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## THE ETHNOCULTURAL FEATURES IN THE ARTISTIC STYLE OF LATE MEDIEVAL POTTERY FROM KULTOBE

*This article is devoted to the study of a collection of glazed pottery discovered at the site of Kultobe (Southern Kazakhstan), which is located in the buffer zone of the designated World Heritage site for the mausoleum of Khoja Akhmed Yasawi (city of Turkestan, Turkestan region, Kazakhstan). Since 2019, the excavations at Kultobe by the archaeological team from the Kazakh Research Institute of Culture has discovered more than 15,000 pottery fragments. Of these, 3,989 both fragments and archaeologically whole vessels of glazed pottery dating back to the 17th-19th centuries were identified. The authors do not aim at a comprehensive examination of the pottery from Turkestan throughout its existence; but confine themselves to the characteristics of the ceramic collection from the Kultobe ancient settlement discovered in 2020 and their associated historical and cultural problems. The study based on the ceramic material has already received some scholarly reflection. At the same time, the existing foundational source of knowledge concerning the artistic style of Turkestani pottery can be expanded due to this newly introduced material. The data in comparison to other disciplines can clarify some particularities of glazed pottery from late medieval Turkestan.*

**Key words:** *Turkestan, the Kultobe archaeological site, pottery, artistic style, ethnocultural features.*

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A NUMBER OF STUDIES (Baipakov 1986; Baipakov, Kuznetsova 2011, et al.) indicate that glazed pottery developed in three of the largest centers of urban culture between the eastern Aral Sea region and the Jungar Alatau Mountains. These centers are southern Kazakhstan (incorporating the Syr Darya and Arys valleys, the foothills of the Talas Ridge, and the Karatau slopes); southwest Semirechye (incorporating the Talas and Chuy valleys and the foothills of the Kyrgyz Alatau Mountains); and northeastern Semirechye (consisting of the Ili River Valley and the foothills of the Zaili and Jungar Alatau Mountains) (Baipakov 1986: 7–12). Experts directly correlate the end of local pottery production with the historical disappearance of these urban areas. In northeast Semirechye, urban culture vanished at the end of the 13th - early 14th century, while in southwest Semirechye and western Kazakhstan this occurred a bit later in the early 15th century. Accordingly, these chronological references also coincide with the end of pottery production in these regions. In what is today's

southern Kazakhstan, the production of pottery continued until the 19th century (Baipakov, Kuznetsova 2011: 22). Hence, the glazed pottery of Turkestan of the 17th-19th centuries considered in this article is the latest period of traditional pottery production in southern Kazakhstan.

This study considers the important works on archaeological pottery of Central Asia (Vakturskaya 1953, Peschereva 1959, Jabbarov 1959, Tashkhojaye-va 1967, Shishkina 1979, Saiko 1982, Brusenko 1986, Mirzaakhmedov 1987, etc.). An independent research study of the pottery of Turkestan separately has only been considered from time to time. Several works regarding Turkestan are of interest to us (Ageyeva 1960, Yerzakovich 1966, Senigova 1978, Smagulov 1999, etc.). At the same time, the study of pottery production for the city of Turkestan seems to be a topical issue for a number of reasons.

First, the uniqueness of Turkestan lies in its geographical location. This zone of close connections between sedentary farmers and nomadic pastoralists,



Fig. 1. Kultobe. Ceramic bowl of the 18th-19th centuries

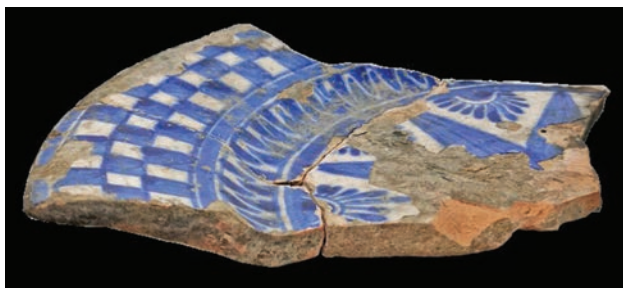


Fig. 2. Kultobe. Fragment of a ceramic dish of the 19th century

who had a significant impact on the culture of the region, is a symbiosis of cultures that manifested itself in the art of pottery production of the past.

Second, local pottery production which developed on one of the busiest sections of the Silk Road absorbed various techniques of artistic and technical design. It incorporated the particularities of shape and decoration from neighboring Central Asia and more distant regions such as China and the Middle East. Thus, it was able to develop its own artistic language, art history, and a unique context including new concepts in ceramic arts and artistic individualism.

