapush*, two *joynamaz*, and two *sandalipush*.

Embroideries had an important place in the marriage ceremonies of Uzbeks and Tajiks (illus. 6).³⁵ Each type of piece had a particular ritual significance. Thus, for example, the coverlet *ruijo* was spread on the young couple's bed, a *bolinpush* was put over the pillows, and a *suzani* was thrown over the bedclothes.

In these nuptial rituals that developed long ago, magical protective powers were attributed to embroideries' ornamentation, which were supposed to protect the young people from the malevolence of all kinds of evil forces.

35 O. A. Sukhareva, "On the History of the Development of Samarkand Decorative Embroidery," *Literature and Art of Uzbekistan*, vol. 6 (1937), pp. 119–134; O. A. Sukhareva, "Wedding Customs of Tajiks in Samarkand and Other Regions of Central Asia," *Soviet Ethnography*, no. 3 (1940), p. 173; A. K. Pisarchik, "Nurata Embroidery," manuscript at the State Museum of Art of the UzSSR; S. P. Rusyaykina, N. A. Kislyakov, *Culture and Life of the Tajik Collective Farm Peasantry*, chapter IV (Moscow-Leningrad: Academy of Sciences of the USSR Publishing House), pp. 133, 178, 180, 191.

Embroideries, it should be mentioned, were also used in burial rites – the stretcher with the body of a deceased girl or young woman would be covered with an embroidery.

However, the primary use of embroideries was during joyful family celebrations. An interesting custom was to leave part of the stitching unfinished in the completed piece. As explained by old women, this was done "so weddings and circumcisions in the house, for which the embroideries were made, will never stop," and "so the daughter keeps well and joy in the house never ends."

The look of different types of embroidered items, their shape and size, and the composition of ornaments across the cloth's surface, depend on the embroidery's intended purpose.

The biggest rectangular *suzani*-type embroideries (230–280 cm long, 170–200 cm wide), used on holidays to cover large areas of wall or to go over the bedclothes in the young people's room, can be viewed in their entirety, and therefore are composed as unified panels with a central field and border (plates 1, 13, 16, 24, 30).

Takyapush-type embroideries – used to screen off a deep niche, or to cover bed linen stored in it during the day, or to cover the head of the marital bed – were made to be rectangular and smaller (170–250 cm long, 120–150 cm wide), according to their purpose. Their design is analogous to that of *suzanis* (plates 12, 14, 22, 34).



7. *Sandalipush* – covering for a low table (*sandal*), 19th century

Coverings for a low table (*sandal*) – *sandalipush* – are square and large enough to be spread over a *sandal* like a tablecloth.

The central field and border of a *sandalipush* are also embroidered (illus. 7), although in some regions only the border is embroidered.

The patterning is different on prayer carpets (*joynamaz*) and coverlets for the wedding bed (*ruijo* or *joypush*).

In line with the basic, practical function of these items, their central area remains free of embroidery. A *joynamaz* (130–150 cm long, 90–110 cm wide) is framed on its two long sides by a patterned border which, widening on one of the short

sides, forms a pointed arch. As a rule, the *joynamaz*'s fourth side is not embroidered (plate 21).

A *ruijo* (260–285 cm long, 165–200 cm wide) has a decorative border along three of its sides, sometimes supplemented with two corners embroidered on one of the short sides, making a pointed arch as on the *joynamaz* (plates 20, 32, 49, 52).

A *bugjoma* or *bugcha* – a cover used to wrap up bedclothes during the day, or to wrap up objects to transport them somewhere – has an ornate rectangle in its center (illus. 8), and sometimes one ornate corner as well. The *bugcha*'s other corners, since they are wrapped up and not visible, are not embroidered.



8. *Bugjoma* or *bugcha* – a cover to wrap up bedclothes.

The long frieze bands *dorpech* and *zardevor*, which are only ornamental, are decorated with repeating motifs along their whole length; often these motifs are situated inside arches which are joined together to create an endless chain (illus. 9).

So far, our discussion of folk-art pieces has only considered how they are traditionally arranged in old-style private houses.

However, embroideries are still used also to decorate the rooms of comfortable, new-style homes, built in Soviet times and fitted out with contemporary furniture, as one of the most distinctive expressions of the national way of life. That said, they are frequently being used in different

ways and parts of the house. For example, embroideries nowadays commonly serve as bedspreads or are hung over the bed like a carpet.

Over centuries, a love of beautiful ornamented embroideries and other items of national decorative art formed among the wide masses of the Uzbek people. Amidst their everyday, lively appreciation of beauty, they developed a mature aesthetic taste which became (it may be said without exaggeration) one of the most attractive features of the national character. This important aspect of the national character is still evolving to this day.



9. Detail of a frieze band (*dorpech*) to decorate the top of a wall.

The national practice of surrounding oneself with decorative embroideries on festive days is now entering public life, too.

The important place occupied by embroidery in the life of the citizens of Soviet Uzbekistan speaks to the vitality of this art form and the promising outlook for its future evolution.

Decorative embroideries in Uzbekistan are created predominantly by women. The ancient traditions of this wonderful art form were preserved and developed in a female environment.

The great number of superb pieces from the 19th and early 20th centuries, created by women under harsh conditions of feudal and religious oppression, amaze us with their optimism. The words of A. M. Gorky, a discerning connoisseur of folklore, spoken at the First Congress of Soviet Writers, are fully applicable here: “[P]essimism is wholly alien to folklore, heedless of the fact that the creators of folklore lived lives that were hard and full of suffering – their slave-like labor was made meaningless by the exploiters, while in their personal lives they were without rights or protection. Yet despite all that, as a collective they seemed to be instinctively conscious of their immortality and certain of their victory over all the forces hostile to them.”³⁶

36 M. Gorky, *Collected Works in Thirty Volumes*, vol. 27 (Moscow: State Fiction Publishing House, 1953), p. 305.

Given their secluded lives, embroidery was practically the only area in which women’s creative powers could manifest themselves. Into this art they poured their best hopes for the future, for their own happiness and their children’s, their love for nature and understanding of beauty. And, of course, the sincere, living feelings of these anonymous folk artists, and the profound humanism of their art, are experienced by anyone who admires their creations.

The craftswomen themselves understood the significance of their work in just this way. A wish embroidered on a *bolinpush* from Urgut (Samarkand Museum) reads, “May the *bolinpush* delight the eye, may it bring joy to whoever it belongs to.”

Girls were taught the art of embroidery from childhood in the effort to make them into good artisans. Every family relied on their own resources to produce *suzanis*, *takyapush* and other decorative embroideries. It took one and a half to two years to finish a *suzani* – longer if the background was densely embroidered. A mother would start embroidering a *suzani* for her daughter’s dowry when she was still small. If a family could not manage on its own to produce the embroideries necessary for a wedding, then they resorted to a *hashar* (mutual communal assistance): the bride’s mother called in relatives and neighbors to help finish the dowry.

Suzani strips, with the design drawn on, were embroidered separately and then

sewn together. This is why the patterns on some *suzanis* do not completely coincide at the seams, and sometimes different parts of the same ornament are stitched in differently colored thread.

Embroidery designs were drawn by exceptionally talented folk artisans called *kalamkash* or *chizmakash*. They drew with a sharp-cut reed (*qalam*) directly on the fabric to be embroidered. Draftswomen knew many different traditional ornaments, endlessly varying them and constantly creating fresh compositions. Usually it was they who decided the basic coloration of the patterns.

The art of the draftswoman received special respect. Often it was passed on within one family from mother to daughter; every neighborhood in a large city had its own draftswoman.

Anyone who witnesses the process by which contemporary draftswomen draw on fabric can only be amazed by their compositional skill, faultless sense of proportion, and bold, free strokes. Folding the cloth vertically, horizontally and diagonally, the draftswoman only marks out the main points of the composition – the center, the edge of the border, etc.; the whole pattern is drawn by eye, all done by hand, although sometimes the boundaries of circular rosettes will be traced using a tea bowl or a somewhat larger bowl (*kosa*). If a similar design is made on a differently proportioned or smaller textile, the composition is correspondingly altered and the size of the motifs reduced, though

they are always kept strictly proportional to one another and to the size of the embroidery.

Draftswomen take the motifs for their designs from embroideries they know in which traditional decorative forms, developed over centuries, are concentrated. At the same time these talented artists did not only repeat established motifs but, observing the life around them, applied their own creativity to each piece, enriching and developing the traditional art. A beautiful flower or a luxuriant pepper bush that caught their imagination would generate new decorative forms to fit the style of the embroidery being created.

Craftswomen did not copy existing embroideries exactly, but worked within the bounds of the same themes and compositional schemes to create a new piece every time that showcased their creative imagination and skill. Hence the charm and individuality of the best embroideries from Uzbekistan, and the absence of formulaic, mechanical repetition.

Their imaginative perception of reality and their powers of observation allowed female folk artists to render objects in a style which conformed to the traditions of embroidery art.

Skullcaps provide the clearest examples from contemporary folk art of how reality is refracted through the creative process. New motifs appearing on skullcaps include the star medal of the Hero of the Soviet

Union, the dove of peace, the parachute, and many others. Most remarkably, all of them fit in organically with embroidery ornaments and do not look like extraneous objects.

Until the end of the 1880s large decorative *suzanis* were executed predominantly on white homespun cloth (*karbos*) or cloth with a natural reddish tint (*malla*). Starting in the 1880s, local handmade silk textiles that were purple, green and orange began to be used widely as backing cloths, as well as white and colored cotton textiles imported from Russia.

The thread used for embroidery until the 1880s was made of silk, locally produced, and colored with natural dyes.

The exceptional beauty of 19th-century embroideries (up to the 1880s–1890s) is largely due to the fact that naturally dyed silk thread produced deep, soft, iridescent tones.³⁷ Bright red wool thread was used in addition to silk thread.³⁸ Cheap, unstable

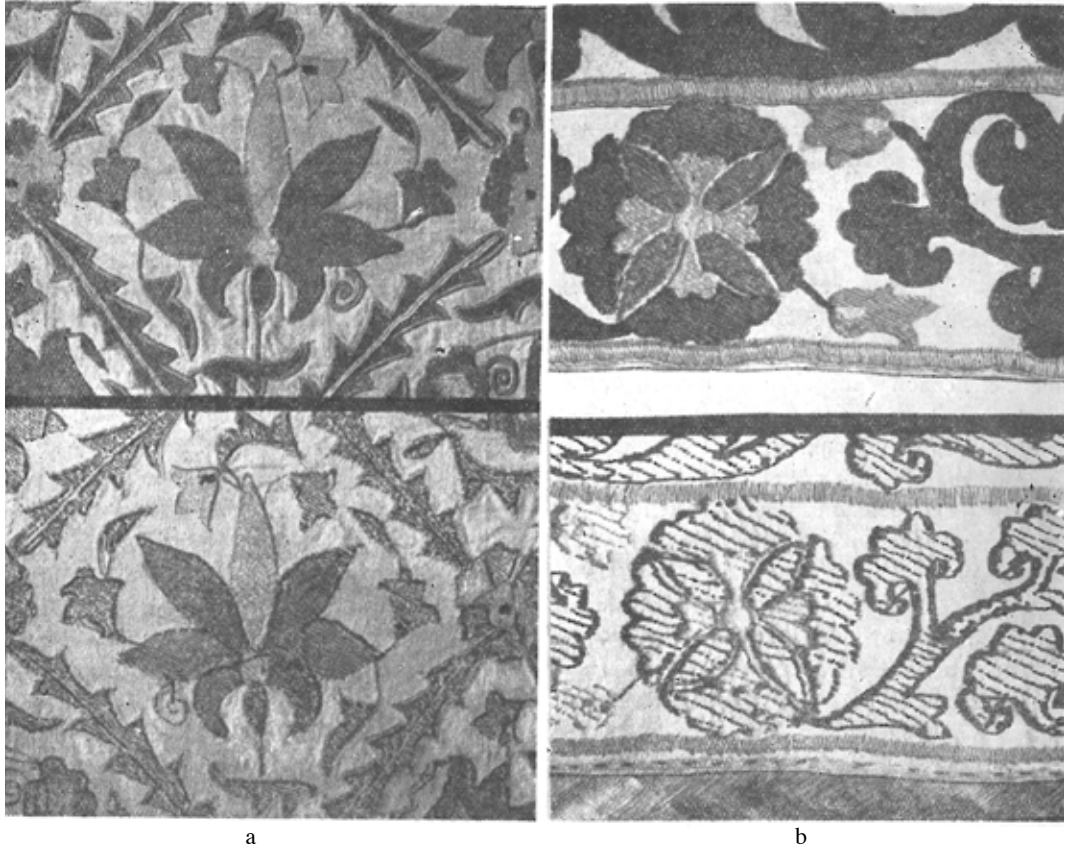
37 For dyeing material, madder was used for red, cochineal for crimson, indigo for blue, yellow larkspur (*isparyak*) for yellow, and pomegranate peel with iron salts for black. Other dyes extracted from local plants were also used [see I. Krauze, “Note on the Art of Dyeing of the Native People,” in *Russian Turkestan*, 2nd ed. (Moscow: 1872), pp. 209–212].

38 Red wool was imported into Central Asia from India. According to O. A. Sukhareva, red wool appears in embroideries not earlier than the mid-19th century and disappears in the 1880s. Hence it is one of their dateable features. (See Sukhareva, “On the History,” p. 121.)

aniline dyes, which began to be used to color silk in the 1880s, and especially in the 1890s, had a disastrous effect on the quality of the art being produced; they created unpleasantly stark, loud colors that cannot stand comparison with the beautiful hues of naturally dyed silk.

Central Asian *suzanis* are characterized by a distinctive embroidery technique whereby large surfaces are entirely filled in with stitching to make the pattern, often leaving a relatively small area of the background visible. Separate kinds of single-sided couched satin stitch are employed, as well as tambour stitch which is also used frequently for decorative motifs. There are two kinds of couched satin stitch – so-called *basma* and *kandakhayol*. They are similar to one another. The sewing technique involved is as follows: the thread is stretched taut from one end of the figure to the other, and then fastened with transverse stitches. The next thread is laid closely beside the first one and also secured with stitches. For *basma*, the stitches are small and sewn almost perpendicularly, at a slight angle to the long taut thread. Each subsequent row of stitches is set a small distance from the last. The result is regular, diagonal rows of stitches on the front side forming a beautiful, slightly raised pattern on the surface of the *suzani*. The reverse side of the embroidery is evenly covered in stitches that are a little longer than on the front side (illus. 10 a).

Basma can be big, with large intervals between the rows of stitches, or small, achieving a jeweler’s delicacy and



10. Stitches used in embroidery. (a) Couched satin stitch, *basma*. Front side and reverse. (b) Couched satin stitch, *kanda-khayol*, and double buttonhole stitch, *ilmak*. Front side and reverse.

precision in its execution. For *kanda-khayol*, a long thread is laid across the figure, the same as for *basma*, while the fastening thread runs practically parallel to it, making long, slanted stitches. The stitching on the front side looks like loops of twisted yarn lined up in a row. On the reverse side, here and there, are rows of small stitches. *Kanda-khayol* produces a

slightly raised effect along the pattern's outline (illus. 10 b).

Besides these basic stitches there is another more complicated one, more rarely encountered, done in raw silk. The technique is as follows: first, loosely twisted silk threads are laid down along the pattern with one-sided satin stitch. Then

they are secured with transverse, spaced-out rows of *basma* in such a way that the *basma* fastening stitches hold down many laid threads simultaneously. For a more striking effect the covering threads are a contrasting color from those underneath. Thus, for example, *basma* in crimson thread overlays areas embroidered in red and cream-colored silk (illus. 11 a, color plate 1).

Analogues of this stitch can be found in old Dagestani (Kaitag) embroideries for pillows.

The tambour stitch (called *yorma* or *darafsh*) is used in some regions of Uzbekistan to embroider *suzanis*.

The tambour stitch is one of the most ancient stitches. For example, it was used to make a Chinese embroidery depicting pheasants from the 5th–4th centuries B.C., discovered in the fifth Pazyryk burial mound in the Altai Mountains.³⁹ It is hard to say when this stitch appeared in Central Asia. It is also found among the Kyrgyz, Kazakhs and other Turkic peoples of Central Asia, as well as in Azerbaijan.

In pieces from Uzbekistan the entire area of ornamental motifs is filled in with tambour stitch, leaving no gaps.

The sewing method is that the tambour chain stitch first winds around the outline

of the figure to be embroidered, then moves inward, closely tracing inside the first outline, and so on until the whole shape from its outer edge to its center is filled with embroidery. Craftswomen are exceptionally inventive in their execution of large figures in tambour chain stitch. The surface acquires an additional decorative dimension and, in conjunction with the rich iridescence of brightly shimmering silk, creates a very lovely texture (illus. 11 b). Particularly fine are the many old *suzanis* from Bukhara, which was famous for the art of tambour embroidery.

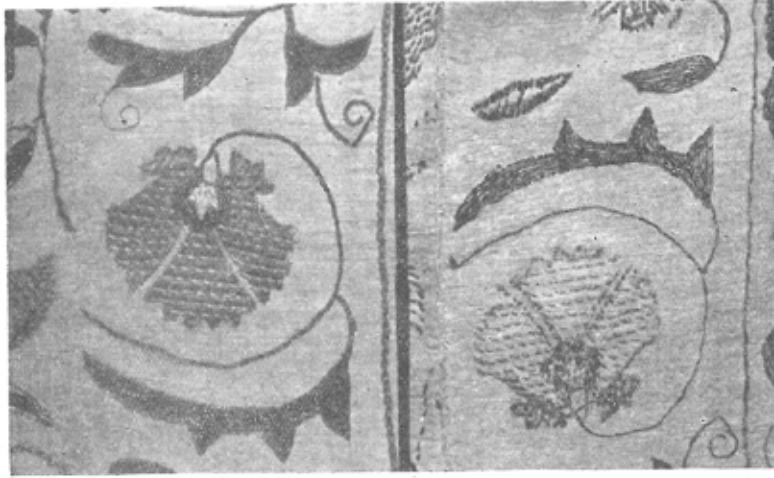
The tambour stitch has an unusual appearance on some pieces. We can call it single-sided in that the loops are visible only on one side of the chain of tambour stitches; on the other side they are pulled into knots.

Tambour embroidery was done with a needle or hook on a circular frame. Tambouring machines appeared at the end of the 19th century and are used to this day to produce decorative embroideries.

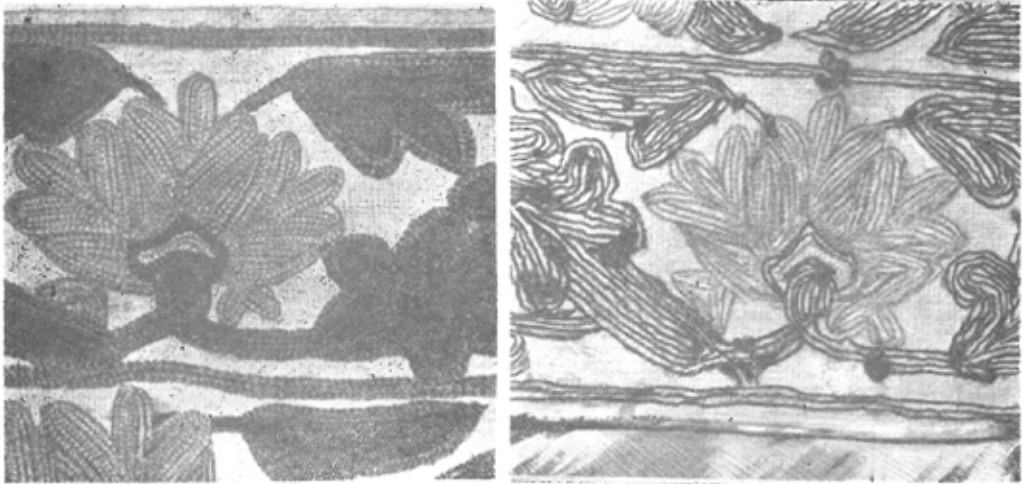
The double-sided satin stitch (*khomduzi*) is a common technique on small items, but encountered rarely on large wall panels which do not need to be viewed from both sides.

Often a variety of embroidery techniques are used on a single piece, organized to create a rhythmic effect. In a floral motif, for instance, petals embroidered in *basma* may alternate with petals in tambour

39 S. I. Rudenko, *The Discoveries in Gorno-Altai and the Scythians* (Moscow-Leningrad: 1952), pp. 82–84.



a



b

11. Stitches used in embroidery. (a) *Basma* on a backing of untwisted silk. Front side and reverse. (b) Tambour stitch. Front side and reverse.

stitch, or *basma* with *kanda-khayol*. Furthermore, the stalks, branches and leaves on any *suzani* usually have edges executed in tambour stitch, or on rare occasions in stem stitch.

A wide plant stalk or band, dividing the border from the central field, is embroidered in single or double buttonhole stitch (*ilmak*) with the loops symmetrically oriented to both sides (illus. 10 b).

Different sewing techniques were preferred in the various embroidery centers. *Basma* was used for embroideries in Nurata,

Samarkand and Tashkent; *kanda-khayol* is characteristic of pieces from Shahrissabz; while in Bukhara, as noted above, tambour embroidery technique was employed in masterly fashion.

In Shahrissabz and Kitab, the half cross stitch *iraki* was used as a fill stitch for large decorative embroideries. The sewing technique consists of extending the laid thread diagonally across the whole line to be embroidered; then the laid thread is crisscrossed with stitches, in the usual way of embroidering in cross stitch.





II. TYPES OF ORIGINAL EMBROIDERY



The embroidery of Uzbekistan in the 19th and early 20th centuries can be treated as a branch of folk art with a uniform artistic style which formed over centuries. At the same time, embroidery art, like other kinds of folk art, developed distinct local features.

We can identify six main, local schools of embroidery: Nurata, Bukhara, Samarkand, Shahrisabz, Tashkent, and Ferghana.

There were many other cities and towns that produced original decorative embroideries. However, since far from all the embroidery centers have been adequately studied, it is not yet possible to characterize them. Even in a city as large as Khiva, the capital of a feudal khanate,

apparently no decorative embroideries were produced whatsoever.

Various factors influenced what particular kind of embroidery was created at one or other of the centers: not only the natural environment and national makeup of its population, but the artistic traditions historically associated with that region, and the level of its overall economic and cultural development.

By the 19th century a unique type of embroidery had emerged in Nurata, a large town situated on a spur of the Ak-Tau mountain range bordering the steppe. Life in this oasis is made possible by water from underground streams. Prior to the revolution this steppe area was the center of the Emirate of

Bukhara's Nurata District, which traded between the Kazakh steppe and the cities of the Emirate. Its population was primarily made up of Tajiks. In addition to decorative embroidery the town of Nurata was famous for its fabrics, carved dishes, and architectural details made of marble (marble was quarried from the nearby Gazgan deposit).

Nurata embroideries have very specific, pronounced features which make it easy to tell them apart from embroideries from other regions. Therefore, it makes sense to begin a review of local types of embroidery with pieces from this town.

Nineteenth-century Nurata embroideries are decorated with floral sprays spaced not too close together over the white background of the fabric. In terms of the richness and variety of their floral motifs they take first place among the artworks of Uzbekistan. Often their vegetal patterns are enlivened by little figures of birds; and, sometimes, even by highly stylized images of animals and humans, put in places where they are hardly noticeable. The embroideries are executed in bright, gentle colors, employing painstakingly fine *basma* stitch, with a border of ornamental motifs in tambour stitch.

The commonest design in Nurata is a closed composition having an eight-pointed star in the middle and four large floral sprays in the corners of the central field.⁴⁰ Additional motifs are distributed

between these principal ones.

A *suzani* from the State Museum of Oriental Cultures may serve as an example of this type of composition (plates 2, 3). It stands out for the clarity of its design scheme and good balance of its various elements. The *suzani's* large floral bouquets point from the corners of the central field towards the middle; the flowers in the bouquets diagonally opposite one another are similar in form but differ in their details, creating plenty of variety in the embroidery while preserving the rhythm of its patterning. The draftsman has drawn in little sprigs with great success: they are all of different sizes and shapes, as if scattered around those spots which, after the work was done, she felt still needed to be filled with more decoration.

A *suzani* of the same type from the mid-19th century is in the State Museum of Art of the UzSSR, a beautiful example of old Nurata workmanship (plates 4, 5). It is remarkable for the special ease and grace of its floral pattern. In the ornamentation of this *suzani* we see the rare motifs of a bouquet in a vase and a cypress tree amidst a flowering shrub. The *suzani* is colored in soft, light shades: sand-colored, gold, light blue, crimson, lilac, and light green.

Another design scheme used for Nurata embroideries is an array of rhombuses whose sides are made up of serrated

40 The type of composition is called in Nurata

chor-shokh-u yak moh (in Tajik, "four branches and one moon").

leaves.⁴¹ The cells of the grid are filled with flowering branches, rosettes, and bird and animal figures. One *suzani* of this type has pictures of two ducks and a horse (plates 6, 7). There also are embroideries where separate floral motifs are arranged over the background in a checkerboard pattern (plate 8).⁴²

There is a very interesting *suzani* which combines elements of the compositions “four branches and one moon” and “branches.” At its center is a bush around which stand four pairs of peacocks (plate 9). Thin, elegant branches and pitchers are distributed over the rest of the field in a checkerboard pattern. The *suzani* is framed with a narrow border strip (color plate I).

The particular beauty of this piece comes from the shiny, pure, saturated hues of the untwisted silk used to execute the embroidery against a background of dark (natural *malla*-colored) plain-woven cotton. The color combinations of certain motifs are remarkably refined: in one flower the petals are yellow and gold, in another they are light blue, rose and cream-colored; light blue flowers with rose-colored centers grow on a branch beside light turquoise leaves.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries the art of embroidery in Nurata sharply

41 The composition is called *chor-shokh-u yak moh* (“lattice”).

42 The composition is called *shokh-shokh* (“branches”).

declined. Floral motifs lost their variety of detail and turned into identical circles.

If a corner floral spray contained 43 flowers in the old embroideries (plate 1), in the new ones it was sketched as a family of circles with little connection between them. Many embroideries started to be done on red, factory-produced fabrics, with rows of identical, feeble shrubs as decoration. Such embroideries have nothing in common with the glorious artistic pieces produced in Nurata in the 19th century.

Embroideries from Bukhara are some of the most beautiful in Central Asia.

They embody centuries’ worth of artistic tradition in a city with over two thousand years of historical development, which was the capital of a feudal state more than once and a prominent center of culture, literature and art. In the 19th century the city was the capital of the Emirate of Bukhara, home to outstanding weavers and potters, masters of gold embroidery and embroidery on silk, copper engravers and silversmiths.

Bukhara’s architecture was notable for its magnificent ornamental trappings. Via the ceramic facades and paintings on monuments of the 16th century, and the plaster carvings and wall paintings of later buildings of the 18th–20th centuries, a living tradition of exceptionally rich, sumptuous floral ornament was transmitted.

Bukharan embroideries are so varied that they defy the precise classification that is possible in the case of Nurata. Their distinguishing feature is the masterful application of tambour stitch, used to create the majority of Bukharan pieces, and delicate, subtle color combinations of light blue, gray, violet, rose and light yellow employed alongside red, crimson and green.

Each detail of the decorative shapes is sewn separately in tambour stitch, creating an extra, slightly raised surface patterning and a striking effect whereby different shades of a single color shimmer on the shiny silk, comparable to the play of light on the facets of precious stones. *Basma* stitch was used in Bukhara as well as tambour.

The compositions and patterns of Bukharan pieces are highly diverse. Most common is a closed composition that emphasizes the center and corners, and has a round rosette as its major motif. The rosette can also be seen in the *islimi* pattern (wavy, curved plant tendrils) on the border (plate 12a). The details of rosettes are handled in an astonishing variety of ways: split into concentric circles, sections, stars, etc. – shapes that constantly introduce new variations on the basic motif. Circles are framed by a wreath of leaves or sometimes (as in a unique *suzani* in the collection of the Museum of History of the UzSSR) are surrounded by a necklace of black dots which, like cherries, are also interspersed among the *islimi* pattern on the border (plate 13).

An example of another version of a closed composition is found in a *bolinpush* (plate 14). On its central field is a diamond-shaped composition of leaves and large palmette-shaped flowers, with four pomegranate motifs placed in the corners, each one rendered differently (color plate II). In this *bolinpush*, as in many other Bukharan embroideries, the decoration of the central field and of the border are different. Its wide border (the ratio of the width of the border to the width of the central field is 1:1.5) is decorated with lovely large rosettes set among the curves of a leafy stalk.

There are also compositions with three eight-pointed stars arranged along the lengthwise axis, the largest in the middle (plate 15). The outlines of the stars are created with passages of serrated leaves, while their rays are filled with floral motifs. The composition on the central field is completed with flowers atop slender stems. The rare, very beautiful border gives the *bolinpush* reproduced in plate 15 great elegance: twenty rosettes and palmettes are arranged in the gentle curves of a leafy tendril, and all twenty have different features and a separate design, attesting to the large creative imagination of the folk artists (color plate III).

On a number of Bukharan *suzanis* there is a diamond-shaped grid on the central field with separate flowers and floral motifs in its cells, while the pattern of the border consists of the favorite *islimli* tendril with rosettes and palmettes, elaborated

differently in every piece, impressing the onlooker with the great variety of the ornamentation (plates 16, 17).

The compositions of the next group of Bukharan embroideries involve thin stalks and flowers spread freely over the area of the central field (plates 18, 19).

The high artistic quality of Bukhara's *suzanis* and *bolinpush* is equally evident in its *joynamaz* and *ruijos* (plates 20, 21). The free and easy floral pattern of the *joynamaz* makes a charming impression.

By the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries the embroideries of Bukhara, while partially retaining the traditions of its ancient art, became bigger in size; their technique grew coarser, and their colors got harsher.

Samarkand is one of the most ancient cities of Central Asia, famous as early as the 4th century B.C. For many centuries it was a major center for ceramics, silk weaving and other artisanal trades. One can find archaic features in embroideries from Samarkand linking them to the art of ancient Sogdiana, particularly the décor of clay ossuaries, as well as to the ornamentation of 19th-century household ceramics and patterns on the *duvals* (rammed-earth fences) in courtyards in Samarkand.

Samarkand embroideries are different from those of Nurata and Bukhara: their designs are larger and more laconic. The

main motif of Samarkand embroidery is a round rosette, in cool crimson tones, surrounded by a ring of leaves. In early embroideries from the mid-19th century (up to the 1880s) the round rosette has multicolored concentric and ray-like components, while the rings of leaves are enlivened by a rainbow-banded stripe or a light green center with a streak of bright red.

The aesthetic merits of Samarkand embroidery are the decorativeness and clarity of its large, simple pattern. The best old pieces by Samarkand artisans are held in the Samarkand Museum. Among them, a *bolinpush* from the mid-19th century stands out for its simple composition of five circles (plate 22). The artist has accentuated the central circle of the *bolinpush* not by means of its size or design, but by framing it with a ring of leaves while keeping the wreaths around the corner circles open.

The gaps between the corner circles are filled with a design element, typical for Samarkand, called *chor-chirog* ("four-font lamp"), which perhaps once had a magical significance associated with the cult of fire in Central Asia. *Chor-chirog* is composed of four elongated floral shapes emerging from a central rosette. The embroidery is framed by a narrow border strip, patterned with the repeating motif of a branch with a blossom and a pair of leaves. This border design is characteristic of Samarkand embroideries (plate 22, color plate V).

The Samarkand Museum has a very beautiful *suzani* with a big circle in the middle, from which emerge two pairs of crimson palmettes with rose-colored slashes.

A *suzani* from the 1870s–1880s (plate 23) is similarly effective, with a simple, precise design consisting of twelve round rosettes of two kinds, arranged in three vertical rows. The rosettes' bright, star-shaped centers stand out beautifully on the circle's turquoise background, which has been completely filled in with embroidery.

All the pieces referenced above date from the period 1850–1880 – a time when embroidery art flourished; they were executed on white homespun cotton cloth, using colored silk and bright red wool, in *basma* stitch.

At the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries the style of Samarkand embroideries changed radically. The circular rosettes grew larger and lost their multicolored components; the green rings of leaves turned into thick black tendrils. The colors are applied graphically instead of pictorially, according to a scheme based on contrasts between four colors: two shades of red in the circles, black leaves and the white background.

If pieces from the 19th century move the viewer with the subtlety and variety of their design, the reserve and dignity in the harmony of their colors, the new pieces overwhelm the viewer with the force and laconicism of their bold, simple,

expressive forms and contrasting color combinations.

These new artistic qualities, pertaining to embroideries from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, evidently suited the changing tastes of the population at that time.

A large *suzani* from the end of the 19th century belonging to the Museum of the Academy of Sciences of the Tajik SSR in Stalinabad may serve as an example of the new tendency in embroidery art (plate 24). It is embroidered with colored silk on white factory-produced fabric. The *suzani's* decoration consists of nine big violet-cherry red circles with bright red circles inside them, placed in three rows; thick black tendrils curl around the rosettes. The embroidery has a narrow border, about 20 cm wide, on which large black curlicues alternate with cherry-red rosettes with red centers. The embroidery conveys a feeling of grandiosity and laconicism of expression. This is achieved by the stern rhythm of the circles and the bold, unrestrained silhouettes of powerful black tendrils.

A large number of *suzanis* and *bolinpush* appeared in the late 19th and early 20th centuries with patterns that were totally new for Samarkand, in the form of rows of identical shrubs. These embroideries were usually done on colored backgrounds – on purple silk, or red or yellow factory-produced cotton fabric. They used a limited range of colors, often with white predominating. We will mention two

embroideries in the Samarkand Museum as examples. The first *suzani* is decorated with 12 identical shrubs organized in three rows (plate 25). The shrubs' black stems are sharply silhouetted against a crimson background, with flower shapes of turquoise green and purple; some of them are additionally outlined in white.

The second *suzani* has an even more laconic design. Twelve wide, white spirals with a flower at the end are embroidered on a maroon background; yellow, serrated S-shaped forms repeat along its narrow borders. The palette here consists of only three colors: red (background), white and yellow. The embroidery commands instant attention with its large, bright pattern.

We should add that the embroideries preserved by people nowadays are primarily of the two types just described, on white or colored backgrounds; and contemporary folk artists base their own creations on these pieces.

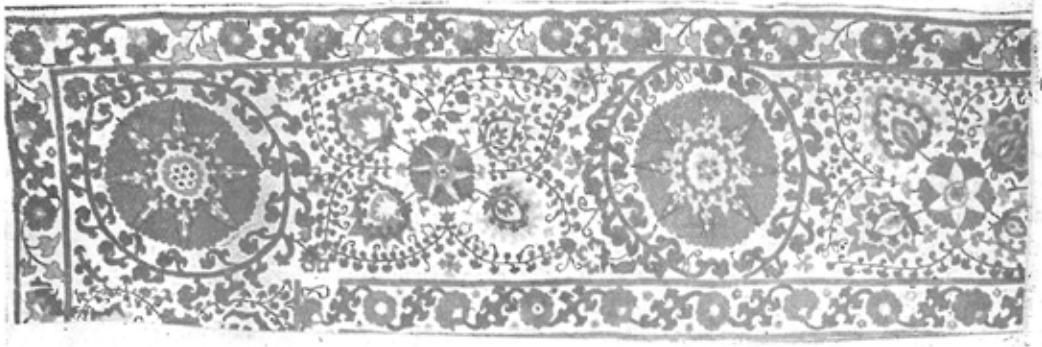
Jizzakh – a small regional center located between Samarkand and Leninabad (formerly Khojent) – developed its own variety of embroidery. Jizzakh embroideries are done on white or yellow cotton fabric. Their basic motif is a crimson circle framed by navy blue leaves. Unlike other regions, circles in pieces from Jizzakh do not have any varicolored details. The circles are sewn in threads of a single color. To break up a large monotonous area, an artisan would cover it with 3–5 concentric rings executed in various techniques, such that the rings

are separated by a narrow zigzag strip of unembroidered fabric. Another specific feature of this region's embroidery is that the circlets of leaves around the rosettes are open on two sides (plate 26). Images of a *tumor* (amulet) – silver jewelry for a woman – are usually embroidered in the corners of the central field. Jizzakh pieces are sewn in *basma* stitch; the leaf parts are thickly and somewhat crudely outlined in black using double buttonhole stitch, *ilmak*.

Shahrisabz (“Green City”) is situated in a fertile, irrigated valley with rich vegetation. It is also one of the oldest cities of Central Asia – ancient Kesh, the birthplace of Tamerlane. The walls of the Timurid Ak-Saray palace are still standing; the extraordinary beauty, variety and delicacy of the ornamentation on their ceramic facades are astonishing.

In the 19th century Shahrisabz was the center of a large county of Bukhara, with well-developed trade and crafts. Shahrisabz's artisans, both male and female, worked for the courts of the Emir and the county governor (*bek*).

Shahrisabz has an illustrious tradition of embroidery art. Women in Shahrisabz employ the technique of filling in an embroidery with cross stitch called *iraki*. In the 19th century they sewed small pieces in *iraki* for themselves, and large pieces (*suzanis*, robes, horse blankets, etc.) for the *beks*.



12. Details of the border of a Shahrisabz *suzani*. (a) On white homespun cotton cloth.

In the early 20th century, women in Shahrisabz produced for the Emirs' court huge cloths, completely filled in with embroidery, called *dastarkhans*, which were used to wrap up gifts for Russian tsars, officials, and representatives of the local nobility.

The composition of these pieces is more reminiscent of a carpet than an embroidery. Often they have a large medallion in the center, with four quadrants of the same medallion in the corners (plate 27). Their colors are more contrasting, and ornaments more geometric, than in other embroideries.

For their own homes, Shahrisabz craftswomen created decorative embroideries of a different sort, applying not only *iraki* technique but other stitches well-known in Uzbekistan.

All museums with collections of Central Asian embroideries contain superb pieces that are astonishing for their richly intricate

patterns and range of colors, in which cool crimson and ocean blue shades prevail. These embroideries are executed on white homespun cotton cloth in *basma* stitch or often *kanda-khayol*. They stand between (so to speak) pieces from Samarkand and pieces from Bukhara and Nurata. They are like Samarkand pieces in their round rosettes framed in leaves and their cool color tones, although their bold, detailed ornamentation is more richly elaborated than in Samarkand. In their floral patterns they are closer to Bukhara or Nurata.

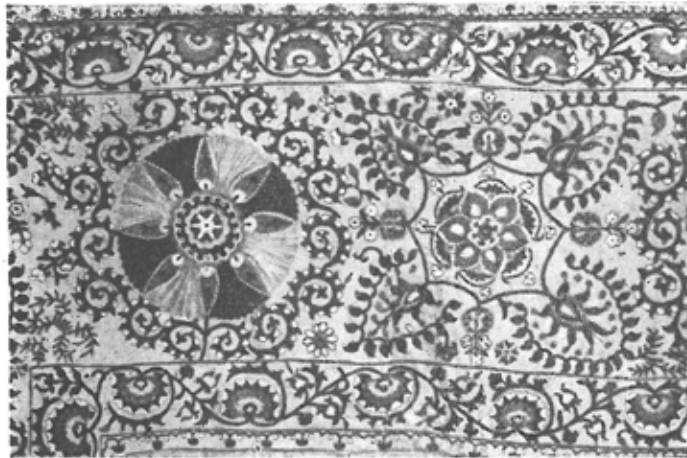
It has not been established where these embroideries were produced; it has been suggested they were made in Shahrisabz or Karshi.

When they are compared with pieces on colored backgrounds known to have been produced in Shahrisabz, the affinities between them become apparent (illus. 12 a, b). Hence, we may surmise that these splendid pieces are native to the city of Shahrisabz. We will consider a few

embroideries from the Shahrisabz group.

We show a *suzani* embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth, in colored silk and red wool, using *basma* stitch (plates 28, 29). There is a large rosette at the center of the composition, flanked on two sides by many-colored palmettes. Eight smaller rosettes of the same kind decorate the wide border strip, thereby expanding the overly narrow central field. The impression of a unified composition is strengthened further by the fact that the decoration across the whole embroidery is uniformly dense, leaving only a few insignificant areas where the white backing is visible. The rosettes differ in their details and coloring; their massiveness contrasts with the thin, interlaced branches which frame the border's floral composition. The wreaths of leaves around the rosettes and the whimsical, fantastical trailing leaves have been executed with exceptional skill.

Another variation with a slightly different composition is seen in a *suzani* in colored silk on white cotton, using *khanda-khayol* stitch (plate 30). Beside the rosette-framed-with-leaves composition, this embroidery's decoration includes a central circle with four motifs emerging from it. This composition is in the middle of the central field; we also find it in the border. The embroidery is very ornate and festive. The colors and shapes of the rosettes and flowers are worked out in detail; they combine two kinds of red, crimson with green, dark blue with yellow, gray with turquoise; certain details attract attention from the contrast of black and white. The green leaves frames are shot through with lively rainbow colors, and the leaf ends are touched up in red and crimson highlights (color plate VI). The embroidery is adorned with many elegant pitchers and pheasants with long tails and bright plumage.



12. (b) On colored silk.

Two pieces similar to this embroidery are a strikingly fancy, loose-patterned *suzani* (plate 31) and a *ruijo* (plate 32).

A number of embroideries in this group have a design close to pieces from Nurata, with a large star-shaped rosette in the center, floral sprays in the corners, and branches between them. At the same time, these pieces have many unique features. The floral sprays are shaped differently than in Nurata embroideries; they are sewn in *khanda-khayol*, not *basma* stitch; the leafy parts of the ornaments are colored in cool blue-green and dark sky-blue shades with a navy blue edge (plate 33).

Shahrisabz embroideries on colored backgrounds in tambour stitch are outstanding for their high level of artistry, similar to those from Bukhara. They are so varied and original that it is hard to give a general description of them.

Each embroidery is a unique work of art, full of the charm and imbued with the creative imagination of the individual artist.

A small *yastykpush* from Shahrisabz can serve as an example of such consummate skill (plate 34). The embroidery is done in tambour stitch using fourteen colors of silk thread and bright red wool on a pleasantly soft, grayish rep weave fabric. The central field's role is unimportant compared to the border, which is even a little wider than it is.

The central field is embroidered with

large shapes looking like lyre-shaped vessels, from which red tongues of flame are bursting upwards. Within the border are large palmettes and circles. Each palmette shape is divided into separate segments by rays and transverse stripes; many of the segments are divided further by stripes, small squares, and thin little decorated ribbons. The colors have been very tastefully chosen. Similar colors are juxtaposed like cornflower blue and sky blue, carmine and light crimson, yellow and gold, together with contrasting combinations purple and yellow, dark blue and red, etc. Every figure is double-outlined with white-and-red and black lines. The palmettes convey the impression of shining suns, with rainbow-colored rays spreading out from the center to the periphery. In circles on the background, fully sewn in with bright red wool, are the figures of two highly stylized birds on either side of an oval plant. Leafy parts of the decoration are embroidered in light green and dark blue silk; there are also round little leaves shaped like berries.

A fantastic flight of imagination characterizes the decoration of a Shahrisabz *suzani* on brown silk rep in colored silk thread and wool, using tambour stitch. A single plant, with branches coming off a vertical stalk, occupies its central field. The border is patterned with large palmettes arranged to create the sense of a twining stem in rhythmic motion. The design's effect is enhanced by breaking up the surface of its motifs – flowers with scalloped petals in the central field, and huge palm ettes (up to 30 cm long) with

pointed petals in the border – with tiny ornaments: the flowers are covered with squares, and the palmettes with rows of tiny crosses. The color combinations used here are favorites of Shahrissabz: similar tones of a single hue, or contrasting colors. Thus, for example, on a light blue field the pattern is dark blue and crimson; on a crimson field it is rose and light blue; on a red field it is white and yellow. The flowers in the narrow border strip have outlines corresponding to the color of the motif: dark and light blue motifs have a white outline, crimson ones have a rose outline, lilac-colored ones have a yellow outline, etc. (color plate IV).

We must not conclude our description of Shahrissabz embroideries on a colored background in tambour stitch without remarking on a large, very interesting *suzani* from the end of the 19th century, sewn on dark purple silk (plates 35, 36, 37). The embroidery's subject is charming. Roosters march in stately fashion around a central circle. A large number of parti-colored figures of birds are scattered around the embroidery in many places. One can also find images of pitchers, pomegranates, almonds and other various motifs. Despite the design's variety and its diversity of colors, the embroidery maintains a unified composition and color scheme. The long inscription running around the central part of the *suzani* is a rarity. The inscription expresses a host of wishes to the girl for whose wedding the embroidery was made, as well as an appraisal on the embroidery itself as "a marvelous *suzani* to delight the heart."

The inhabitants of Shahrissabz still possess quite a number of beautiful examples of embroideries executed in tambour stitch on colored silk or cotton fabrics; some of them are around one hundred years old. Their design consists of a central circle or star, off of which four branches extend towards the corners. Analogous motifs are in the border. As in the case of the museum pieces described above, these old embroideries still in use among the people are characterized by a love for bright colors, polychromatic stripes dividing up the areas of ornamental shapes, and figures of birds to enliven the design.

Tashkent is one of Central Asia's oldest cities (in the early centuries A.D. it was the chief city in the region of Chach). In the 10th century it was called Binkent and known as a large center for commerce and crafts, conducting a lively trade with nomads. In the 19th century Tashkent was ruled at various times by the Khan of Kokand or the Emir of Bukhara, and sometimes formed its own independent entity.

The city's trade links with Russia expanded in the 19th century, and in the second half of the century it turned into a major administrative, commercial and cultural center in Central Asia.

Some Tashkent embroideries, in their colors and designs, are reminiscent of the carpets of nomads.

There are two types of large decorative embroideries in Tashkent analogous to

the *suzanis* of other regions, the *palak* and the *gulkurpa*. Sukhareva derives the word *palak* from Arabic *falak* meaning “sky, heavenly firmament.”

Palaks’ basic motif is big, dark red circles called *oy* (“moon”), or occasionally *yulduz* (“star”), densely covering the surface of the fabric. The *gulkurpa* (“flowery coverlet”), which used to serve as a bedspread over a newlywed pair’s blanket, is decorated with floral ornament leaving a large part of the background unembroidered. The technique used for Tashkent embroidery is *basma*.

Palaks followed a distinct pattern of development. In the earliest examples from the middle of the 19th century, the background is more sparsely embroidered, with a finer stitch, than *palaks* from the second half of the 19th century. In the center of the earlier embroideries is a circle with many-colored rays, or a star with palmettes in its rays. The remaining area of the central field is filled with circles or branches with flowers in profile, the bottom petals of which are bent towards the stem.

A *palak* in the Museum of Art of the UzSSR is an example of an early piece, done with superb artistry (plate 38).

