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### BUKHARA GYPSUM CARVING: HISTORY, STYLES, AND GREAT MASTERS

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#### Abstract

This article discusses the development of gypsum carving in the Bukhara region since ancient times. Archaeological excavations (for example, the remains of the Varakhsha Palace) show that gypsum was widely used not only in building construction but also in wall decorations.

**Keywords:** Ancient monuments, restoration, gypsum carving, conservation, history, Zaminli carving, Qirma, Chaspak, Pax-gypsum, Lola-gypsum, Zanjira, archaeology, repair specialist, geometric.

#### Аннотация:

В данной статье рассматривается развитие резьбы по гипсу на территории Бухары с античных времён. Археологические раскопки (например, остатки дворца Варахша) показывают, что гипс широко использовался не только в строительстве зданий, но и в настенных украшениях.

**Ключевые слова:** Древние памятники, реставрация, резьба по гипсу, консервация, история, резьба «Заминли», Кирма, Часпак, Пах-гипс, Лола-гипс, Занджир, археология, ремонтолог, геометрический.

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### Annotatsiya:

Ushbu maqolada Buxoro hududida ganch o‘ymakorligi antik davrlardan boshlab rivojlanganligi, Arxeologik qazishmalar (masalan, Varaxsha saroyi qoldiqlari) shuni ko‘rsatadiki, ganchdan nafaqat bino qurilishida, balki devoriy bezaklarda ham keng foydalanilganligi haqida so‘z boradi.

### 1. History and Formation

Gypsum carving in Bukhara developed from ancient times. Archaeological excavations (for example, the remains of the Varakhsha Palace) demonstrate that gypsum was used not only in building construction but also extensively in wall decoration.

During the 9th–10th centuries, under the Samanids, gypsum art reached its peak. Although the Ismail Samani Mausoleum is famous for its brick decorations rather than gypsum, this period saw the refinement of gypsum’s plastic qualities and ornamental compositions. In the Middle Ages, Bukhara’s palaces, mosques, and madrasas became major centers of gypsum carving.

### 2. Distinctive Styles of the Bukhara School

The Bukhara school differs from other regional schools (Fergana, Khiva, Tashkent) in several ways:

- **Pax-gypsum (Zaminli carving):** The background is deeply carved, making the ornament stand out in relief.
- **Chaspak:** Ornament elements are cast in molds and then attached to walls.
- **Qirma:** Layers of colored gypsum are placed one over another; the top layer is carved to reveal the colors beneath.
- **Lola-gypsum:** A style unique to Bukhara, characterized by smooth, flowing lines.
- **Mirror inlay:** Gypsum carving combined with small mirror pieces, widely used in palaces such as Sitorai Mohi Khosa.

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**Ornament types:** Predominantly floral (islami) and geometric (handasavi) designs. Complex compositions like “Zanjira,” “Medallion,” and “Guli Kavush” were favorites of Bukhara masters.

### 3. Great Masters

The fame of the Bukhara school is tied to generations of master craftsmen:

- **Usto Shirin Murodov (1880–1957):** The greatest representative of the Bukhara school. He combined traditional art with modern architecture. His most famous work is the “Bukhara Hall” in the Alisher Navoi Theater in Tashkent, considered a masterpiece of gypsum art worldwide.
- **Usto Abdurahim Turdiyev:** A student and follower of Shirin Murodov, contributed to the decoration of many public buildings.
- **Usto Bolta Jo‘rayev:** Known for his delicate and complex compositions.

### 4. Modern Significance

Today, Bukhara’s gypsum carving traditions continue in the decoration of new buildings and the restoration of historical monuments. Architectural complexes and museums in Bukhara still showcase this art form.

### Conclusion

Bukhara gypsum carving is not merely decoration; it reflects the philosophical worldview, aesthetic aspirations, and intellectual creativity of the people. The school established by masters like Shirin Murodov remains a rich heritage for younger generations.

### Technical and Artistic Foundations of Gypsum Carving

- **Composition:** Gypsum consists mainly of calcium sulfate mixed with soil, fired at 160–200°C.

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### • **Properties:**

- Quick setting when mixed with water.
- Plasticity during carving, allowing fine details.
- Durability when properly prepared.

### **Main techniques:**

- Zaminli carving (background carved deeply).
- Zaminsiz carving (surface-level designs).
- Qirma (layered colored gypsum).
- Chaspak (molded pieces attached to walls).
- Mirror inlay (gypsum combined with mirrors).

### **Ornamental systems:**

- Islimi (floral motifs).
- Geometric (mathematical “giriḥ” patterns).

### **National Schools**

- **Bukhara school:** Famous for refined mirror inlay (e.g., Sitorai Mohi Khosa).
- **Khiva school:** Distinguished by deep carving and unique floral compositions.
- **Tashkent school:** Known for realism and adaptability to modern architecture (e.g., Alisher Navoi Theater).
- **Fergana school:** Rich in floral bouquets and natural motifs.

### **Renowned Masters**

- **Usto Shirin Murodov** – Bukhara school.
- **Usto Toshpo‘lat Arslonqulov** – Founder of the Tashkent school.
- **Usto Mahmud Usmonov** – Decorator of many modern buildings.

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