Third, the excavated materials are of interest not only as samples of artwork, but also as important properties of the sacred and religious cults which provide a semantic and symbolic context.

The purpose of this article is to introduce into the scholarly circulation a previously unexplored collection of glazed pottery from the Kultobe ancient settlement and to reveal the ethnocultural features and specificity of the Turkestani style in artistic pottery at its later stages of development. This analysis was based on potsherds and archaeologically whole vessels of glazed pottery from the Kultobe site totaling 3,989 items.

The pottery collection from the Kultobe site (finds from 2020) includes bowls (*kese*), vases, dishes (*lyagan*), *tagoras* (*taz*) and vessels of various shapes. The greater part of the vessels was made of a well-variegated, dense red fabric with insignificant inclusions

of fine sand particles and mica visible in the broken cross sections of the potsherds.

Analysis of this glazed pottery from Kultobe indicates six types with various subtypes graphically shown in Table 1.

As the table indicates, the overwhelming majority of pottery fragments are covered with a white, light-colored slip that provides a finish for the inner surface of the vessels or the outer surface along the rim's edge. This applies to open vessels (bowls, dishes, *tagoras*, etc.), which comprised a large number of potsherds from the Kultobe site. 880 total samples were found with a white slip background and a monochrome underglaze design. 860 samples had bi-chrome painting covered with a transparent glaze. There were 377 samples with a polychrome underglaze design possessing a white slip background.

The undisputed "favorite" of the Kultobe ceramic complex is Type 1 with its various subtypes, i.e. vessels on a white slip background with variants of mono- or polychrome paintings under a white transparent glaze.

Consider several examples of this type. The inner and outer surface of a ceramic bowl (Fig. 1) is covered with a colorless transparent glaze on a light slip background. An underglaze bichrome design made with blue and silvery-gray colors is found on the inside and outside of the vessel. The inner side design forms concentric straight lines while the outer side is decorated with a wide band consisting of concentric lines and alternating flowers ("stars," reminiscent of the "Basma" decorative motif). The rim is straight with its lip forming a flattened-oval. The vessel is 17.6 cm in diameter and the sidewall is 0.6–1 cm thick. The walls of the bowl taper into a slightly concave disc-shaped base 6.7 cm in diameter. The base's height is 1.4 cm, and the entire vessel is 8.4 cm tall.

The next most numerous subtype (type 2a) includes 401 samples covered by a blue glaze on a white slip background with a underglaze of monochrome decorative features. Several interesting samples were found in this group. One example is a wide dish with slightly raised, sloping walls (Fig. 2). The inner surface is embellished with floral and checkered patterns made with blue paint on a white background. Another example is a pottery dish with a large wide bottom and low inclined walls. The inner surface is decorated in blue glaze with vegetal and checkered motifs on a white background (Fig. 3). Both items date to the 19th century.

The next vessel (Fig. 4), similar to the first two, is a fragment of a base from a large *lyagan* dish, made of a light-red, dense, well-variegated fabric with minor inclusions of fine sand and mica particles. The inner surface of the vessel is covered with a transparent, colorless glaze on a white slip background. A poly-

Table 1. Types and subtypes of glazed pottery from the Kultobe site

Types and subtypes	Rims		Side walls		Total
Type-1. Colorless transparent glaze with no designs, on a white slip background	8	40	17		65
Type-1a. Colorless transparent glaze on a white slip background, with monochrome underglaze ornamentation	326	138	410	6	880
Type-1b. Colorless transparent glaze with bichrome painting on a white slip background	260	139	457	4	860
Type-1c. Colorless transparent glaze on a white slip background with polychrome underglaze ornamentation	123	63	191		377
Type-2. Blue glaze on a white slip background with no design	30	35	83	1	149
Type-2a. Blue glaze on a white slip background with monochrome underglaze design	64	87	250		401
Type-3. Green or light green glaze on a white slip background with no design	135	55	185		375
Type-3a. Green or light green glaze on a white slip background with monochrome underglaze design	78	12	69		159
Type-3b. Green or light green glaze on a white slip background with bichrome underglaze design	4				4
Type-4. Dark brown glaze on a red slip background without design	3	2	12		17
Type-4a. Brown transparent glaze on a red slip background with designs	5	7	21		33
Type-5. Yellow glaze on a white slip background with no design	66	28	82		176
Type-5a. Yellow glaze on a white slip background with monochrome underglaze painting	121	35	114		270
Type-5b. Yellow transparent glaze on a white slip background with underglaze bichrome design	18	6	26		50
Type-5c. Yellow transparent glaze on a white slip background with underglaze polychrome design	9		13		22
Type-5e. Yellow glaze over a white slip background with underglaze ornamentation and elements of engraved decoration	19	12	39		70
Type-6. Dark (black) opaque glaze on a grey slip background with no design.	10	16	44		70
Type-6a. Dark (black) glaze over a gray slip background, with underglaze design	1	5	5		11
Total	1280	680	2018	11	3989