Other *palaks* have a circle in the middle, set in a wreath of flowers in profile, occupying the whole width of the field; four huge red flowers spread out from the circle towards the corners like a fan, on thick straight stalks with bright streaks of

rainbow colors. Embroideries of this kind are highly decorative.

A *palak* in the State Museum of Oriental Cultures represents a variation on this composition (plate 39). It too has a circle in the center and flowers in the corners. To enliven the composition, bands of yellow *bodoms* (almonds) and trefoils have been inserted into the frames of leaves. Motifs of branches, characteristic of *gulkurpa* embroideries, have been added to the border of this embroidery together with circles.

One very beautiful *palak* has 15 circles on its central field (plate 40). The artist has managed to keep the rows straight while accentuating the design’s key areas, the center and corners, by inserting larger circles set in multicolored, toothed frames.

The group of Tashkent pieces under discussion have much in common with those produced by embroideresses in Ura-Tyube, the primary center for folk art in northern Tajikistan, situated south of Tashkent. Their similarities can be seen in identical designs of the central star, the shape of flowers in profile, and the multicolored motifs scattered over the field of the embroidery.

In the second half of the 19th century the most common type of *palak* had rows of large carmine red circles in navy blue leafy frames. Depending on the number of circles the *palak* was called *olti oylik palak* (six-moon *palak*), *o’n ikki oylik palak* (twelve-moon *palak*), etc. (color

plate VII).

There are more circles in earlier pieces, fewer circles in later ones. There exist 19th-century embroideries with twelve circles, and people remember hearing about embroideries with 40 circles.⁴³ The circles' rings of leaves touch one another, but the gaps between them are also filled in with embroidery.

The same circles, but smaller, form a closed frame along a wide border strip. For a narrow border, the favorite pattern in Tashkent *palaks* consists of small red roundels alternating with dark blue cross-shaped figures composed of leaves (illus. 13 b).⁴⁴ More rarely, the border features the motif of a flower in profile with its lower petals bent towards the stalk. In later *palaks*, embroidery densely covers the surface of the cloth, leaving hardly any of the background showing through.

These kinds of panels impress the onlooker with the strict rhythm of their orderly rows of identical motifs, and their austere color scheme based on contrasting the large masses of dark red circles with the dark blue frames of leaves.

To break up the monotony of large embroidered areas, women would often not embroider all the circle at once, but

in two stages, doing its middle part and its outer ring separately. This produced a certain play of color and subtleties of shading on its surface. Moreover, the blue leaf frames were complemented with fancy-colored striped or toothed rings – light blue and yellow, orange and purple. Bright, parti-colored flowers were scattered between the circles for the same purpose (illus. 13 a).

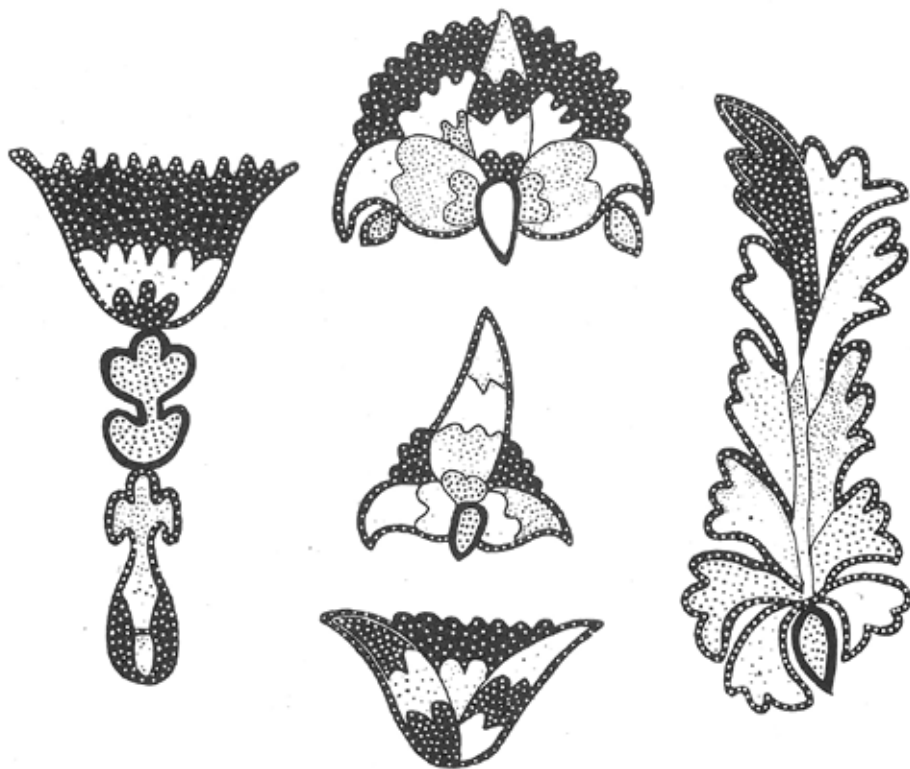
The appearance of Tashkent embroideries changed radically in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The number of circles grew less, while their size increased, until the rows of circles were replaced in the new-style pieces by one huge circle. Such embroideries are called *oy-palak* (one-moon *palak*), *kiz-palak* (girl's *palak*)⁴⁵ or *tagora-palak* (*palak* with a big bowl – *tagora*) (plate 41). They are completely covered in embroidery, with none of the background showing through.

Oy-palak has a circle with a star at its center, with two bright rings of various colors, and rainbow-banded curlicues called *zuluk* (leeches) which really do look like squirming leeches. The floral ornaments in these pieces are rendered very schematically. Whereas on embroideries until the 1890s the frames around the circles were made up of serrated leaves, the rings of leaves on *palaks* from the beginning of the 20th century look like a band with identical rounded scallop shapes

43 M. A. Bikzhanova, "Tashkent Embroidery, 19th–20th Centuries," manuscript at the Institute of Art of the Academy of Sciences of the UzSSR.

44 See the key to Abbreviations and Notations at the end of the book.

45 The name is explained by the fact that the *palak* was made for a wedding, a mandatory item of the bride's dowry.



a



b

13. Motifs of Tashkent embroideries. (a) Small floral motifs placed between the circles on the central field. (b) Pattern of narrow border strips.

along both its edges. The embroidery has sharply contrasting colors. Colorfully striped bands are done in bright yellow and rose thread, and outlined in black; the remaining area is entirely sewn over in maroon thread. Some productions from this period have decorative qualities, but many of them, unfortunately, use thread of such unpleasant, garish shades that it diminishes their artistic worth.

A special feature of *gulkurpas*, as noted above, is that a large area of their background fabric remains unembroidered. The earliest 19th-century *gulkurpas* were made on white homespun cotton cloth. Their design usually consists of a star in the middle and dark red circles or flowering branches in the corners of the central field and in the border (plate 42, color plate IX).

In the 1880s *gulkurpas* were embroidered on colored factory-made cotton fabrics, and on purple or green local artisanal silk.

In these pieces, the star is positioned not only in the middle but also in the corners of the central field. Besides branches in the border, there is a spiral-twisted stem with leaves and tiny flowers.

This review of two types of Tashkent embroidery – *palak* and *gulkurpa* – shows that in the 19th century many motifs appeared in the decoration of both, such as the star, large circle, and flowering branch. Moreover, in 19th-century *palaks* a significant portion of their surface remains unembroidered.

Thus, these two types of embroidery were not distinguished as sharply in the 19th century as they came to be in the 20th century. It is possible that only one kind of large, *suzani*-like decorative embroidery used to exist in Tashkent.

In its outward appearance and ritual significance, the Tashkent embroidery *choyshab* unites the functions of two embroideries known in other regions as *ruijo* (nuptial bed coverlet) and *takyapush* (cover for the head of the bed). The connection with the *ruijo* is seen from the custom of leaving one of the short sides of the *choyshab* unembroidered. Previously its central field was left completely empty, and the *choyshab* served originally as a bedsheet. Only later people started using it like a *takyapush* to cover the head of the newlyweds' bed and to curtain off large niches where folded blankets were stored during the day.

Choyshabs' ornamentation has much in common with *palaks* and *gulkurpas*.

Old *choyshabs* from the mid-19th century were made on white homespun cotton cloth and decorated with the same motifs as *palaks* – circles, and flowers in profile with their petals bent downwards.

Thus, for example, on one *choyshab* we see two big crimson circles framed in dark blue leaves, and flowers on a straight stem in the border (plate 43). Interestingly, the leafy parts of the pattern are not outlined, which is a feature of older embroideries.

There is one group of *choyshabs* on white backgrounds whose decoration combines motifs characteristic of *palaks* (circle, flower in profile) and *gulkurpas* (flowering branches) (plate 44).

The patterns of *choyshabs* on colored backgrounds are analogous to *gulkurpa* patterns, and whole sets of them were often embroidered at the same time. A *choyshab* on red calico belongs to this category (plate 45).

So-called *choyshab-palaks* became fashionable at the beginning of the 20th century. Complete sets were created with a single design, their surfaces completely filled in *basma* stitch. The sets included a pair of curtains for niches (*choyshab-palaks*) and an embroidery strip to cover a narrow niche (*kirpech-palak*).

A unique variation on Tashkent-style embroideries developed in the town of Pskent, located about 46 kilometers southeast of Tashkent.

The central field of a Pskent *palak* is broken up by a grid into large octagons and squares. Within each cell of the grid is a star or circle. The embroidery truly produces the impression of “the vault of heaven” with moons and stars. An example of such a *palak* is reproduced in plate 46.

In other instances, the central field is divided into rectangles, each with its own decoration (color plate VII).

Like the pieces from Tashkent, Pskent textiles from the late 19th and early

20th centuries are embroidered entirely in *basma* stitch, and have the same color scheme as those from Tashkent. Set against large areas of carmine red background, yellow and rose-colored striped bands and stars’ rays sharply stand out. Notwithstanding some rather garish colors, Pskent embroideries are very decorative.

An uncommonly beautiful *gulkurpa* from Pskent has a different character (plate 47). It is embroidered in white, black, crimson and cornflower blue thread, in *basma* technique, on shimmering reddish-orange silk. The big circles are made up of finely delineated concentric rings (color plate X). Verses in Arabic letters have been embroidered within some of the bands and ornamental motifs.

The Ferghana Valley – the jewel of Uzbekistan – is famous not only for its fertile soil and cotton cultivation, its orchards and vineyards, but also for its silk production. Since the distant past, brilliant wood carvers and wood painters, ceramists, metalsmiths and silk weavers have lived and worked in cities in the Ferghana Valley like Kokand, Margilan, Namangan and Andijan, and smaller towns like Rishtan, Chust, Isfara and others.

Skullcaps embroidered by Ferghana women are popular throughout the republic and beyond its borders. With their delicate work and elegant designs, Ferghana’s large decorative embroideries

are reminiscent of Ferghana skullcaps.

As in other regions, embroideries in Ferghana were made on white homespun cotton cloth until the 1880s. Unfortunately, few of these early embroideries have been preserved and they are completely unstudied; it is extremely hard to form an idea of their appearance.

The pieces by Ferghana artisans which we do know were produced on colored backgrounds and date to the end of the 19th–beginning of the 20th centuries.

These are primarily *ruijos*; less commonly, embroideries such as *gulkurpas* and *suzanis*.

Pieces from the late 19th and early 20th centuries were executed on dark green or purple silk or sateen. Their patterns are remarkably light and graceful, loosely spaced over the empty background. The repeating motif of a flowering bush with scallop-shaped leaves that look like they are flowing is a common one for *ruijos* (plates 48, 49). The embroidery uses bright thread on a dark background; the simple alternation of white and yellow bushes with crimson-red flowers sets up a rhythm of color. The decorative motifs' bright outlines look lovely against a dark background (color plate XIII). The basic motif of many large embroideries is a round rosette of concentric rings (plate 50).

Ferghana pieces are made with tightly wound silk thread, using a special kind

of *basma* stitch, whereby the ground threads are fastened by rows of stitches in a checkered pattern; in this way a sort of mesh is created through which the background is visible.

In concluding this overview of local types of 19th-century embroideries, let us again briefly mention the basic notable features of each.

Nurata embroideries are distinguished by their floral sprays spaced loosely over the background fabric, the richness of their floral motifs, the bright gentle colors of the thread, and *basma* stitch.

In Bukharan embroideries typically there are flowers on thin branches, evenly spaced over the surface of the textile, or round rosettes framed by branched stems, delicate color combinations, tambour technique, and *basma* stitch.

Samarkand embroideries stand out for their laconic pattern of big round rosettes in rings of leaves, a color scheme consisting of cool violet and crimson tones, and *basma* stitch.

The decoration of Shahrisabz embroideries, like those from Samarkand, is dominated by a big rosette with many-colored components in dark blue, leafy wreaths. The principal stitches of Shahrisabz embroideries are *kanda-khayol* and tambour.

The compositions of Tashkent *palaks* consist of dark red circles, entirely filled

in with embroidery; the compositions of *gulkurpas* and *choyshabs* involve a central star or circle and flowering branches, leaving a large area of the background empty. Tashkent embroidery uses *basma* technique.

Embroideries from the Ferghana Valley are characterized by a graceful linear design of branches or concentric rings, leaving much of the background free.

While speaking of different schools of embroidery, we can simultaneously recognize that they share a certain common character, corroborated by the historically attested ties between the regions.

For example, sophisticated floral ornamentation closely connects one group of Bukharan embroidery with pieces from Nurata. Other Bukharan embroideries patterned with round rosettes are close to embroideries from Shahrissabz. The colors and compositions of Shahrissabz textiles have much in common with pieces from Samarkand. *Gulkurpas* and *choyshabs* from Tashkent share similarities with embroideries from Ferghana.

In museum holdings there are outstanding, unique textiles about which we can only say that they were made on the territory of Uzbekistan or Tajikistan. Their excellence as works of art requires us to focus on at least a few of them.

There is a *suzani* in the collection of the State Museum of Oriental Cultures that is remarkable for its totally individual design

(plate 51). The *suzani*'s large area is evenly covered in delicate floral ornamentation, amidst which a central, circular rosette and round rosettes in the corners stand out. The central field and border have identical patterns and color schemes, making for a uniform composition. At first glance the embroidery's flowers seem to be scattered between the rosettes in no particular order, merely to create a many-colored textile. When we inspect the *suzani* more carefully, however, we can observe unified groupings of small floral motifs. The embroidery incorporates a wealth of lovely details executed very tastefully and elegantly (color plate XI).

Fourteen shades of silk are used in the *suzani*'s color scheme, but the hues which predominate are carmine-crimson, light olive green and dark gold, making for a uniform, austere palette; other tones are used discreetly for details. The embroidery was made with great technical skill using a tambour. In many places the embroidery's black threads have fallen out over time.⁴⁶

This outstanding piece is striking for its vivid individuality. Judging by how it was sewn, it may have been made in Bukhara or Shahrissabz where embroideresses used tambour stitch.

A remarkable *ruijo*, made on white homespun cotton cloth in *basma* stitch,

46 Threads fall out after 70-100 years as a result of the pomegranate peel extract used to dye them. This shows the embroidery is around 100 years old, or even older.

displays a rich, original design and an especially beautiful combination of colors (plate 52, frontispiece.) Its star-shaped rosettes are modelled like cornflowers, while shoots with various kinds of little flowers twist within every leaf – a fanciful pattern giving the design of the *ruijo* a particular air of whimsy. The array of colors is rich and lively, with a predominance of terracotta red. Crimson, light blue, gold and violet-gray are used for details.

In analyzing the textiles of different regions, some attempt was made to trace the process by which the art of embroidery developed from the mid-19th to the beginning of the 20th century. Now it is necessary to offer a general description of that process.

The best surviving examples of 19th-century embroideries were made in the years 1850–1870. As far as earlier embroideries are concerned – dating from the first half of the 19th century – we can only judge by individual remaining pieces.

Commercial ties with Russia grew significantly by the end of the century, and imports of cheap factory-made goods into Central Asia increased. This had an effect on the arts and crafts of Uzbekistan. Some types of handicraft, such as block printing and artisanal weaving, unable to withstand the competition from cheap factory textiles, practically ceased to exist.

Embroidery, which did not face such competition, remained an essential

appurtenance of the national way of life. Nonetheless, embroidery style could not help being affected by the changes happening in society. Whereas in the past each family had created decorative textiles by its own efforts alone, now professional embroideresses began to produce them to order for rich households, or to sell in the markets. Making items for the markets led to a deterioration in their quality. Rising mass production, and the requirement to keep turning out copies, eliminated creativity from the manufacture of embroideries and led to an impoverishment of their designs and colors. Their look reflected the tastes of the emerging local bourgeoisie, who strove to show off their wealth even in embroideries. *Suzanis* grew to huge sizes; and, as discussed above, certain motifs of the patterns got bigger.

One already feels in pieces from the 1880s a certain decline from the peak achievements of folk art attained in the previous decades. The integrity and unity of the composition as a whole; harmonious balance among its various parts; variety in the patterning: increasingly these things are missing. This process of regress accelerated especially in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Despite the marks of decline evident in Uzbekistan's artistic handicrafts during this period, particularly in embroidery, it is wrong to talk only about a decline in the art of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Folk art was alive and well and continued evolving during these years. Artisans

created new embroideries with a host of aesthetic qualities never seen in earlier times.

We recall, for example, the laconicism and grandiosity of the new Samarkand *suzanis*, the decorative abundance of the embroideries from Shahrizabz and

Pskent, and the elegance of the pieces from Ferghana. Productions from the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries are not only a bridge connecting the artistic creativity of past eras with the decorative and applied art of the Soviet period, but also directly formed the basis for contemporary art.





III. AESTHETIC PRINCIPLES OF DECORATIVE EMBROIDERY IN UZBEKISTAN IN THE 19th CENTURY



1. Composition

Examination of a large number of embroideries from different regions of Uzbekistan allows us to elucidate some of the general principles on which their ornamentation and color schemes are based.

We have already noted how embroidered items' designs differ depending on their intended use.

Let us focus now on the compositions of decorative embroideries having a central field and border.

The central field and border are of equal importance in these textiles, and work together to create a uniform aesthetic

whole. There are numerous different ways the two parts can interrelate. In many embroideries the principal decorative theme is played out on the central field, while the border merely supplements it by giving the piece the necessary feeling of completion (plates 2, 4, 22, 23).

There are other embroideries, however, where the artist has concentrated primarily on elaborating the border, beautifying it in a particularly rich and sumptuous way (plates 14, 28, 34).

The ratio between the width of the border and the width of the central field can differ widely, fluctuating on average from 1:4 to 1:2.2. Sometimes the border is a very narrow strip; at other times it is practically as wide as the central field itself. Wide

borders are found on the best embroideries of the 19th century. Possibly this can be explained by the fact that it was customary in some regions to cover folded blankets with several embroideries, thrown one on top of the other in such a manner that the border of each was visible.

The border commonly consists of three bands: a wide central one between two narrow ones. The outside bands are equal in width, although on occasion – as if to emphasize the completion of her work – the craftswoman would make the band on the edge of the embroidery slightly wider than the one abutting the central field. There are also a fair number of pieces with a single border strip edged with thick straight lines; and there are others with double borders – a wide one closer to the center and a narrow one along the embroidery’s edge (plate 53).

Even this brief outline of one of the composition features of Uzbekistan’s embroideries – the size ratio between the central field and border – suffices to show its great variety and the absence of any fixed rules in this regard.

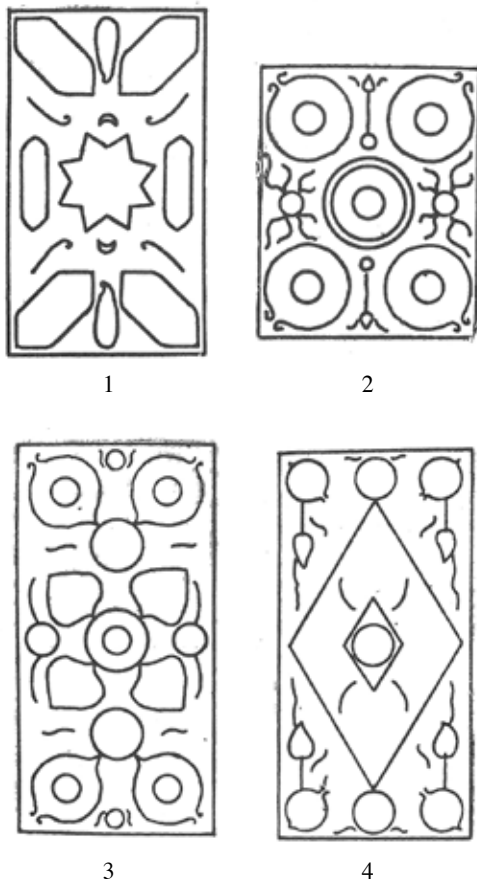
While working within an established tradition, craftswomen invented fresh creative solutions in every embroidery they made and never repeated themselves. Therein lay the great strength of folk art.

We turn now to a consideration of the main compositional approaches to decorative embroideries’ central field.

The commonest type was a closed

composition which accentuated the principal, central motif and the four accompanying motifs in the corners. These motifs can be a star or round rosette with four floral sprays in the corners; a big circle with four smaller circles; or many other shapes (illus. 14).

It is common to find a complicated floral



14. Closed compositional schemes for embroideries’ central field, accentuating the central and four corner motifs.

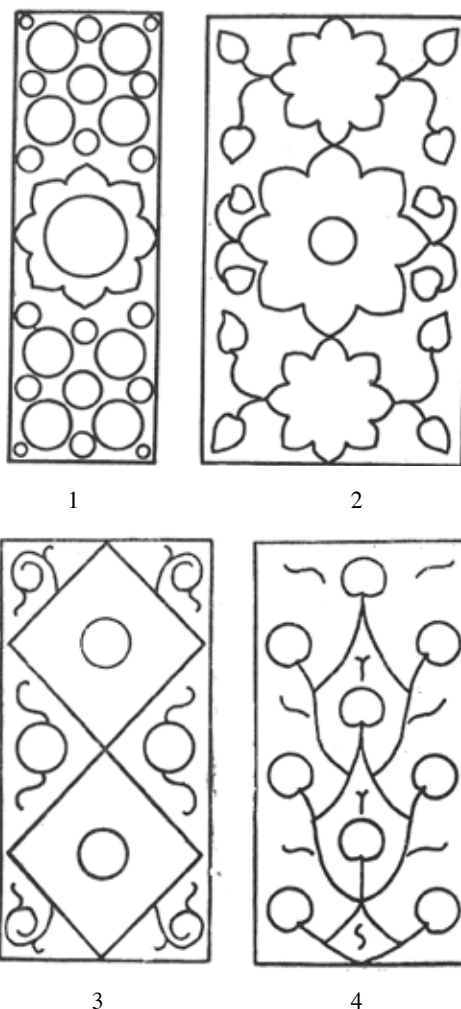
composition in the center in the shape of a cross or rhombus. Other additional elements are arranged between these main ones.

This type of composition envisions the embroidery's design as an entirety, in which separate elements are arranged quite loosely (and not necessarily repeated) but always respecting the overall balance between the ornamental shapes. The center and corners of a wall hanging are the most natural places for observers to concentrate their attention, affording the artist wide scope for a host of established alternatives.

Compositions where the dominant axis of symmetry is vertical are rarer. Various ways of organizing decorations in this fashion are shown in Illustration 15. In one case, three primary motifs are set out in the middle of the central field – three stars, or a star with circles below and above. A second possibility is two rhombuses; a third possibility is a plant with branches unfurling on both sides of a vertical stalk.

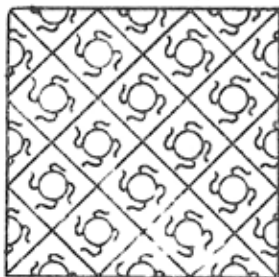
A third compositional type is based on the principle of covering the central field uniformly in decoration that mentally could be extended in any direction, like the repeating designs of rapport fabrics.

Embroideries with a square, diamond-shaped or polygonal grid placed across the whole central field belong to this type. The grid is formed of lines or leaf segments; its cells are filled with identical or differing motifs arranged to create a

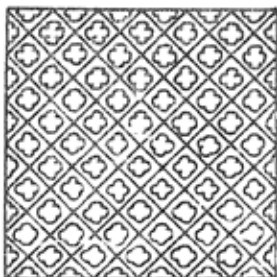


15. Compositional schemes for embroideries' central field with a vertical axis of symmetry.

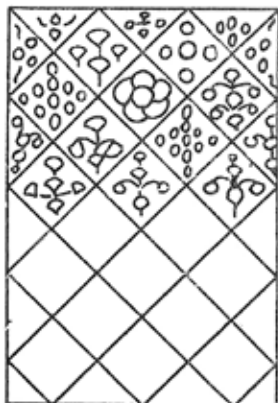
distinct rhythmic pattern (illus. 16). This most elementary form of design construction has ancient roots in the art of Central Asia. For instance, there is a



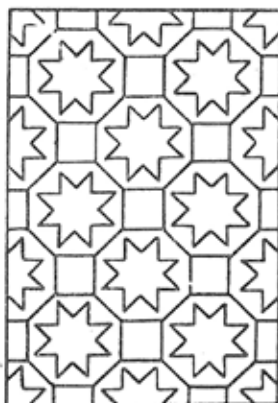
1



2



3



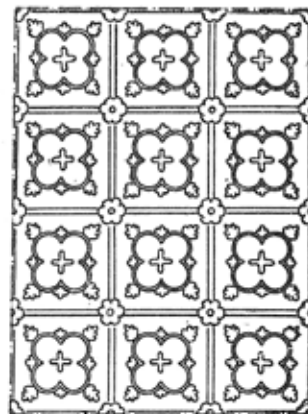
4

16. Repeating compositional schemes for embroideries' central field with square, diamond-shaped and polygonal grids.

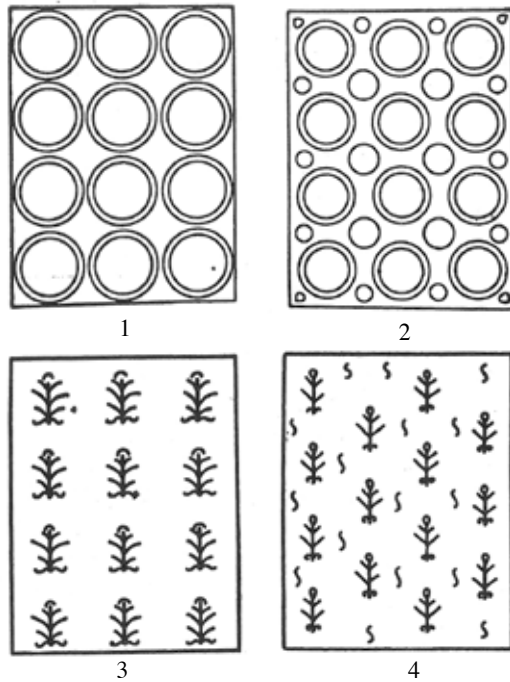
17. Compositional schemes for embroideries' central field. Bukharan embroidery, 19th century. GMVK No. 2332 III. Carpet depicted on a wall painting in Penjikent, 7th century A.D. (artifact III, room 7).



1



2



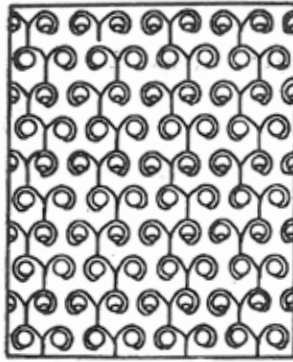
18. Repeating compositional schemes for embroideries' central field with rows of motifs organized in simple lines and in a checkerboard pattern.

striking similarity between 19th-century Bukharan embroidery and the pattern on the carpet reproduced in a painting from Penjikent (artifact III, room 7).⁴⁷ In both cases we see a square grid with four-petaled flowers in its cells (illus. 17). A large number of embroideries have a repeating design with rows of motifs organized either in simple lines or in a

checkerboard pattern (illus. 18). The rows can consist of a single repeating motif or different, alternating motifs.

A variant of this composition is shown in Illustration 18–2: rows of the principal large rosettes are interspersed with rows of small secondary motifs, organized in a checkerboard pattern with respect to the principal motifs. *Suzanis* with this design are reminiscent of Turkmen carpets which have straight lines of polygonal medallions (*guls*) and small motifs between them. This composition

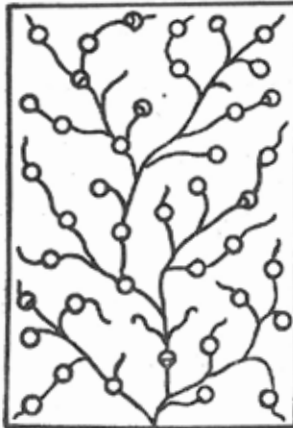
⁴⁷ *The Painting of Ancient Penjikent* (Moscow: Academy of Sciences of the USSR Publishing House, 1954), plate XXVII.



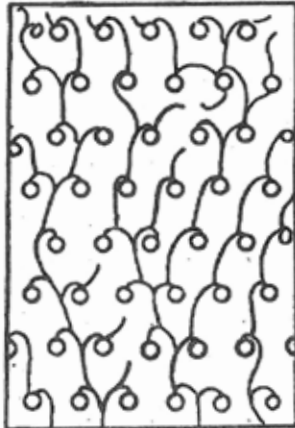
1



2



3



4

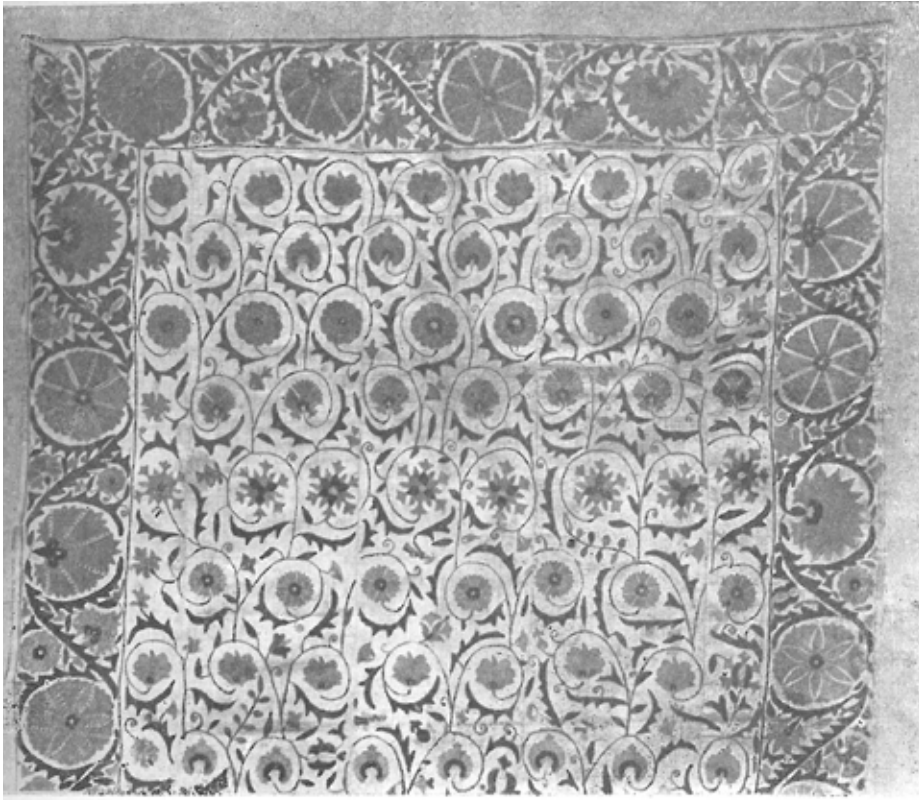
19. Compositional schemes with flowering branches for embroideries' central field.

1, 2. Flowers on spiral branches forming horizontal rows. 3. Flowers freely arranged on stems growing from the same root. 4. Flowers on stems growing from several roots.

of motifs in rows impresses the viewer with its strict rhythm. An endless number of variations on the scheme are possible, with different arrangements and colorings of its individual elements.

Suzanis adorned with flowering branches

employ exactly the same principle of a central field uniformly filled with decorations (illus. 19). The flowers are ordered according to a definite pattern: each kind of flower forms a straight horizontal row; but each following row is shifted with respect to the one above

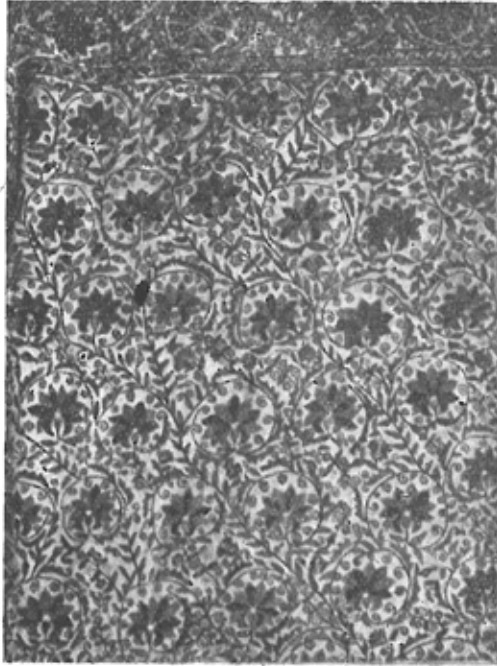


20. Detail of a *suzani*, 19th century. GMVK, inv. 1105 III.

like on a checkerboard. For example, on one embroidery (illus. 20) there are six rows of differing floral motifs, which then repeat. The flowers are on slender, spiral twin stems, artfully positioned to make it look as if each upper pair of tendrils are growing out of a single, lower one (illus. 19-1). Sometimes the spirals emerge not from straight stems but diagonally leaning branches, as for example in a *suzani* in the Bukhara museum (illus. 21, 19-2).

The central field can also be filled with flowering branches in a freer style. The

decoration on a *nimsuzani* from the Samarkand museum, for example, has been applied with great artistry (plate 18). Reproducing the natural curves of a living plant, stems growing from one of several roots (plate 19) rise up and send out shoots in all directions which fill the area of the central field. These floral motifs, all different in shape and color, are not pulled into straight lines but move to more complex rhythms, creating nevertheless a uniform, harmonious composition (illus. 19-3).



21. Detail of a *suzani*. Bukhara, 19th century. Bukhara museum, inv. 1817/10.

Besides the central-field designs already discussed, there are embroideries in which different sorts of decorative compositions are employed together. In one *suzani*, for example, there is a large rosette in the center while the rest of its field is covered in a grid pattern. Another has bouquets in the corners but no motif in the middle, instead of which the central area is filled with floral sprays in a checkerboard arrangement. We could cite more such examples but, in any case, the preponderant number of *suzanis* can be assigned to the basic compositional schemes described above.

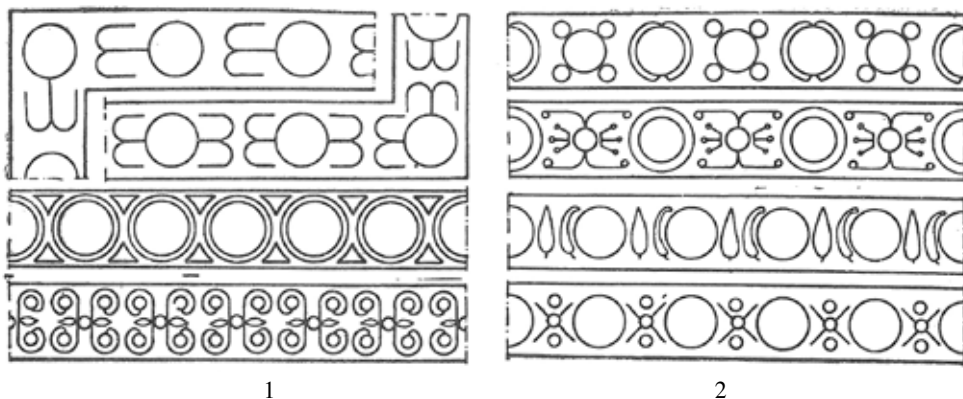
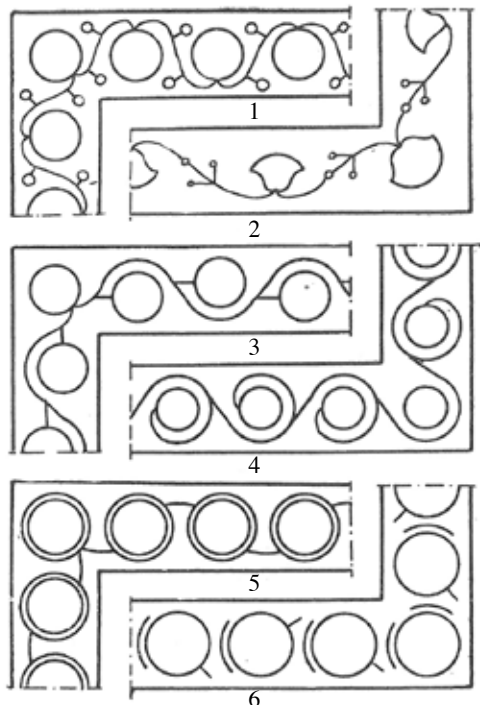
There is also a variety of border designs on decorative embroideries. The prevailing type of composition is a wavy, curling plant tendril – *islimi*. It appears in every kind of decorative art in Uzbekistan across many centuries. *Islimi* decoration is full of movement and goes well in border strips framing the central field. Moreover, it looks equally good horizontally as vertically. *Islimi*'s smoothly twisting tendrils are made up of leaves, with flowers and flower rosettes fitted into its curves in accordance with the pattern (illus. 22). The flowers frequently seem to grow from the very top of the stem, either drooping downwards or rising up (illus. 22–1); sometimes they are on straight little legs coming off the sides of the tendril (illus. 22–2). Another *islimi* variant has flowers on spiral stems, offshoots of the main stalk that bend alternately to one side or the other, emphasizing the dynamism of the pattern (illus. 22–3). The tendril's natural rhythm is felt especially when the flowers and leaves are directly on the plant itself and tilt, in one direction or the other, along with the turning of the stalk (illus. 22–4). The stalk is not always shown fully. Sometimes its movement is implied by the placement and tilt of individual flowers (22–5). In all its variations, the composition is enriched by tiny flowers positioned symmetrically around the principal motifs.

Besides *islimi*, the border composition may utilize the simple repetition of one and the same motif, or of two different ones (illus. 23).

The border's pattern can consist of identical circles, or a succession of flowering branches, or a more complicated, repeating floral composition.

22. Compositional scheme for embroideries' border with an *islimi*-style curling tendril.

1. Floral motifs emerging from the very top of the tendril. 2. Floral motifs on straight little legs coming off the sides of the tendril. 3. Floral motifs on spiral stems, offshoots of the main stalk. 4. Floral motifs on the main stalk itself. 5. The tendril's movement implied by the placement of floral motifs.



23. Compositional schemes for embroideries' border with repeating motifs.

1. Composition with one repeating motif. 2. Composition with two alternating motifs.

The best 19th-century embroideries manage to combine the central field and border in such a way that they set off and complement one another, making a continuous whole. This is achieved in different ways, depending on the particular embroidery styles in separate regions.

The sharpest juxtaposition of central field and border occurs in Nurata embroideries, with the motifs of a central star and floral sprays. The central field's tranquil, symmetrical composition, leaving much of the background empty, contrasts with the rhythmical movement of the plant tendril which densely fills the border and, like a garland, twines around the panel to give it a needed sense of completeness (plate 2). If, on the contrary, the entire central field is covered from top to bottom by side shoots off a stalk and little flowers, then by contrast the border is patterned simply by alternating two larger motifs, creating a frame that beautifully sets off the *suzani's* delicate, dynamic design (plate 18).

There is not such a sharp boundary between the central field and the border in embroideries from Tashkent, Samarkand, Shahrisabz and, in part, Bukhara. The wide strip of the border, where the same rosettes are repeated (only slightly smaller) as the ones on the central field, comes across as an extension of it (plate 12-a, 28, 31, 40). But in this case too – in Tashkent embroideries for instance – densely packed crimson circles in the border create a closed frame that encloses the embroidery's central area.

2. Color

Color plays a fundamental role in 19th-century embroidery art. Most of the pieces from this period work their effect on the onlooker not by delineating their motifs in a delicate, expressive manner, but by bringing out details of large decorative shapes completely filled in with embroidery. This is done by means of color, which endlessly enriches simple ornamental forms, giving the surface of the textile a rhythmic articulation and turning it into a bright decorative space.

Embroideries' color schemes are the result not only of the thread used to make them, but the hue of the background fabric. White calico is never straight white; its soft grayish or yellowish tone makes for an overall harmonious coloration. If the background is colored, the embroidery thread is chosen in accordance with its color. Sometimes the background provides part of an ornament's color in tandem with the embroidery. An example is a Samarkand *suzani* from the 1880s in which the red components of the rosettes are unembroidered fabric (illus. 24).

In every single piece from the 19th century we can identify between nine and fourteen – and sometimes fifteen – different colors of thread. Such a variety of shades made it possible to create a wealth of tonal combinations while preserving a unified color scheme overall.

When embroideries in Uzbekistan are sewn on a white background, the



24. *Suzani*. Samarkand, 1880s, Samarkand Museum. Embroidered in colored silk on red calico.

dominant hues used in the patterning are reds, making for an energetic, cheerful spectrum of color. Flowers and rosettes are executed in shades of red. Leafy parts of the ornaments are embroidered using green (sometimes light and dark blue) thread; stems, branches and the edges of leaves are olive, light sand colored, and navy blue. This range accords more or less with plants' natural coloration, and also exploits the resonant contrast of red and green.

There are different gradations of warm reds, from orange and bright red to dark brown terracotta and carmine. Ranged along with them are the cool tones of dark and light maroon.

The range of green shades appearing in embroideries' color schemes is similarly wide. Alongside golden green and green-turquoise – the colors of seawater – one sees various shades of dark blue-green. The color green, obtained by coloring thread with yellow and dark blue natural dyes, is not homogeneous: gold and blue tones shine through it, creating unusually lovely tints and plays of light across a colored surface.

Ornamentation is two dimensional, and the decorative principle underlying the application of color is to create a sequence of warm reds rhythmically alternating with cool crimson tones. At the same time, differently colored petals and parts of rosettes alternate with one another. Sometimes the juxtaposition of warm and cool tones is not a feature of every motif, but rather of the panel as a whole. An interesting example of this is a *joynamaz* made in Bukhara in the mid-19th century (plate 21). The decoration employs a spectrum of cool colors: crimson-lilac flowers and light blue leaves. Rosettes in warm red and golden yellow hues have been deliberately added in several places to balance and enliven the embroidery's design.

The rhythmic alternation of warm red and cool crimson tones is characteristic of all pieces from Uzbekistan, as well as Tajikistan, and has deep roots in ancient art. For example, we find a rosette with alternating red and crimson petals among the fragments of a mural painting from Toprak-kala, the palace of the Shahs of

Khorezm, dating to the 3rd century A.D (illus. 25).⁴⁸

Red tones are not the only ones used for flower motifs. The details of flowers and rosettes are embroidered in yellow, light blue, cream, lilac, rose and purple thread. Flowers in various shades of gold and light blue are also placed against red backgrounds on *suzanis*.

As a rule, flowers and rosettes are depicted without outlines, reflecting the soft contours of natural flowers whose petals appear as a single unit. Leaves, however, are almost always given very dark (or, on the contrary, light) edges. They emphasize the sharp silhouette of dark leaves with clear-cut contours.

Color combinations in embroideries can be built around the contrasts between red and green, yellow and purple, orange and dark blue, red and dark blue, green and orange, or black and white.

Together with combinations of contrasting colors in embroideries, one often finds shades of a single hue, such as sky blue and cornflower blue, light yellow and gold, or dark and light crimson.

Bukharan embroideries from the 19th century are notable for their surprisingly soft and gentle color schemes. Intriguingly, the characteristic colors of

Bukharan embroideries – light blue, gray and rose – can be found in the decoration of a drapery detail in a wall painting from Varakhsha (7th century A.D.) where the same colors are used for images of eagles in circles and birds beside a tree. This is very interesting when we recall that Varakhsha is located close to Bukhara, meaning that a color scheme favored since antiquity was carried on into later times by the people of the region.

A multiplicity of colors was not typical of all embroideries in Uzbekistan in the 19th century. There is a textile group from Tashkent Region characterized by a more restrained range of colors, based on contrasting crimson and red circles with midnight blue (almost black) leafy frames.

Changes came about in embroideries' color schemes in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Starting in the 1890s there was a transition from figuration to linearity in Uzbekistan's embroideries, and from polychromy to palettes with an extremely limited number of colors. When the background was white, large patterns were often made with two colors, red and black; when the background was colored, there was a prevalence of white ornaments with one or two other colors added. This restricted range often makes for effective, impressive results.

Thread treated with aniline dyes, which became particularly widespread at the end of the 19th century, makes for harsh, unpleasant colors.

48 Color sketch of a detail of the painting from the excavation of room № 2103 (from the materials of the Khorezm Expedition).



25. Painting (detail) from Toprak-kala, the ancient palace in Khorezm, 3rd century A.D.

3. Decoration

Uzbekistan's embroideries of the 19th century, as they have come down to us today, represent a mature and stylistically uniform art form. That said, embroideries' decorations, mirroring people's conceptions of natural phenomena and of the life around them, absorbed and synthesized images taken from disparate sources and different times over the course of centuries – the stratified layers of different historical eras.

The fundamental vision behind embroideries' decoration in Uzbekistan in the 19th century was the image of a lush, flowering garden. Even decorative elements that reproduced images of the animal or mineral world took on a plant-like appearance and meshed organically with the embroidery's overall style.

This was true across the region. Embroidered panels were made in the cities and large towns in the non-mountainous parts of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, in the ancient centers of agricultural, sedentary culture made possible by artificial irrigation.

Agricultural peoples whose efforts turn desert into irrigated fields and gardens, cultivating every scrap of land with painstaking labor and love, have special feelings towards the shade of trees or beautiful bright flowers. Flowers are tastefully combined and grown even in small courtyards in the cities, and in early spring the roofs of mudbrick houses burst

into bloom, covered in waving carpets of scarlet poppies.

Flowers migrated from parterres and gardens to decorative embroideries, where, transformed by artists' creative imaginations, they turned into joyous folk-art patterns. Flowers form stars, sumptuous bouquets and shrubs, sway atop slender stems, or grow on graceful branches. Little figures of birds frequently appear amidst all this thriving nature, and, exceptionally, even depictions of animals and people.

Embroideries' rich floral ornaments were an imaginative reconstruction of the real natural world, and were associated with the most important aspects of the life of the people.

Decorative motifs served as wishes for happiness and prosperity, or as fertility symbols. They played a large role in wedding ceremonies and national holidays.