Fig. 3. Kultobe. Fragment of a ceramic dish of the 19th century

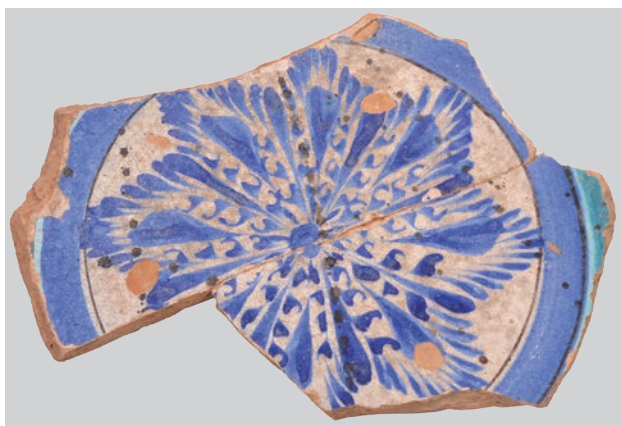


Fig. 4. Kultobe. Fragment of ceramic ware of the 19th centuries

chrome decoration in blue, light blue and other dark colors is under the glaze. The design has a geometric vegetal style that forms a large flower in the center of the bowl's bottom and is bordered by wide concentric circles. Decorative features compactly cover the vessel's entire surface, leaving no free zones, with stem-like patterns serving as a connecting feature.

In terms of typology, items with blue and white color schemes traditionally belong to fully investigated samples of "Timurid pottery." According to various experts (Smagulov, Grigoriev, Itenov 1999; Gyul 2017), this blue and white gamut has long been considered an imitation of Chinese porcelain. However, in the light of recent scholarly research, consideration has shifted in thinking that these vessels are a manufacturing "initiative" of the Turkic-Mongolian upper class. Blue and dark blue were almost exclusively the most esteemed color among the Turkic peoples and in association with the supreme deity *Tengri*; while in the Sufi tradition blue and dark blue (which was often worn by Sufis) symbolized seclusion from the external and recognition of the inner world.

Representatives of the Turkic, and later the Turkic-Mongolian upper class, were actors in the so-

cial order with the blue color found in architectural structures of the period (Smagulov, Grigoriev, Itenov 1999: 199), and eventually displayed in pottery—the so-called "Turkish blue." The Chinese, having adapted the "Turkish blue," "brought" it back to the Turkic world under the guise of a Chinese label. In turn, the Turks still had a complementary attitude towards blue and white Chinese porcelain due to their generational preference for the color of Heaven, which was sacred for them (Gyul 2017: 784–785).

According to scholars (Peschereva 1959, Vishnevskaya 2001, etc.), dishes with a blue or dark-blue pattern in Central Asia were called "tui lagan" (*toy lyagan*), and the wealthy placed orders for them with master potters when hosting a reception at their homes. The very traditional name of these dishes speaks to some of their ritual function and the relation between color (and possibly decoration) and deeper cultural phenomena.

Consider more particularly the symbolism of the checkered design which is quite often found on the pottery of the Kultobe site in this later period. This same motif is found on pottery on the territory of Uzbekistan of the early Middle Ages (Tokharistan, Sogdiana, Khorezm). There is an opinion that it diffused into Central Asia from Nishapur (Solovyov 2014: 42). It is known that the checkered design on pottery from the steppe cultures had already appeared in the first half of the Late Bronze Age on sites from the Ural region (Alakul and Srubnaya cultures), and its distribution passed through the north of the forest-steppe regions of Eurasia associated with the traditions of central and western Europe (Mochalov 2001: 42). The earliest examples of this ornamental motif date to the ancient Greek tradition in which checkered motifs are found on ancient amphoras in variously depicted scenes including a checkered canopy over the deceased, a wedding ceremony, or depictions of battles, etc.

While analyzing images on ancient Greek amphorae, L. I. Akimova concluded that "they do not contain the depiction of the static phenomena of being. There is only the drama of the change from one state to another, the drama of death and the birth of the cosmos, the mystery of the interchange of man with nature and the mystery of the denial of death – the establishment of life through the very process of creating a cosmic object and its cosmogenic painting (or composition in general)" (Akimova 1985: 98). Consequently, the sequential combination of two equivalent squares was interpreted as the interaction or alternation of absolute light with its opposite of darkness; life and death; day and night; as well as other opposition principles of nature as if bringing them into balance and harmony. The alternation of white and blue on the Kultobe pottery is most likely subordinate to the same idea – the harmonization of the two premortal

polar units specifically and fancifully manifested in pottery as a kind of artistic preference for the local ethnic environment.

Among the Kultobe finds in 2020 were vessels with green or a light green glaze on a white slip background without decorative features or those containing mono- and bichrome designs totaling 538 sherds. This type with its various subtypes comprise the second largest group of glazed items from Kultobe that deserve closer examination.

One interesting vessel belongs to a type of large pot with a high base. The inner surface and partially on its outer surface is covered with an opaque, greenish-blue glaze on a light slip background. Along the rim's inner and outer edge is a bichrome underglaze decoration using turquoise and silvery-gray colors. The decor of the vessel is made in a vegetal-geometric style in the form of bands consisting of straight wavy concentric lines or S-shaped curls forming horizontal lines. These S-shaped signs are very ancient symbols of abundance and fertility still popular in Kazakh carpet weaving. The rim of this vessel has a straight, short neck with flattened-oval profile. The rim is 25 cm in diameter and its neck passes into a shallow shoulder with a sharp carination. The vessel's upper body section expands outward to a diameter 29 cm and then tapers down into a high circular base measuring 11 cm in diameter. The base is 3.5 cm high and the entire vessel measures 22.8 cm in height.

Another vessel is a hemispherical-shaped bowl made of a well-variegated light-colored, dense fabric. The inner surface is covered with an opaque yellowish-green glaze over a light slip background. The inside contains a monochrome underglaze decoration with wavy, diagonal lines forming a solar symbol and teardrop-shaped features between the lines. The rim of the bowl is straight and its edges are oval in profile. It measures 19.3 cm in diameter and its walls taper down toward a flat disc-shaped base which measures 7.7 cm in diameter. The base is 0.9 cm high with the entire vessel measuring to a height of 7.7 cm. The compositional turning point of the vortex-shaped solar symbol on this vessel is noticeably displaced to the right which further enhances the dynamics of this decorative feature. In general, a vortex rosette with its variations is quite often found in the ornamentation of pottery from Khorezm, Ferghana, southern Kazakhstan, and the Talas Valley.

In terms of color, greenish tones (greenish-turquoise, greenish-yellow) predominate in both these samples. This is a characteristic feature quite typical for medieval Central Asia and it impacted the work of the Turkestani craftsmen. The design of the ornaments on both vessels, despite their conventionality and even simplicity, still possesses a certain visual impact and, most likely, is a relic form reflecting very old

cosmological views.

Among the represented types of the Kultobe collection are very interesting samples of glazed pottery with paintings in various tints of brown, green, reddish-orange as well as other colors on a yellow background (16th-18th centuries). These types total 588 samples about 70 of which contain features with an engraved design. It is believed that this technique imitated a "reserve" technique (i.e. a design on the background, from which the slip was removed) (*Akischev, Baipakov, Yerzakovich* 1987: 18). This feature is noticeable in the eastern Mediterranean region, Transcaucasia, and the Crimea during the 11th-12th centuries. Yet, this engraving pattern on pottery from Central Asia, which in some cases was combined with painting, is associated with the engraving traditions on clay and metal by Middle Eastern craftsmen.

A subtype of vessels from type 5 (type 5a), which total 270 potsherds, possess a yellow glaze over a white slip background with a monochrome underglaze painting. Yellow-background glazed pottery with a more complicated design feature were discovered in Otrar, as those conducting the excavations described: "the pottery collection of stage IV comprises glazed dishware. It contains a prevailing amount of yellow glazed dishes with polychrome paintings on a light slip. The designs include a combination of dark brown and reddish tints, often with the addition of green. The red-slip vessels with light-colored painting were also covered with a yellow glaze" (*Akischev, Baipakov, Yerzakovich* 1987: 20). Comparative yellow-background glazed pottery has been found in medieval settlements of the Mongol-Timurid period in the middle Syr Darya and the slopes of Karatau Mountains. These examples are most numerous and their paintings are combinations of "green and brown colors, such as dark brown and light brown; or red, green and dark brown. The yellow glaze is bright and transparent" (*Akischev, Baipakov, Yerzakovich* 1987: 106).