The principal features of embroideries' decorative style in the 19th century were cognate with the rich floral ornamentation that evolved in Central Asia's medieval architecture, miniature painting and applied art, especially in the 15th–16th centuries. Uzbekistan's national poetry, too, is full of images of gardens and lush flower beds.

Many of the decorative motifs used in embroidery have existed since antiquity; others only appeared in recent times.



26. Details of a *suzani*. 19th century, GME USSR, inv. 58–140.

We can attempt to identify decorative elements preserved from antiquity by comparing 19th-century embroideries with works of art from past epochs and Central Asia's rich store of mythological images.

One such archaic motif is the circle, which, alongside plants, has a fundamental place in embroideries' decorative scheme. For the peoples of Central Asia, the circle may sometimes have been a symbol of the sun (which it is elsewhere in the world, too), but more often it was a symbol of the moon. Worship of the celestial bodies was part of the religious systems of Central Asian agriculturalists from ancient times.

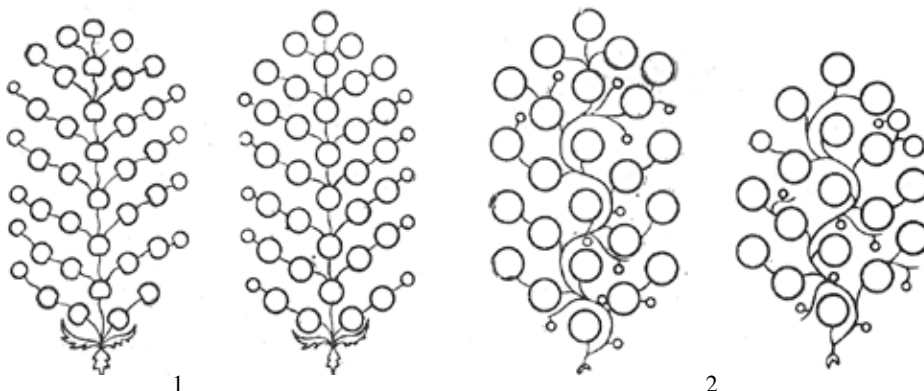
There are also very long-standing traditions of depicting birds. Even in deep antiquity the image of a bird was associated with the idea of a good beginning; there was a custom of keeping birds with beautiful plumage in luxurious gardens.

The ancient symbolism behind embroidery ornamentation lost its meaning long ago,

and in its place the decorative qualities of the pattern have assumed primary importance. Nonetheless, the old motifs continue to exist to this day. Their survival was facilitated by the closed-off nature of women's lives, leading them to preserve the most ancient national traditions, ceremonies, and decorative forms.

Motifs having completely separate origins, and dating from different eras, were transformed by popular imagination into beautiful and vivid patterns that were stylistically homogenous.

A viewer's response to the ornamentation of a large decorative embroidery may be compared to the impression one gets from looking at Central Asian architectural decoration. From a distance, what strikes the eye is the pattern's overall surface design; a little closer, and large shapes become visible; and coming up close, one can appreciate the individual subtleties and details of the ornaments.



27. Design scheme of oval floral sprays in Nurata embroideries.

Having discussed the general scheme of pattern design, we turn now to the large shapes and decorative elements that make up the patterns.

Plant forms play a big role in the ornamentation of decorative embroideries – bushes, branches, bouquets. There is an interesting peculiarity in the way the natural world is rendered: both large shrubs and little branches always have a trefoil, semicircle or simply a thickening at their base. It is a way of indicating symbolically that the plant is alive and growing out of the ground, its roots extending into the earth. In other instances, stems with flowers emerge from rosettes, leaves and other flowers, as if growing out of them; but they are never shown cut.

A flowering shrub is a much-beloved motif of Nurata, Shahrisabz and Ferghana *suzanis*. In the course of its development the treatment of this motif in embroidery

underwent the same changes as it did in wall paintings. These changes are described by V. L. Voronina: “In the middle of the 19th century the style of painting was looser and more realistic... Subsequently, shrubs and bouquets acquired an increasingly dry, flat, geometrical form....”⁴⁹

In some older surviving embroideries flowering shrubs are conveyed very energetically, with great immediacy. A Shahrisabz type of *suzani* in the collection of the painter Dudin is one such example. Its flowering branches are arranged in a free and natural manner, without being constrained by any geometrical configuration (illus. 26). Flowering shrubs in later embroideries have the shape of a regular oval. A straight stem passes through the middle of the shrub; flowering branches come off both of its sides,

49 V. L. Voronina, *National Traditions of Architecture in Uzbekistan* (Moscow: 1951), p. 91.



28. Cypress motif. (a) In a Nurata embroidery, 19th century.

symmetrically, at the same distance from one another. The exactitude of the design is not immediately apparent, smoothed over by the slight angle of the branches, as well as small differences in the sizes of the flowers and the spacing between them. Instead of being straight, the stem of the shrub can be curved in the shape of a wave, in which case the flowers are arranged a bit differently, but the shrub as a whole keeps its oval form (illus. 27). The shrub can be portrayed in a great variety of ways. Sometimes a shapely cypress tree is placed in its center, surrounded

by tiny flowers (illus. 28-a). The cypress tree motif, carved in plaster, also appears as part of the decoration of rich houses from the 18th–19th centuries in Bukhara, Kokand and Tashkent (illus. 28-b).

Small, slender branches with flowers and leaves in pairs are particularly lively and elegant. Their tops are bent as if a slight breeze were blowing (plate 3).

The popular, poetic image of the weeping willow (*majnuntol* or *majnunbed*) appears in decorative embroidery – admittedly less than in plaster carving, painting, or gold embroidery – in the shape of a small plant with graceful branches, dipping down low on either side, with tiny pairs of leaves (illus. 29).



(b) Carved in plaster.



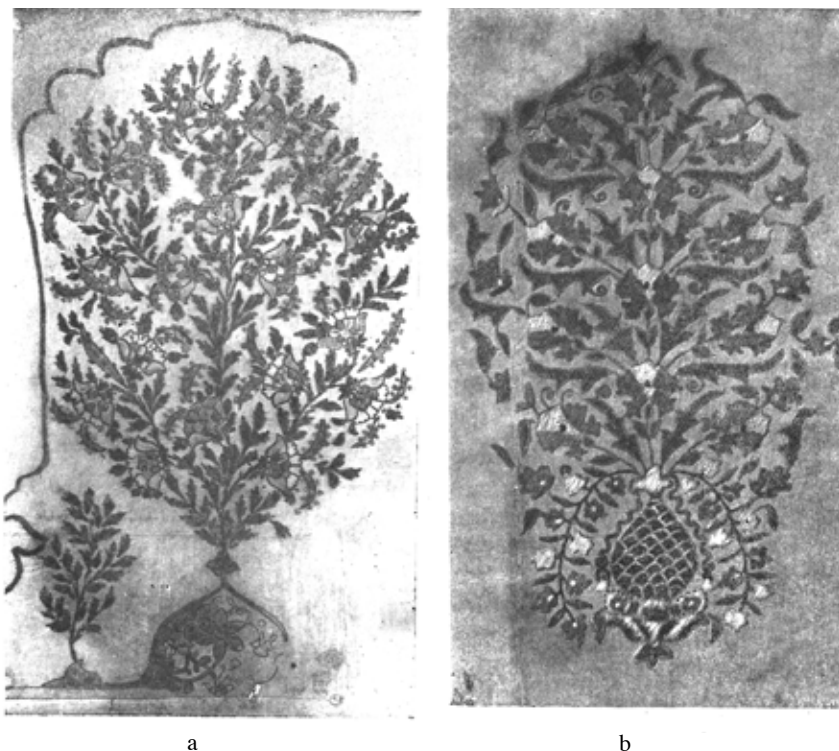
29. *Majnunbed* (weeping willow) motif in a Nurata embroidery, 19th century.

The motif of a bouquet in a vase is found on *suzanis* together with flowers and branches. An embroidery in the Museum of Art of the UzSSR shows sumptuous bouquets of assorted flowers in a patterned vase with flaring handles. The vase stands on a base, with two stylized pomegranates lying beside it (plate 5).

Flower pots, blossoming bushes and saplings – the most popular subjects for painted plaster wall panels in the 19th and 20th centuries – are found on the ceramic facings of medieval architecture of the 15th–17th centuries. The flower pot motif appears on mosaic panels in the mausoleum of Tuman-aka, dating to 1405–1406, from the Shah-i-Zinda Ensemble, and on

the majolica of 16th-century Bukharan buildings. The interpretations of flower bouquets in embroidery are paralleled particularly closely by their treatment in murals of the 18th–19th centuries in the rooms of the Abdullah Khan Madrasa and the Abdulaziz Khan Madrasa in Bukhara, and in old buildings in Samarkand (illus. 30-*a*, *b*).

The similarity between murals and embroidered wall panels arises from their shared purpose, which is to beautify the surface of the walls, and the common artistic media they draw on: both painting and embroidery achieve their effects primarily through color.

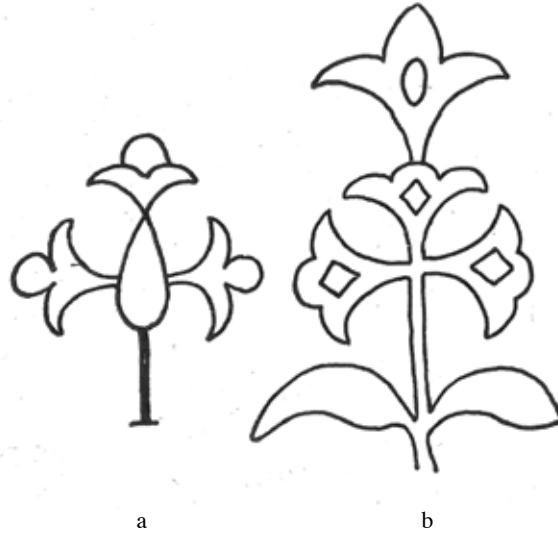


30. Depictions of flowering bouquets in a vase.
 In a mural of the 18th–19th centuries in the Abdulaziz Khan Madrasa in Bukhara.
 In a Nurata embroidery, 19th century.

Not only does the image of a blossoming bouquet in a vase have centuries of tradition behind it, but occasionally even the individual flowers depicted have analogues in medieval architectural decoration. Flowers called *chinda-khayol* in Nurata can be seen in a mosaic of the 15th-century Ulugbek Madrasa in Bukhara (illus. 31-1, 2).

One motif found in embroidery is a flower that looks like a tulip or lily (illus. 37-1-3). A flower of similar design appears in ancient works of art: it is one of the attributes of Anahita, the goddess of fertility and Central Asian rivers.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ C. V. Trever, *Terracottas from Afrasiab* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1934), plate VII, №. 99.



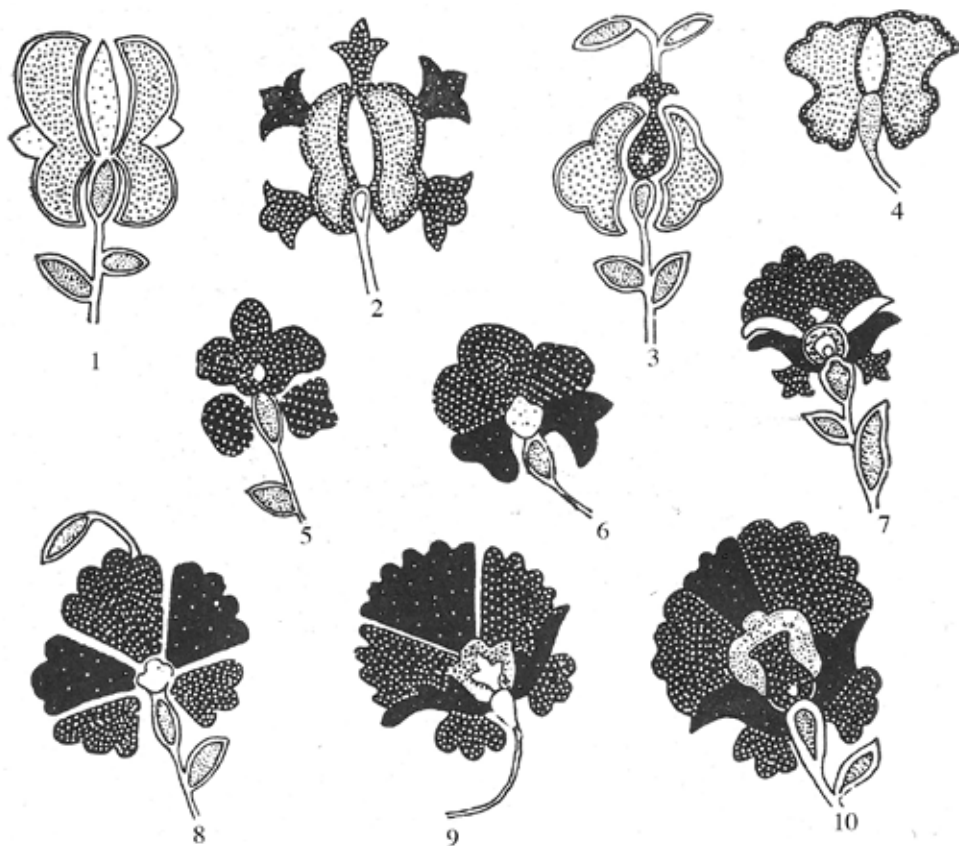
31. *Chinda-khayol* flower motifs.
 In a Nurata embroidery, 19th century.
 In a mosaic of the 15th-century Ulugbek Madrasa in Bukhara.

Flowers that grow in Uzbekistan also can be seen among embroideries' floral motifs – irises, carnations, tulips, cockscombs, zinnias, malvas, apple blossoms and others – while crops depicted include pomegranates, cherries, almonds, peppers, and opium poppy heads.

In the majority of cases, however, flowers are so transformed by artists' imagination that it is practically impossible to identify the real-life original. Some of the names of flower pictures have been preserved in craftswomen's memories. Usually they are just called "flower" (*gul*), or, as in Nurata, they have conventional names like *guli-bakhmal* ("velvet flower") or *guli-haftrang* ("seven-color flower"), etc.

It took many centuries for the Uzbek people to achieve the supreme skills displayed by their masters of decorative art: their ability to synthesize the phenomena of nature and create simple, laconic, vivid decorative images.

To be transformed into a decorative element, a flower has to be stylized in a unique way, reduced to two dimensions, and have all its contours abstracted into one general shape. Flowers are portrayed from above and in profile. The most generic flower shapes are close to nature yet with much simplified forms. As an example, let us see how the iris is treated (it is always recognizable and is one of the few flowers which draftswomen



32. Table of flower motifs.
 Depiction of irises – top row. Depiction of a carnation – № 8.

distinguish by name) (illus. 32-1-4). The iris motif is made up of two shapes constituting four petals – two raised and touching on top, and two drooping down. In some variants of this motif, a pair of shoots are also visible where the petals come together, which accords with what is found in the real flower. Not represented, however, is the front petal which should stick out of the picture plane. Its absence

makes the pistil visible, pointing upwards.

Stamens are usually omitted from embroidery ornaments. Irises are embroidered most commonly in cornflower-blue or purple thread, but can be other colors. Blue flowers are sometimes outlined with a thin red line and given colored shoots.

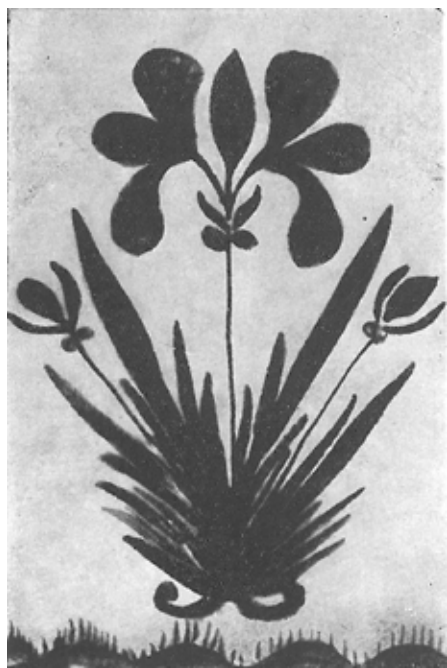
33. Depiction of irises.

(a) In paintings from a rich house in Samarkand, 19th century.

(b) In paintings from the Tash-Hauli Palace in Khiva.



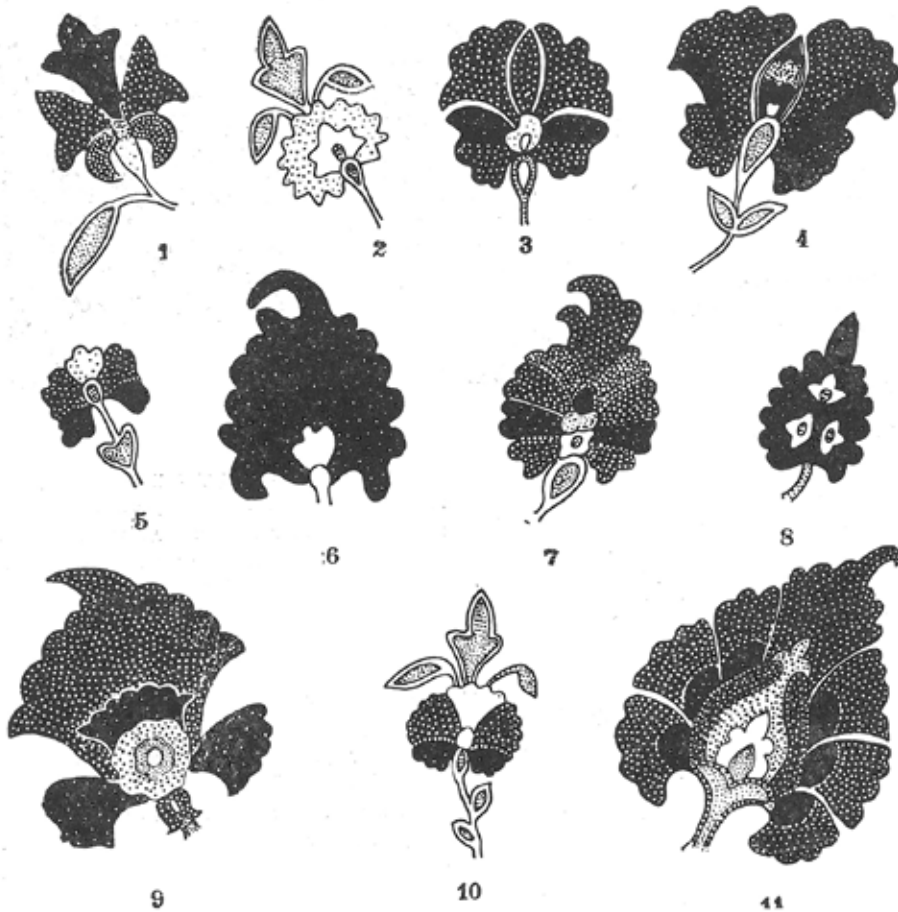
b



a

This approach to picturing an iris shows, on one hand, an attempt to mimic the real world, but also a need for conventions, on the other hand, when adapting nature for the purposes of decorative art. These images of irises have analogues in other kinds of folk art in Uzbekistan – especially gold embroidery and 19th-century wall paintings from the Tash-Hauli Palace in Khiva and a rich house in Samarkand (illus. 33-*a, b*).

The carnation undergoes modifications the same as the iris. The carnation's principal, distinguishing features are emphasized (illus. 32-8) – its separated, ruffled petals which flatten off at the top. Petals folded over one another, such as are found in the flower in nature, are not reproduced in the ornament.

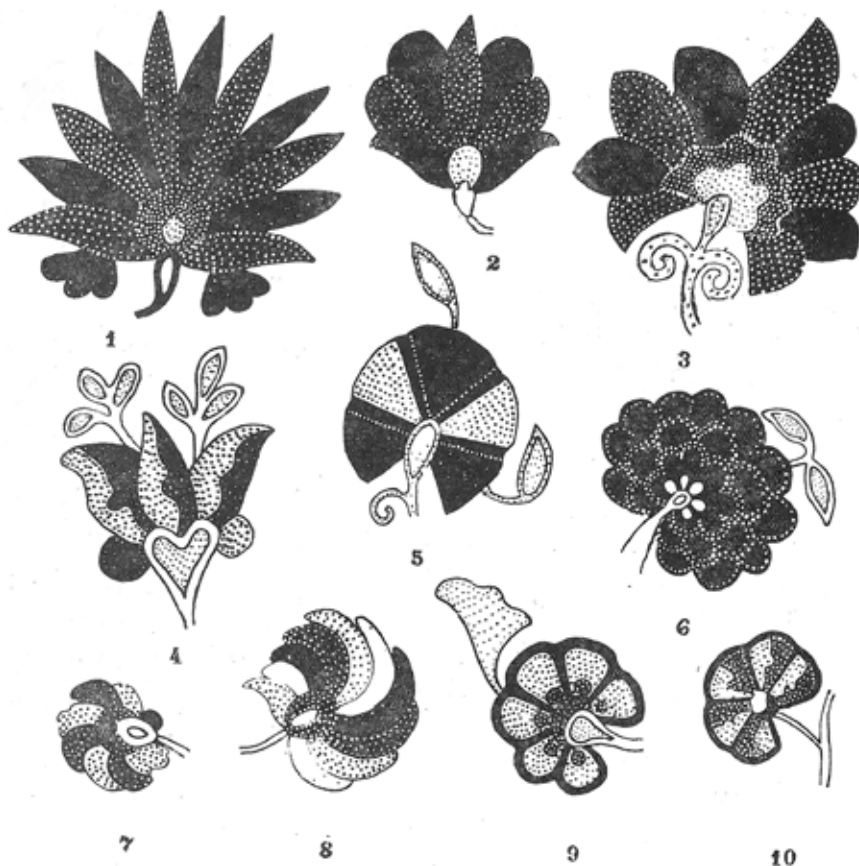


34. Flower motifs. Depiction of cockscombs – Nos. 6, 7, 8, 9, 11.

The cockscomb motif conveys the flower's essential element – its erect crest (illus. 34-6, 7, 8, 9, 11). The flower's image in profile, similar to a dahlia or zinnia, has four rows of small rounded petals (illus. 35-6).

It must be said that flower motifs are not

all that different in their outlines. Even if the flowers are very similar in form, the amazing richness and variety of floral patterns in embroidery come from the diverse ways the details inside the flowers are elaborated (illus. 32, 36). These details differ in shape, color, and sewing technique. The ability to generate a wealth



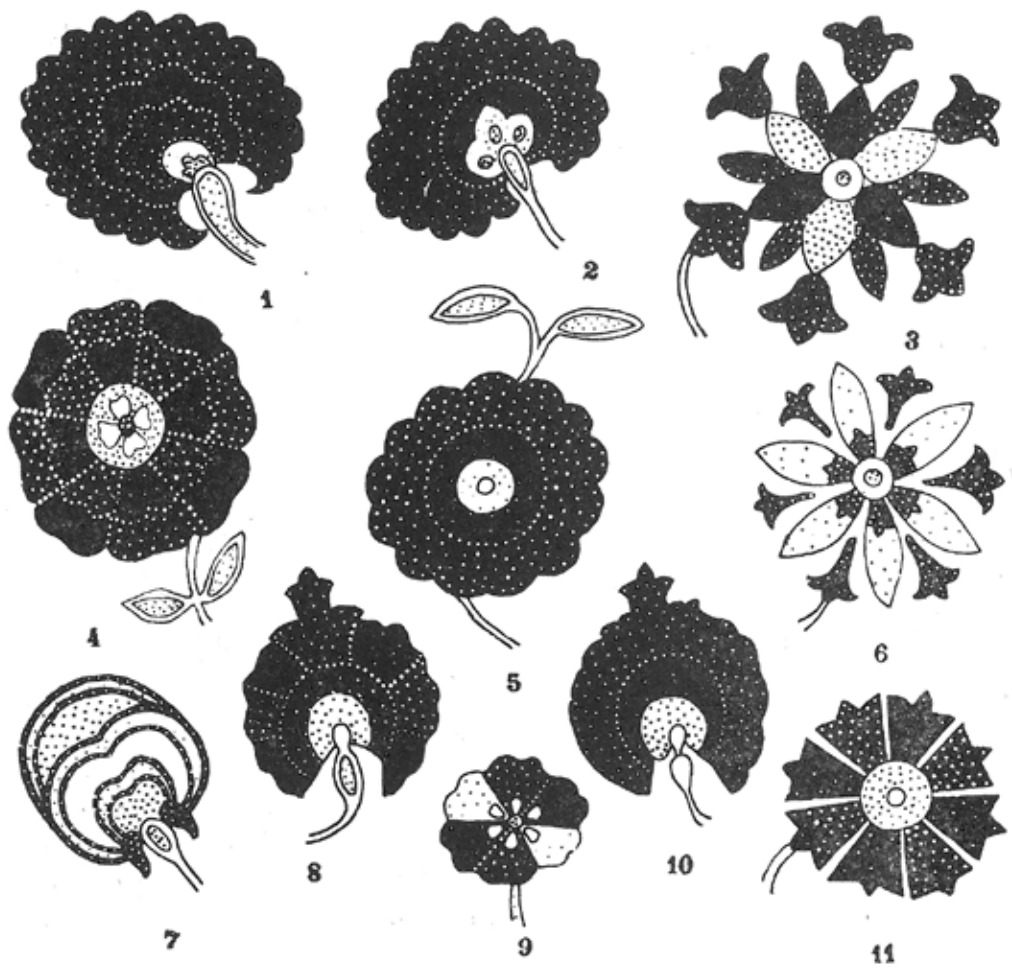
35. Flower motifs.

of variations, while working within the limitations of the original forms, is one of folk art's best qualities.

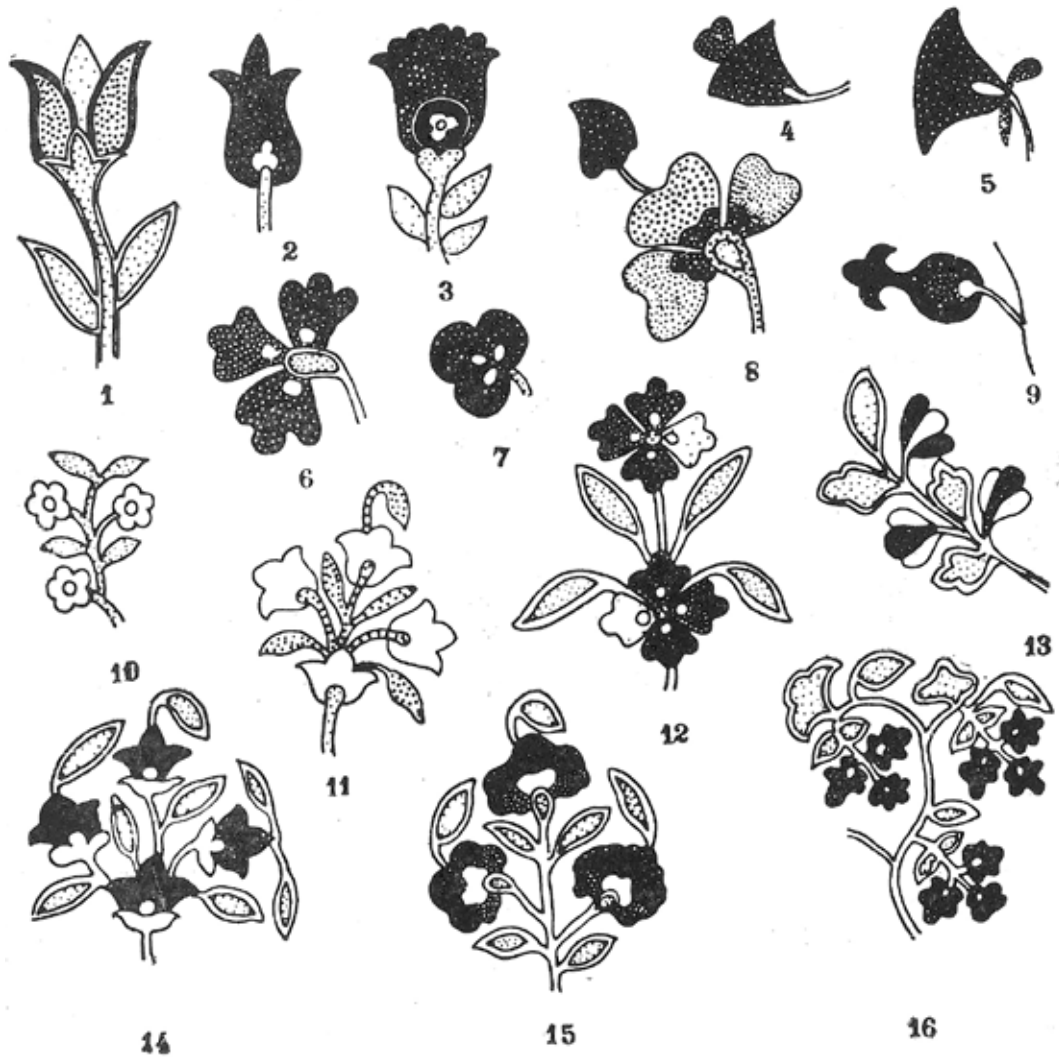
When depicting a flower, the artisan with her multicolored thread was not concerned to convey its volume, but rather was interested in the rhythm of the colors, a key point in decorative art. To this end she alternated red and crimson petals and other details, or she divided each petal in half with a vertical wavy line, embroidering

one half in crimson silk and the other in navy blue (illus. 35-4).

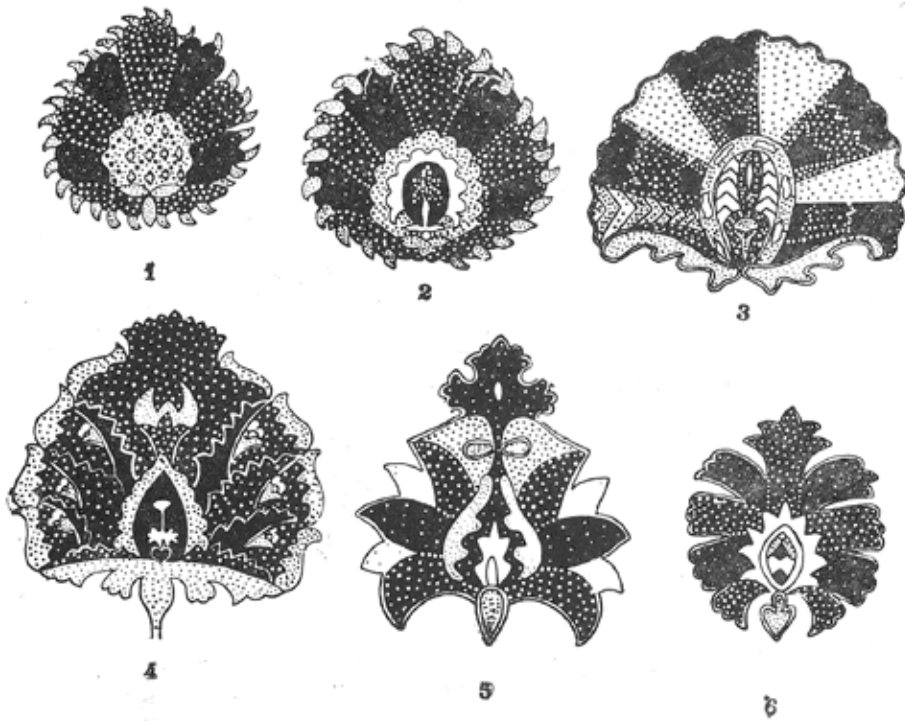
Especially beautiful is a fantastical flower with narrow petals, each a different hue, swirling in one direction. The succession of colors – yellow, light blue, red, cherry – is fully repeated in the flower twice, and then the last two petals, yellow and light blue, start the same sequence again (illus. 35-8).



36. Flower motifs.



37. Small flower motifs. Depictions of lilies and tulips – Nos. 1–3.

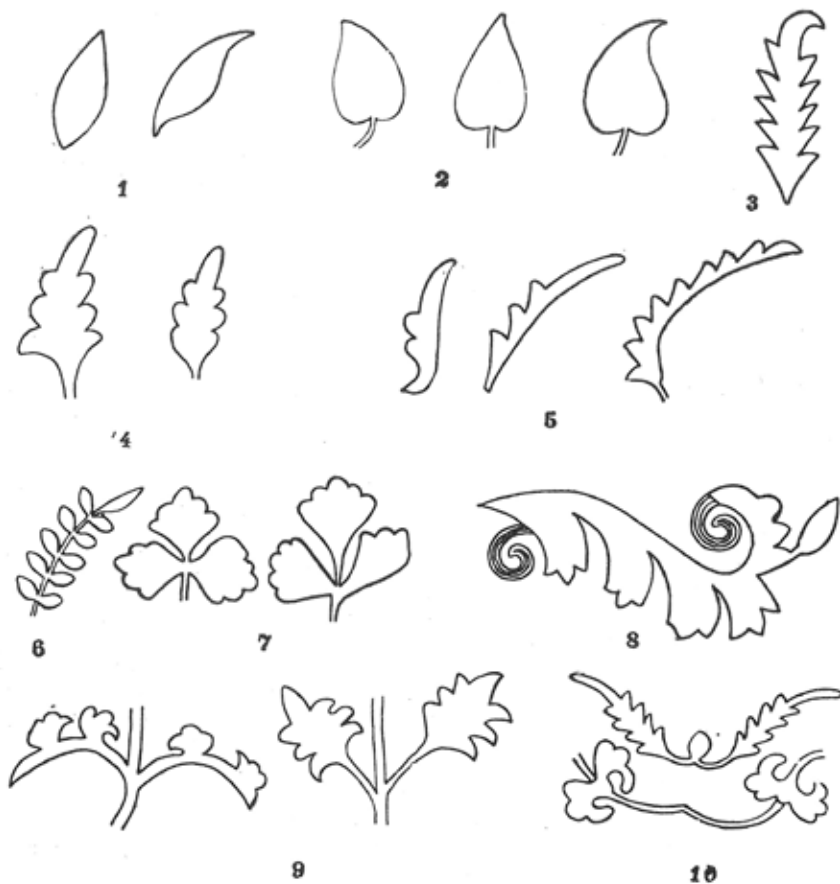


38. Floral palmettes.

Floral palmettes are notable for their grand and decorative appearance (illus. 38). They tend not to be very big – about 15 cm tall, though they can be over 30 cm. It fell to the artistry of the embroideress to fill in such a large area with details that were distinct and easy to apprehend.

A number of leaf shapes appear in embroidery ornament: oval with serrated edges like lilac leaves; three- and five-

lobed leaves in various configurations; and long fir-tree leaves (a particular favorite). Fir-tree leaves, when they are part of a frame consisting of floral forms, become one-sided, i.e. they are portrayed as if in profile (illus. 39-5). Wide rings of leaves framing rosettes are typical for many embroideries. They are embellished with fanciful tendrils emerging from both sides. Sometimes, to brighten up such a ring's center area, it is filled in with a



39. Leaf motifs.

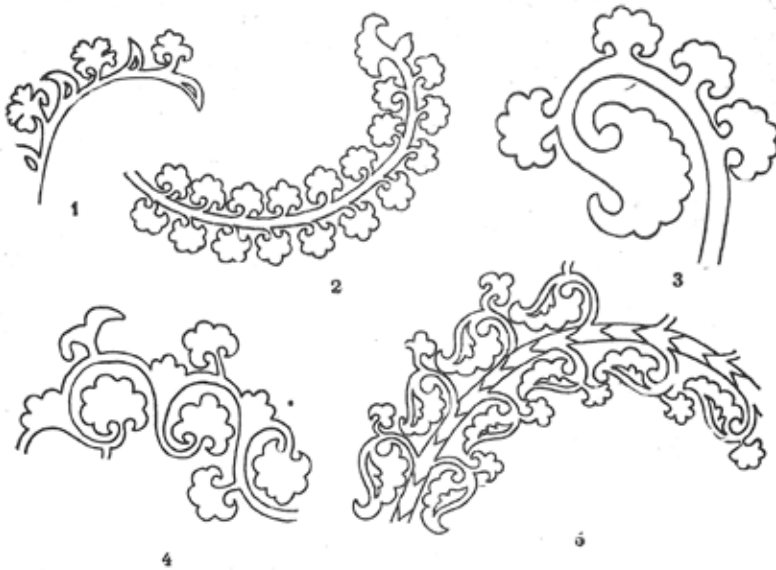
colorful rainbow-like band, while bright red and orange tongues of flame seem to flare at the ends of the leaves (illus. 41-5, color plate VI).

A twisting stem, with three- or five-lobed leaves in its curves, is used as a frame for round rosettes. This motif has a long tradition in Central Asian art. It has a

prominent place in Samarkand ceramics of the 9th-12th centuries (illus. 42) and is used widely in wood carving of the 11th-12th centuries as well as in other monuments from that era. Possibly this motif is a modification (at several removes) of a grapevine, a theme often found in ancient art.



40. Leaf motifs.



41. Leafy frames around large rosettes.

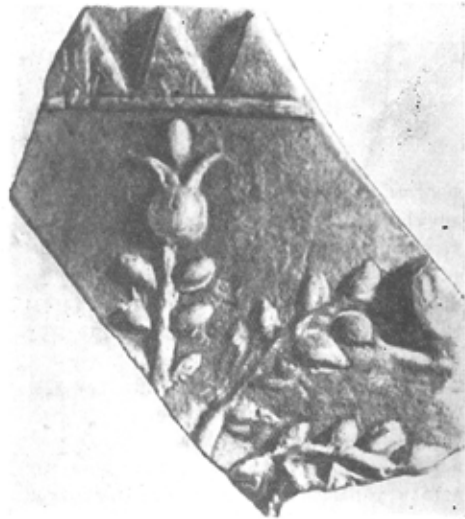


42. Motif of a spiral stem with leaves.
1. In medieval Samarkand ceramics, 9th-12th centuries. 2. In 19th-century embroidery.



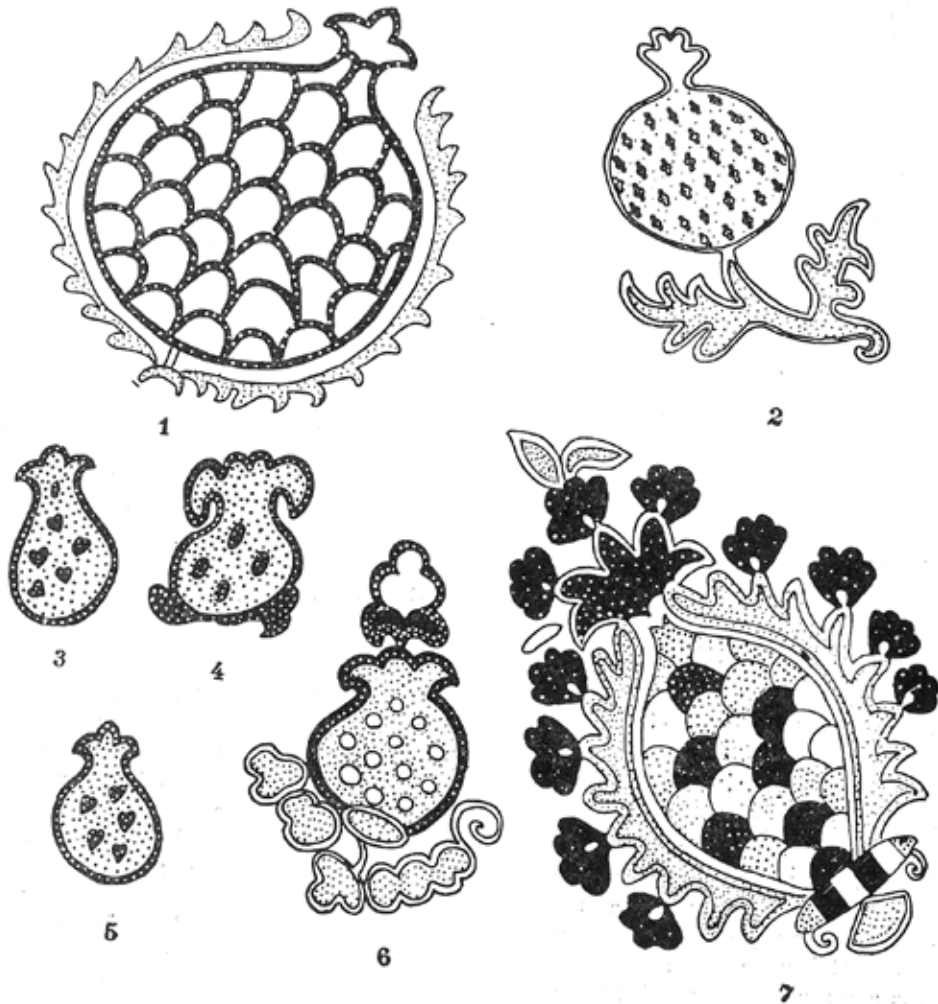
a

Among motifs representing crops, the most interesting is the pomegranate. For the peoples of Central Asia, as for many other peoples of the East, the pomegranate symbolizes fertility. It can be seen in the hands of sculptural figures of Anahita, and on the walls of ossuaries dating to the first half of the first millennium A.D. (illus. 43-*a*, *b*). The pomegranates on these objects are depicted in relief with a very simple shape: the fruit's round form is shown with a pomegranate's characteristic crown on top. Two-dimensional renditions of pomegranates in embroidery have the same simple form. The seeds, as the salient element expressing the essence of the fruit and the notion of fertility,



b

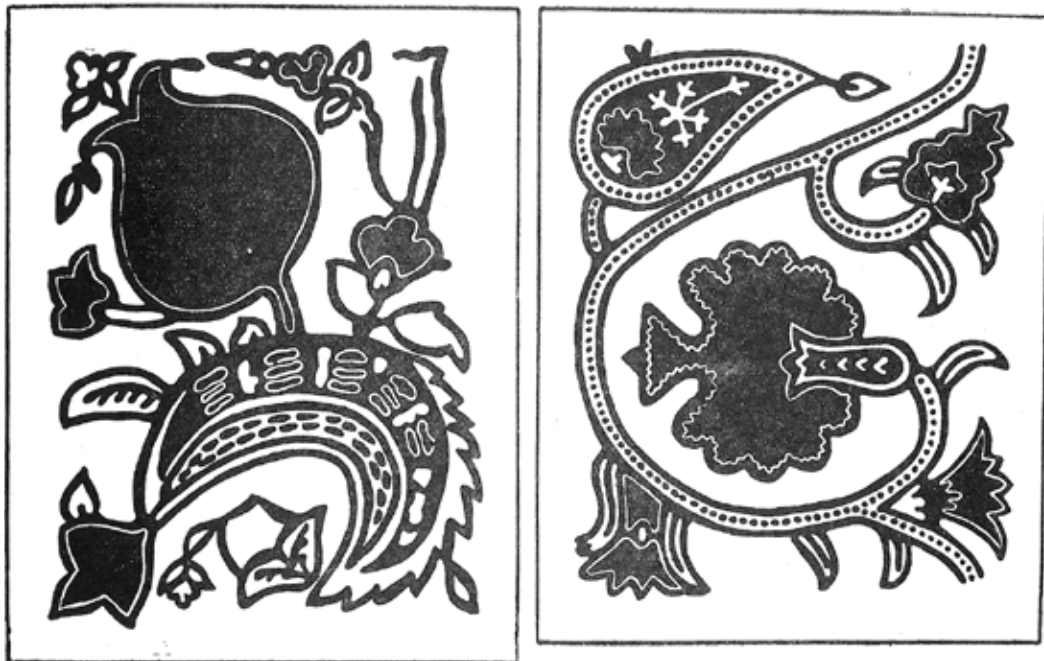
43. Depiction of pomegranates in ancient art.
(a) Sculptural figure of Anahita, goddess of fertility, with a pomegranate in her hand. State Hermitage.
(b) Detail from an ossuary. State Hermitage.



44. Pomegranate motifs in 19th-century embroidery.

are pictured as if showing through the rind (illus. 44-2-6). This approach to portraying a pomegranate is also well-known in Chinese ornamentation.

In other instances, the skin of the pomegranate is made scaly – with the scales presumably meant to suggest the array of seeds and membranes inside the fruit (illus. 44-1). The pomegranate motif



45. Pomegranate motif in 19th-century fabric printing.

is widespread in all forms of embroideries in Uzbekistan, as well as in ceramics and fabric printing (illus. 45).

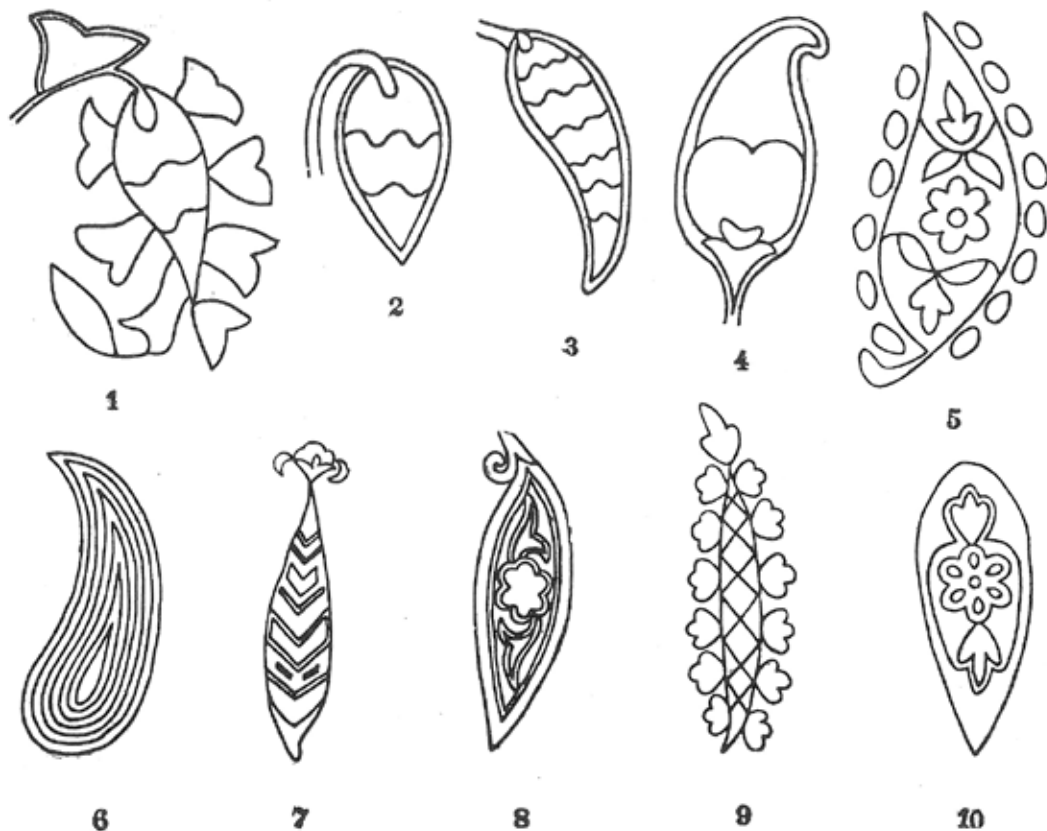
Other vegetative design elements which are very popular and should be noted are pictures of poppy heads, and the motif called the *bodom* (almond) or *kalampir* (capsicum pepper), which has a great number of variants (illus. 46).