Samples similar to the Kultobe yellow-background pottery (Fig. 5, 6) were found in Turkestan and at earlier levels. Thus, "in the stratigraphy of the city of Turkestan in the area around the mausoleum of Khoja Akhmed Yasawi at its lowest cultural base layer, yellow-background glazed pottery with brown and green painting was discovered. However, these examples are fewer and they intermix fairly well with representative pottery of the Timurid style" (*Smagulov* 1999: 15). Lemon-yellow glaze is also typical for the pottery production of Sogdia and Khorezm in the 9th century as well as ancient Tashkent (the Binkent medieval settlement) which became widespread in the middle of the 11th century.

Consider in more detail two samples with yellow glaze from Kultobe which were found at one of the





Fig. 5. Ceramic tagara with a trichrome pattern.  
18th-19th centuries. Restoration



Fig. 6. Kultobe. Ceramic dish.  
18th-19th centuries. Restoration

sites of the settlement. This vessel dates to the 17th-18th centuries and was interpreted by researchers as the premises of the local Sufi community, or *zikhra-na*. This ceramic *tagara* (Fig. 5) covered with a yellow glaze containing a trichrome pattern dates to the 18th-19th centuries. The vessel is 42 cm in diameter and 15.1 cm high. The other vessel is a ceramic dish (Fig. 6) covered with yellow glaze with a bichrome pattern. Its dimensions are 35 cm in diameter and 6 cm high. Despite some deterioration of the vessels, these samples with polychrome painting under a transparent lemon-yellow glaze are rather original. They are notable for their wealth of dabs forming smudges with an S-shaped pattern along with connecting tops or headers of short lines of M-shapes, zigzags, streaks, etc. This combination shapes the vegetal-geometric style of the composition and, in the second case, complements the twisting effect.

It is obvious that color gave great artistic expressiveness to ceramic ware and thus fulfilled a significant symbolic function. The dominance of lemon-yellow color in the Kultobe pottery in its worldview context is most likely associated with the Sufi tradition of “interpretation, when the external, having appeared (*zahir*) hid the sacred, underlying the essence (*batin*)” (Gyul 2019), where yellow (the color of the sun or fire) was considered the color of the second stage of the spiritual path (*tarik*at). At the same time, it is worth mentioning the “role of the Sun as a symbol of the radiation of God or the Prophet” (Schimmel 1975) in the Sufi tradition. The researchers noted that among the representatives of the *kubraviyya* *tarik*at,

yellow was associated with a delicate substance, that is, the world of the spirit (*ruk*h); the human type as the “Friend of God” (*wali*) and the prophet Daud; and among the *Nakshbandiyya* brotherhood, yellow was considered the soul under the navel (Vasiltsov 2007: 117).

Whatever the interpretation, the color yellow in Islamic culture has a very important symbolic function associated with the spirit, a spiritual path, and the Prophet, etc. Yet, one cannot fail to mention that the yellow color (or the color of gold) among representatives of the Turkic ethnic groups (Kazakhs as well) signified the highest of value; the beginning of all beginnings; and a symbol of divinity. So, the whole palette of basic colors – white, black, red, yellow, blue and green— permeate the entirety of Turkic culture, including pottery, and was one of the significant elements of the traditional worldview.

Another artistic feature of one these Kultobe bowls with a yellow-background (Fig. 7) demonstrates a specific decorative technique. From its inside, the bowl was decorated with multichromatic streaks which created a visual effect of perpetual movement flowing down to the bottom of the bowl. Other similar samples are also found at Kultobe. This technique was also popular with Samarkand craftsmen who, prior to firing, splashed paints of various colors into the dishes which spread over the surface in the form of drips, stains, and streaks.

People in antiquity believed that dishes, like living things, could be exposed to the “evil eye.” To avoid this, Samarkand potters sprinkled tableware

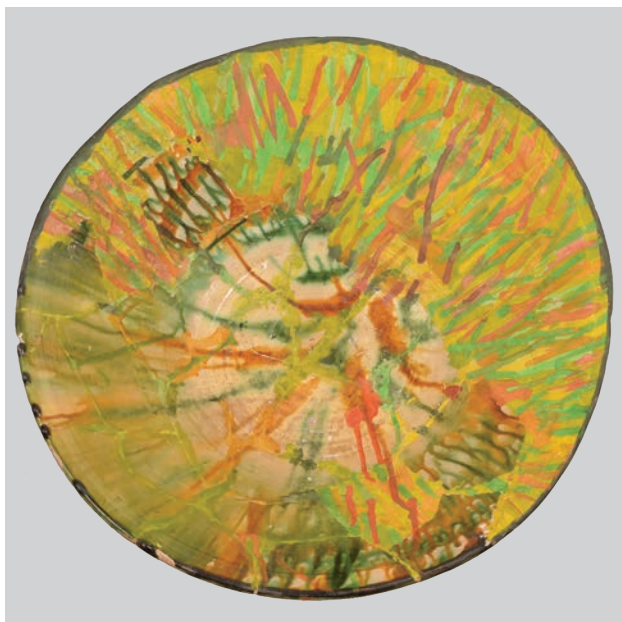


Fig. 7. Kultobe. Restored glazed pottery. Bowl.  
18th-19th centuries



Fig. 8. Kultobe. Ceramic bowl.  
18th-19th centuries

such as dishes and cups with spots of copper oxide. "Dishes covered with stains and drips, like the spots themselves, were called *"avr,"* meaning *cloud*, and it is believed that it is *chashm namegira* and it does not receive the evil eye," that is, the "evil eye" does not it. These stains gave the dishes a ritual cleanliness. It was believed that they were especially needed for dishes covered with yellow transparent glaze because iron scale is used to provide pigment for the yellow-colored glaze known as *guxi oxan*, that is, "iron excrement." Thus, this made the dishes *makruh*, or unpleasant, unclean, filthy. If the glaze had a green color, then it could be left without covering the dish with spots" (Peschereva 1959: 153). It seems that the Turkistani potters' spraying of green and red-brown paint on the surface of the bowl in question pursued the same goal. The bowl's diameter is 46.1 cm and measures 16.1 cm high. The vessel is dated to the 18th-19th centuries. E. Gyul writes the following about similar dishes from Urgut: "In the painting, local masters emphasized the line with the designs comprised of stars shaped in geometrical abstractions drawn in green as well as chains of triangles, among others, on a yellow background. In addition to the painted pottery was another group whose décor was created by drips of paint from two different colors. These two styles can well be compared with geometric abstracts and abstract expressionism" (Gyul 2017: 787).

Picturesque drips as an artistic element of decoration can also be found among the glazed pottery of the 10th – 11th centuries discovered at Jigerbent, the site of a medieval fortress on the southern outskirts

of Khorezm (Vishnevskaya 2001: 71, 158). A similar technique was used by Shakhrisabz potters. They covered glazed pots with white slip, then using ferrous clay, created random drips and stains on the inner surface of the vessel. They called such dishes *ala guli* or *ala bulo*, that is, piebald or speckled. The reasoning was that leaving a vessel smooth was not considered good (Kubel 2014: 421). At the same time, the concept of *ala* (piebald) had a deep symbolic meaning in the Turkic (Kazakh) culture associated with the veneration of an ancient totem, such as a specific piebald horse-deity. Later consecrated by Islam, like the other favored traditional colors, it had many archaic features from the earlier culture.

On the inner surface of another vessel from this type, is a traditional decor in the form of small flowers or "stars" (in this particular case in red-brown and green colors), which, as of the historian S. N. Yurenev suggests, was usually called *basma* (Fig. 8). This element, unlike many others, remained a popular motif in Bukharan pottery until modern times (Mirzaakhmedov 1987). Close comparisons to this design motif were found in Suzak (Yerzakovich 1966).

Numerous examples of yellow-background pottery with a *basma* motif and other decorative designs are found in Bukhara where they were popular in the 17th-18th centuries due to the availability of raw materials. Thus, J. Mirzaakhmedov, studying the glazed pottery of late medieval Bukhara, points out that costly bowl types were often overlaid with yellow glaze on the inside and green glaze on the outside. Such an effect was a common decorative technique of



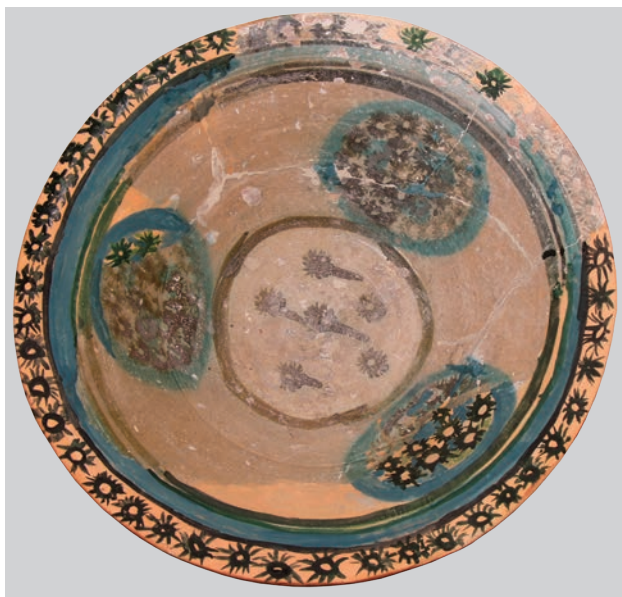


Fig. 9. Kultobe. Ceramic bowl.  
18th-19th centuries

pottery of this period and, most likely, was associated with the traditional concepts of the peoples of Central Asia who considered yellow-background dishes to be unclean and accepting of the evil eye. Green, in contrast to yellow, was considered pure, not attracting the evil eye (Mirzaakhmedov 1987: 98). The bowl under consideration (Fig. 8) differs in its decorative decor from the traditional style of pottery design as it tends toward a minimalist style.