An intriguing explanation of the origin of the *bodom* motif is given by G. Grigor'ev in his book.⁵¹ By comparing a series of

images from a variety of art forms and different historical epochs, Grigor'ev explains this motif's origin as the figure of a bird (pheasant, rooster or peacock) which underwent gradual stylization, losing visual elements along the way. We find we cannot agree with this as the only explanation of how it emerged. The motif could have arisen in numerous ways. In particular, it could have referenced (as the name of the motif implies) a real, actual almond or capsicum pepper. In any case, it figures already in a generic form in the

51 G. Grigor'ev, "Tus-Tupi," *Art*, no. 1 (1937), pp.

121–143.



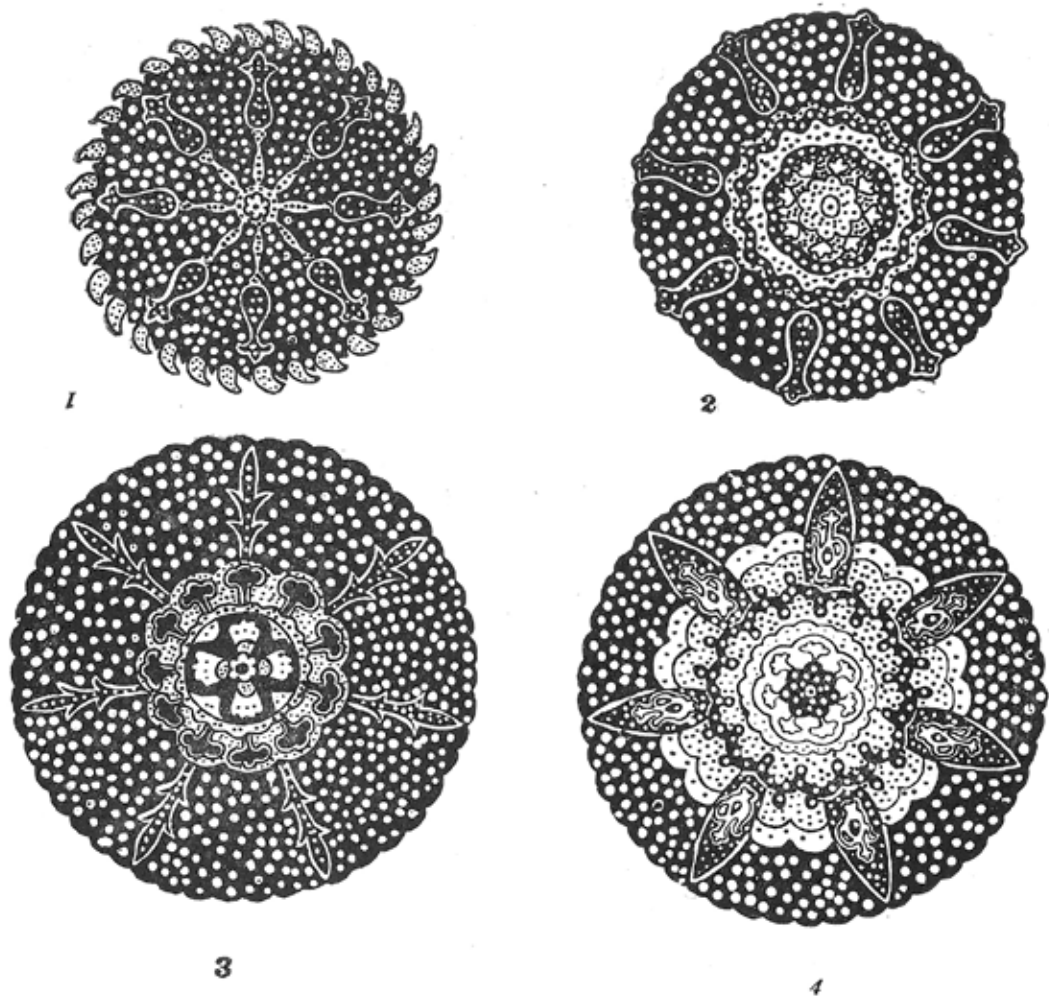
46. *Bodom* (almond) motifs in 19th-century embroidery.

so-called Airtam Frieze dating to the first centuries A.D.⁵²

There are a number of regions in Uzbekistan where pride of place in

embroidery is given to large circles and round rosettes. In Tashkent embroideries, for example, the principal motif is a large crimson-red circle surrounded by a black ring of leaves. The circles are frequently embellished with ornamentation, exhibiting an endless variety of details that is astonishing. The circles' large areas are divided into segments by concentric,

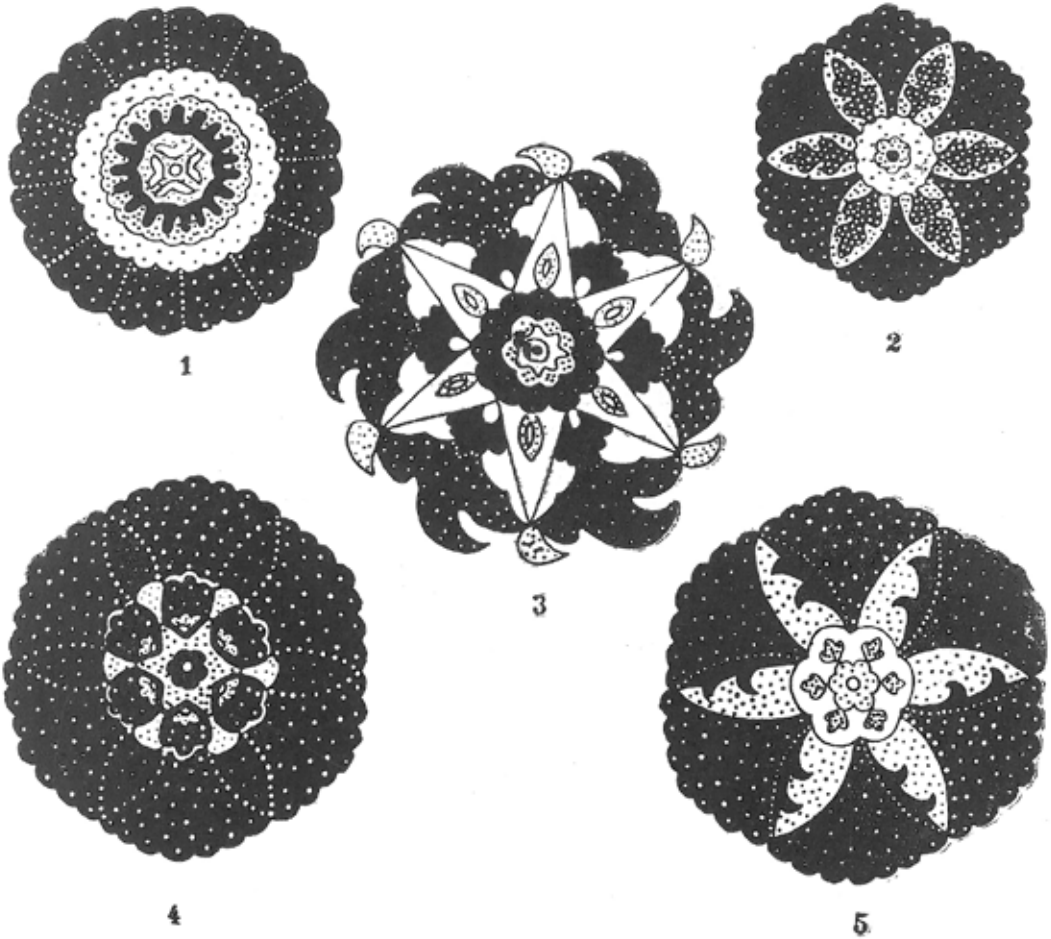
52 K. V. Trever, *Monuments of Greco-Bactrian Art* (Moscow-Leningrad: Academy of Sciences of the USSR Publishing House, 1940), plate 46.



47. Large rosette motifs in 19th-century embroidery.

scalloped rings, and radially by rays, petals, small “fir trees,” and figures which women call *zaboncha* (“little tongue”), *oftobacha* or *kuzacha* (little pitcher), and other things. These shapes are fit into the

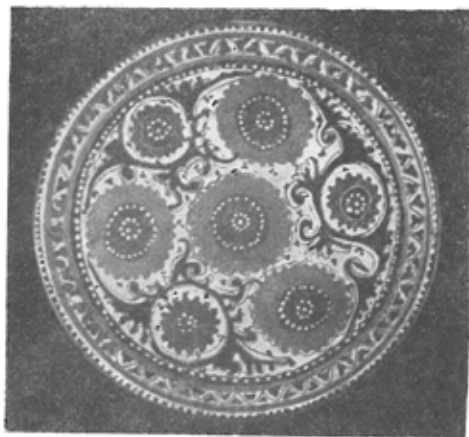
circles in arrangements which produce six- or eight-pointed stars. The manner in which patterns are used to fill the surfaces of rosettes has much in common with the decorative approach to floral forms.



48. Large rosette motifs in 19th-century embroidery.

Thus, as with flowers, the color scheme of rosettes exhibits a rhythm of alternating red and crimson shades, supplemented by small amounts of light blue, yellow, rose, grayish, black, white and other colors (illus. 47, 48).

The circle motif is very widespread in folk art – in fabric printing, ceramics (illus. 49-a, b), and stylistically archaic carvings on *duvals* (rammed-earth fences) in Samarkand. Turning to archeological material, we can find examples of the

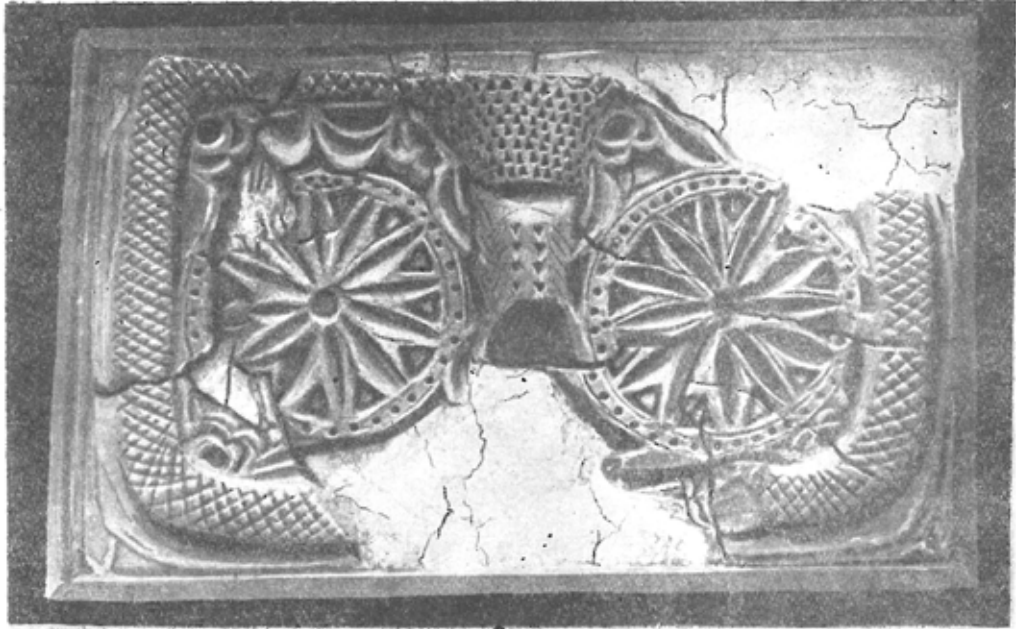


a

49. Circle motif. (a) On a ceramic dish from Samarkand. (b) On printed fabric, 19th century.



b

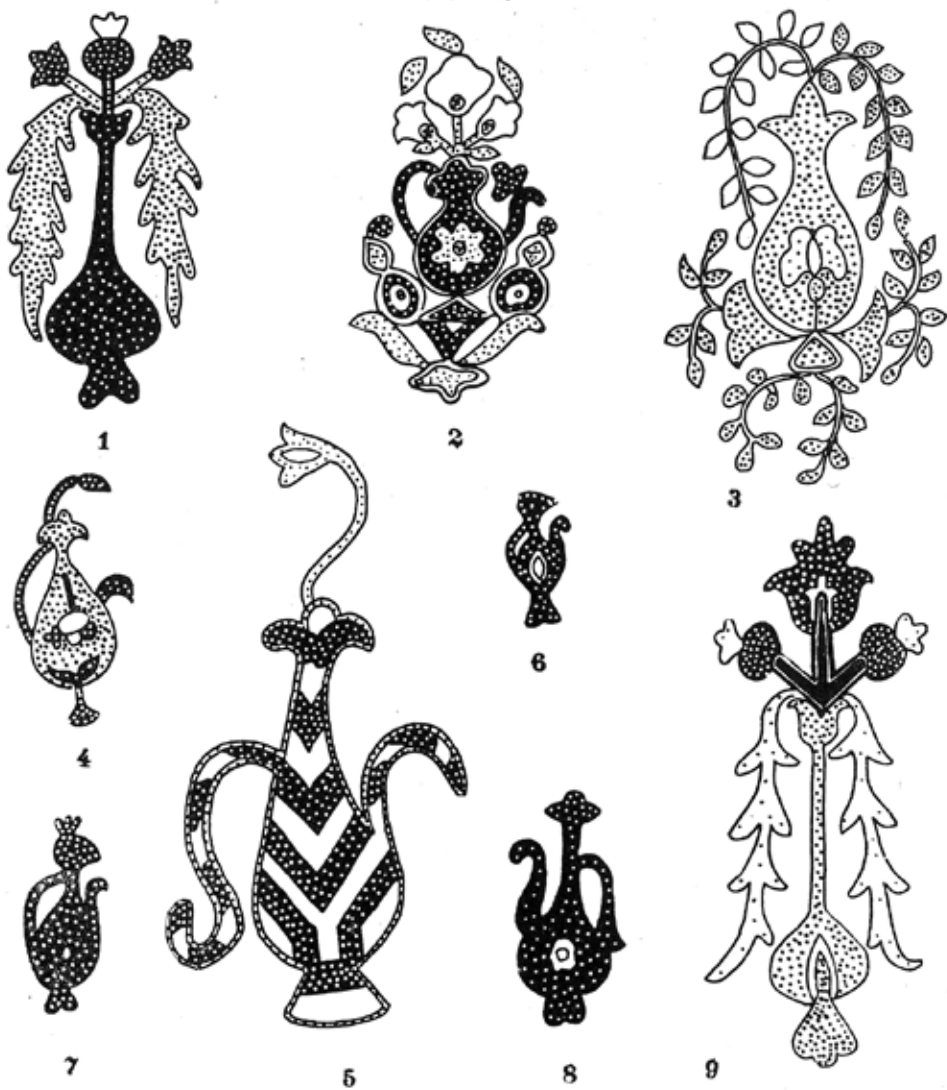


50. Circle motif on a clay tile. Ancient Samarkand.

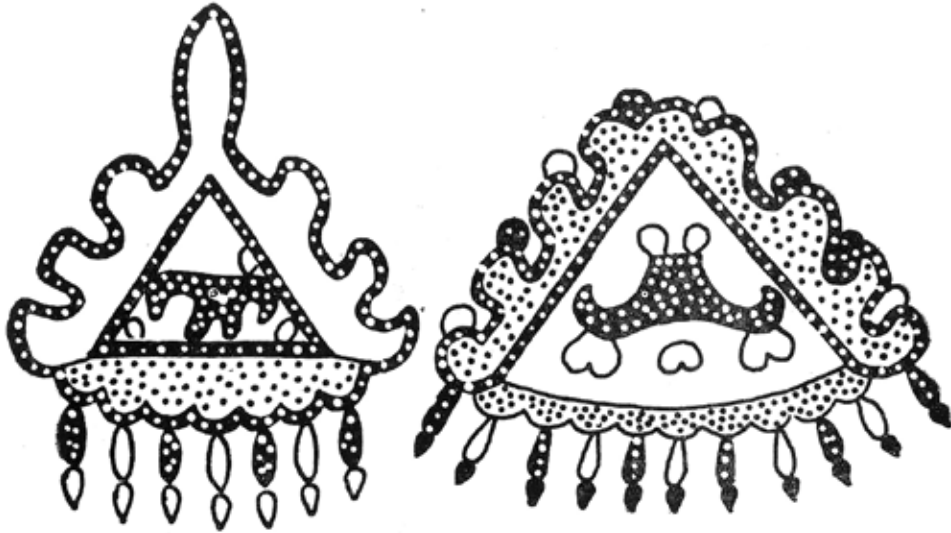
motif in ancient art: among the ornaments in paintings at Topraq-kala in Khorezm (3rd century A.D.), in plaster carving in Varakhsha (7th century A.D.), in ossuaries, clay tiles (illus. 50) and Sogdian textiles. It is interesting to trace the modern name of this motif in embroidery. In Tashkent, the circle is called *oy* (moon). In Nurata, the central star is also called “moon” (Tajik *moh*). In Samarkand, the rosette is called *lola* (tulip).

Among the ornamental motifs representing objects of the material world, we can find depictions of small pitchers of various shapes (illus. 51). They show *kumgans* or *oftobas* (copper pitchers for ablutions),

jugs that look ceramic, and also teapots. These images feature as individual motifs or as repeating ornamental elements placed along the rays of the star in a large round rosette. Quite often a twig is inserted into the small pitcher or teapot, which grows off a stem as if it were a flower, while its surface is decorated with rosettes or given a scaly pattern. In this way, the pitcher image is incorporated wholly organically into the floral ornament of embroidery. Sometimes little pitchers are pictured, with a naivety that is touching, with their top in the shape of a bird’s head with its beak, eye and crest. While retaining the outlines of a pitcher, such images call to mind a creature from a fairy tale (illus. 51-7).



51. Depictions of pitchers in 19th-century embroidery.



52. Depiction of women's silver jewelry, *tumor*, in pitchers in 19th-century embroidery.

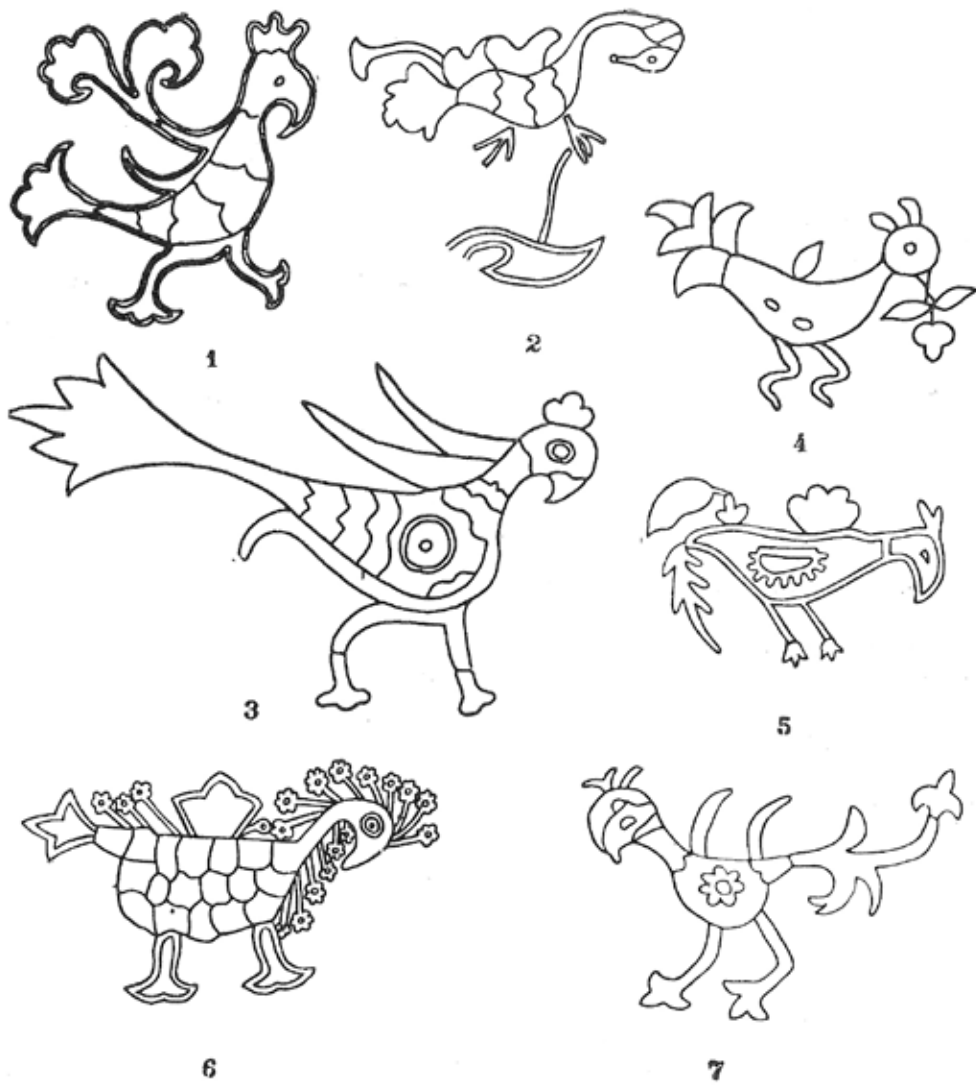
An item of women's silver jewelry with dangles, called *tumor*, is also represented in embroideries (illus. 52). We may surmise that just as a *tumor* itself (a case holding a prayer) was worn as a protective amulet, so too its depiction on an embroidery must have had a magical significance.

It is common to see bright, varicolored birds among an embroidery's bushes, flowers and round rosettes. They enliven the exuberant vegetal world reproduced in the patterns of *suzanis*. These images are interesting since birds are the sole living creatures which, notwithstanding the prohibitions of Islam, the people retained in their art all the way to the 19th and 20th centuries. Roosters, pheasants, peacocks and ducks are some of the birds that can

be identified. However, it is often hard to work out what bird the embroideress had in mind in each separate instance. The figures of birds are bright and decorative; they fit into the surrounding ornamentation organically and match its style (illus. 53).

We will offer a few examples. In the center of a *suzani* from Nurata, a large flowering bush stands among dainty smaller bushes, while four pairs of peacocks strut around it with their long necks extended (plate 9).

The artisan has rendered their flamboyant plumage in shiny silk thread colored light blue, rose, light green, bright crimson and gentle cream. On another *suzani*, the bird figures are reminiscent of a pheasant with its blunt, downward-curving beak, ring around the eye, and lovely long tail (illus. 53-3).



53. Depictions of birds in 19th-century embroidery.

The figures of birds on a different *suzani* are extremely expressive, standing amidst flowers (color plate XII). The treatment of their plumage is bold and decorative: the birds' tails and bodies are divided up into differently colored sections. This approach is one which embroideresses often resorted to when faced with a large area to decorate – the body of a bird or animal, or the surface of a vase or pitcher. There are examples where bird figures are treated even more abstractly. In one such case, a bird with a body shaped like a crescent moon is divided into transverse bands of various colors, and provided with colorful appendages; its feet are shaped like tendrils, and it has little leaves growing from its tail (color plate XIV).

Bird figures are closely linked to flowers and round rosettes. In a Shahrissabz-type *suzani*, for example, flowers and rosettes are surrounded by the figures of three multicolored birds similar to roosters (illus. 53-1, 54). Their feet touch the leafy frames while lush green leaves sprout from their wings.

The images of birds commonly appearing in embroidery have long traditions reaching back to the mythology of the Central Asian peoples.

The motif of a bird with a twig in its beak, in a *suzani* from the 19th century (plate 3) has numerous antecedents in so-called “Sasanian” silver of the 3rd-4th centuries which was used sometimes by Central Asian artisans in textiles and other works of art from that period.

Whereas in ancient pieces the bird occupied a central position in the composition, in embroideries of the 19th century it was relegated to a modest place where it was hardly noticeable.





54. Detail of an embroidery showing roosters around a rosette. Shahrizabz, 19th century, GME SSSR.



55. Detail of a *suzani* showing human figures. Bukhara, 19th century, Samarkand Museum.

The depictions of ducks on a *suzani* in the State Hermitage are similar to pictures on the fabric of clothes from the 15th–16th centuries shown in a Central Asian miniature (illus. 56-*a*). Ducks in embroidery are placed in segments of a circle as if swimming by the shore. Their shapes are thickly outlined, while the crests, tails and feet are highlighted with multicolored stripes (illus. 56-*b, c*).

It must be said that, stylistically, birds and animals in medieval art are treated differently than images of living creatures in works from the preceding epoch. In ancient art, the movements and traits of birds are rendered more accurately and realistically; their outline is sharp and clear. In medieval pieces their images are more generalized. The contours of the figures are complicated by the addition of vegetal elements; leaves and plant tendrils appear in the bird's beak, on its head, behind its back and on its tail.

They undergo a fascinating process in the history of decorative art, an "extension" of living creatures which turns them from subjects of portraiture into ornamental figures that blend into the surrounding vegetal decoration – a process governed, broadly speaking, by changes in the ideology of society. The ongoing process of ornamentalizing images of living creatures can be observed in 19th-century embroidery in Uzbekistan.

Rarely and exceptionally, one finds figures of animals and humans on *suzanis*. The embroideress would not put them in a prominent spot where they would attract

attention but somewhere on the edge. On a Nurata embroidery from the UsSSR Museum of Art, for example, a picture of a horse is tucked away in a corner of the central field. The horse's body is divided up into colorful squares, in the same way as bird figures; plant tendrils are sewn on the end of its tail and above the saddle. Despite the picture's primitiveness, the artist has tried to communicate a sense of movement: the horse's head is bent and the front legs are stepping forward (plate 7).

Human figures are even rarer, and portrayed extremely primitively, often evoking some kind of fantastical creatures having the attributes of birds (illus. 55).

Our study of embroideries made in Uzbekistan in the 19th century allows us to draw the following conclusions.

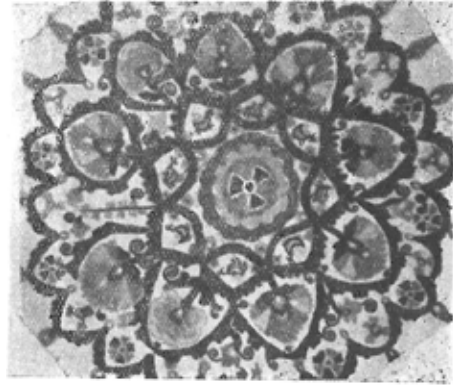
The thoughts and feelings of the people – their realistic, life-affirming attitude towards the world around them – are expressed in perfect images in their works of art. The famous scholar V. S. Voronov's characterization of folk art is wholly applicable to them: "It is a precise, rigorous and beautiful language without superfluous words, empty phrases, or unnecessary tedious passages."⁵³

All the resources of art – ornamental design and its decorative application, color schemes, the texture of fabric, sewing

53 V. S. Voronov, *Peasant Art* (Moscow: Gosizdat, 1924), p. 24.



a



b



c

56. Depictions of ducks on a 15th-century textile and 19th-century embroidery.
 (a) Detail of a miniature from the manuscript *Five Poems by Nizami*. Herat School, 1491.
 (b, c) Details of a *suzani*. Shahrissabz, 19th century, State Hermitage.

technique – are inseparably linked. They complement and reinforce one another, and serve to create a decorative work of art that is an integrated, harmonious whole.

The fine aesthetic sense of folk artists is attested by their ability to arrange a pattern on the surface of a textile without overloading it, while at the same time leaving no unwarranted empty spaces. In this way a balance between

the background and the decoration is achieved which is pleasing to the eye. The backing cloth itself, visible between the ornamental motifs, functions as an additional part of the panel's decorative design. This active role played by the background is extremely characteristic of the decorative art of the people of Central Asia. It is seen especially clearly in Kyrgyz and Kazakh *koshmas*, where background and ornaments are of equal

aesthetic importance.

Suzani patterns – which are basically symmetrical, their individual parts balanced – always deviate a little from strict geometrical symmetry. For instance, all four corners of a panel are not completely identical: on one half there may be some extra small motifs, with nothing equivalent on the other half. This kind of freedom in the placement of motifs reflects the rhythm of natural plant growth and gives Uzbekistan's decorative embroideries a special, lively spontaneity. In everything there is a feeling of vitality: in the flowing contours of every flower, and in the efforts to avoid repeating any one exactly.

Motifs with simple shapes often have the same outlines, so the richness of the pattern derives from the different ways that details are embellished within identical shapes.

That embellishment is done by means of color (embroidery's fundamental medium of artistic expression) and sewing technique. Sewing technique directly affects the artistry of the piece.

Rows of raised stitches on a flat surface, in conjunction with the shimmering of silk thread, create a powerful decorative effect. Sewing skill is not all that matters here, but also how fine, twisted, and shiny the thread is, and the quality of the dyes used to color it. All of these factors contribute together to the richness of the surface's texture.

The rhythm of floral patterns arranged harmoniously on the cloth; the surprising compositions, freshly conceived in every piece; the bright and cheerful range of colors; and the supreme skill shown in their execution – these are the reasons behind the unfading beauty and originality of the best examples of Uzbekistan's decorative embroidery in the 19th century.

We can look at hundreds or thousands of *suzanis*, and, though they may be similar, we will never find two alike; each one is unique in its own way. This endless wealth and multiplicity of variations, within the limits of an established tradition, is a priceless trait of folk art in which, like a precious amalgam, many different creative personalities have merged.





CONCLUSION



In conclusion, we must mention a few examples of how the artistic heritage represented by embroidery has been incorporated into Soviet applied art.

The tradition of large, hand-made decorative embroideries lives on in the nation to this day.

However, mass production of large decorative pieces is done essentially by means of machine embroidery.⁵⁴

Machine embroidery, now widespread among artels in Tashkent, Samarkand and the cities of the Ferghana Valley, is based on the traditions of embroidery by hand,

even if it still makes far too little use of them.

The designs of Tashkent and Ferghana *gulkurpas* and *choyshabs* from the early 20th century enjoy particular popularity, but are adapted to meet modern requirements in terms of usage, size, and machine embroidery technology.

Recently, artists have been working successfully on expanding the kinds of pieces that can be produced, enriching the patterns, and improving the quality of the stitches and colors of machine embroideries.

The decorative shapes and compositions of old *suzanis* find wide application in the production of new household objects like small embroideries, silk scarves, fabrics and even porcelain.

54 A. S. Morozova, *Machine Embroidery* (Tashkent: Goslitizdat UzSSR, 1960).



57. Embroideresses of the "Woman's Labor" artel in Samarkand.

Pieces produced by the "Woman's Labor" artel in Samarkand are examples of patterns and techniques used in old Nurata *suzanis* being successfully applied in modern textiles (illus. 57). The artel was awarded a silver medal for its entries at the International Exposition of Decorative Arts in Paris in 1937.

Tablecloths, sofa cushions and long wall hangings made by the artel's artisans (on white or black backing cloth in *basma* stitch) have somewhat relaxed, easily legible designs that cover the surface harmoniously and fit the style of contemporary textiles. They employ color schemes that are pleasing and restrained.

Examples include a pillow with a pomegranate branch, a pillow with the motif of a bouquet in a vase (plate 54-*a, b*), and a tablecloth with napkins. Embroidery is also used for men's shirts and decorative passages on women's dresses, but in those cases the patterns work better in wider strips (plate 54-*c*); a dainty pattern executed in *basma* on a dress or shirt comes out looking too crude, since this kind of stitch covers a lot of area when sewn.

We can only regret that the Samarkand artel, after making a fine start, was not continued in subsequent years.

Not only national artisans but professional artists contribute to the creation of new designs for modern products from Uzbekistan's embroidery artels.

The experimental laboratory at Uzkhudozhpromsoyuz [Uzbekistan Art Industrial Union] is not making adequate use of the initiative of Uzbek artisans, who frequently are employed merely to copy an artist's set designs. Artists working in this sphere study folk art too superficially, and consequently the aesthetic quality of their work is often lower than that of folk artists.

Far more creative cooperation between artist and artisan is necessary. Artists should help craftswomen realize their ideas by properly directing their work when needed, but not supplant the creative drive of national embroidery masters with their own ready-made designs.

Skullcaps – a branch of folk art produced by artisans independently – show what beautiful work the embroideresses of Soviet Uzbekistan are capable of doing.

One totally new field of decorative embroidery, developed only in Soviet times, is embroidered panels with portraits and scenes.

The eager desire to employ decorative art – the pride of the peoples of Uzbekistan – to portray images of our socialist reality is completely natural, and increases with each passing year. Such panels can be used in the interiors of modern public buildings, clubs, cinemas, etc.

How to create decorative panels on contemporary themes, including human figures, is a question which artists from all the republics of the USSR are working on, and remains far from resolved.

Uzbekistan's artists are not always on the right track where this issue is concerned. Human figures – embroidered in satin stitch, employing a lot of colors, and aiming to convey a sense of volume like in painting – frequently fail to mesh with the flat pattern surrounding them, and clash with the overall style.

Furthermore, when the central field depicts a concrete subject, it is not always linked organically with the ornamental frame. A textile panel illustrating a theme is a complex creative challenge, and the only way an artist can succeed is by approaching the piece as an integrated decorative work of art.

We will consider a few handmade embroideries with portraits or scenes which, in our opinion, are handled successfully.

An interesting portrait of Alisher Navoi was made in 1940 by the Ferghana embroideress Karamat Niyazova, following a design by the famous Bukharan master miniaturist Sadreddin Podchoev (plate 55).

The portrait was taken from the well-known miniature painting by Mahmud Muzzahib, in which the poet is shown in his declining years, leaning on a stick wearing a robe and turban. Like the

miniature, his embroidered portrait is two-dimensional. The face, beard, and folds of the turban are highlighted with an emphatic outline; the texture of the quilted is rendered nicely. The figure of Navoi, under the portal arch of a building, stands out sharply against the fabric's white background. The architecture in the embroidery is also treated in a flat, ornamental manner. All the parts of the panel, conceived as a single idea, constitute an integrated work of art.

The portrait of Navoi done by National Artist of the UzSSR, embroideress Fazylat Saidalieva, represents a contrasting approach (plate 56).

The portrait is executed in colored silk thread, using satin stitch. Navoi's face is expressive but has generic elements, inevitable in decorative pieces. The picture is composed successfully as a portrait medallion. The pattern and color of the ornate frame harmonize with the portrait; the frame displays embroidery ornaments and compositional principles characteristic of the decoration of medieval architecture.

When artists in Uzbekistan create thematic panels, they most commonly put a portrait or scene in the central field with an ornamental frame around it. But this is not the only approach.

More interesting compositions are those in which the subjects being depicted are introduced directly into the embroidery's web of decorations.

Thus, despite its somewhat piecemeal and scattered pattern (which does not sufficiently take into account what is technically possible on an embroidery), the artist G. A. Orlova's draft design for an embroidered panel called "Soviet Uzbekistan" (1957) is highly successful.⁵⁵

In designing the piece, the artist has taken the most essential qualities of Uzbek *suzanis* and their inherent rhythms as her starting point. She folds human figures into the curves of a twisting plant stalk – women picking cotton and crops, a shepherd, musicians, ladies dancing. The figures are shown in a flat, generic manner and decoratively coalesce with nearby patches of color. Their graceful forms harmonize with the surrounding floral pattern of flowering branches and leaves (plate 57).

It is interesting to study the human figures, trying to guess the relationships among them and the meaning of the picture as a whole, while simultaneously savoring the panel's colorful patterning. The work makes creative use of the traditions of embroidery art in Uzbekistan – the ability to stylize objects from the surrounding environment skillfully, including the human form, while keeping their images in line with the uniform style of the whole embroidery.

55 The embroidery that was actually executed from this design cannot be described as successful. The colors of the thread used to sew the embroidery in 1958 were garish and clashing.

“Soviet Uzbekistan” is just one example of a thematic approach to textile panels, but there can be many such examples, and there are multiple routes by which artists can achieve a successful outcome while creatively embracing the aesthetic legacy of folk artists.

The proper way to draw on decorative art traditions is not by blindly copying old models but by comprehending the creative principles behind them, tried and tested by the wisdom of the people for centuries.

Such an approach to assimilating the part of our heritage represented by embroidery can be useful not only to artists and embroidery masters, but also those working in the republic’s textile industry and other branches of decorative art. It may also prove significant in elevating Soviet applied art as a whole.

Every one of the peoples of the great Soviet Union builds its culture by creatively developing its best national traditions

and by assimilating the achievements of global culture.

Both these processes – the assimilation of global culture and the development of national traditions – are closely linked with one another; only by combining them correctly can achievements of the utmost worth be attained in the field of culture and art.

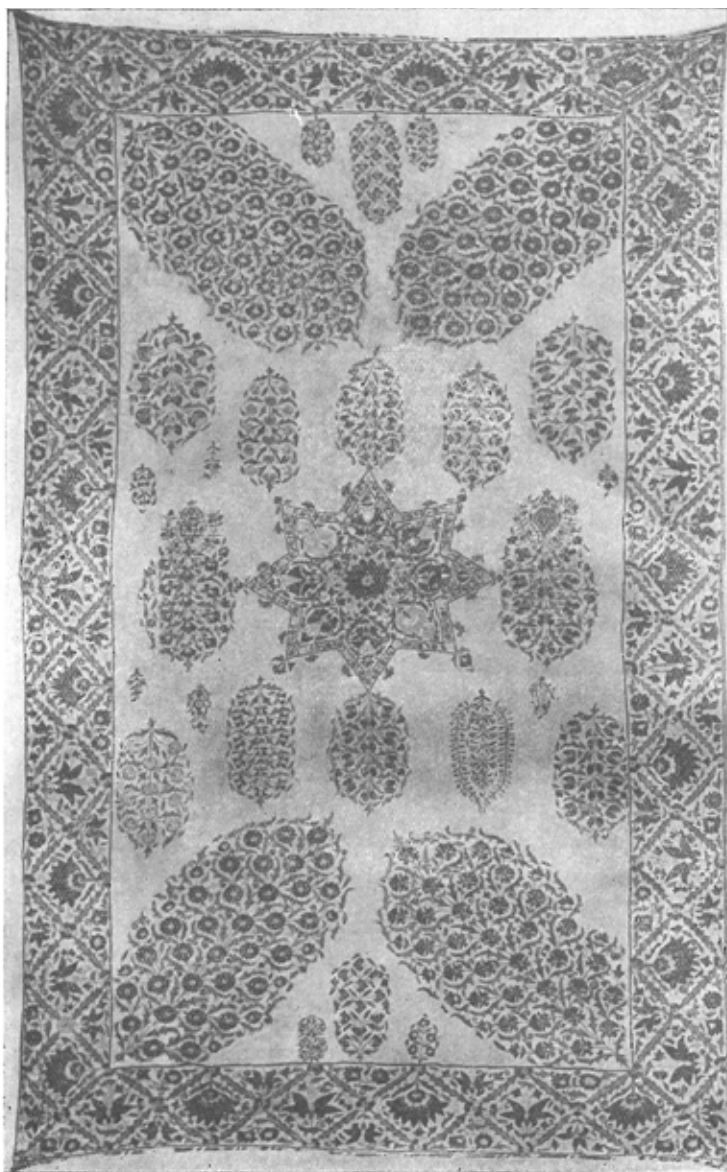
Thanks to the close friendly ties between the peoples of the USSR, the highest accomplishments of their national art have made worthy contributions to the shared treasury of Soviet culture.

The unique national character of every culture shines forth in its decorative art. As is true also for many other folk-art pieces produced in Uzbekistan in the 19th century, the beautiful old textiles made by anonymous folk artists and embroideresses can serve as inspiration for Soviet artists and artisans, as they create contemporary works of art in the conditions of the new socialist reality.

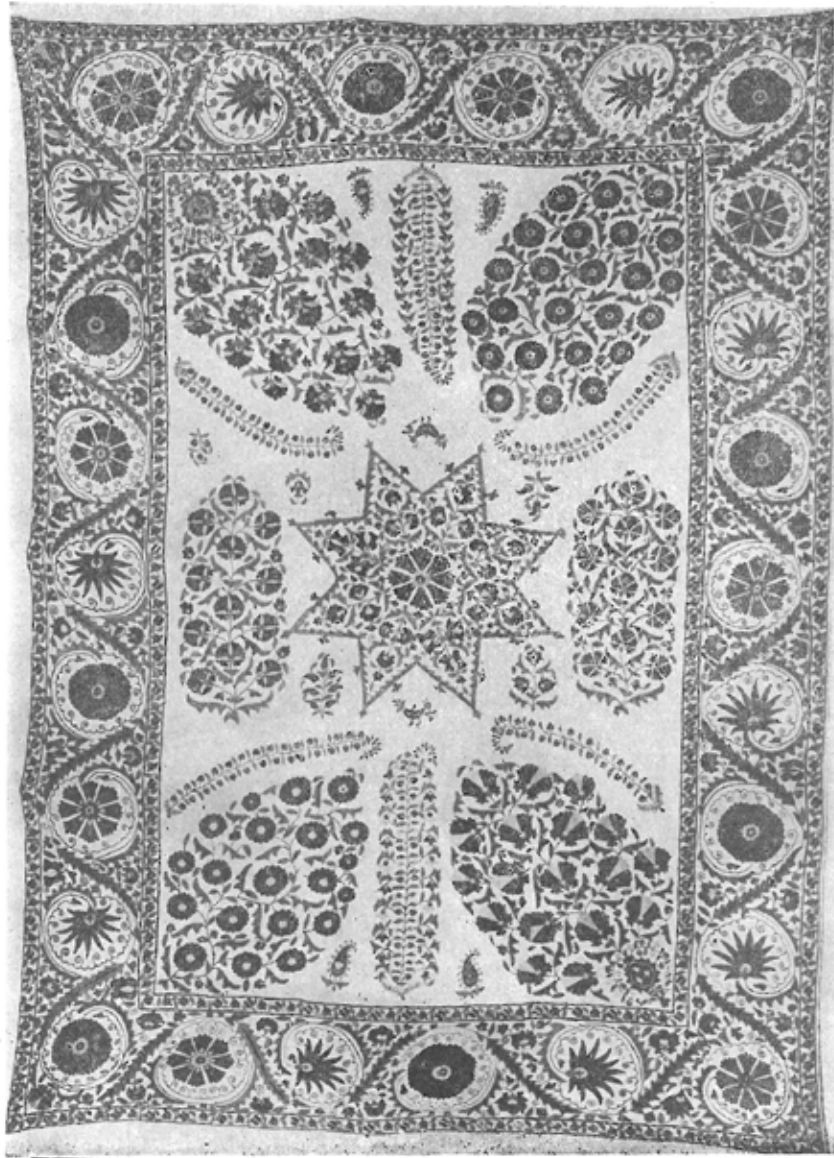


PLATES





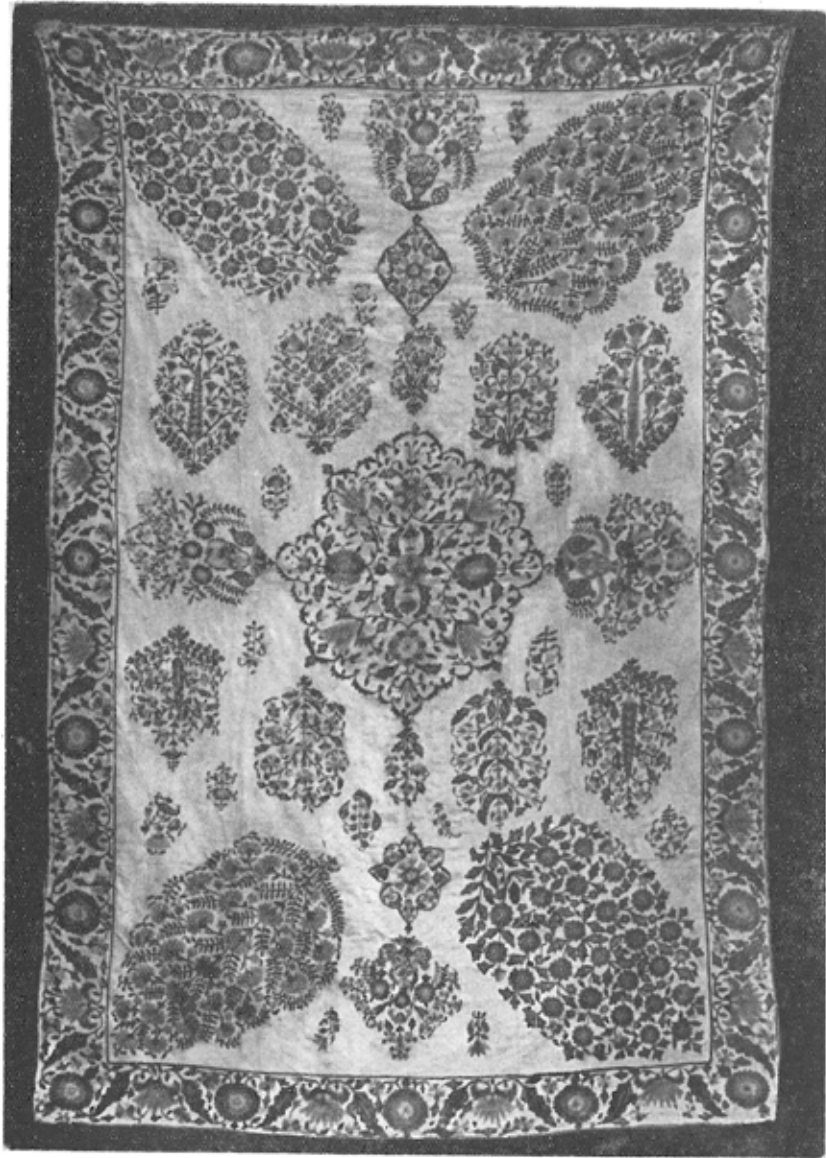
1. *Suzani*. Nurata, 19th century. Size 260 x 130 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch. GMVK, inv. 2322 III.



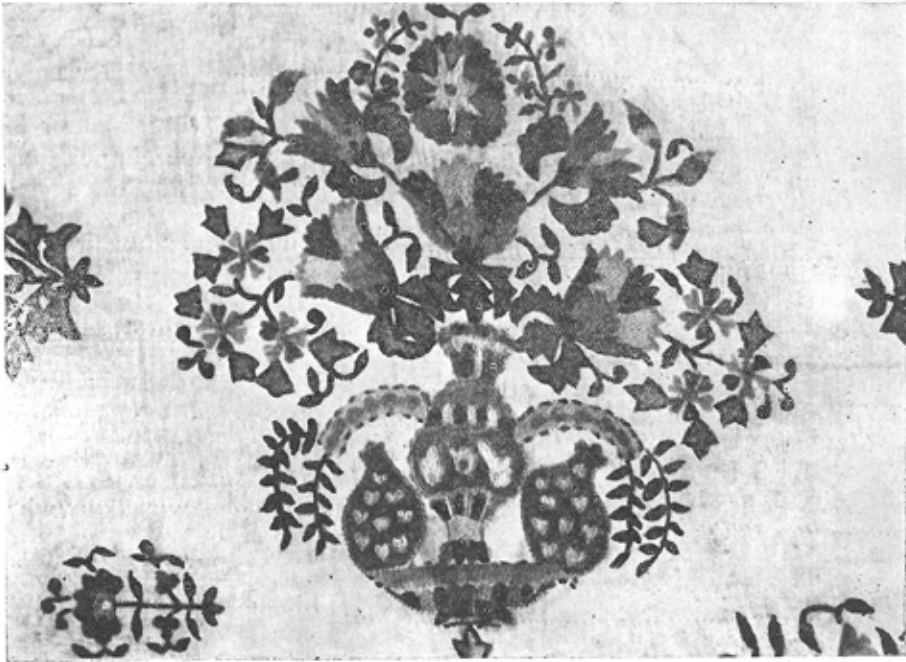
2. *Suzani*. Nurata, 19th century. Size 224 x 163 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch. GMVK, inv. 2328 III.



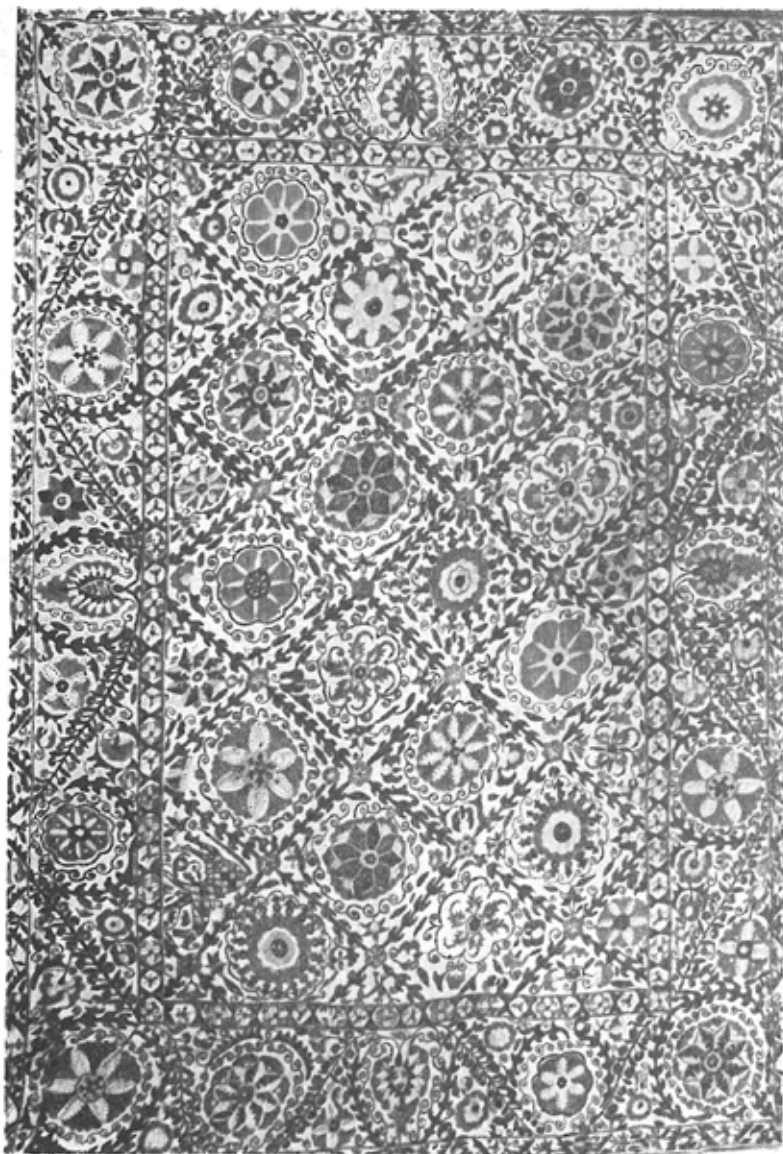
3. Detail of a *suzani*. Nurata, 19th century. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch. GMVK, inv. 2328 III.



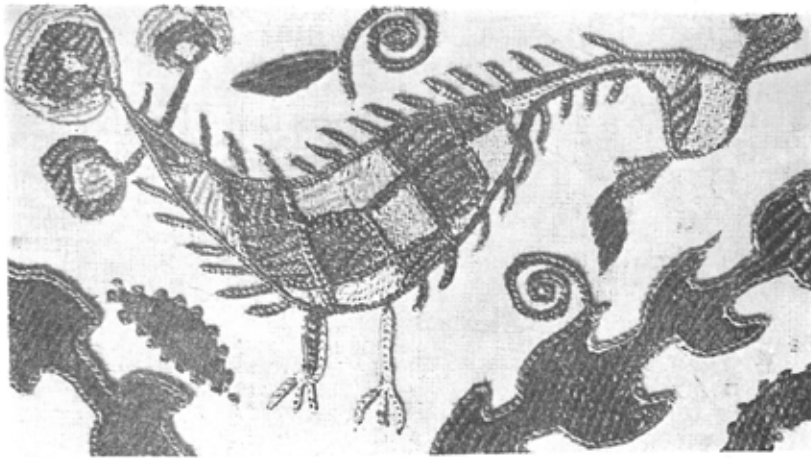
4. *Suzani*. Nurata, 19th century. Size 240 x 160 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch. Museum of Art of the UzSSR, inv. 468.



5. Detail of a *suzani*. Nurata, 19th century. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch. Museum of Art of the UzSSR, inv. 468.



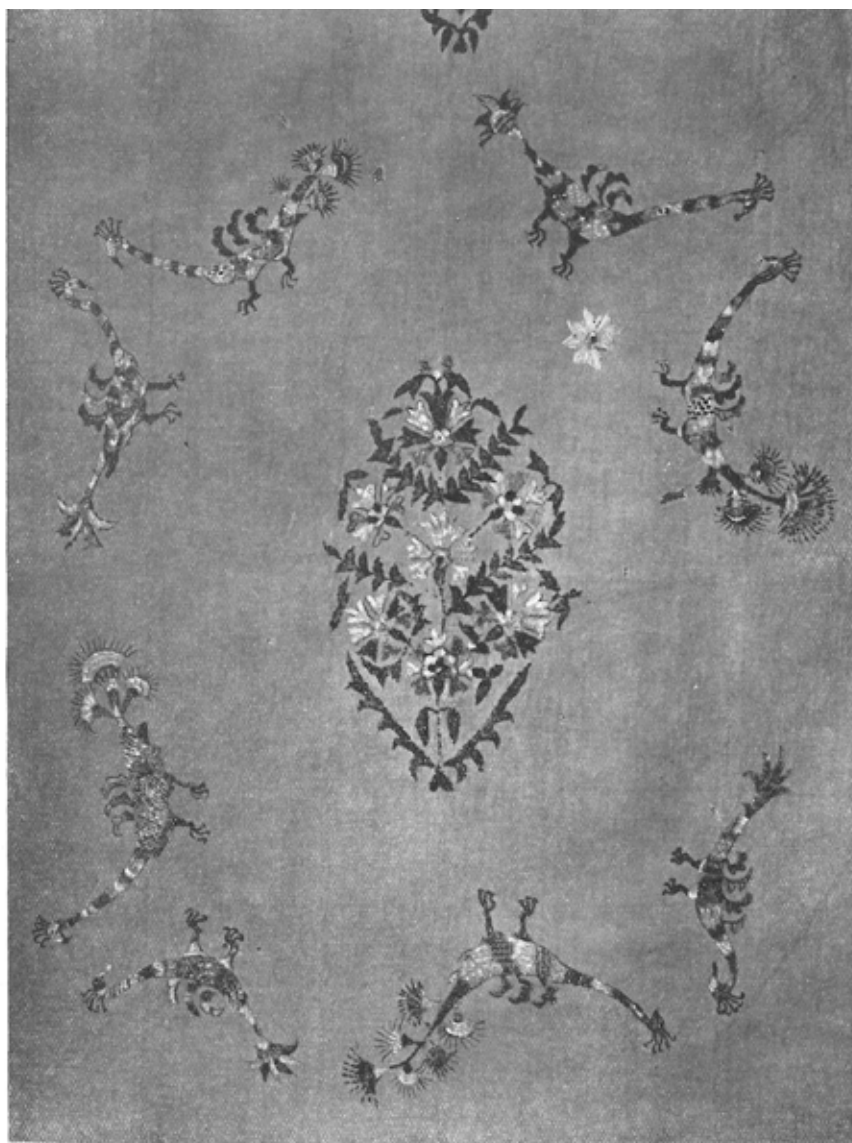
6. *Suzani*. Nurata, first half of the 19th century. Size 248 x 175 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch. Museum of Art of the UzSSR, inv. 477.



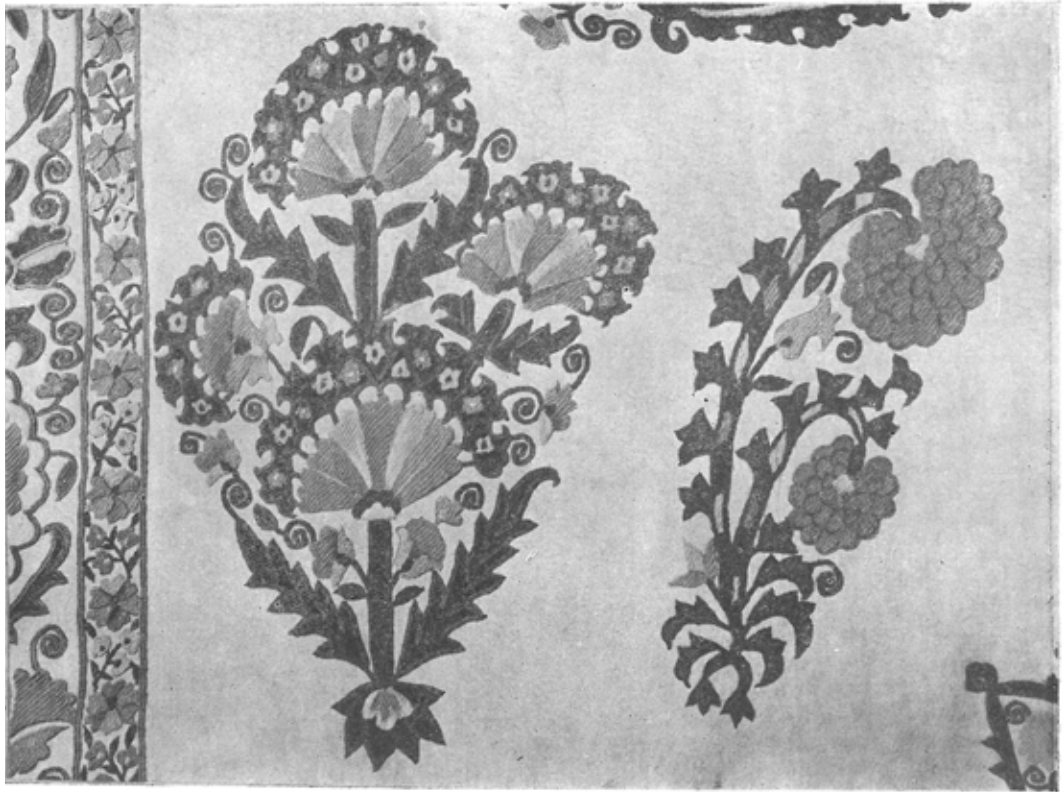
7. Details of a *suzani*. Nurata, first half of the 19th century. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch. Museum of Art of the UzSSR, inv. 477.



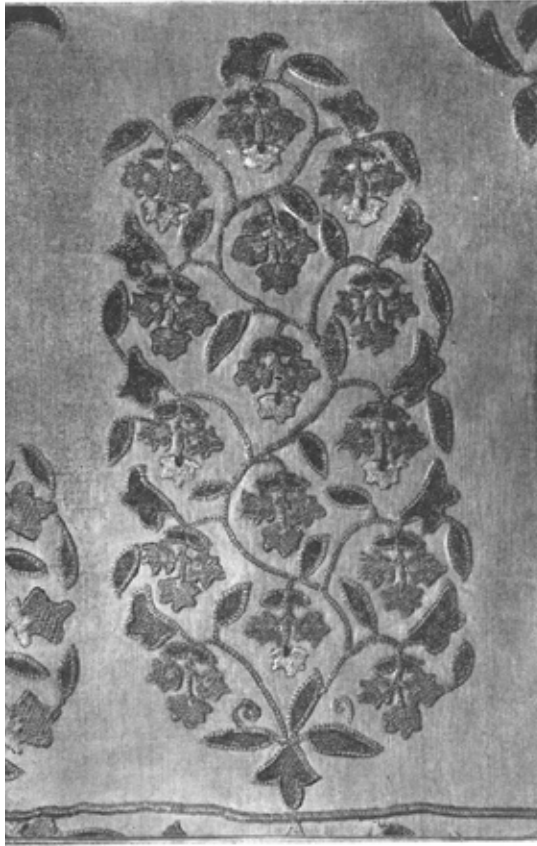
8. *Suzani*. Nurata, 19th century. Size 160 x 232 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch. Museum of Art of the UzSSR, inv. 469.



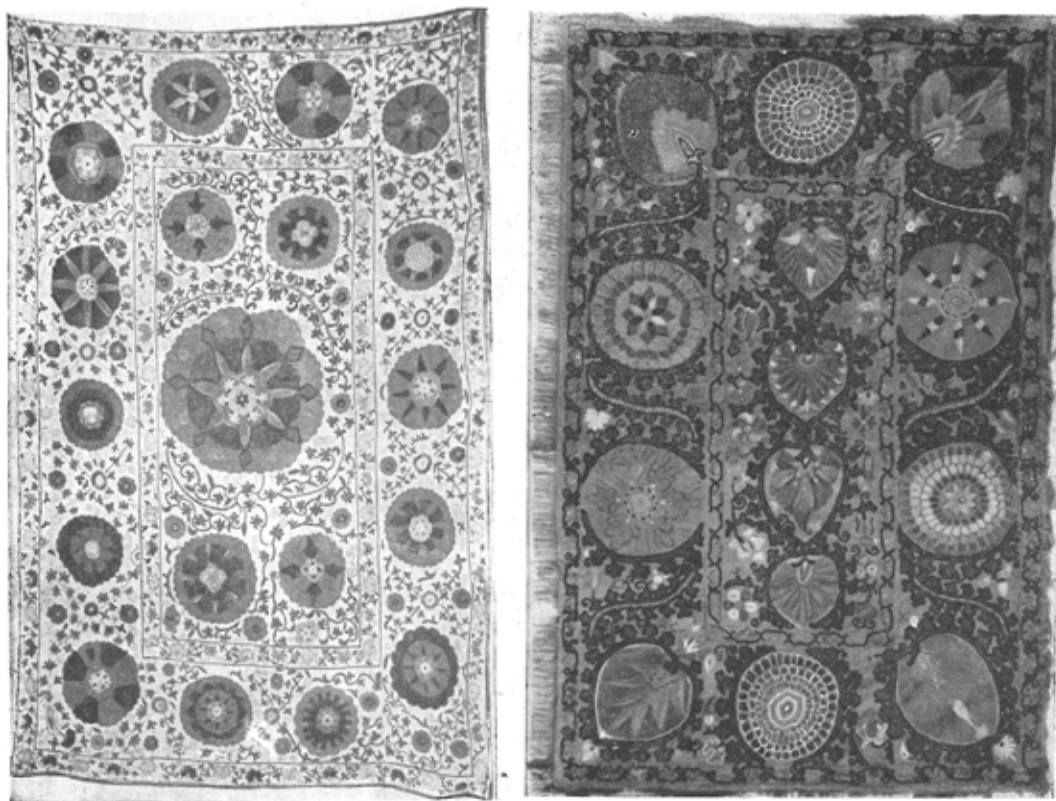
9. Detail of a *suzani*. Nurata, 19th century. Embroidered on dark cotton fabric (*malla*) in colored untwisted silk, *basma* on the backing, *kanda-khayol*, satin stitch, outlines in stem stitch. GMVK, inv. 1107 III.



10. Detail of a *suzani*. Nurata, 19th century. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch. GMVK, inv. 3196 III.

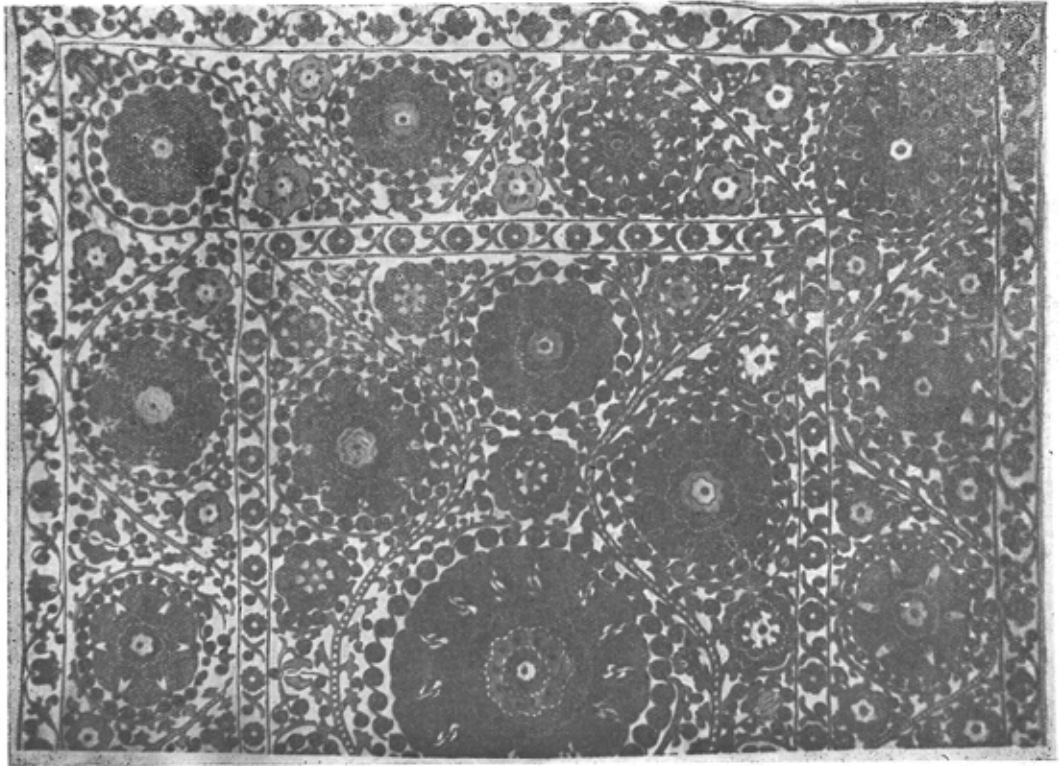


11. Details of *suzanis*. Nurata, 19th century. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch. GMVK, inv. 2554 III, 2322 III.

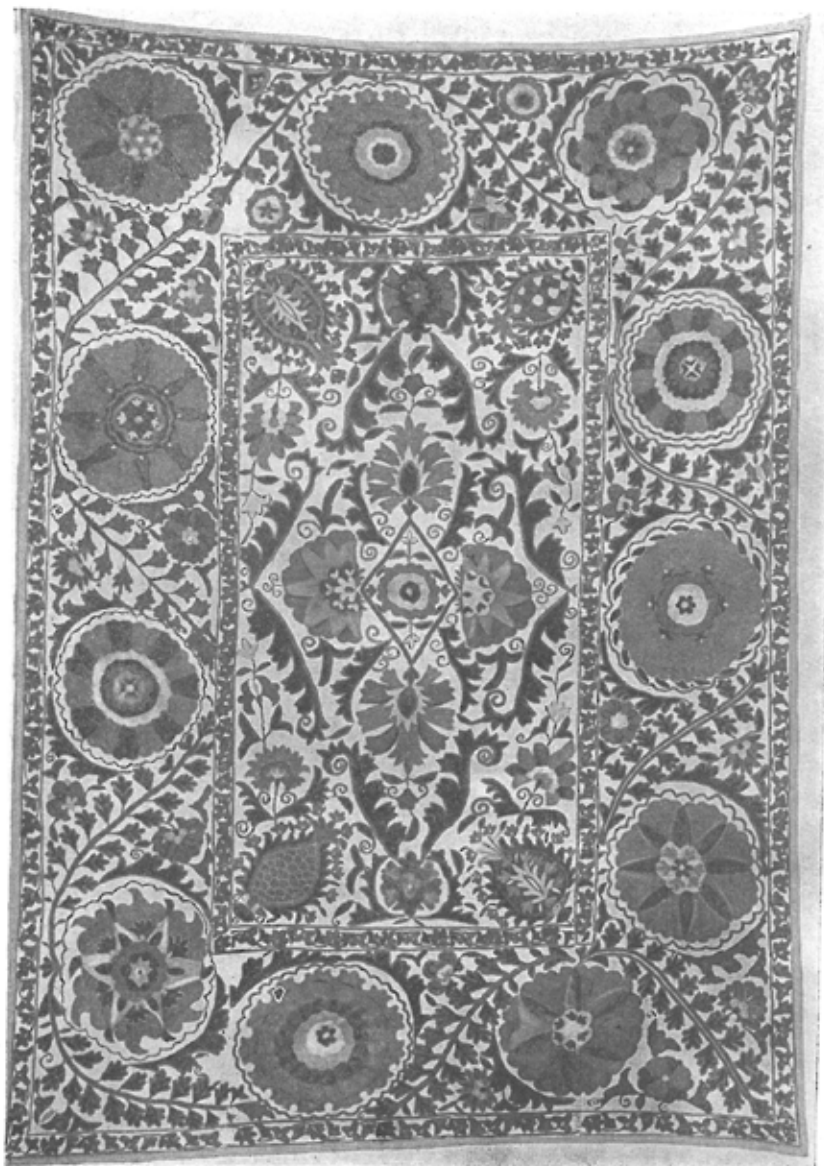


12. (a) *Bolinpush*. Bukhara, 19th century. Size 195 x 125 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, tambour stitch. GMVK, inv. 810 III.

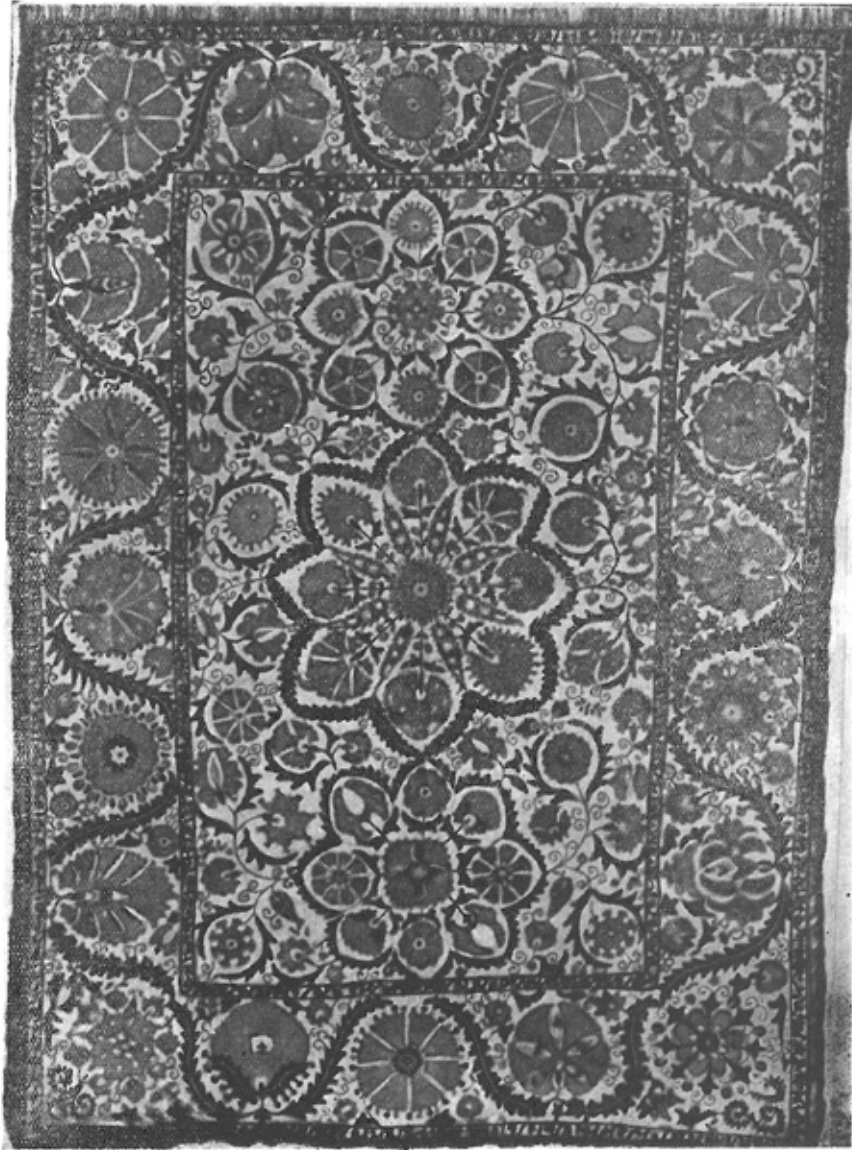
(b) *Bolinpush*. Bukhara, 19th century. Size 165 x 105 cm. Embroidered on brown cotton fabric in colored silk, tambour stitch. Tajik Regional History Museum (Stalinabad), inv. 500.



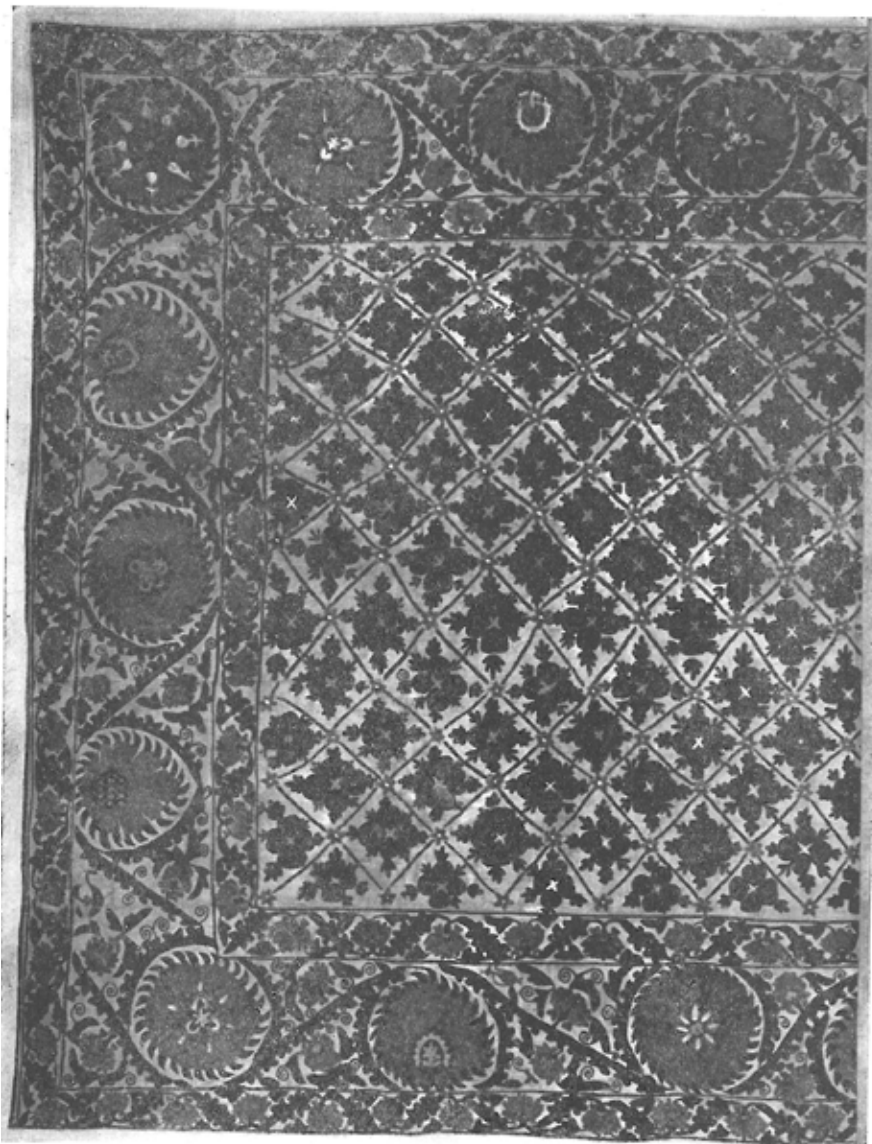
13. *Suzani*. Bukhara, 19th century. Size 232 x 183 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, tambour stitch. Museum of History of the UzSSR, inv. 1435/22.



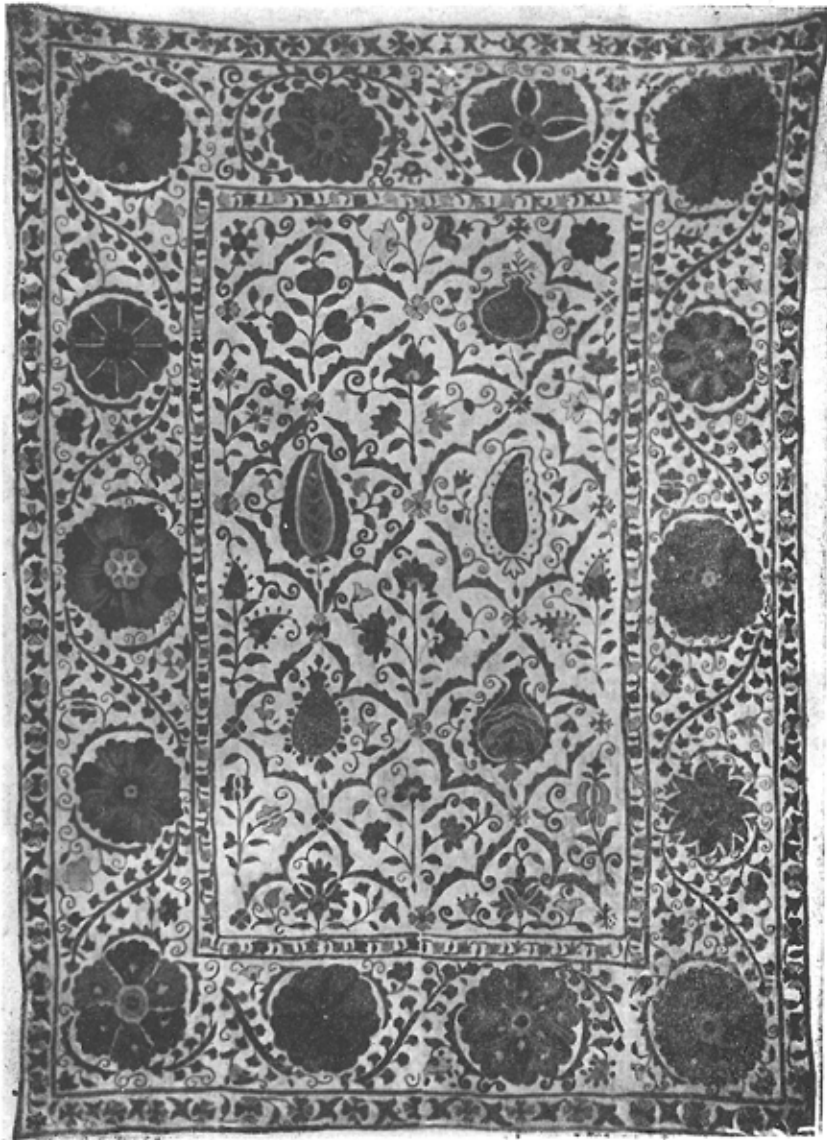
14. *Bolinpush*. Bukhara, 19th century. Size 157 x 107 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, tambour stitch. GMVK, inv. 2329 III.



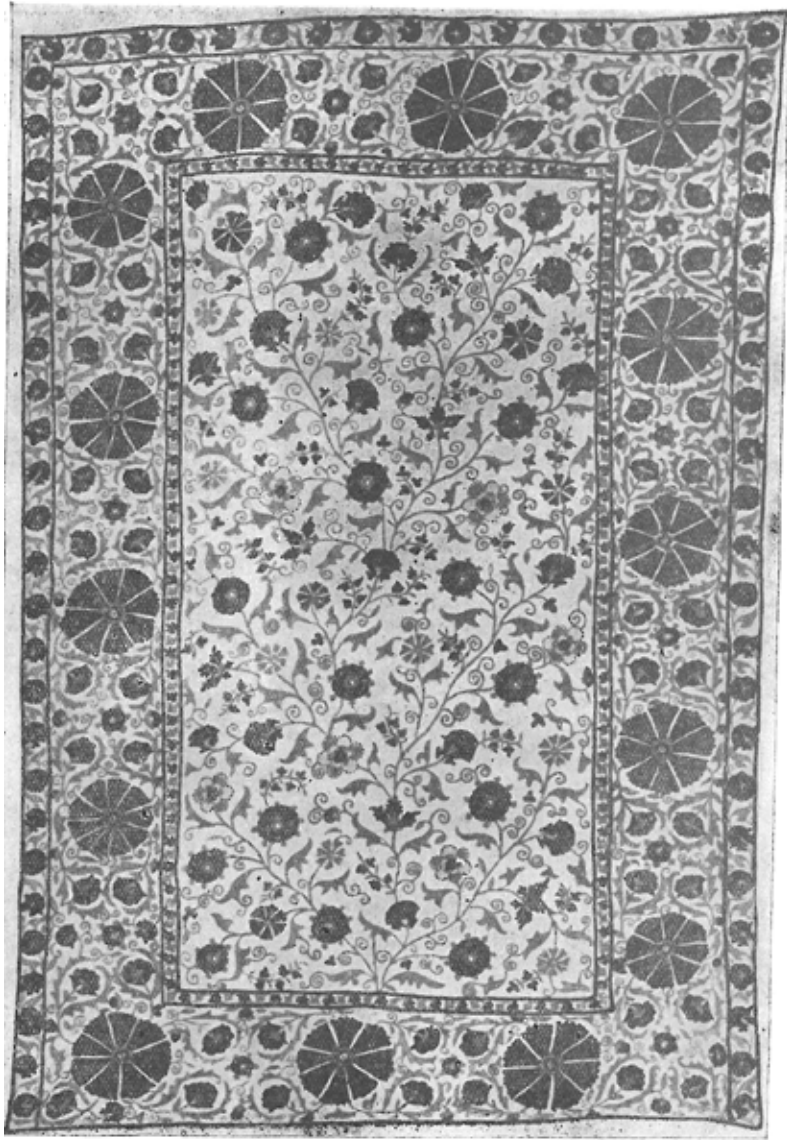
15. *Bolinpush*. Bukhara, 19th century. Size 156 x 115 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, tambour stitch and *basma*. Edged with a silk fringe. Samarkand Museum, KP 1633.



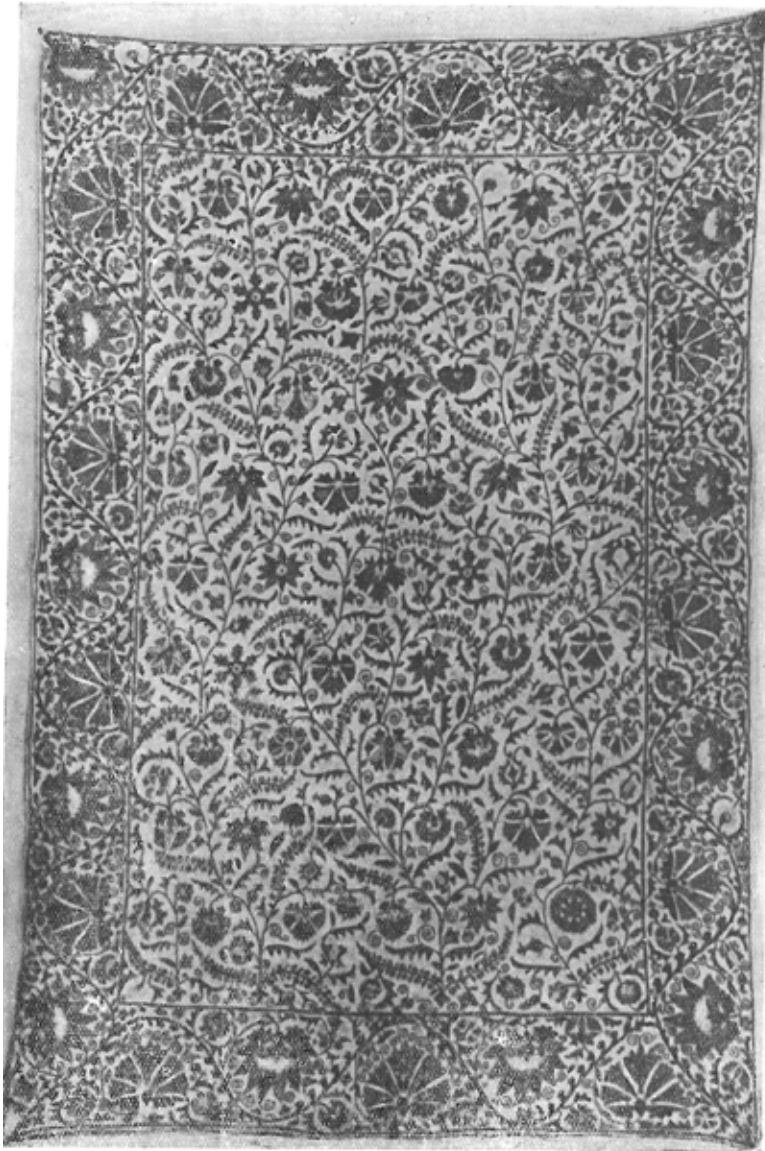
16. *Suzani*. Bukhara, 19th century. Size 228 x 155 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, tambour stitch. GVMK, inv. 2332 III.



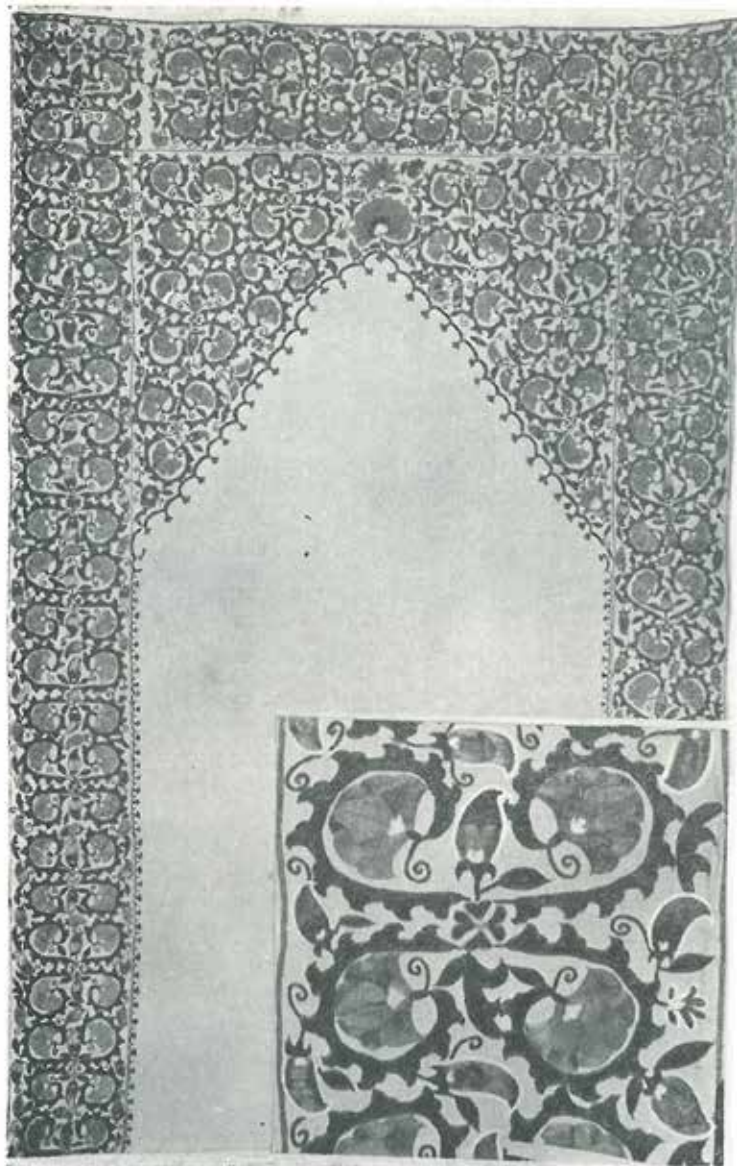
17. *Bolinpush*. Bukhara, 19th century. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, tambour stitch. Property of "Women's Labor" artel in Samarkand.



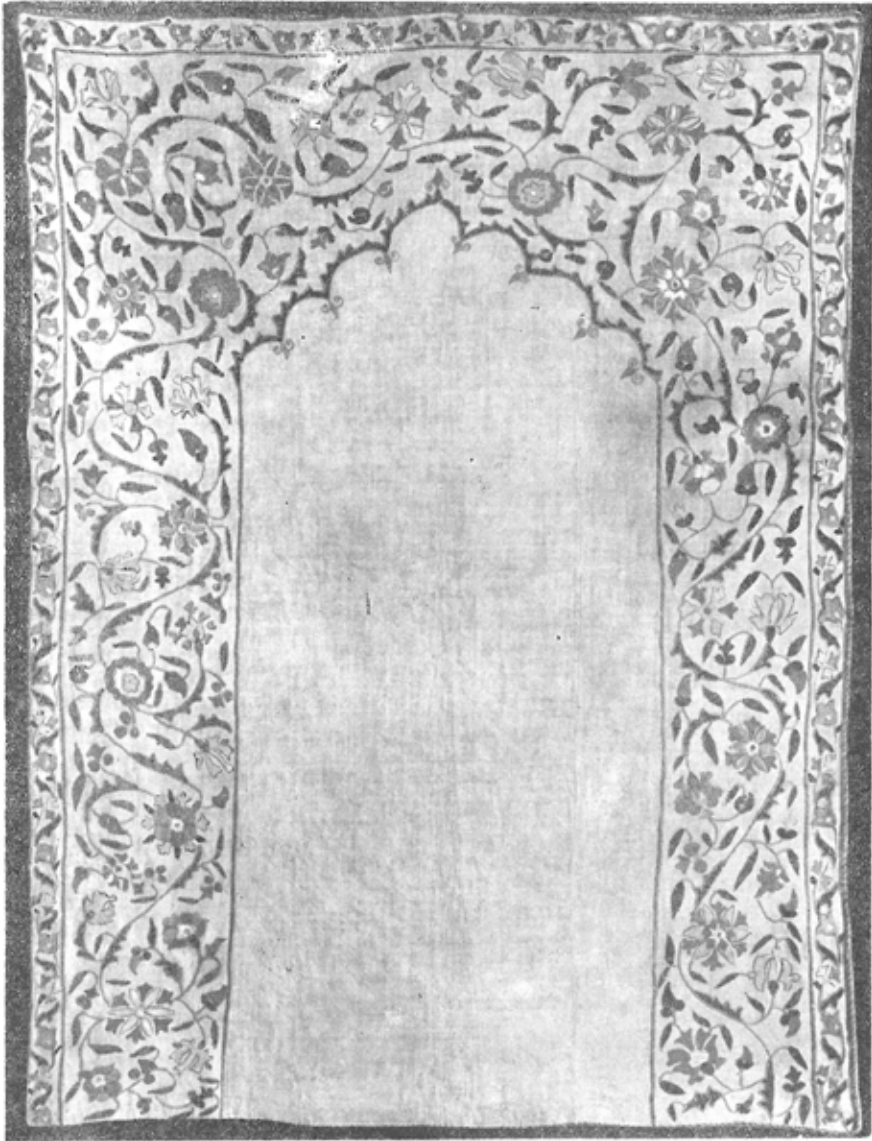
18. *Nimsuzani*. Bukhara, 19th century. Size 170 x 112 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch. Samarkand Museum, KP 1522-a.



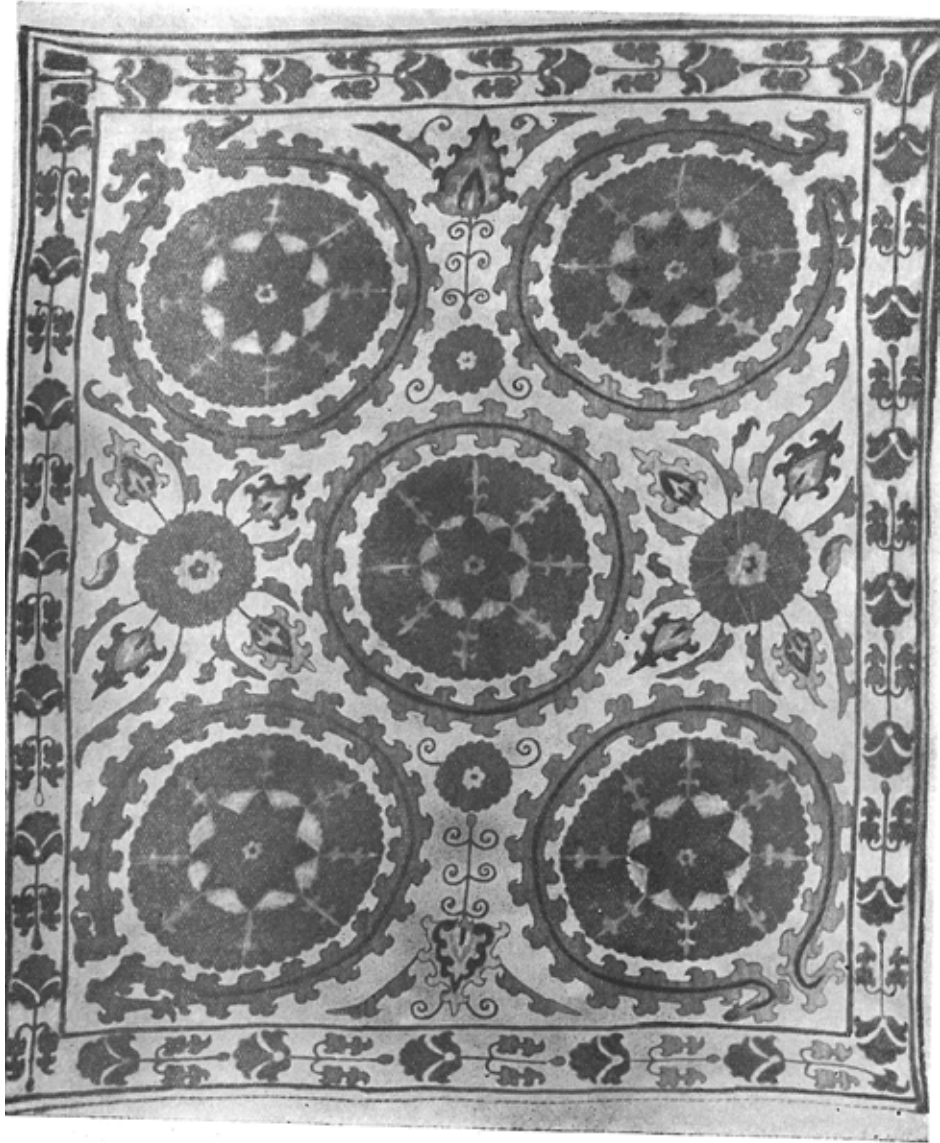
19. *Suzani*. Bukhara, 19th century. Size 249 x 172 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk. Museum of Art of the UzSSR, inv. 478.