The relatively poor and simple ornamental decor of the Kultobe yellow-background pottery is fully offset both by the richness of the colored background itself and, in some cases, by the polychrome patterns. Considering that they were found in the zikhran, it is possible to conclude that according to all its indicators (its quadrilateral layout, the structure of premises, the presence of burials, etc.), this was a fairly popular and well-known place in the city of Turkestan. Perhaps this examined tableware belonged to the Sufi community and were used during public meals, or perhaps as even a “type of donation for sacred purposes given to a public institution by a master potter who lived in this quarter” (Mirzaakhmedov, Babayev 1981: 179).

The basma decorative motif, yet with other variations or combinations, is found on one of the Kultobe ceramic bowls (Fig. 9) which measures 43.5 cm in diameter and is 15.5 cm high. Data on Bukharan pottery with this motif is available in previous publications (Mirzaakhmedov, Babayev 1981, Mirzaakhmedov, Akhrorov 1981).

Another bowl from Kultobe (Fig. 10) displays a rather interesting artistic decorative technique ren-

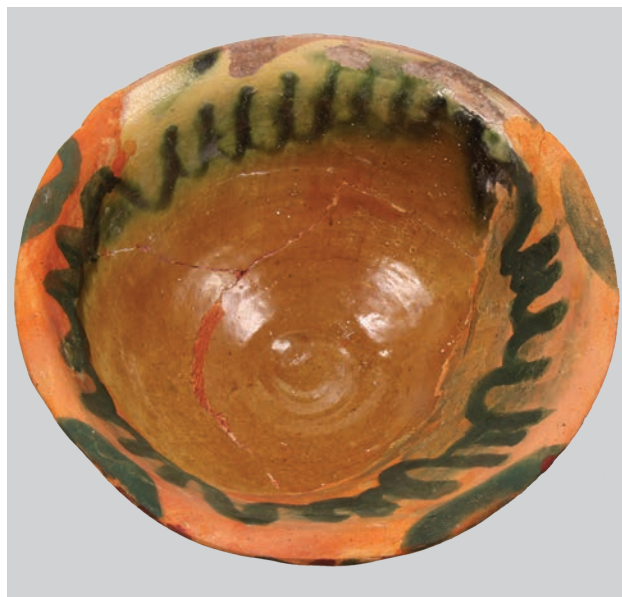


Fig. 10. Kultobe. Ceramic bowl  
of the 18th-19th centuries

dering its image utilizing expressive, smooth lines. The Turkestani craftsman used dark-green paint on a brownish-yellowish background depicting wavy lines with absolutely free brushwork which in some places vaguely resembles the letter *w*. A bichrome underglaze decoration of oval lines in brown and green is on the outer surface of the vessel.

In general, the glazed vessels from the later period of the Kultobe site with their applied brushstrokes, in terms of artistic rendering, were fairly free and to some extent, even careless. The craftsmen did not strive for the filigree inlay of decorative motifs characteristic of the early periods which is most often associated with the general decay of pottery production in the region from the late Middle Ages.

Certain conclusions can be drawn in summarizing this brief review of the chromatic concepts of Kultobe pottery. The main color combinations of the Kultobe samples are shown in Table 2. They demonstrate a fairly rich color palette of mono-, bi-, tri- and polychrome combinations. The table includes data only on bi- and trichrome combinations in view of their prevalence throughout the entire collection.

As observed from Table 2, the color combinations of pottery from Kultobe differ in terms of their wide variety represented by the primary colors (blue, yellow, red), with their contrasting and comparative warm and cold combinations. Such a variety of color combinations “work” by enhancing various combinations of colored accents. In one case, a pale color is intensified by a more saturated one. In other cases, an opaque background weakens dark colors, etc. This undoubtedly indicated the developed flair of the



Table 2. Color combinations of glazed pottery of the Kultobe site

No	General color combinations
<b>Bichrome combinations</b>	
1	yellow/green
2	green/brown
3	yellow/brown
4	blue/blue
5	blue/brown
6	light brown/green
7	beige/blue
8	turquoise/brown
9	beige/green
10	green/reddish-brown
11	blue/turquoise
<b>trichrome combinations</b>	
1	yellow/brown/green
2	yellow/red/green
3	red, blue/green
4	light brown/green/red
5	turquoise/blue/brown
6	turquoise/brown/green
7	green/ brown/ beige
8	green/blue/red
9	turquoise/blue/brown

craftsmen as they intensified the accents of color depending on their aim.

Thus, the wide range of colors and color combinations of the Kultobe ceramic collection— ranging from pure-white to dark-brown, with yellow, blue, light-blue, green, brown—is most likely not only an indicator of the use of existing colors from that time period, but also an unconscious artistic processing of nature with its color combinations and forms.

The most common decorative motifs of Kultobe pottery are represented in Table 3.

Without providing a detailed analysis, we would note that design as a characteristic feature of decor in most Central Asian pottery traditions in relation to the Kazakhstani material requires a generalization of the work on its development of classification of the decorative decor for pottery. For this, it is necessary to involve all materials obtained in the study of various sites.

Following the work of previous scholars (Senigova 1978; Smagulov 1999), we can state that there is

Table 3. Decorative motifs of glazed pottery from the Kultobe site

№	Ornamental motifs
1	Three-pointed cross
2	Concentric circles
3	Checkered motifs
4	Separators, including rounded ones
5	Inclined lines in the form of petals
6	Combination of concentric lines and triangles
7	Vortex or petal rosette
8	Straight and wavy lines
9	Floral designs features (other than those indicated)
10	Geometric design features (other than those indicated)
11	Small flowers / stars / basma
12	S-shaped signs
13	Solar symbols

no significant difference in decorative motifs in comparison to broader Central Asian and other southern Kazakhstan collections. As for the earlier Turkestani finds from the same historical period, their ornamentation is strictly concentric. That is, in the form of two or three bands around a central rosette which was either decorated with “spirals,” “basma,” a multi-petalled flower, or remained undecorated. The outer sides of bowls are decorated with concentric bands of black triangles (Tuyakbayev 2012: 133). The white-background pottery with its unique pattern was discovered in the same collection, which the researcher interpreted as being a stylized floral ornament, “similar to the stems of a black camelthorn” (Tuyakbayev 2012: 135). This suggests a stylized depiction from the local flora by Turkestani craftsmen

According to the studies of E. A. Smagulov, two types of decorative compositions are found on open form vessels (dishes, bowls) from the Turkestan oasis which are labeled “zonal” and “concentric.” The first type is characterized by the pattern’s arrangement in sectional zones “as if diverging from the center of the bottom.” The second type is notable for its decorative rosette in the center and framed by bands, or ribbons (Smagulov 2018). The Kultobe pottery has geometric and floral designs and most often in combination with one another. Additionally, samples of so-called “free form” (indicated by abstractions in the form of drips, spots, dots, etc.), as well as designs of wavy lines using brushwork can be found.

But, in general, the compositional methods of decoration by Turkestani masters are not arbitrary, but subordinate to both zonal and concentric principles adopted in the Central Asian and southern Kazakhstani forms of pottery décor. In one case, the composition can fill the entire surface, and in others, only certain areas. Examples include designs that border the sides of the vessel, divide the surface into sections, or can be centered. Naturally, the use of a particular technique depended on the specifics of the product, its shape, and purpose as well as the level of skill and creative preferences of the potter. Even when the design on Kultobe dishes covered a significant part of the vessel's surface it still did not obstruct its shape. The ancient motifs and rich colors still bore the imprint of apotropaic and ritualistic meanings.

On the basis of this study, it can be stated that the shape, décor, and color of the considered ceramic products are the “links of one chain” (an expression by Elmira Gyul), which manifested the creative po-

tential of the Turkestani pottery masters. Thus, the ethnocultural features of the artistic style of late medieval pottery of Turkestan, imply, first, the potters' use of widely ranging combinations of contrasting and comparative primary colors (blue, yellow, red) with warm and cold combinations. Second, involved the use of “zonal,” “concentric,” and “abstract expressionism” as well as “brushwork” for the organizing of decorative space.

This present study does not cover the issues involving the traditional names of patterns that existed in the craft environment which is a linguo-cultural aspect; along with some other issues. In this regard, relevant questions pertaining to the creation of a database including traditional decorative features used by local potters at different times could serve as the basis for the further detailed study of this topic. This article should be considered a tentative study which outlines possible approaches for a more detailed study of the said problem.

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