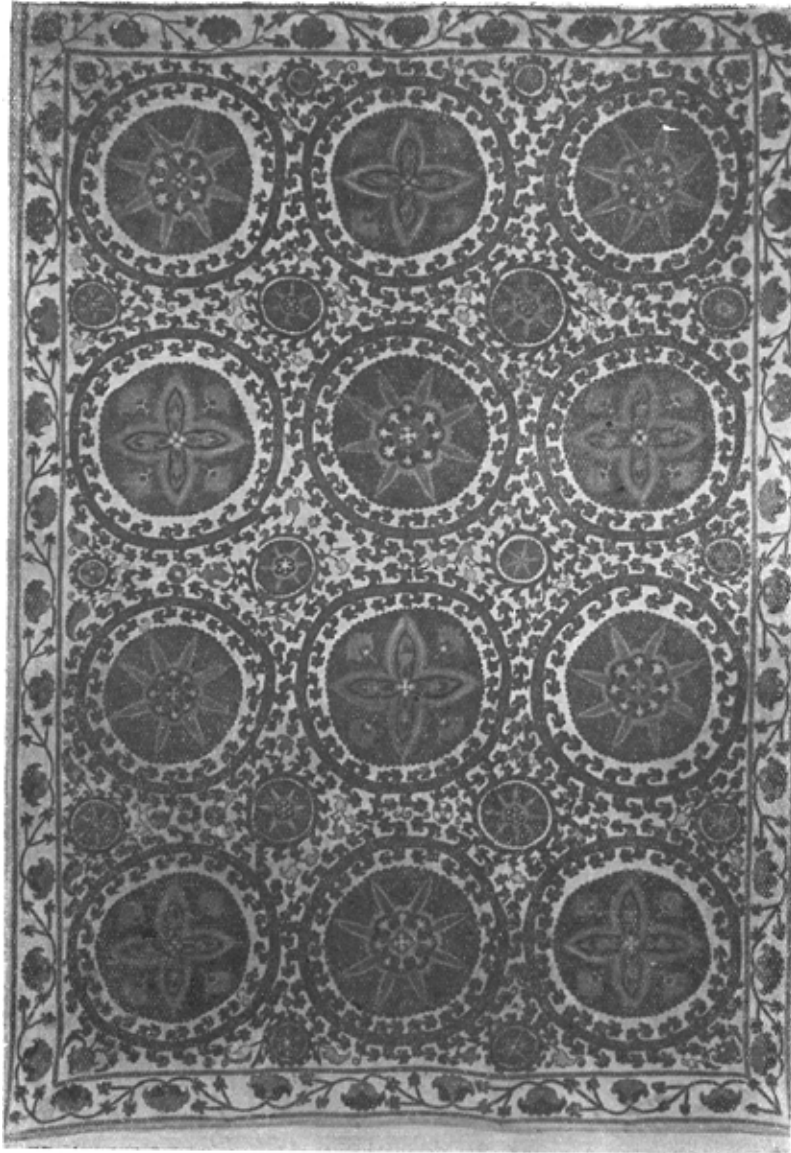
20. *Rujjo*. Bukhara, 19th century. Size 263 x 165 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, tambour stitch. GVMK, inv. 1001 III.
General view and detail of the border.



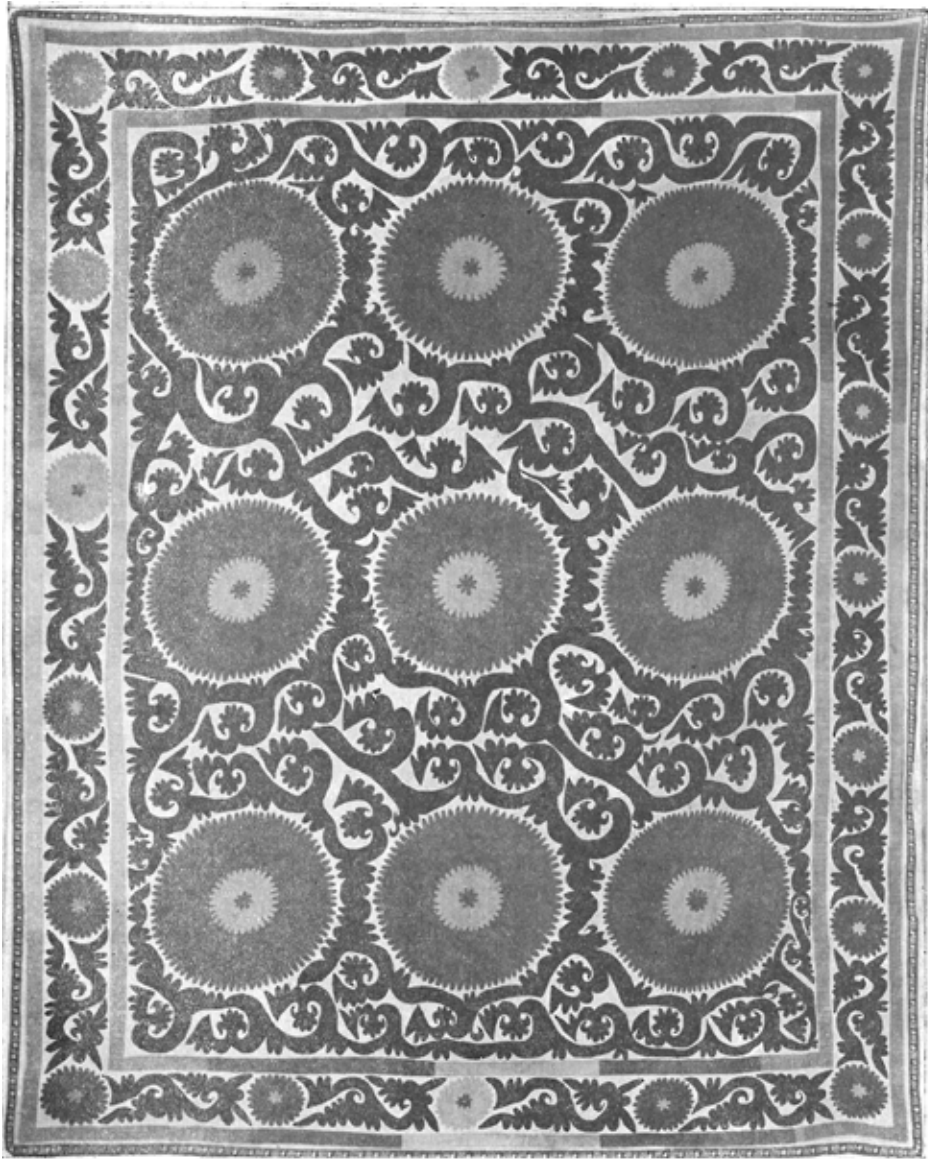
21. *Joynamaz*. Bukhara, 19th century. Size 126 x 96 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, *kanda-khayol*, outlines in tambour stitch. GVMK, inv. 811 III.



22. *Bolinpush*. Samarkand, mid-19th century. Size 160 x 137 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk and red wool, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch. Samarkand Museum, KP 195.



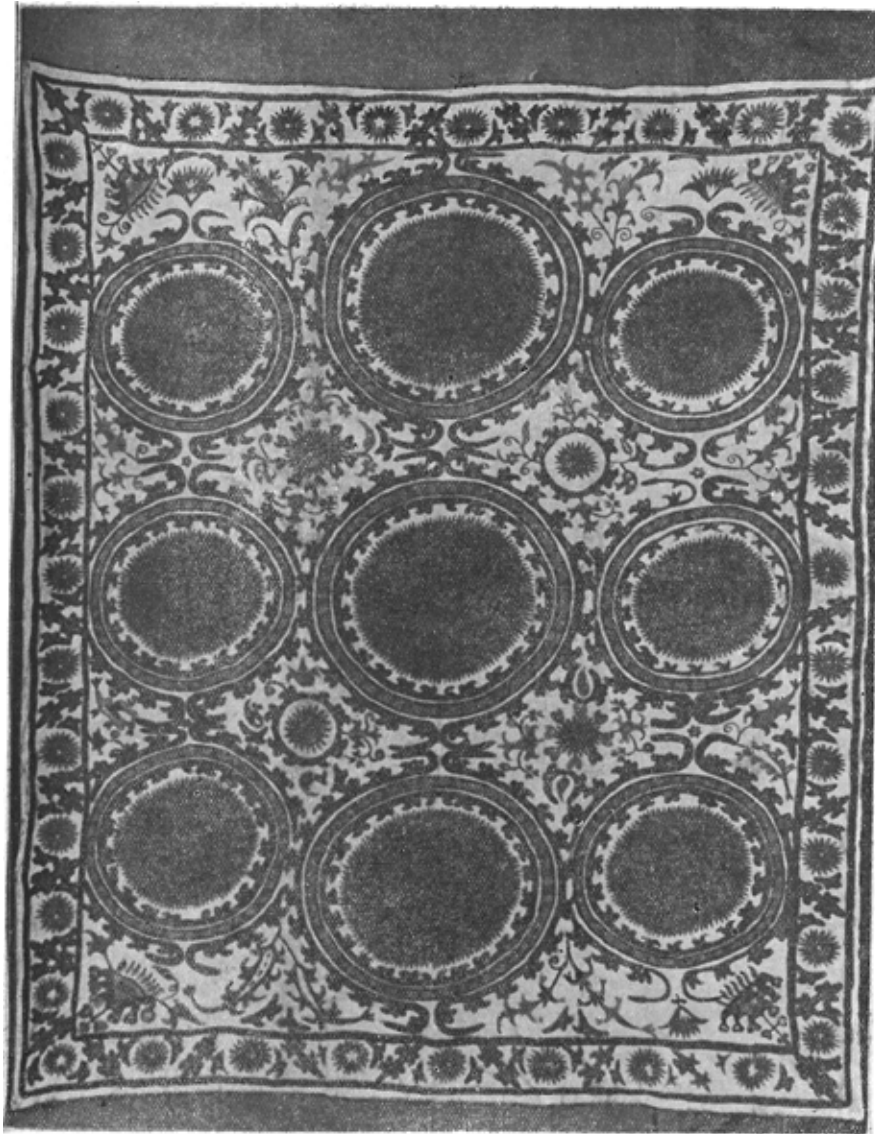
23. *Suzani*. Samarkand, 19th century. Size 265 x 186 cm. Embroidered on white factory-made fabric in colored silk and red wool, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch. Samarkand Museum, KP 1227.



24. *Suzani*. Samarkand, late 19th century. Size 405 x 325 cm. Embroidered on white factory-made fabric in colored silk, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch. Museum of AN Tajik SSR, KP 1432.



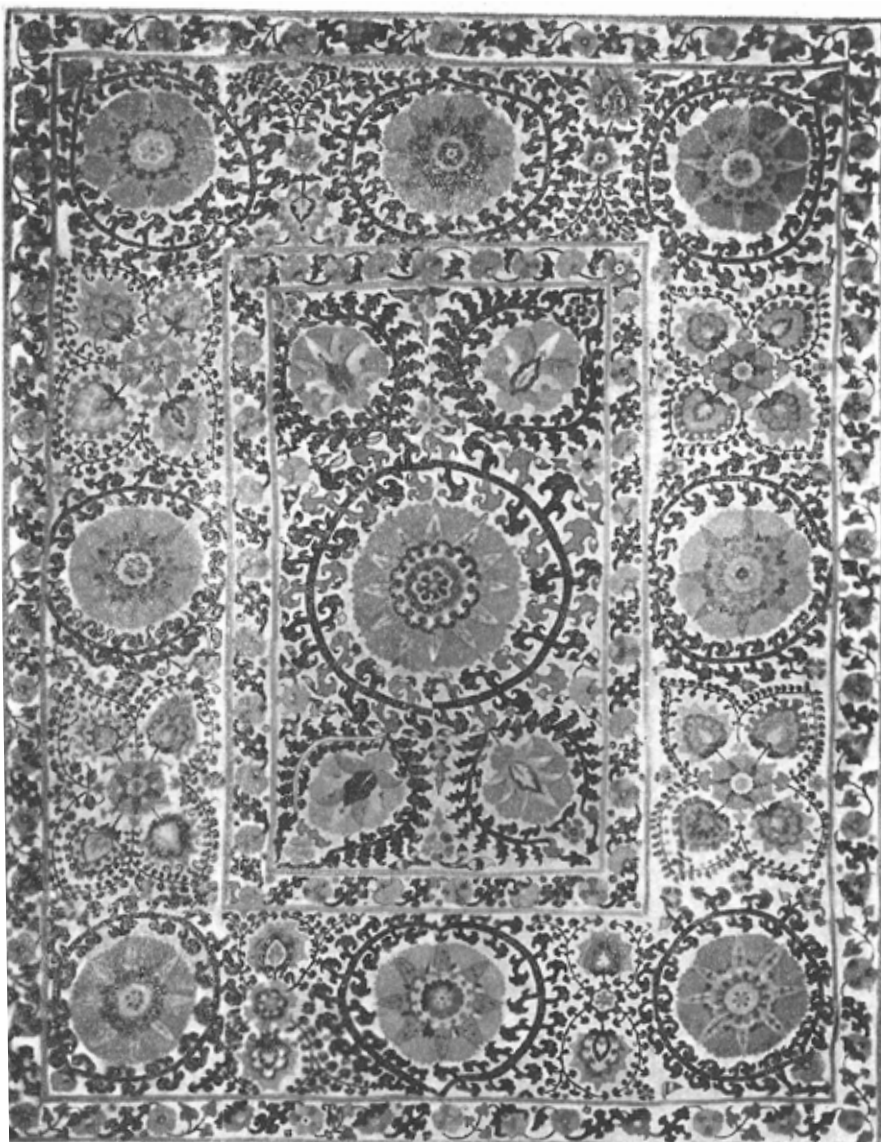
25. *Suzani*. Samarkand, early 20th century. Size 222 x 185 cm. Embroidered on crimson cotton fabric in colored silk, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch. Samarkand Museum, KP 1608.



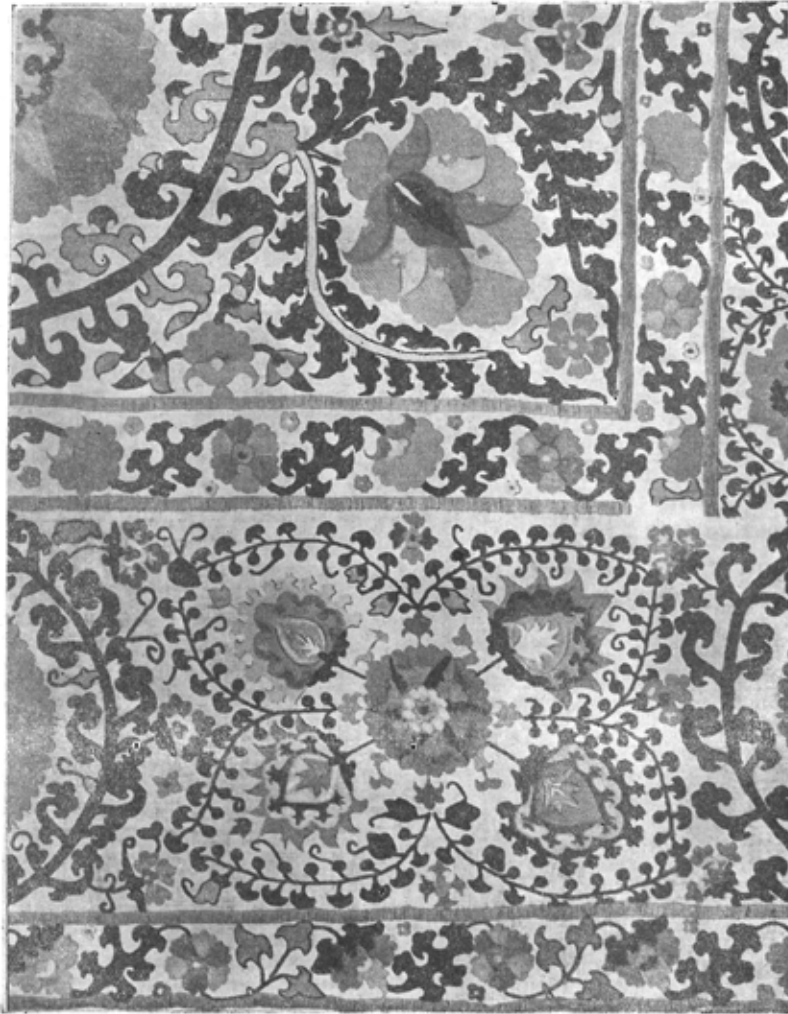
26. *Suzani*. Jizzakh, 19th century. Size 260 x 217 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, *basma*, outlines in double buttonhole stitch. Museum of History of the UzSSR, inv. 3-1435/7.



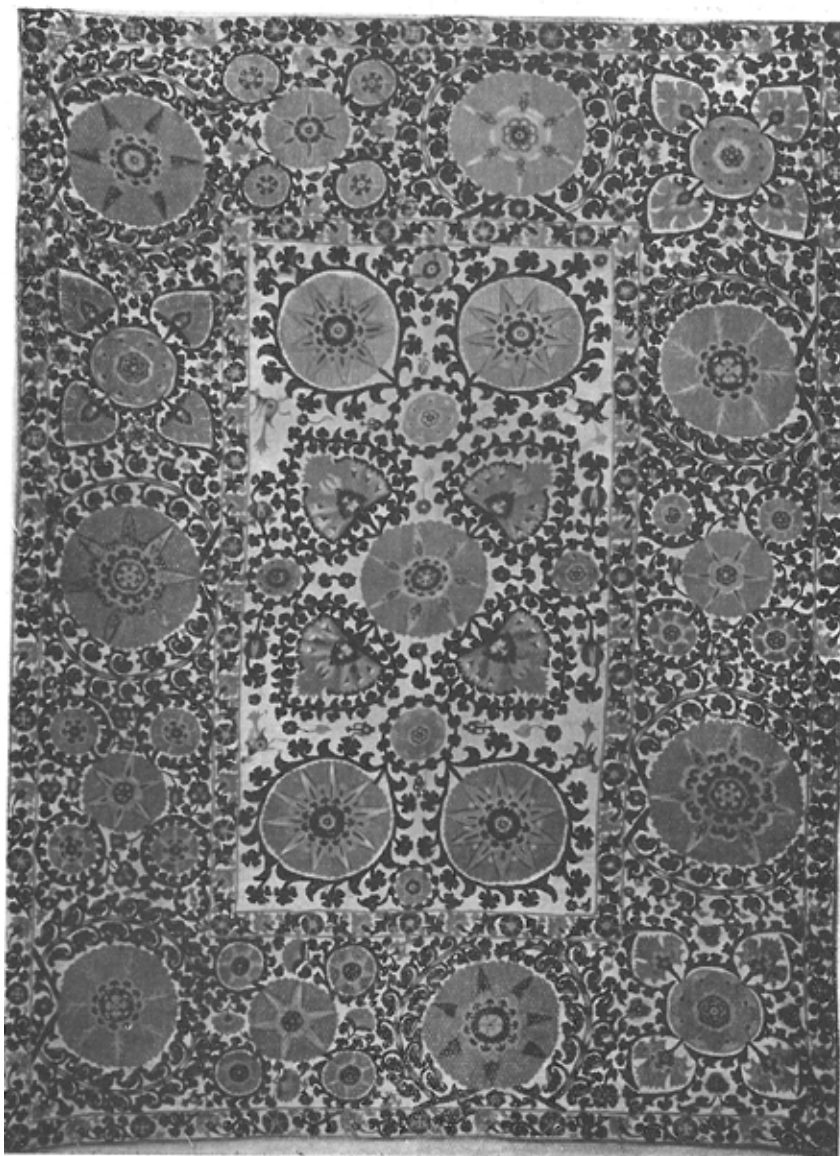
27. *Suzani*. Shahrizabz, early 20th century. Size 235 x 161 cm. Entirely embroidered over in colored silk, *iraki* stitch. Museum of Art of the UzSSR, inv. 141.



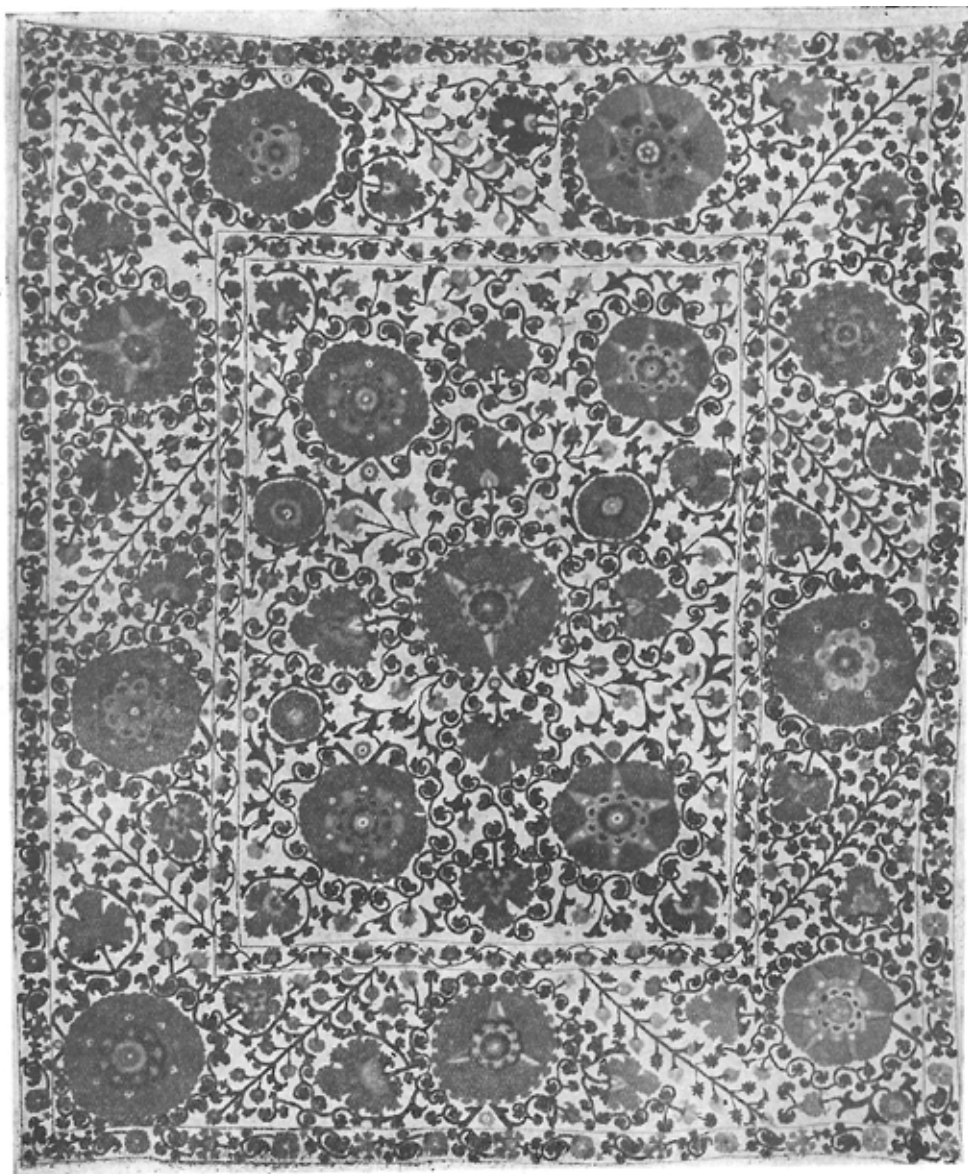
28. *Suzani*. Shahrizabz, 19th century. Size 290 x 209 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk and red wool, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch. GMVK, inv. 2327 III.



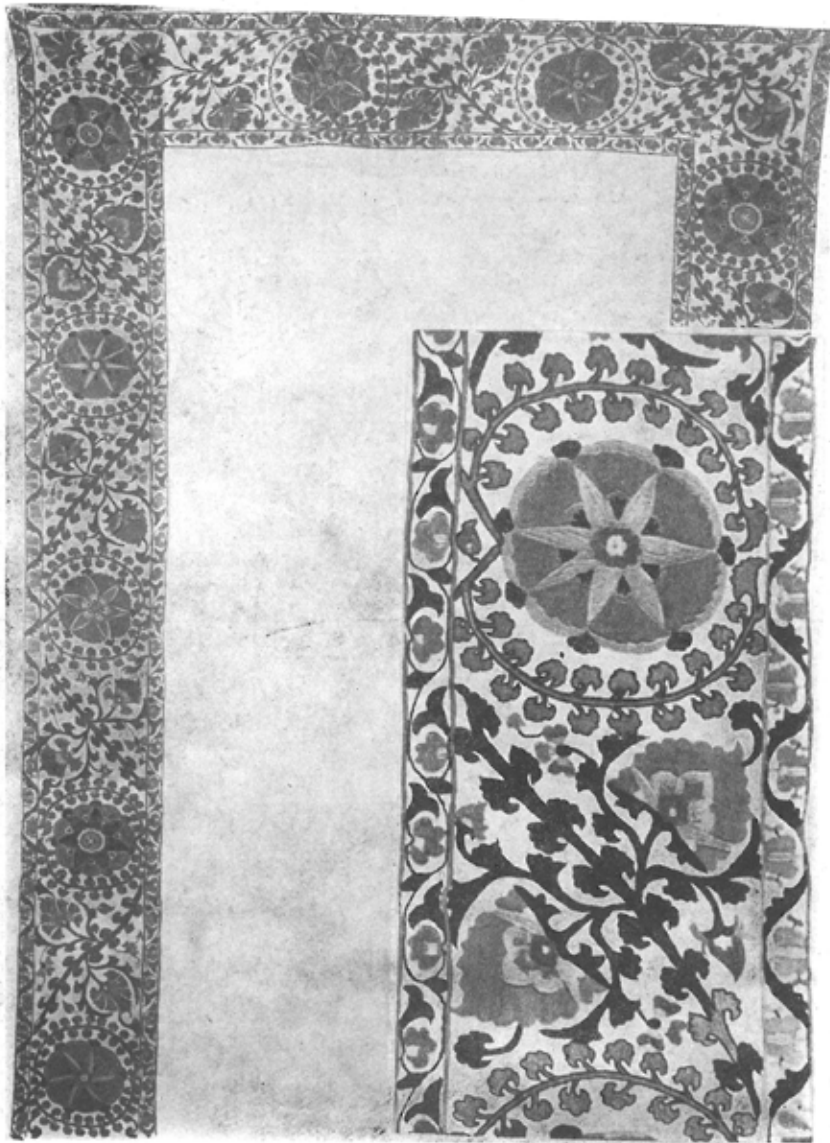
29. Detail of a *suzani*. Shahrissabz, 19th century. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk and red wool, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch. GMVK, inv. 2327 III.



30. *Suzani*. Shahrizabz, 19th century. Size 275 x 200 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, *kanda-khayol*, outlines in tambour stitch. GMVK, inv. 4114 III.



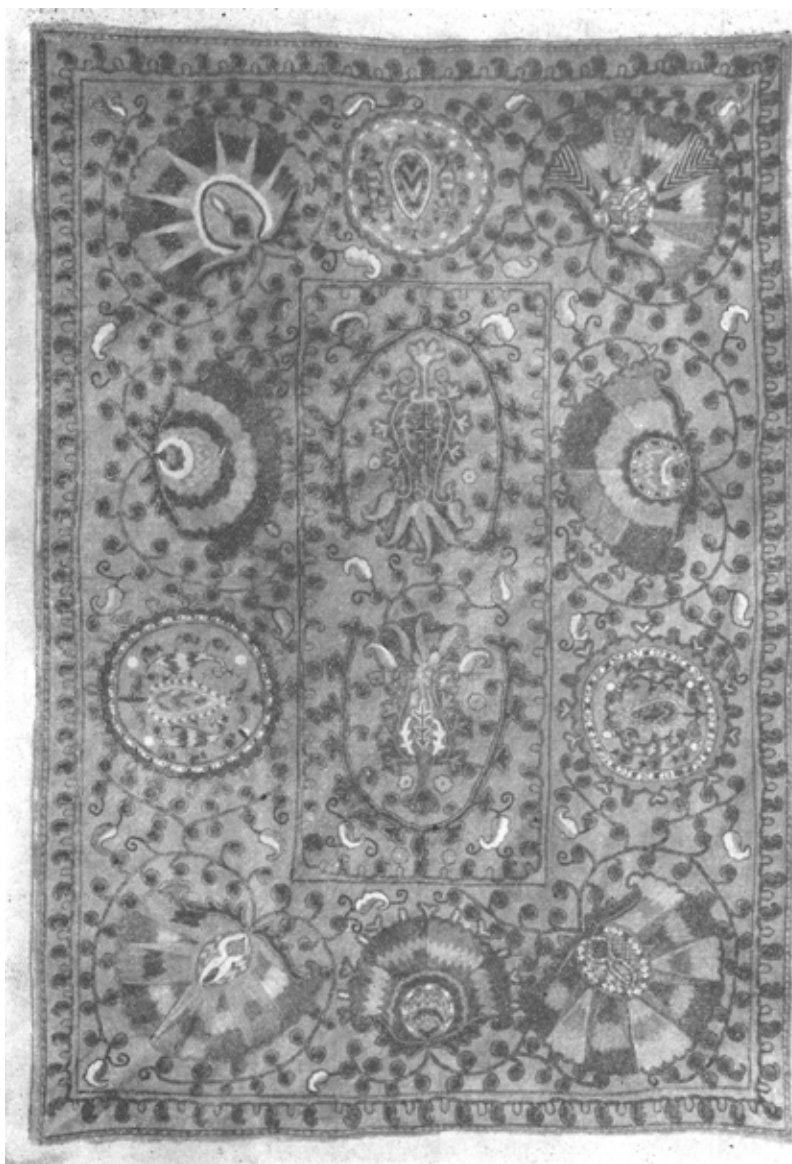
31. *Suzani*. Shahrissabz, 19th century. Size 262 x 218 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk and red wool, *kanda-khayol*, outlines in tambour stitch. GMVK, inv. 3197 III.



32. *Ruijo*. Shahrizabz, 19th century. Size 258 x 186 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, *kanda-khayol*, outlines in tambour stitch. GMVK, inv. 835 III. General view and detail of the border.



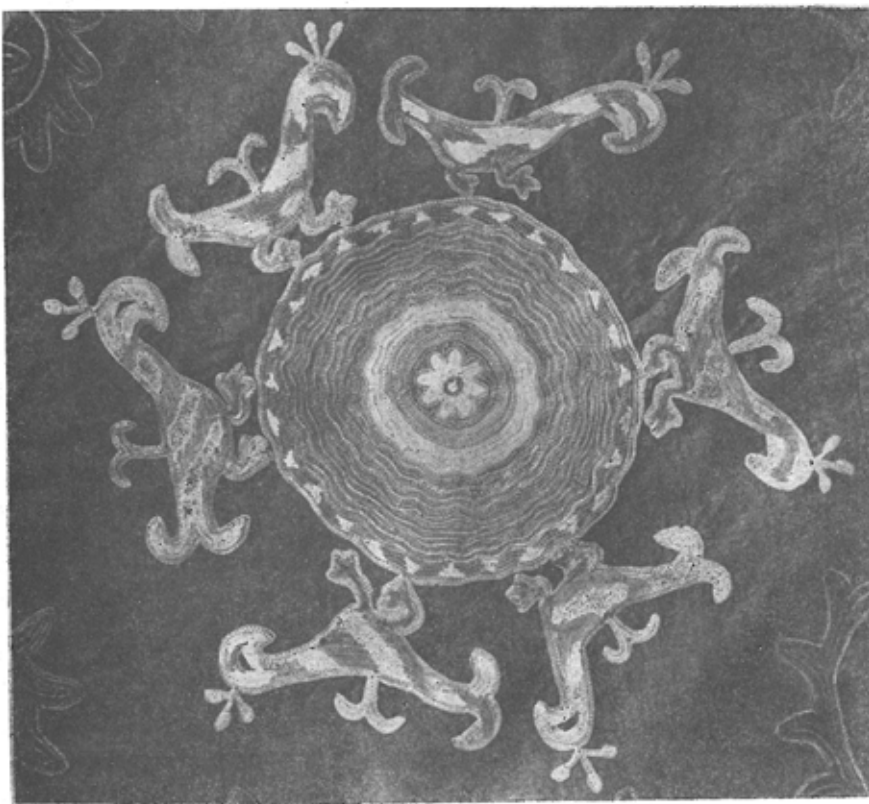
33. *Suzani*. Shahrissabz, 19th century. Size 238 x 127 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, *kanda-khayol*, outlines in tambour stitch. Samarkand Museum, KP 1257/27.



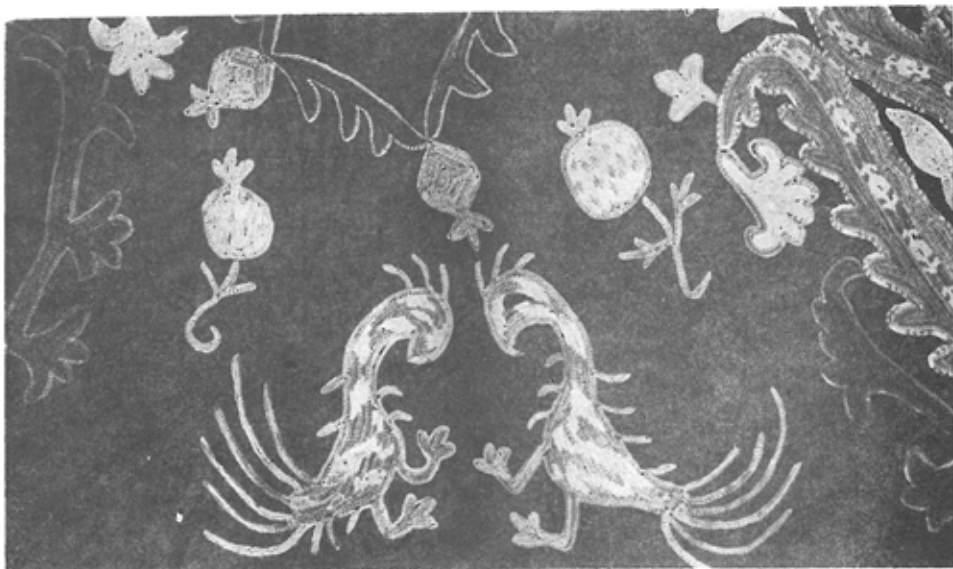
34. *Yastykpush*. Shahrissabz, 19th century. Size 117 x 115 cm. Embroidered on grayish cotton rep in colored silk and bright red wool, tambour stitch. Museum of AN Tajik SSR, inv. 157-2.



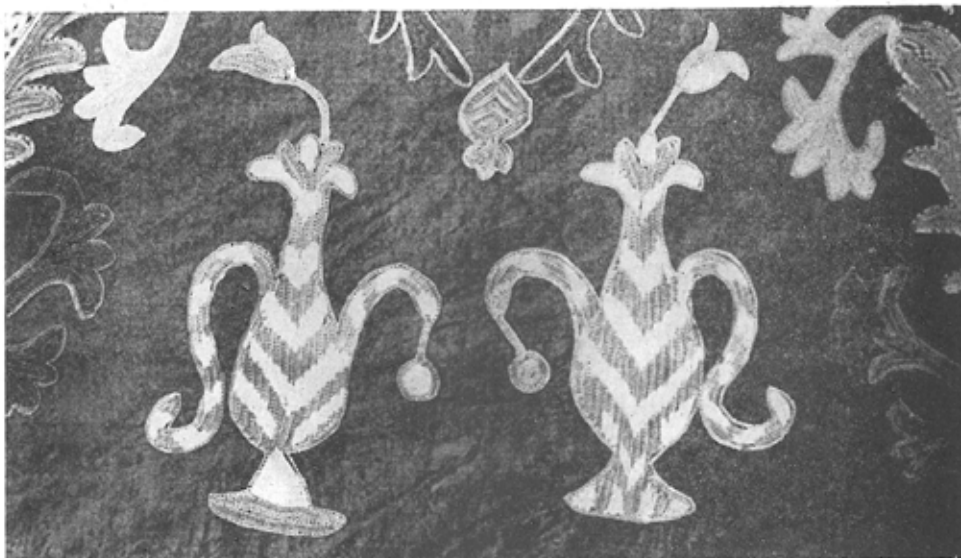
35. *Suzani*. Shahrissabz, late 19th century. Size 280 x 200 cm. Embroidered on dark purple silk fabric in colored silk thread, tambour stitch. Museum of Art of the UzSSR, inv. 924.

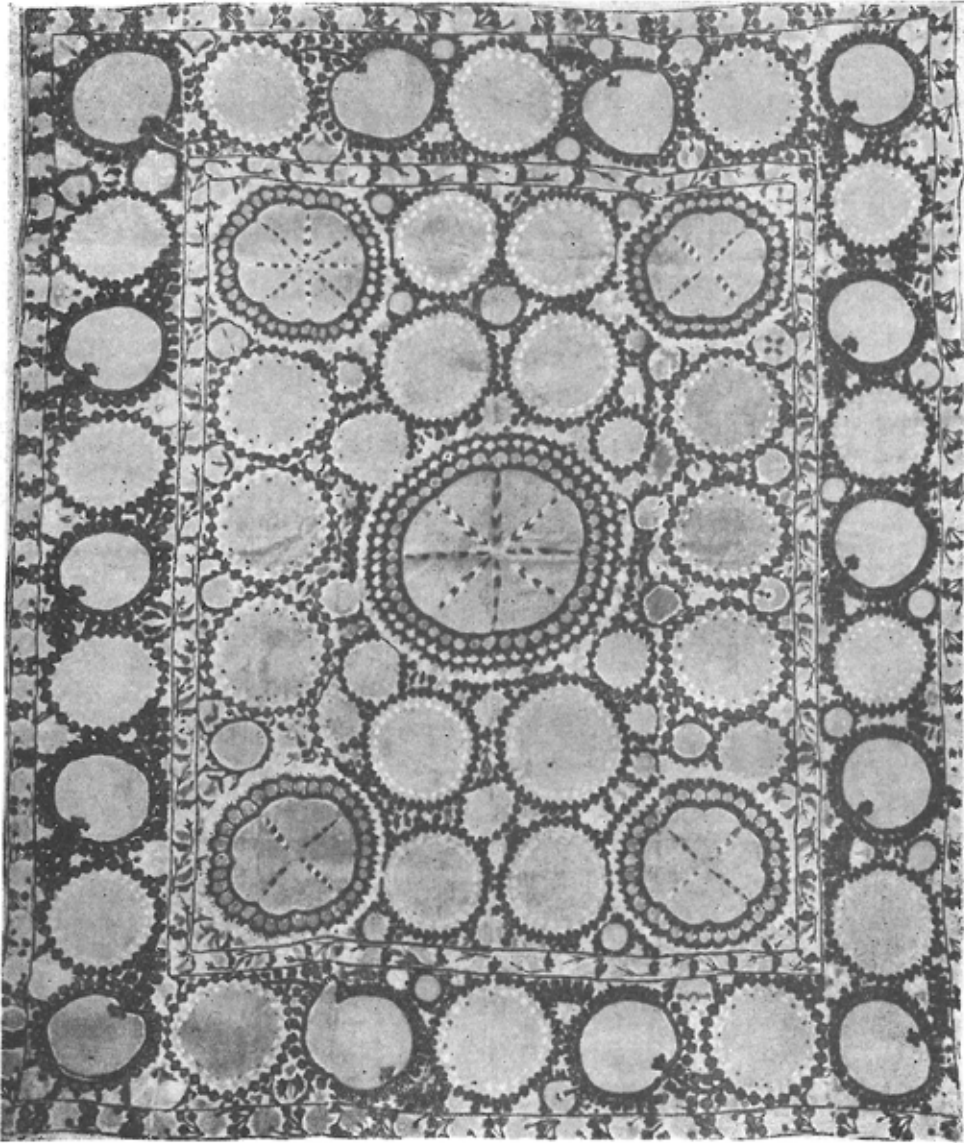


36-37 (a, b, c). Details of a *suzani*. Shahrizabz, late 19th century. Embroidered on dark purple silk fabric in colored silk thread, tambour stitch. Museum of Art of the UzSSR, inv. 924.

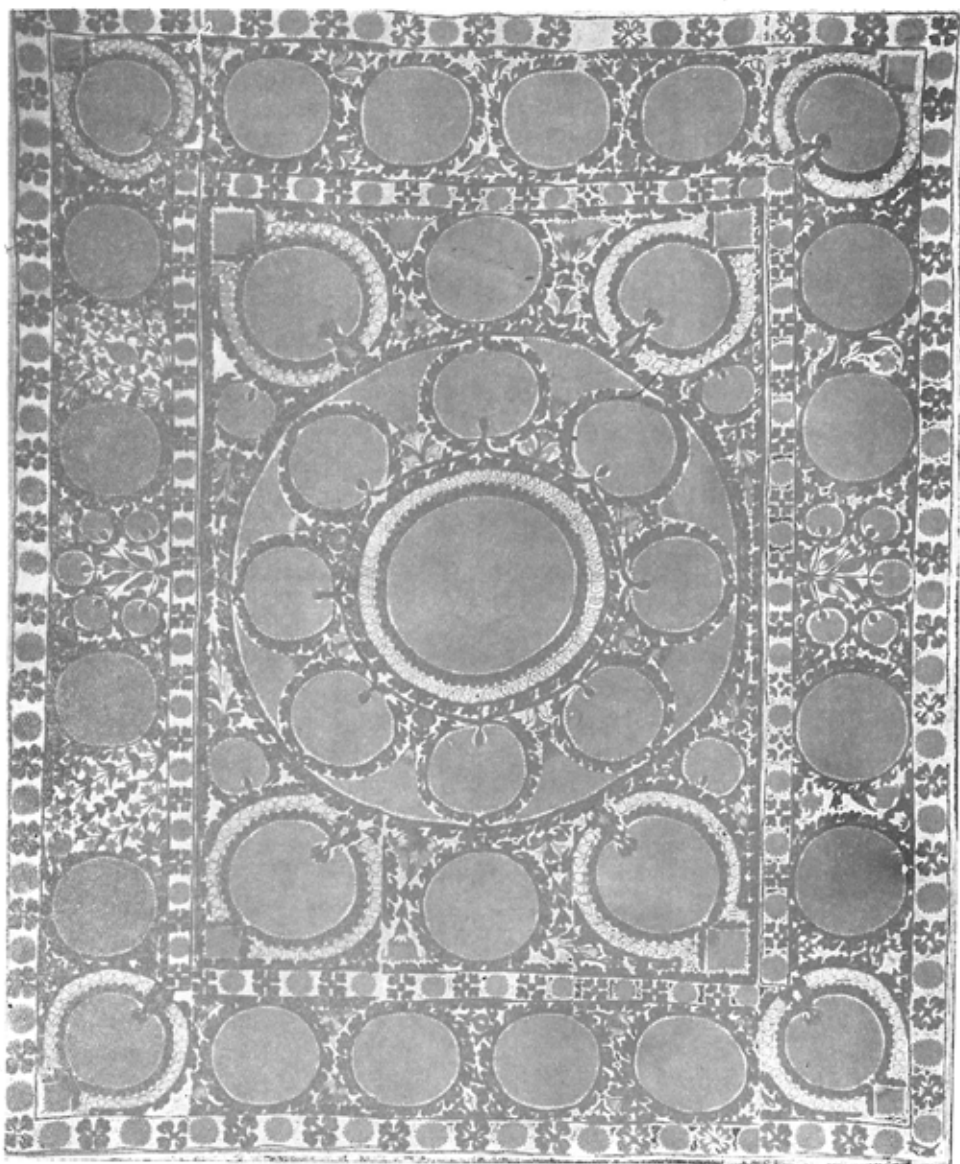


6

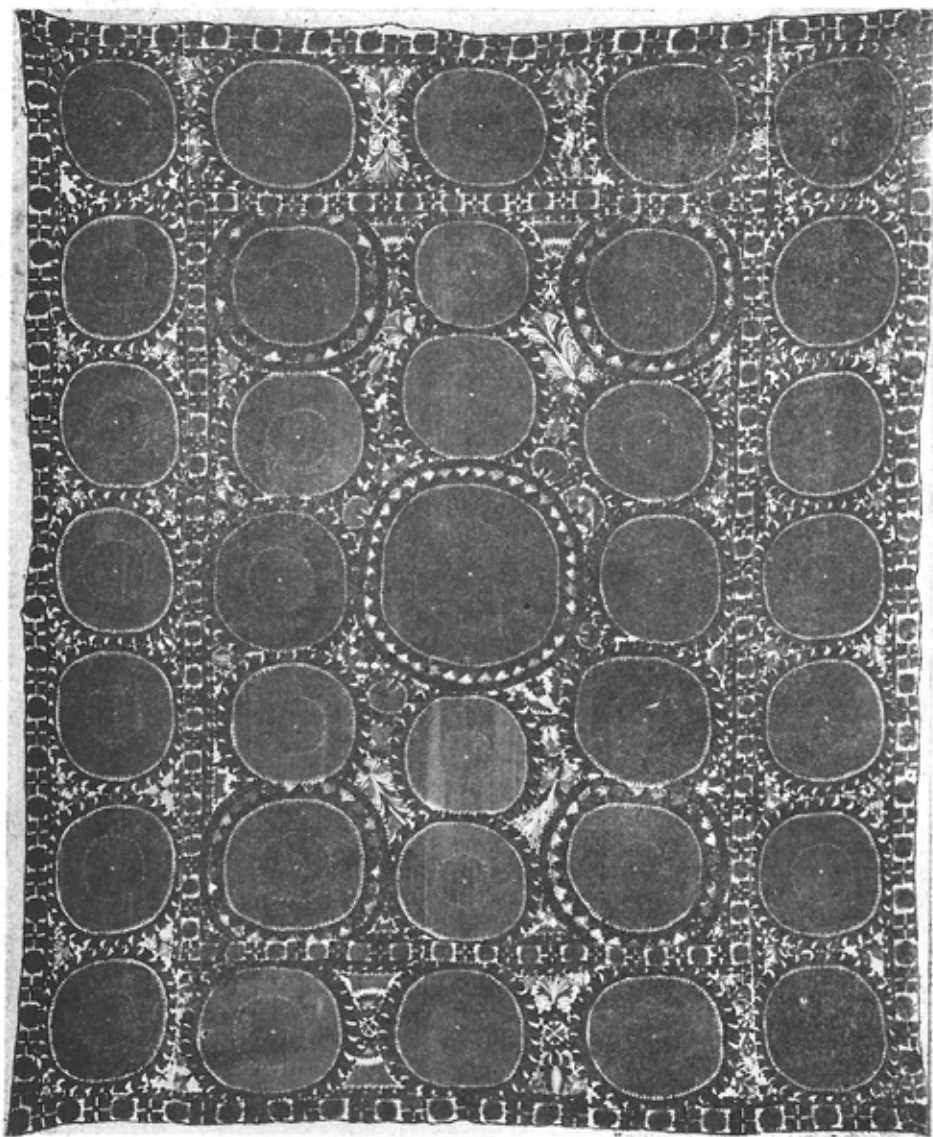




38. *Palak*. Tashkent, 19th century. Size 262 x 211 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk and red wool, *basma*, tambour and *ilmak* stitch. Museum of Art of the UzSSR, inv. 379.



39. *Palak*. Tashkent, 19th century. Size 240 x 200 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk and red wool, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch. GMVK, inv. 3437 III.



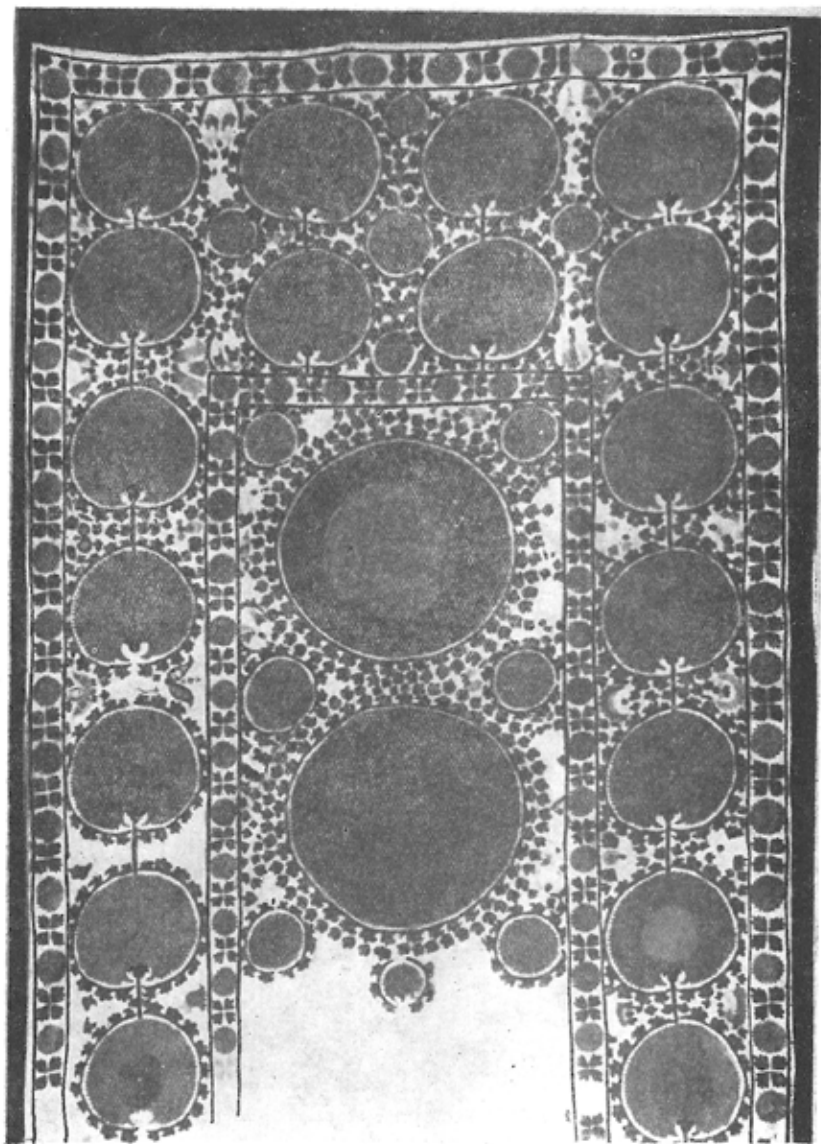
40. *Palak*. Tashkent, 19th century. Size 231 x 190 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk and red wool, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch. GMVK, inv. 2326 III.



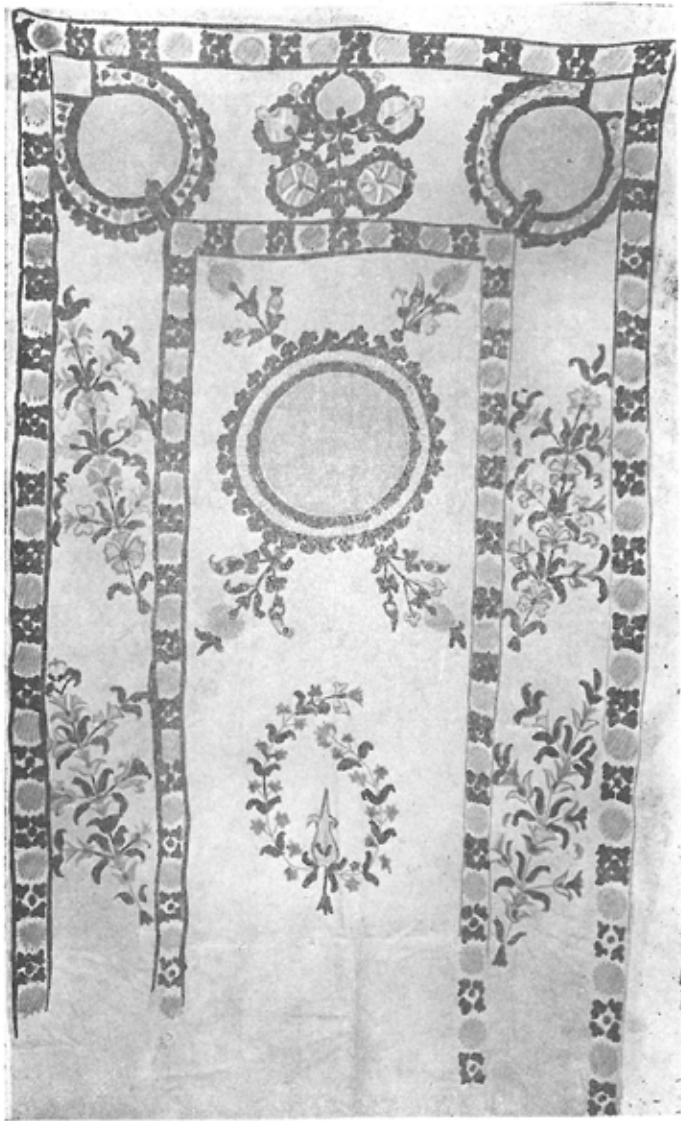
41. *Oy-palak*. Tashkent, early 20th century. Size 270 x 260 cm. Entirely embroidered over in colored silk, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch.



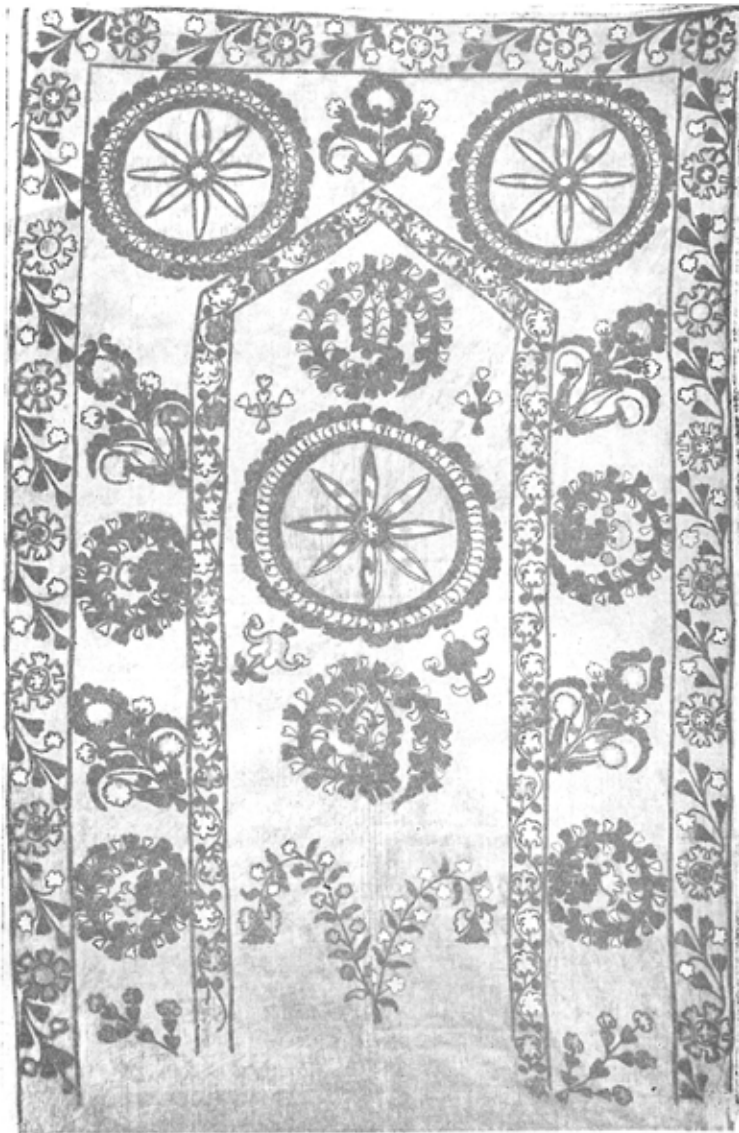
42. *Gulkurpa*. Tashkent, 19th century. Size 232 x 170 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, *basma*. Museum of History of the UzSSR, inv. Э-1435/98.



43. *Choyshab*. Tashkent, 19th century. Size 179 x 126 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, *basma*. Museum of History of the UzSSR, inv. Э-1435/17.



44. *Choyshab*. Tashkent, 19th century. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk and red wool, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch. GME SSSR, inv. 21810.



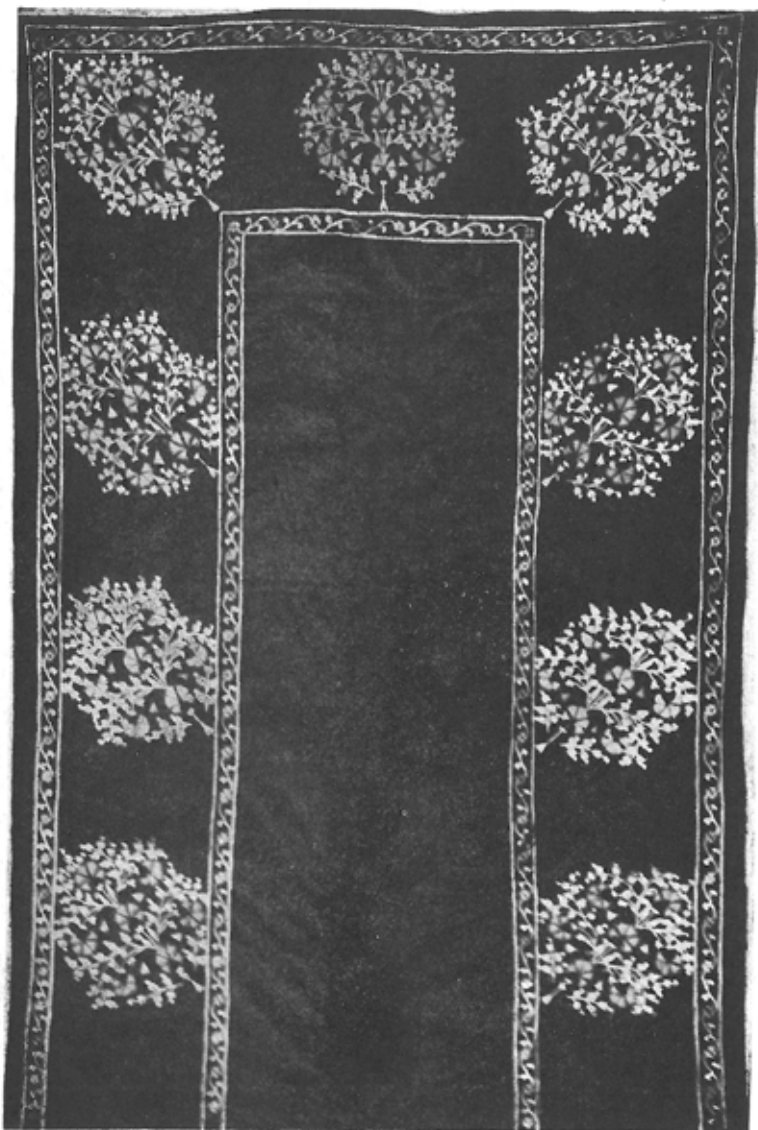
45. *Choyshab*. Tashkent, 19th century. Size 204 x 130 cm. Embroidered on red calico in colored silk, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch. Museum of Art of the UzSSR, inv. 422.



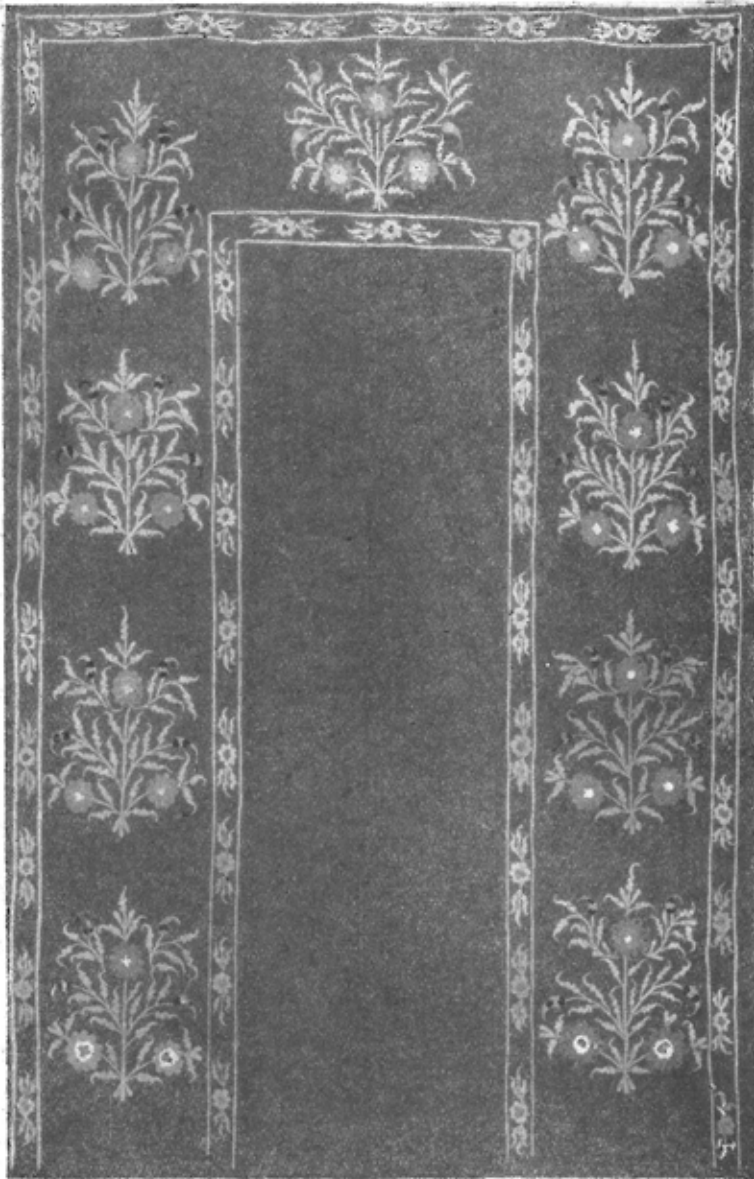
46. *Palak*. Pskent, 19th century. Size 254 x 208 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, *basma*. Museum of History of the UzSSR, inv. Э-1435-20.



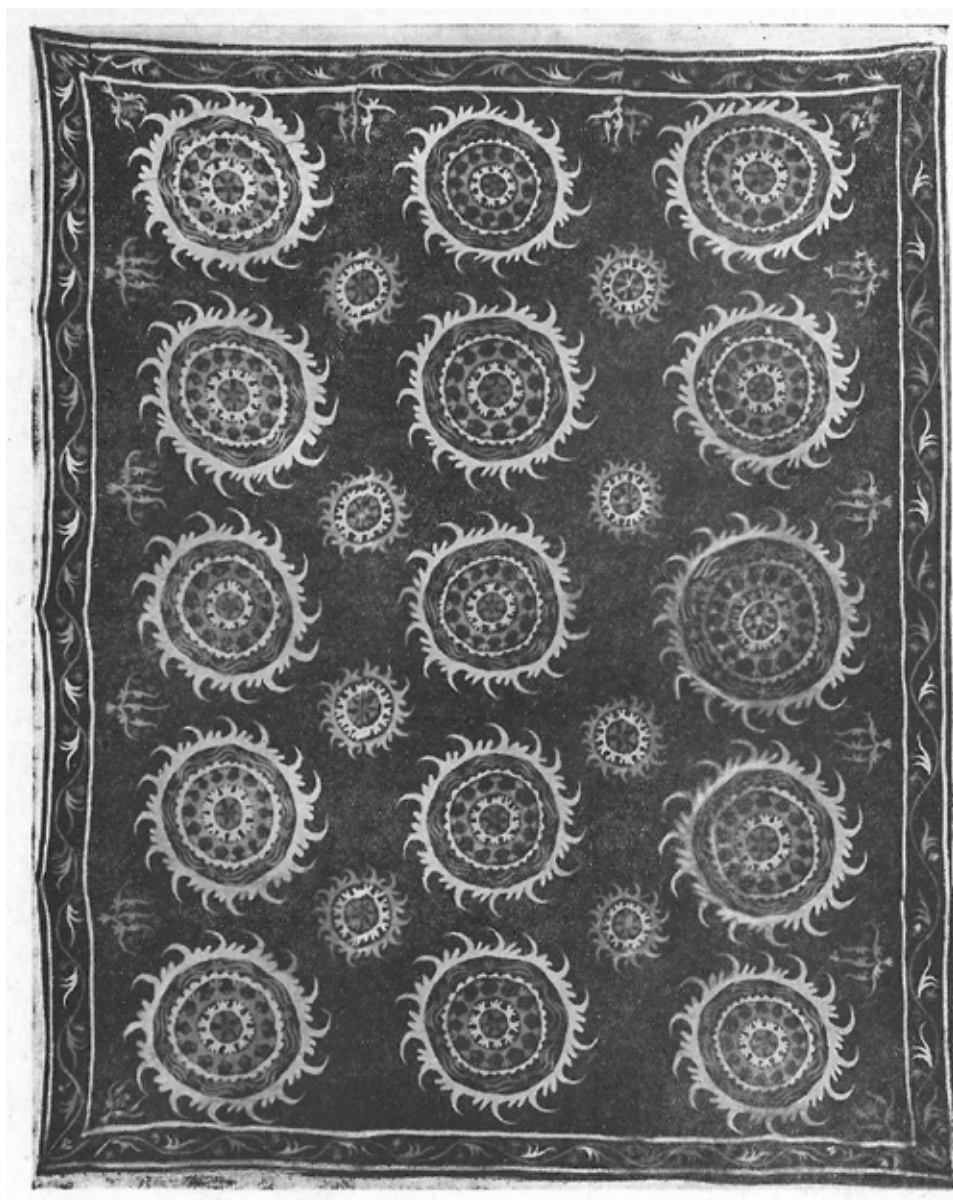
47. *Gulkurpa*. Pskent, early 20th century. Size 268 x 219 cm. Embroidered on orange silk fabric in colored silk thread, *basma*, satin stitch, double buttonhole stitch (*ilmak*). Museum of Art of the UzSSR, inv. 426.



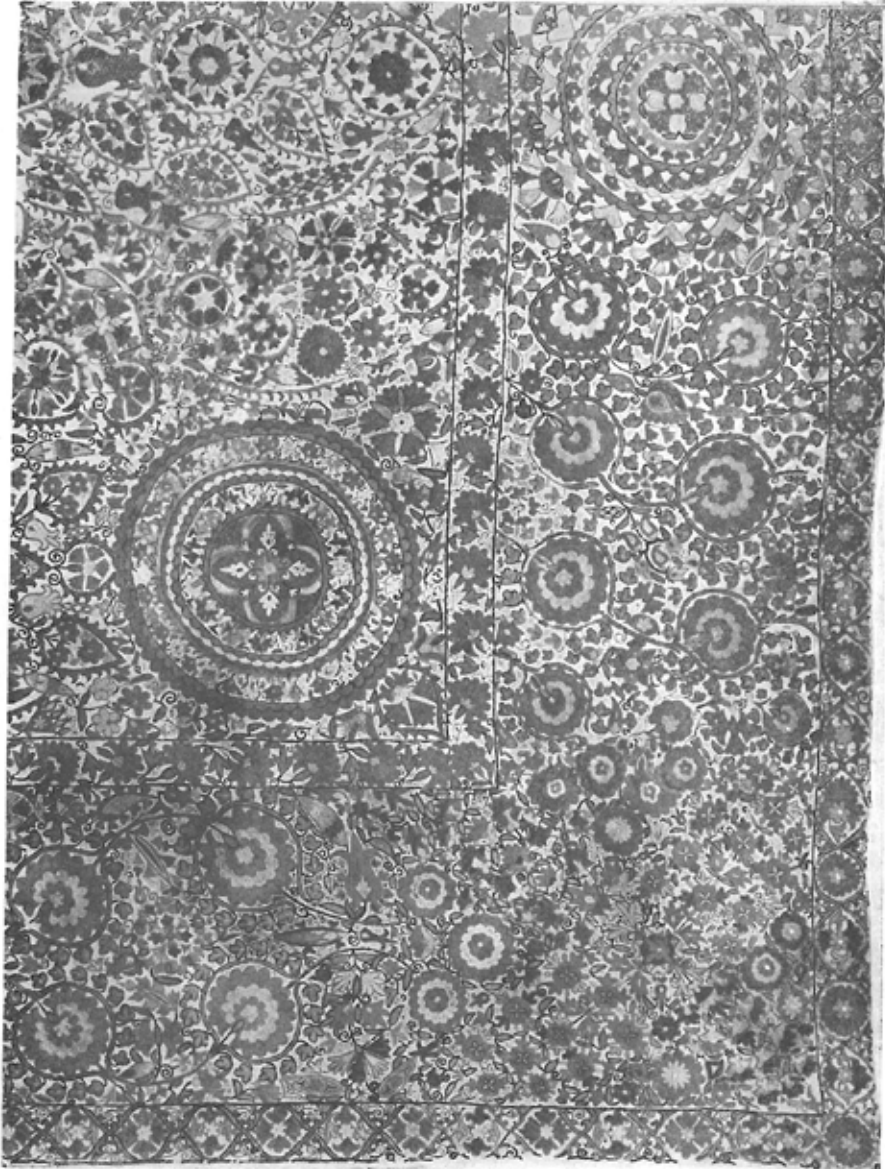
48. *Ruijo*. Ferghana, late 19th century. Size 260 x 167 cm. Embroidered on purple silk fabric in colored silk thread, *basma*. Museum of Art of the UzSSR, inv. 360.



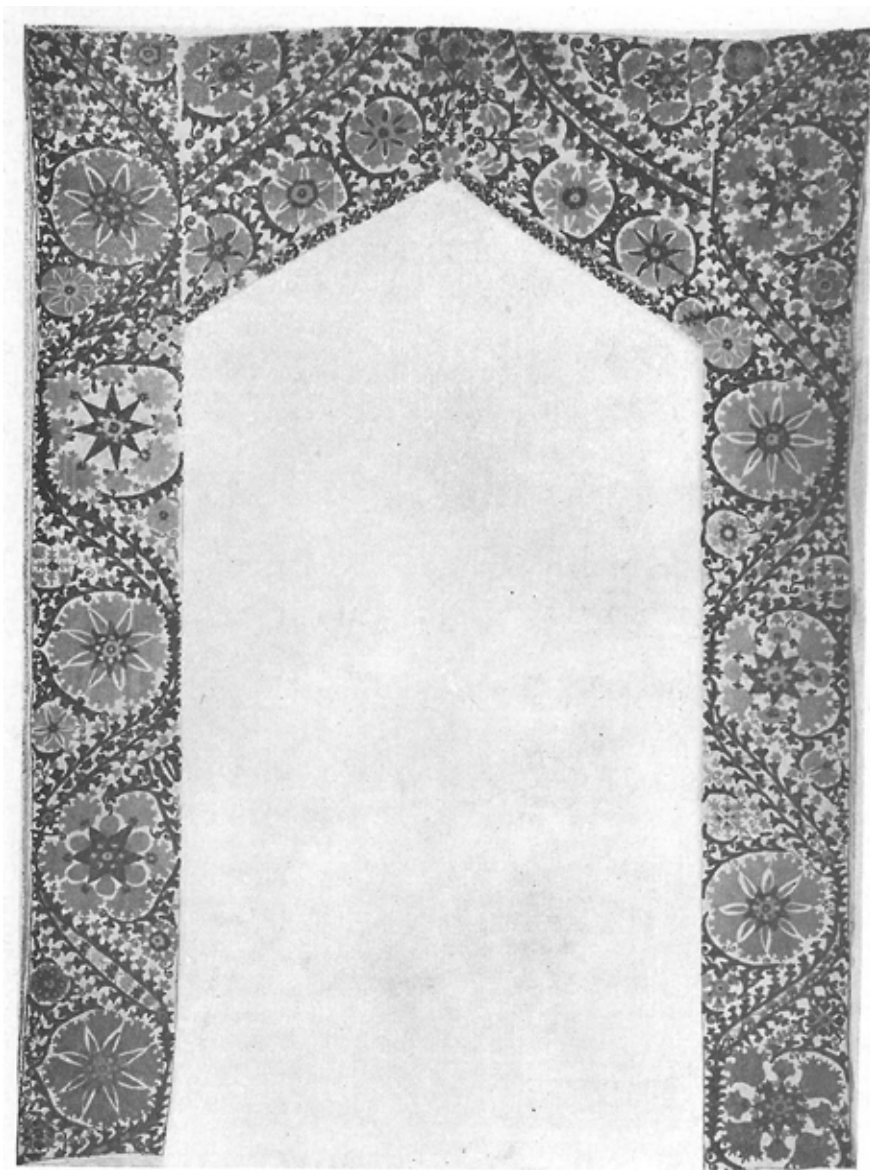
49. *Ruijo*. Ferghana, early 20th century. Size 275 x 170 cm. Embroidered on green sateen in colored silk, *basma*. Museum of AN Tajik SSR, inv. 23-12.



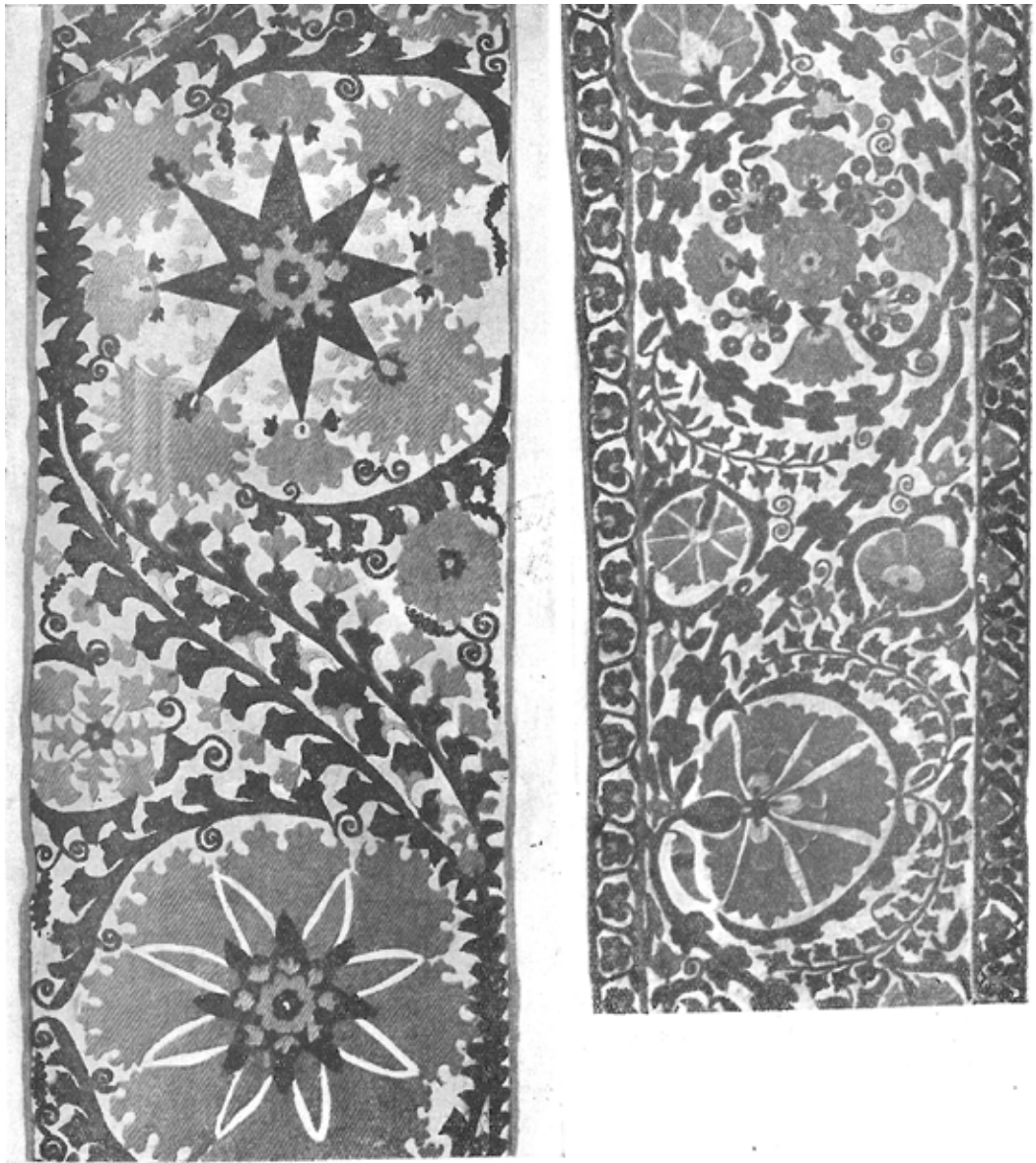
50. *Suzani*. Ferghana, early 20th century. Size 273 x 221 cm. Embroidered on black sateen in colored silk, *basma*. Private collection.



51. Detail of a *suzani*. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, tambour stitch. GMVK, inv. 2320 III.



52. *Ruijo*, 19th century. Size 225 x 166 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch. GMVK, inv. 836 III.



53. Details of embroidery borders, 19th century.

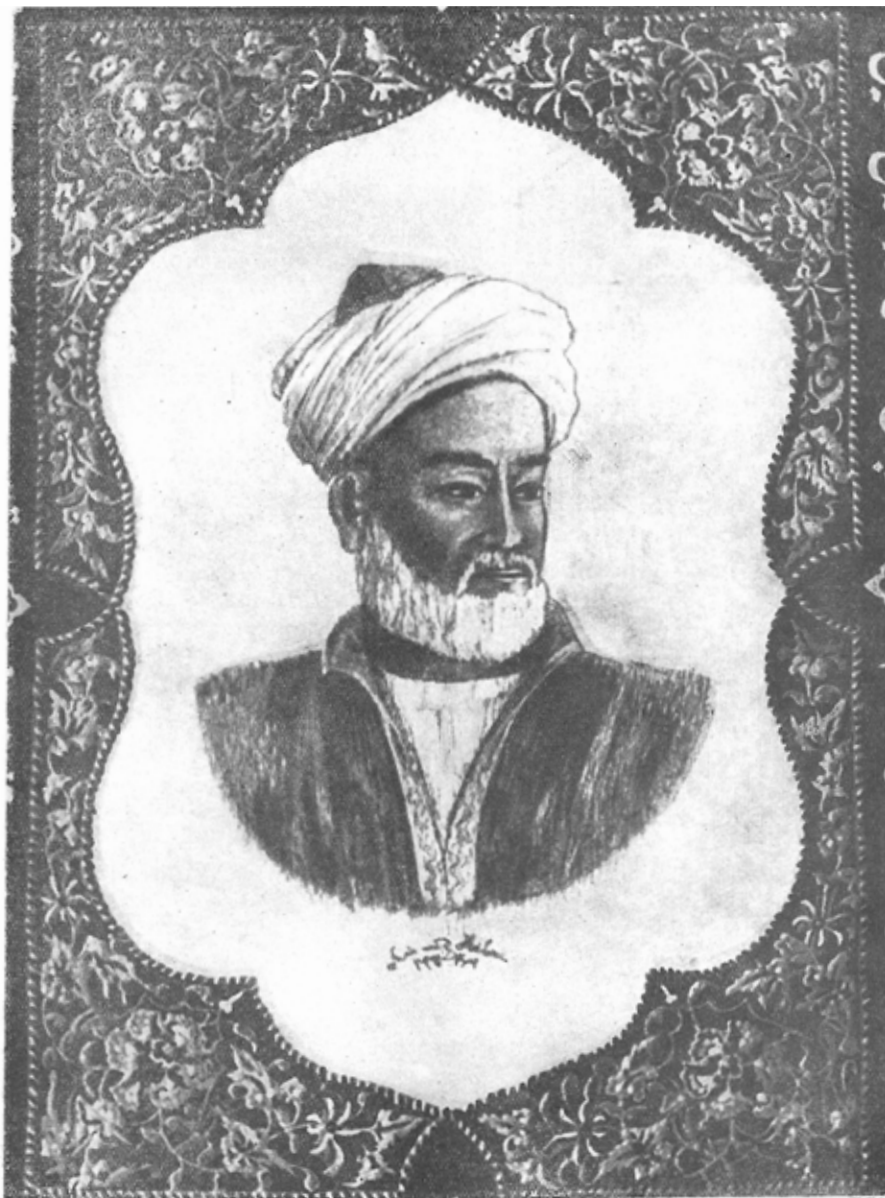


54. Art works from "Woman's Labor" artel in Samarkand, 1936.

- (a), (b) Embroidered pillows.
- (c) Embroidery on a dress decoration.



55. Embroidered portrait of Alisher Navoi. Work by Karamat Niyazova, following a design by Sadreddin Podchoev, 1940. Bukhara Museum.



56. Embroidered portrait of Alisher Navoi. Work by artist Fazylat Saidalieva. Museum of Art of the UzSSR.



57. Embroidered panel, "Soviet Uzbekistan." Design by artist G. A. Orlova. Museum of Applied Art of Uzbek SSR.

GLOSSARY OF LOCAL TERMS

Anor – pomegranate; name of a decorative motif.

Ayvan (*ayvon*) – terrace, open on one side, with a flat roof supported by columns.

Basma (*bosma*) – stamp, printing on fabric. A stitch used in decorative embroidery, a kind of couched satin stitch.

Bigiz – awl, hook for tambour embroidery.

Bodom – almond; name of a decorative motif.

Bolinpush (*bolinpūsh*) [from *bolin* “pillow, head of the bed” and Tajik verb *pūshidan* (*pūsh*) “cover”] – embroidered covering for the head of the bed of newlyweds, and for blankets and pillows put away in a niche (see also *takyapush* and *yastykpush*).

Bugjoma (*bug'joma*, *bug'cha*) (from *bug'cha* “knot” and *joma* “clothes”) – square embroidery in which to wrap up blankets and clothes.

Chinda-khayol – (1) Double-sided stitch, (2) decorative floral motif in Nurata embroidery.

Chizmakash (from *chizma* “sketch” and Tajik verb *kashidan* “pull, draw”) – designer, draftswoman.

Chor-chirog – name of an embroidery decoration in Samarkand.

Chor-shokh-u yak moh (Tajik) – four branches and one moon, name of one of the compositions of Nurata decorative embroidery.

Choyshab (from modified *jo* “place” and *shab* “night”) – sheet; embroidered curtain for a large niche (called *takhmon* in Tashkent).

Choyshab-palyak (*choyshab palak*) – name in the early 20th century for a *choyshab* with its background entirely covered in embroidery, a pattern and technique characteristic of *palaks*.

Darafsh (Tajik) – awl, hook for tambour embroidery, tambour stitch.

Dastarkhan (*dasturxon*) – embroidered tablecloth, “a spread” (cloth and food).

Devor – rammed-earth fence.

Dorpech [from *dor*, a clothes rack fixed to the wall of a room, and Tajik verb *pechidan* (*pech*) “wrap oneself up”] – embroidered band to decorate the upper part of a wall. Hung above the rack to hang dress clothes on.

Gul' (*gul*) – (1) flower, (2) design.

Guli bakhmal (from *gul* “flower” and *bakhmal*, the name for locally made velvet) – velvet flower, name of a decorative motif.

Guli haftrang (Tajik *guli haftrong*) (from *gul* “flower,” *haft* “seven” and *rang* “color”) – seven-colored flower, name of a decorative motif.

Gulkurpa (*gulkūrpa*) (from *gul* “flower” and *kūrpa* “blanket”) – a literally “blanket with a floral pattern.” Large decorative embroidery to decorate the walls of a room. (Name used in Tashkent and

Pskent).

Hashar – mutual communal assistance.

Ilmok (*ilmoq* “to hook”) – hook; buttonhole stitch.

Iraki (*iroqi*) – “Iraqi”; cross or half cross embroidery stitch.

Islimi – pattern in the form of a curling tendril.

Joynamaz (*joynamoz*) (from *joy* “place” and *namoz* “prayer”) – embroidered rug to pray on.

Joypush (*joypūsh*) [from *joy* “place” and Tajik verb *pūshidan* (*pūsh*) “cover”] – embroidered sheet for newlyweds’ bed.

Kalam – reed pen, pencil.

Kalamfur (Tajik), *kalampir* (Uzbek) – red capsicum pepper, name of a decorative motif.

Kalamkash – “woman drawing with a *kalam*,” draftswoman.

Kanda-khayol (from Tajik verb *kandan* “break off, interrupt,” and *khayol* “fantasy”) – embroidery stitch, a kind of couched satin stitch.

Karbos – artisan-made cotton fabric, *mata*.

Kashta (Uzbek), *kashida* (from Tajik verb *kashidan* “pull, trace, draw”) – name used in some regions of Uzbekistan for large decorative embroideries.

Kaziklungi (*qoziqlungi*) (from Uzbek *qoziq*, a wooden peg hammered into the wall of a room, and *lo’ngi*, a garment wrapped around the waist for the bath) – decorative towel for embroidered ends to

decorate the walls of a room.

Khamduzi (*khomduzi*) [from *khom* “raw” and Tajik verb *dūkhtan* (*dūz*) “sew”] – double-sided satin stitch using untwisted silk.

Kirpech [from Uzbek *kir* “dirt, dirty laundry, cleaned laundry,” and Tajik verb *pechidan* (*pech*) “wrap oneself up”] – curtain for a small niche in a room where fresh laundry and clothes are put away.

Kirpech palyak (*kirpech palak*) – name in the early 20th century for a *kirpech* with its background entirely covered in embroidery, a pattern and technique characteristic of *palaks*.

Kosa – large bowl for food.

Kuzacha (diminutive of *kūza* “jug”) – small pitcher, name of a decorative motif.

Kyyik [*qiyiq*, *qiyiqcha* (diminutive)] – “crooked, sliced sideways.” Sash belt, folded in a square. Used by men instead of a belt.

Kyz palak (*qiz palak*) (from Uzbek *qiz* “girl” and *palak*, large decorative embroidery) – “girl’s palak.” Name for a *palak* with one big circle (see “*Palak*”). Part of a bride’s dowry.

Lola – a tulip; name used in some regions for an embroidery motif shaped like a large round rosette.

Malla – (1) auburn, (2) naturally colored, reddish artisanal cotton fabric.

Mejnunbed (Tajik *majnunbed*), *mejnuntal* (Uzbek *majnuntol*) – weeping willow, name of a decorative motif.

Miyonband [from *miyon* “small of the back, waist” and Tajik verb *bastan* (*band*) “tie”] – man’s sash belt (see “*Kyyik*”).

Mokh (Tajik *moh*) – moon, name of a decorative embroidery motif shaped like a big round rosette.

Nimsuzani (*nimsūzani*) (from *nim* “half” and *sūzani*, large decorative embroidery) – a small decorative embroidery used in Nurata and Bukhara to hang on the wall.

Oftobacha (*optovacha*) (diminutive from *optova*, pitcher for washing) – small pitcher, name of a decorative motif.

Oy (Uzbek) – moon, name of a decorative embroidery motif shaped like a big round circle.

Oy palyak (*oy palak*) (from *oy* “moon” and *palak*, large decorative embroidery) – name for a *palak* with one large circle.

Oyna khalta (from *oyna* “mirror” and *khalta* “sack, bag”) – embroidered bag for a mirror.

Palyak (*palak*) (from Arabic *falak*, “sky, firmament”) – (1) large decorative embroidery in Tashkent and Pskent with a densely sewn background and a pattern of circles and stars, (2) tendrils of a melon plant, name of a pattern of Samarkand embroideries in the late 19th–early 20th centuries.

Ruijo (*rūijo* and *rūjjo*) (from Tajik *rū* “face, facing side, surface” and *jo* “place”) – embroidered sheet for the bed of newlyweds.

Sandal – low, wide table, covered with a blanket, which stands over a recess in the

floor with hot coals. Hands and feet are warmed under the *sandal* in winter.

Sandalipush (*sandalipūsh*) [from *sandal* and Tajik verb *pūshidan* (*pūsh*) “cover”] – embroidered cover for a *sandal*.

Sarpokkun [from *sar* “head,” *pok* “clean” and Tajik verb *kardan* (*kun*) “make”] – towel; decorative towel with embroidered ends to decorate the walls of a room.

Shokh – (1) Branch, shoot, (2) horn.

Shokh-shokh – branches. Name of one of the compositions of Nurata decorative embroidery.

Shona khalta (from *shona* “crest, comb” and *khalta* “sack, bag”) – embroidered case for a comb.

Suzani (*sūzani*) (from Tajik *sūzan* “needle”) – literally “pertaining to a needle.” The largest decorative embroidery, serving to cover the bed of newlyweds and to decorate the walls of a room on holidays.

Tagarapalyak (*togorapalak*) (from *togora*, “large bowl” and *palak*, large decorative embroidery) – name for a *palak* with one big circle.

Takhmonpech [from *takhmon* “large niche” and Tajik verb *pechidan* (*pech*) “wrap oneself up”] – curtain for a large niche.

Takyapush (*takyapūsh*) [from *takya* “pillow, head of the bed” and Tajik verb *pūshidan* (*pūsh*) “cover”] – embroidered covering for the head of the bed of newlyweds, and for blankets and pillows put away in a niche during the day (see

also “*Bolinpush*,” “*Yastykpush*”).

Tanpokkun [from *tan* “body,” *pok* “clean” and Tajik verb *kardan* (*kun*) “make”] – bath sheet; decorative towel with embroidered ends to decorate the walls of a room.

Tobadoni – latticed, name of types of compositions in Nurata embroidery.

Tokcha – niche in the wall of a room with shelves for dishes and other household items.

Yulduz – star.

Yurma (*yorma*) – name for tambour stitch.

Yastykpush [*yostikpūsh*, from *yostik* “pillow” and Tajik verb *pūshidan* (*pūsh*) “cover”] – embroidered covering for the head of the bed of newlyweds, and for blankets and pillows put away in a niche during the day (see also *bolinpush* and *takyapush*).

Zaboncha (diminutive of *zabon*, “tongue”) – little tongue, name of a decorative motif.

Zardevor (from modified Tajik *sar* “head” and *devor* “wall”) – a long embroidered band to decorate the upper part of a room.

Zuluk – leech, name of a decorative motif.

ABBREVIATIONS AND NOTATIONS USED IN THIS BOOK

GRM – State Russian Museum, Leningrad.

GME SSSR – State Museum of the Ethnography of the Peoples of the USSR, Leningrad.

GMVK – State Museum of Oriental Cultures, Moscow

Museum of History of the UzSSR – Museum of the History of the Peoples of Uzbekistan,

Academy of Sciences of the UzSSR, Tashkent.

Samarkand Museum – National Museum

of the History, Culture and Art of the Uzbek SSR,

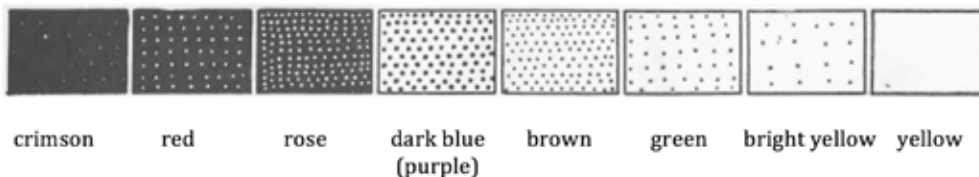
Samarkand

Bukhara Museum – Regional History Museum, Bukhara

Museum of AN Tajik SSR – M. S. Andreev Museum of the Institute of History, Archeology and

Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences of the Tajik SSR, Stalinabad.

Tajik Regional History Museum – National Regional History Museum of the Tajik SSR, Stalinabad.



LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS IN THE TEXT

1. Polling station in Tashkent, decorated with embroideries.
2. Living room furnishings. Samarkand.
3. Living room furnishings. Samarkand.
4. Furnishings in the newlyweds' room. Samarkand, 1948.
5. Furnishings in the newlyweds' room. Tashkent, 1948.
6. Visiting the young wife. Tashkent, 1948.
7. *Sandalipush* – covering for a low table (*sandal*). 19th century.
8. *Bugjoma* or *bugcha* – a cover to wrap up bedclothes.
9. Detail of a frieze band (*dorpech*) to decorate the top of a wall.
10. Stitches used in embroidery.
 - (a) Couched satin stitch, *basma*. Front side and reverse.
 - (b) Couched satin stitch, *kandakhayol*, and double buttonhole stitch, *ilmak*. Front side and reverse.
11. Stitches used in embroidery.
 - (a) *Basma* on a backing of untwisted silk. Front side and reverse.
 - (b) Tambour stitch. Front side and reverse.
12. Details of the border of a Shahrissabz *suzani*.
 - (a) On white cotton.
 - (b) On colored silk.
13. Motifs of Tashkent embroideries.
 - (a) Small floral motifs placed between the circles on the central field.
 - (b) Pattern of narrow border strips.
14. Closed compositional schemes for embroideries' central field, accentuating the central and four corner motifs.
15. Compositional schemes for embroideries' central field with a vertical axis of symmetry.
16. Repeating compositional schemes for embroideries' central field with square, diamond-shaped and polygonal grids.
17. Compositional schemes for embroideries' central field.
 1. Bukharan embroidery, 19th century. GMVK No. 2332 III.
 2. Carpet depicted on a wall painting in Penjikent, 7th century A.D. (artifact III, room 7).
18. Repeating compositional schemes for embroideries' central field with rows of motifs organized in simple lines and in a checkerboard pattern.
19. Compositional schemes with flowering branches for embroideries' central field.
 - 1, 2. Flowers on spiral branches forming horizontal rows.
 3. Flowers freely arranged on stems growing from the same root.
 4. Flowers on stems growing from several roots.
20. Detail of a *suzani*, 19th century. GMVK, inv. 1105 III.
21. Detail of a *suzani*. Bukhara, 19th century. Bukhara museum, inv. 1817/10.
22. Compositional scheme for embroideries' border with an *islimi*-style curling tendril.

1. Floral motifs emerging from the very top of the tendril.
 2. Floral motifs on straight little legs coming off the sides of the tendril.
 3. Floral motifs on spiral stems, offshoots of the main stalk.
 4. Floral motifs on the main stalk itself.
 5. The tendril's movement implied by the placement of floral motifs.
23. Compositional schemes for embroideries' border with repeating motifs.
1. Composition with one repeating motif.
 2. Composition with two alternating motifs.
24. *Suzani*. Samarkand, 1880s, Samarkand Museum. Embroidered in colored silk on red calico.
25. Detail of a painting from Toprak-kala, the ancient palace in Khorezm, 3rd century A.D.
26. Details of a *suzani*. 19th century, GME USSR, inv. 58–140.
27. Design scheme of oval floral sprays in Nurata embroideries.
28. Cypress motif.
- (a) In a Nurata embroidery, 19th century.
 - (b) Carved in plaster.
29. *Majnunbed* (weeping willow) motif in a Nurata embroidery, 19th century.
30. Depictions of flowering bouquets in a vase.
- (a) In a mural of the 18th–19th centuries in the Abdulaziz Khan Madrasa in Bukhara.
 - (b) In a Nurata embroidery, 19th century.
31. *Chinda-khayol* flower motifs.
1. In a Nurata embroidery, 19th century.
 2. In a mosaic of the 15th-century Ulugbek Madrasa in Bukhara.
32. Table of flower motifs. Depiction of irises – top row. Depiction of a carnation – № 8.
33. Depiction of irises.
- (a) In paintings from a rich house in Samarkand, 19th century.
 - (b) In paintings from the Tash-Hauli Palace in Khiva.
34. Flower motifs. Depiction of cockscombs – Nos. 6, 7, 8, 9, 11.
35. Flower motifs.
36. Flower motifs.
37. Small flower motifs. Depictions of lilies and tulips – Nos. 1–3.
38. Floral palmettes.
39. Leaf motifs.
40. Leaf motifs.
41. Leafy frames around large rosettes.
42. Motif of a spiral stem with leaves.
1. In medieval Samarkand ceramics, 9th–12th centuries.
 2. In 19th-century embroidery.
43. Depiction of pomegranates in ancient art.
- (a) Sculptural figure of Anahita, goddess of fertility, with a pomegranate in her hand. State Hermitage.
 - (b) Detail from an ossuary. State Hermitage.
44. Pomegranate motifs in 19th-century embroidery.

45. Pomegranate motif in 19th-century fabric printing.
46. *Bodom* (almond) motifs in 19th-century embroidery.
47. Large rosette motifs in 19th-century embroidery.
48. Large rosette motifs in 19th-century embroidery.
49. Circle motif.
 - (a) On a ceramic dish from Samarkand.
 - (b) On printed fabric, 19th century.
50. Circle motif on a clay tile. Ancient Samarkand.
51. Depictions of pitchers in 19th-century embroidery.
52. Depiction of women's silver jewelry, *tumor*, in pitchers in 19th-century embroidery.
53. Depictions of birds in 19th-century embroidery.
54. Detail of an embroidery showing roosters around a rosette. Shahrisabz, 19th century, GME SSSR.
55. Detail of a *suzani* showing human figures. Bukhara, 19th century, Samarkand Museum.
56. Depictions of ducks on a 15th-century textile and 19th-century embroidery.
 - (a) Detail of a miniature from the manuscript *Five Poems by Nizami*. Herat School, 1491.
 - (b, c) Details of a *suzani*. Shahrisabz, 19th century, State Hermitage.
57. Embroideresses of the "Woman's Labor" artel in Samarkand.

LIST OF PLATES

1. *Suzani*. Nurata, 19th century. Size 260 x 130 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch. GMVK, inv. 2322 III.

2. *Suzani*. Nurata, 19th century. Size 224 x 163 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch. GMVK, inv. 2328 III.

3. Detail of a *suzani*. Nurata, 19th century. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch. GMVK, inv. 2328 III.

4. *Suzani*. Nurata, 19th century. Size 240 x 160 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch. Museum of Art of the UzSSR, inv. 468.

5. Detail of a *suzani*. Nurata, 19th century. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch. Museum of Art of the UzSSR, inv. 468.

6. *Suzani*. Nurata, first half of the 19th century. Size 248 x 175 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch. Museum of Art of the UzSSR, inv. 477.

7. Details of a *suzani*. Nurata, first half of the 19th century. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch. Museum of Art of the UzSSR, inv. 477.

8. *Suzani*. Nurata, 19th century. Size 160 x 232 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch. Museum of Art of the UzSSR, inv. 469.

9. Detail of a *suzani*. Nurata, 19th century. Embroidered on dark cotton fabric (*malla*) in colored untwisted silk, *basma* on the backing, *kanda-khayol*, satin stitch, outlines in stem stitch. GMVK, inv. 1107 III.

10. Detail of a *suzani*. Nurata, 19th century. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch. GMVK, inv. 3196 III.

11. Details of *suzanis*. Nurata, 19th century. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch. GMVK, inv. 2554 III, 2322 III.

12. (a) *Bolinpush*. Bukhara, 19th century. Size 195 x 125 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, tambour stitch. GMVK, inv. 810 III.

(b) *Bolinpush*. Bukhara, 19th

century. Size 165 x 105 cm. Embroidered on brown cotton fabric in colored silk, tambour stitch. Tajik Regional History Museum (Stalinabad), inv. 500.

13. *Suzani*. Bukhara, 19th century. Size 232 x 183 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, tambour stitch. Museum of History of the UzSSR, inv. 1435/22.

14. *Bolinpush*. Bukhara, 19th century. Size 157 x 107 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, tambour stitch. GVMK, inv. 2329 III.

15. *Bolinpush*. Bukhara, 19th century. Size 156 x 115 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, tambour stitch and *basma*. Edged with a silk fringe. Samarkand Museum, KP 1633.

16. *suzani*. Bukhara, 19th century. Size 228 x 155 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, tambour stitch. GVMK, inv. 2332 III.

17. *Bolinpush*. Bukhara, 19th century. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, tambour stitch. Property of “Women’s Labor” artel in Samarkand.

18. *Nimsuzani*. Bukhara, 19th century. Size 170 x 112 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch. Samarkand Museum, KP 1522-a.

19. *Suzani*. Bukhara, 19th century. Size 249 x 172 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk. Museum of Art of the UzSSR, inv. 478.

20. *Ruijo*. Bukhara, 19th century. Size 263 x 165 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, tambour stitch. GVMK, inv. 1001 III. General view and detail of the border.

21. *Joynamaz*. Bukhara, 19th century. Size 126 x 96 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, *kanda-khayol*, outlines in tambour stitch. GVMK, inv. 811 III.

22. *Bolinpush*. Samarkand, mid-19th century. Size 160 x 137 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk and red wool, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch. Samarkand Museum, KP 195.

23. *Suzani*. Samarkand, 19th century. Size 265 x 186 cm. Embroidered on white factory-made fabric in colored silk and red wool, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch. Samarkand Museum, KP 1227.

24. *Suzani*. Samarkand, late 19th century. Size 405 x 325 cm. Embroidered on white factory-made fabric in colored silk, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch. Museum of AN Tajik SSR, KP 1432.

25. *Suzani*. Samarkand, early 20th century. Size 222 x 185 cm. Embroidered on crimson cotton fabric in colored

silk, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch. Samarkand Museum, KP 1608.

26. *Suzani*. Jizzakh, 19th century. Size 260 x 217 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, *basma*, outlines in double buttonhole stitch. Museum of History of the UzSSR, inv. 3–1435/7.

27. *Suzani*. Shahrissabz, early 20th century. Size 235 x 161 cm. Entirely embroidered over in colored silk, *iraki* stitch. Museum of Art of the UzSSR, inv. 141.

28. *Suzani*. Shahrissabz, 19th century. Size 290 x 209 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk and red wool, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch. GMVK, inv. 2327 III.

29. Detail of a *suzani*. Shahrissabz, 19th century. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk and red wool, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch. GMVK, inv. 2327 III.

30. *Suzani*. Shahrissabz, 19th century. Size 275 x 200 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, *kanda-khayol*, outlines in tambour stitch. GMVK, inv. 4114 III.

31. *Suzani*. Shahrissabz, 19th century. Size 262 x 218 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk and red wool, *kanda-khayol*, outlines in tambour stitch. GMVK, inv. 3197 III.

32. *Ruijo*. Shahrissabz, 19th century. Size 258 x 186 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, *kanda-khayol*, outlines in tambour stitch. GMVK, inv. 835 III. General view and detail of the border.

33. *Suzani*. Shahrissabz, 19th century. Size 238 x 127 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, *kanda-khayol*, outlines in tambour stitch. Samarkand Museum, KP 1257/27.

34. *Yastykpush*. Shahrissabz, 19th century. Size 117 x 115 cm. Embroidered on grayish cotton rep in colored silk and bright red wool, tambour stitch. Museum of AN Tajik SSR, inv. 157-2.

35. *Suzani*. Shahrissabz, late 19th century. Size 280 x 200 cm. Embroidered on dark purple silk fabric in colored silk thread, tambour stitch. Museum of Art of the UzSSR, inv. 924.

36-37 (a, b, c). Details of a *suzani*. Shahrissabz, late 19th century. Embroidered on dark purple silk fabric in colored silk thread, tambour stitch. Museum of Art of the UzSSR, inv. 924.

38. *Palak*. Tashkent, 19th century. Size 262 x 211 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk and red wool, *basma*, tambour and *ilmak* stitch. Museum of Art of the UzSSR, inv. 379.

39. *Palak*. Tashkent, 19th century. Size 240 x 200 cm. Embroidered on white

homespun cotton cloth in colored silk and red wool, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch. GMVK, inv. 3437 III.

40. *Palak*. Tashkent, 19th century. Size 231 x 190 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk and red wool, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch. GMVK, inv. 2326 III.

41. *Oy-palak*. Tashkent, early 20th century. Size 270 x 260 cm. Entirely embroidered over in colored silk, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch.

42. *Gulkurpa*. Tashkent, 19th century. Size 232 x 170 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, *basma*. Museum of History of the UzSSR, inv. Э-1435/98.

43. *Choyshab*. Tashkent, 19th century. Size 179 x 126 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, *basma*. Museum of History of the UzSSR, inv. Э-1435/17.

44. *Choyshab*. Tashkent, 19th century. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk and red wool, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch. GME SSSR, inv. 21810.

45. *Choyshab*. Tashkent, 19th century. Size 204 x 130 cm. Embroidered on red calico in colored silk, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch. Museum of Art of the UzSSR, inv. 422.

46. *Palak*. Pskent, 19th century.

Size 254 x 208 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, *basma*. Museum of History of the UzSSR, inv. Э-1435-20.

47. *Gulkurpa*. Pskent, early 20th century. Size 268 x 219 cm. Embroidered on orange silk fabric in colored silk thread, *basma*, satin stitch, double buttonhole stitch (*ilmak*). Museum of Art of the UzSSR, inv. 426.

48. *Ruijo*. Ferghana, late 19th century. Size 260 x 167 cm. Embroidered on purple silk fabric in colored silk thread, *basma*. Museum of Art of the UzSSR, inv. 360.

49. *Ruijo*. Ferghana, early 20th century. Size 275 x 170 cm. Embroidered on green sateen in colored silk, *basma*. Museum of AN Tajik SSR, inv. 23-12.

50. *Suzani*. Ferghana, early 20th century. Size 273 x 221 cm. Embroidered on black sateen in colored silk, *basma*. Private collection.

51. Detail of a *suzani*. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, tambour stitch. GMVK, inv. 2320 III.

52. *Ruijo*, 19th century. Size 225 x 166 cm. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch. GMVK, inv. 836 III.

53. Details of embroidery borders,

19th century.

54. Art works from “Woman’s Labor” artel in Samarkand, 1936.

(a) Pillow with a bouquet in a vase and birds. Size 41 x 41 cm. Embroidered on canvas in colored silk, *basma*. Artisan K. Mansurova. MNI IKhP № 15696.

(b) Pillow showing branches with pomegranates. Size 44 x 52 cm. Embroidered on cream-colored silk in colored silk thread, *basma*. MNI IKhP № 12519.

(c) Embroidery on a dress decoration made by “Woman’s Labor” artel in Samarkand, 1936. Width of the

embroidered band: 7 cm. Embroidered on white gunny fabric in colored silk, *basma*. MNI IKhP № 12517. Artisan Marufova.

55. Embroidered portrait of Alisher Navoi. Work by Karamat Niyazova, following a design by Sadreddin Podchoev, 1940. Bukhara Museum.

56. Embroidered portrait of Alisher Navoi. Work by artist Fazylat Saidalieva. Museum of Art of the UzSSR.

57. Embroidered panel, “Soviet Uzbekistan.” Design by artist G. A. Orlova. Museum of Applied Art of Uzbek SSR.

LIST OF COLOR PLATES

Frontispiece. Detail of the border of a ruijo, 19th century. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch. GMVK, inv. 836 III.

I. Detail of a suzani. Nurata, 19th century. Embroidered on dark cotton fabric (*malla*) in colored untwisted silk, *basma* on the backing, outlines in stem stitch. GMVK, inv. 1107 III.

II. Part of the central field and border of a bolinpush. Bukhara, 19th century. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, tambour stitch. GMVK, inv. 2329 III.

III. Part of the border of a bolinpush.

Bukhara, 19th century. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk. Samarkand Museum, KP 1633.

IV. Part of the central field and border of a suzani. Shahrissabz, late 19th century. Embroidered on brown silk rep in colored silk and wool thread, tambour stitch. Bukhara Museum, inv. 1821/10.

V. Part of the border of a suzani. Samarkand, 19th century. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk and red wool, *basma*, outlines in tambour stitch. Samarkand Museum, KP 926.

VI. Detail of the border of a suzani. Shahrissabz, 19th century. Embroidered on

white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, kanda-khayol, outlines in tambour stitch. GMVK, inv. 4114 III.

VII. Palak. Pskent, 19th century. Embroidered in colored silk, basma. Museum of History of the UzSSR,

VIII. Palak. Tashkent, 19th century. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in silk thread, basma. outlines in tambour stitch.

IX. Gulkurpa. Tashkent, 19th century. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in silk thread, basma, outlines in tambour stitch.

X. Part of the central rosette of a gulkurpa. Pskent, early 20th century. Embroidered on orange silk fabric in colored silk thread, basma, satin stitch, ilmak. Museum of Art of the UzSSR, inv. 426.

XI. Detail of a suzani, 19th century. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, tambour. GMVK, inv. 2320 III.

XII. Detail of a suzani, 19th century. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored untwisted silk, tambour, basma on the backing, tambour stitch, basma, outlines in stem stitch. GMVK, inv. 1105 III.

XIII. Detail of a ruijo. Ferghana, late 19th century. Embroidered on purple, artisanal silk fabric in colored silk thread, basma. Museum of Art of the UzSSR, inv. 360.

XIV. Detail of a suzani. Nurata, 19th century. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, basma, outlines in tambour stitch. GMVK, inv. 3196 III.

COLOR PLATES

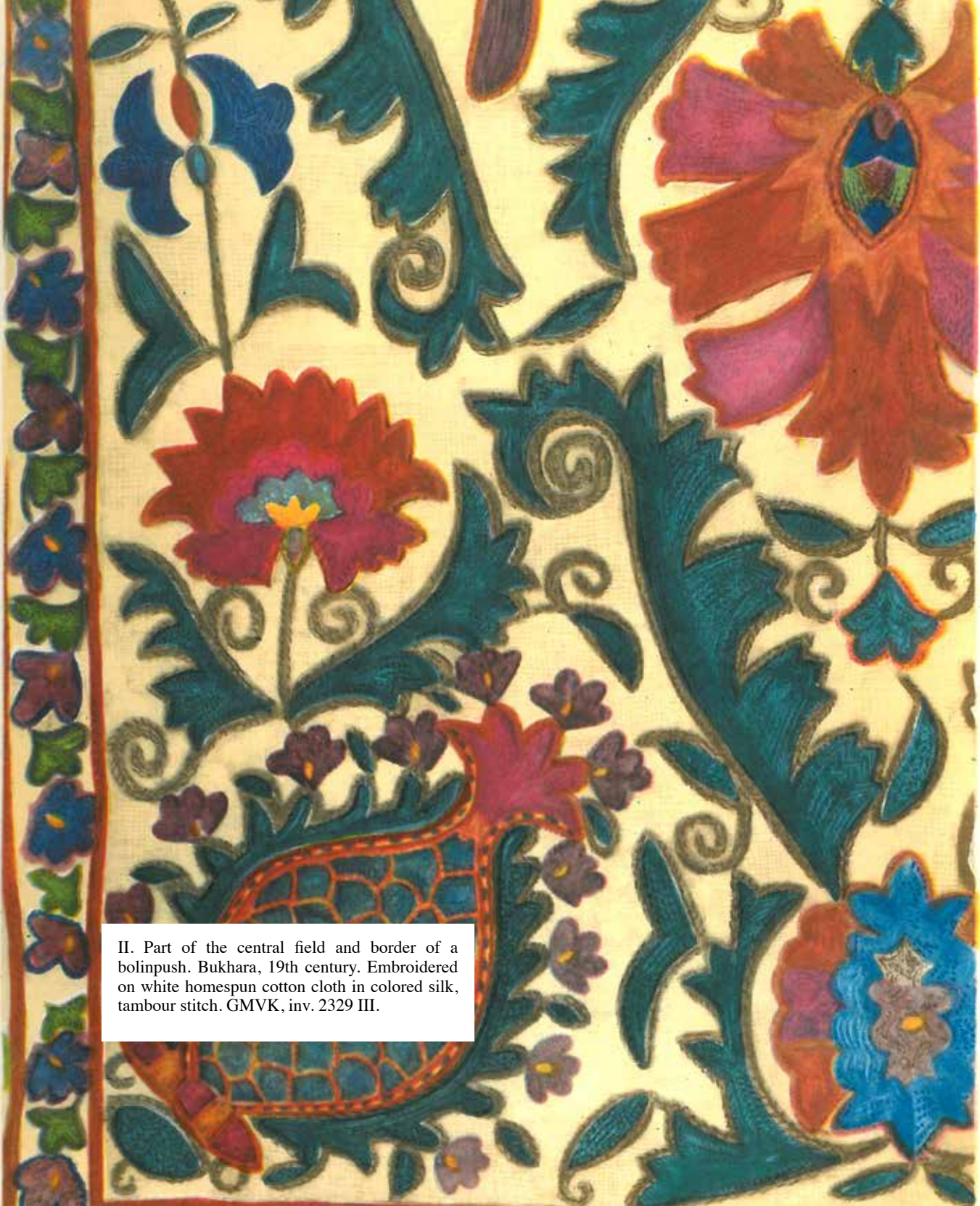




Frontispiece. Detail of the border of a ruijo, 19th century. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, basma, outlines in tambour stitch. GMVK, inv. 836 III.



I. Detail of a suzani. Nurata, 19th century. Embroidered on dark cotton fabric (malla) in colored untwisted silk, basma on the backing, outlines in stem stitch. GMVK, inv. 1107 III.



II. Part of the central field and border of a bolinpush. Bukhara, 19th century. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, tambour stitch. GMVK, inv. 2329 III.



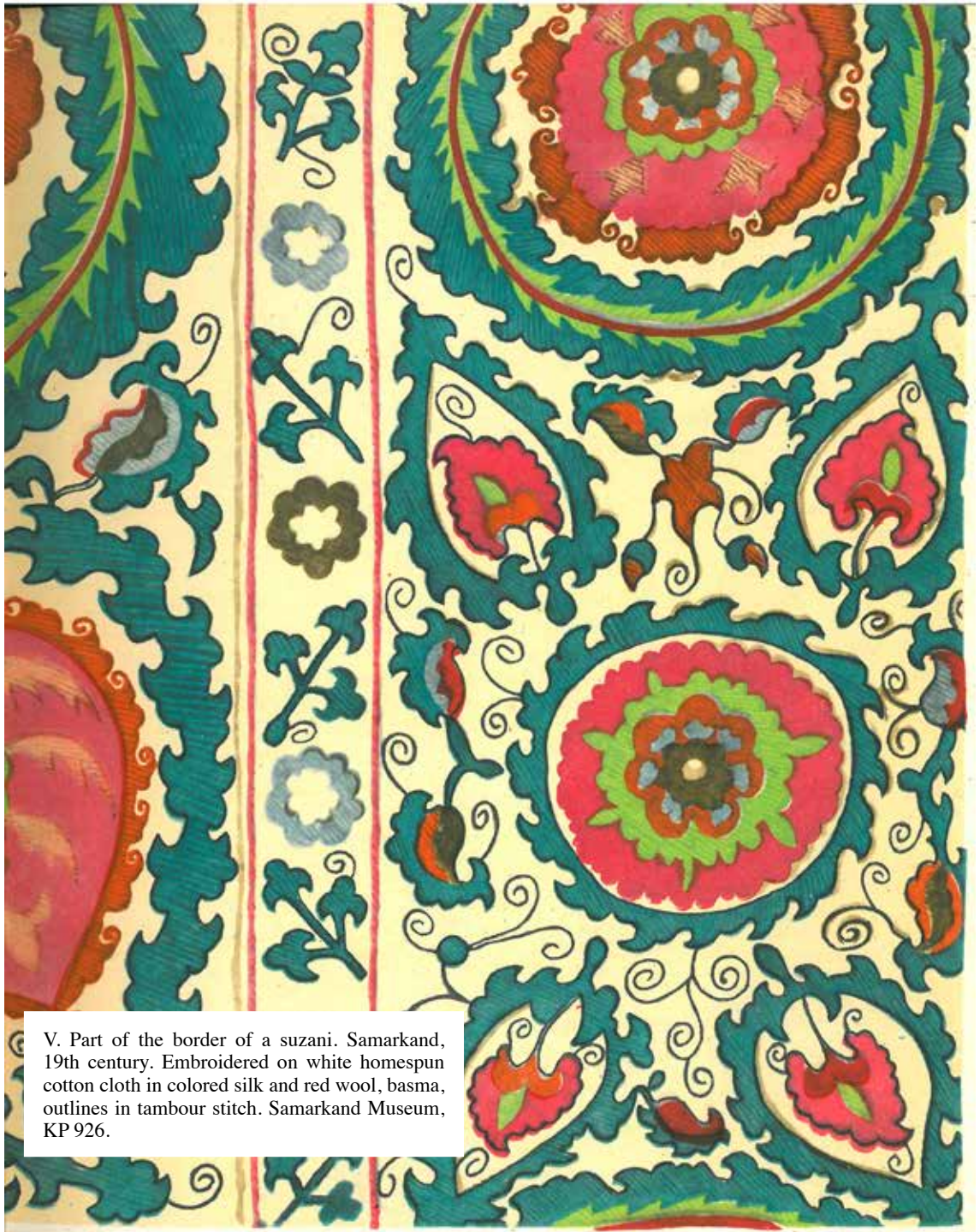
III. Part of the border of a bolinpush. Bukhara, 19th century. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk. Samarkand Museum, KP 1633.



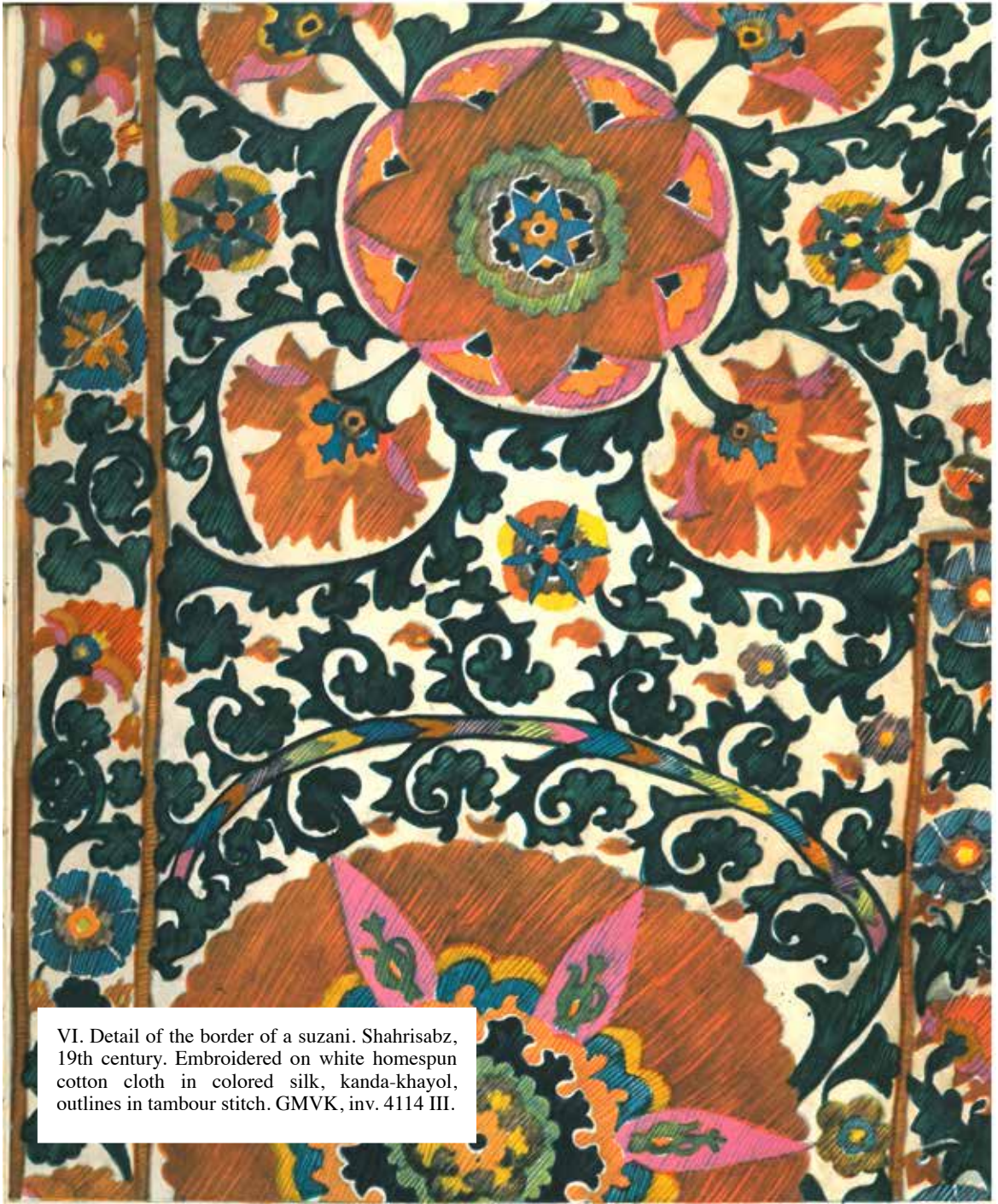


IV. Part of the central field and border of a suzani. Shahrizabz, late 19th century. Embroidered on brown silk rep in colored silk and wool thread, tambour stitch. Bukhara Museum, inv. 1821/10.

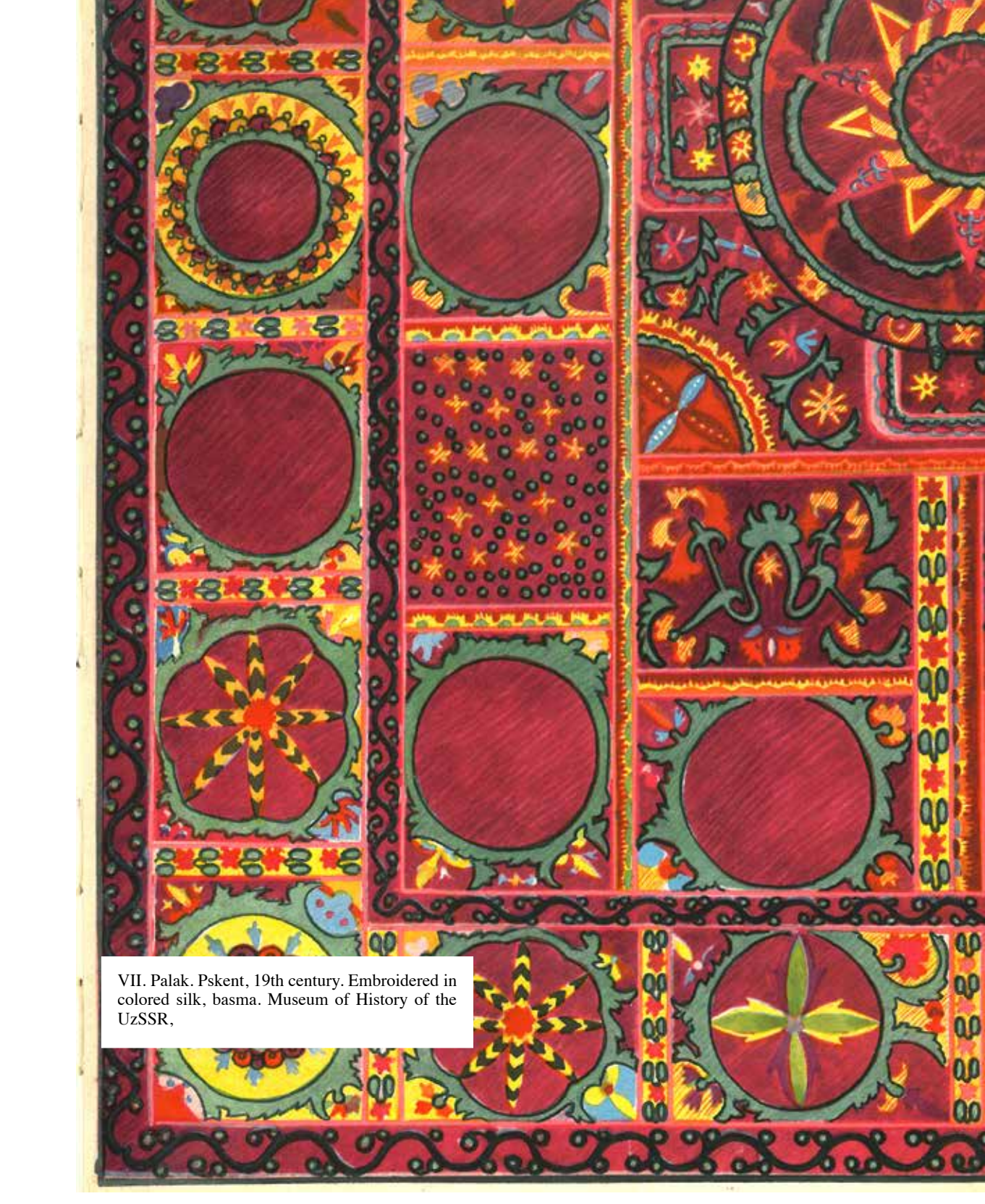




V. Part of the border of a suzani. Samarkand, 19th century. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk and red wool, basma, outlines in tambour stitch. Samarkand Museum, KP 926.

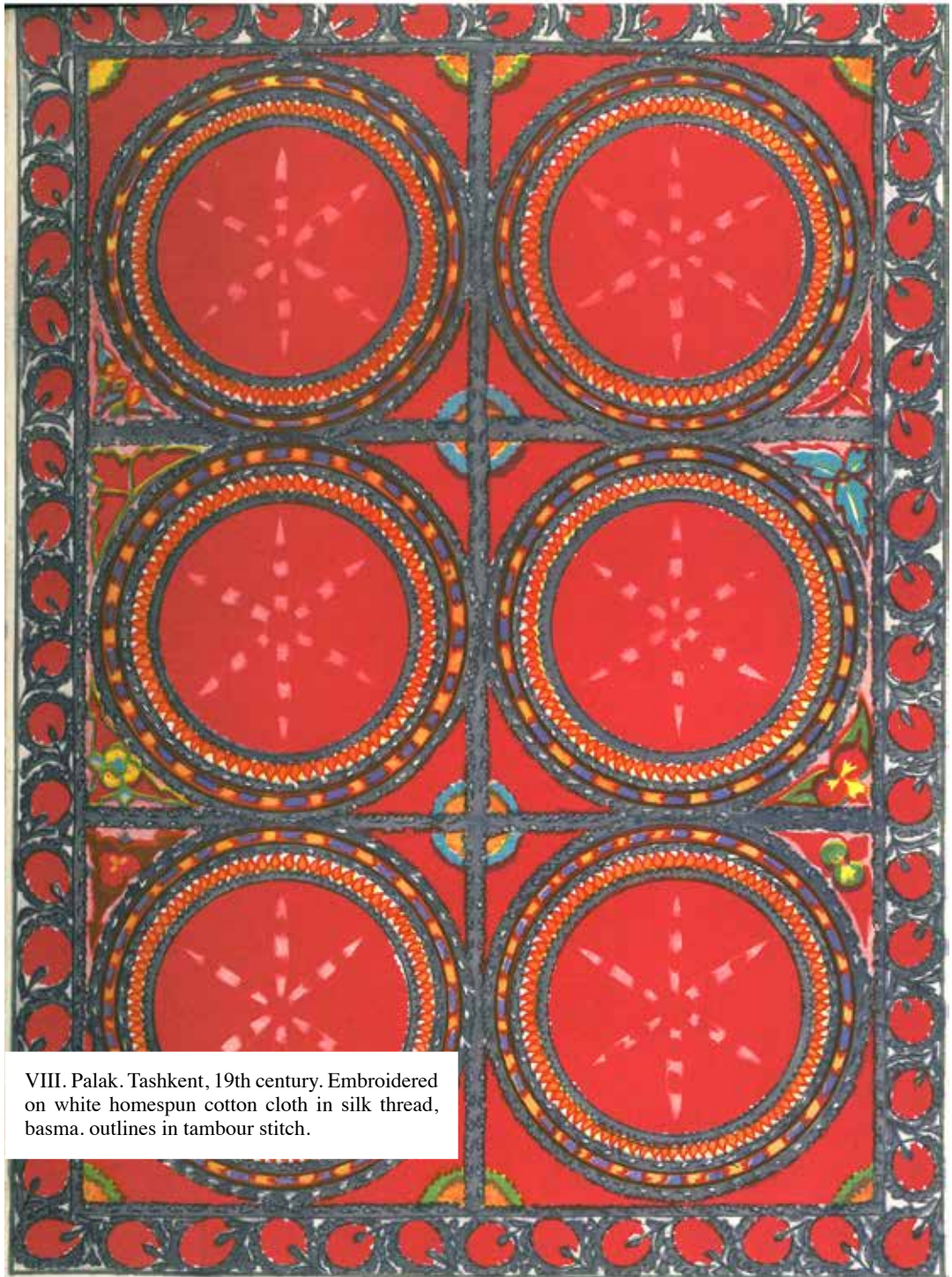


VI. Detail of the border of a suzani. Shahrissabz, 19th century. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, kanda-khayol, outlines in tambour stitch. GMVK, inv. 4114 III.

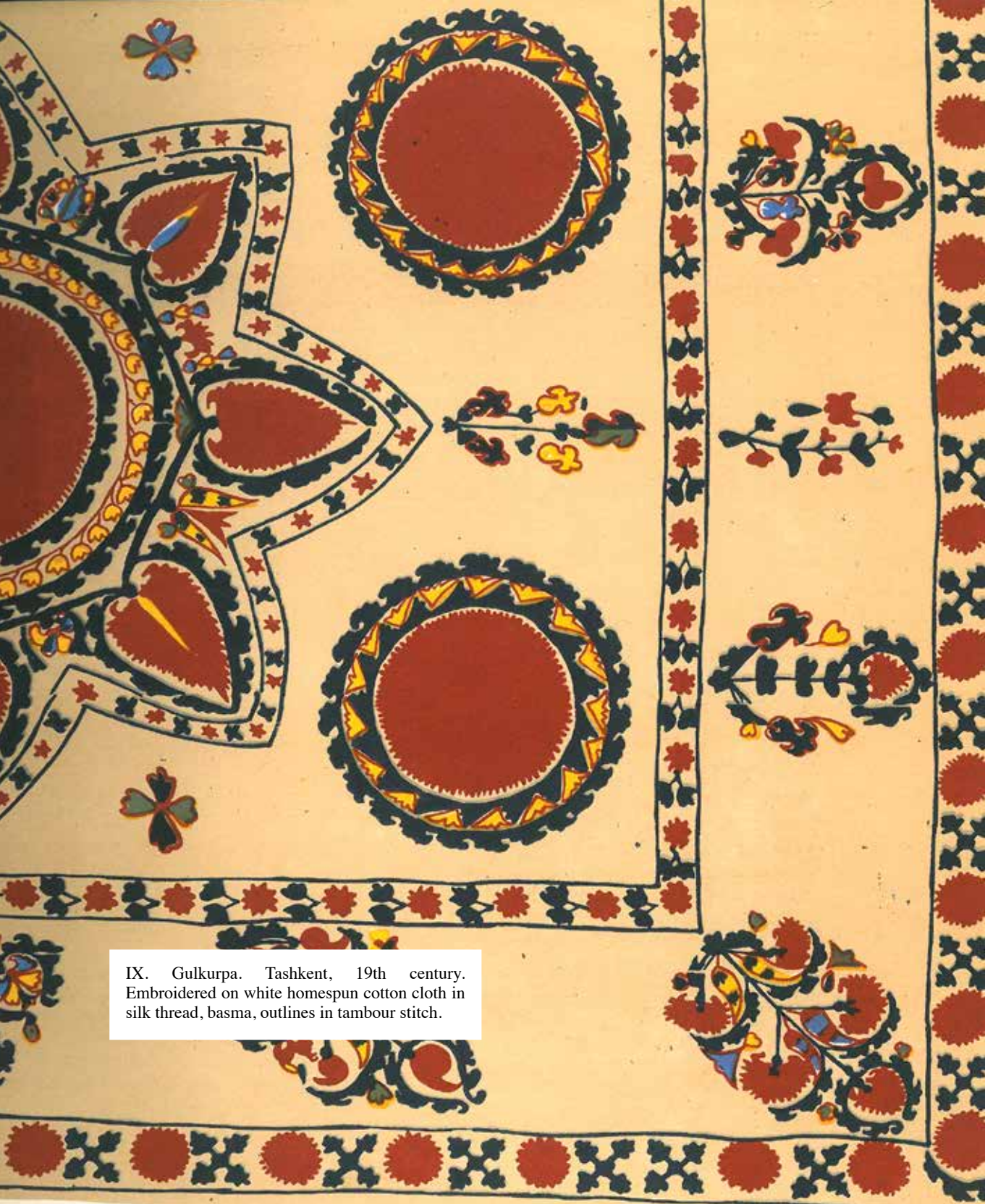


VII. Palak. Pskent, 19th century. Embroidered in colored silk, basma. Museum of History of the UzSSR,



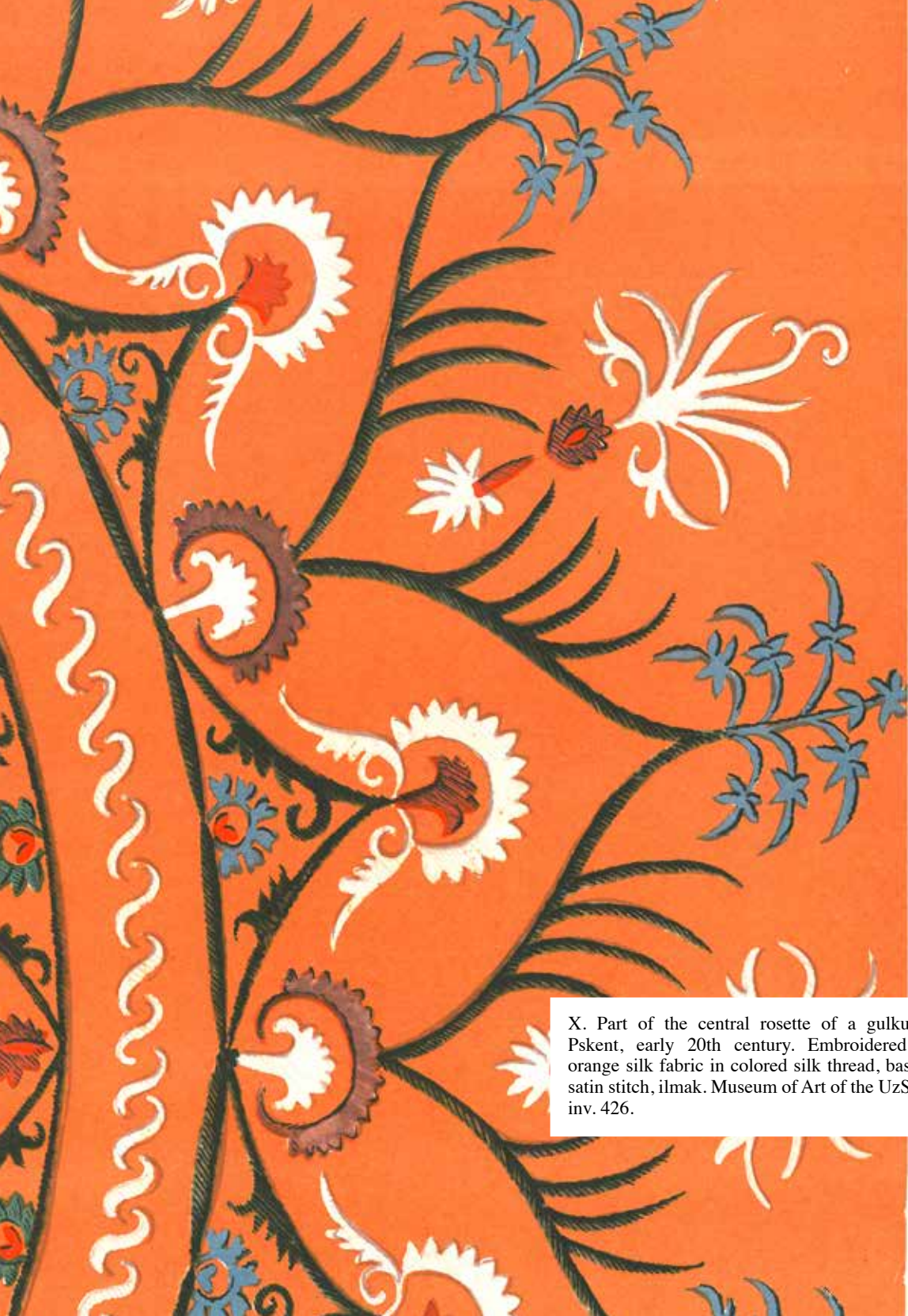


VIII. Palak. Tashkent, 19th century. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in silk thread, basma. outlines in tambour stitch.



IX. Gulkurpa. Tashkent, 19th century. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in silk thread, basma, outlines in tambour stitch.





X. Part of the central rosette of a gulkurpa. Pskent, early 20th century. Embroidered on orange silk fabric in colored silk thread, basma, satin stitch, ilmak. Museum of Art of the UzSSR, inv. 426.



XI. Detail of a suzani, 19th century. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, tambour. GMVK, inv. 2320 III.



XII. Detail of a suzani, 19th century. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored untwisted silk, tambour, basma on the backing, tambour stitch, basma, outlines in stem stitch. GMVK, inv. 1105 III.



XIII. Detail of a ruijo. Ferghana, late 19th century. Embroidered on purple, artisanal silk fabric in colored silk thread, basma. Museum of Art of the UzSSR, inv. 360.





XIV. Detail of a suzani. Nurata, 19th century. Embroidered on white homespun cotton cloth in colored silk, basma, outlines in tambour stitch. GMVK, inv. 3196 III.





CONTENTS

Introduction

- I. The Importance of Decorative Embroidery in the Everyday Life of the People, Types of Embroideries, Materials and Techniques
- II. Types of Regional Embroidery
- III. Aesthetic Principles of Decorative Embroidery in Uzbekistan in the 19th Century
 1. Composition
 2. Color
 3. Decoration

Conclusion

Plates

Glossary of Local Terms

Abbreviations and Notations Used in This Book

List of Illustrations in the Text

List of Plates

List of Color Plates

Color Plates

Chepelevetskaya, Gertruda L'ovna

SUZANIS OF UZBEKISTAN

Editor: *L. I. Levina*

Artist: *M. Ya. Shchirovskii*

Artistic editor: *G. P. Bedarev*

Technical editor: *N. I. Kurilova*

Proofreader: *A. S. Murakhver*

Sent for typesetting 4 Apr. 1960. Approved for publication 20 Nov. 1960. Format 84 x 108 1/16. Print run: 1,000. Subject keyword: Art. State Art Literature Publishing House of the UzSSR. 30 Navoi Street, Tashkent. License № 69/59.

* * *

Printing Press № 1 of Uzglavizdat of the UzSSR Ministry of Culture, 21 Khamza Street, Tashkent. 1961. Order № 173.

Price: 2 rubles, 10 kopeks.

