

AMULET AS JEWEL, JEWEL AS AMULET UZBEK, TAJIK, AND KARAKALPAK AMULET CASES USING THE EXAMPLE OF MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

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ABSTRACT: The study presents amulet cases of the Uzbeks, Tajiks, and Karakalpaks from the late 19th century until the early 20th century taking example from the collections of the State Museum of Arts of Uzbekistan, Samarkand State Museum-Reserve, State Museum of Applied Art and History of Crafting of the Republic of Uzbekistan and National Museum – Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures, Czech Republic. In particular, the types and forms of amulet cases, material, processing technique, ornament, and the resulting ethnic and local specifics are analysed. The study aims to differentiate the characteristic features of this prominent group of Central Asian jewellery and thus contribute to the correct identification thereof in connection with professional museum work.

KEYWORDS: Amulet cases – jewellery – Uzbeks – Tajiks – Karakalpaks – museum collections

Introduction

This study deals with amulet cases from Central Asia, or more precisely mainly amulet cases of settled Uzbeks, plain Tajiks, and semi-nomadic Karakalpaks of the Emirate of Bukhara and the Khanate of Khiva from the late 19th century to the early 20th century using the example of the collections of the State Museum of Arts of Uzbekistan, Samarkand State Museum-Reserve, State Museum of Applied Art and History of Crafting of the Republic of Uzbekistan and National Museum – Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures, Czech Republic. The study takes into account the role they played and the functions that amulet cases assumed in the lives of the people of the aforementioned regions. Attention is placed mainly on their types and forms, local specifics, the material from which they were made, jewellery techniques, the ornament that decorated them, and last but not least outlines their origins and background.

The study aims to point out the specifics of amulet cases occurring in selected ethnic groups and present the local artistic styles of the area from the late 19th century to the early 20th century of which there are many documents available. An important

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part of the study is to catalogue the individual types of amulet cases that have been preserved in museum collections.

Amulet cases rank amongst the most popular and characteristic jewellery of Central Asian ethnic groups. By analysing the above-mentioned aspects of these jewels-amulets and the pictorial presentation of their representation in museum collections, this study aims to contribute to a broader knowledge of their specifics and to the correct identification thereof within professional museum work.

Roles and functions of amulet cases

Amulet cases were a widely worn and popular decoration of the region's inhabitants in the late 19th and early 20th centuries: Uzbeks, Tajiks, Karakalpaks, Turkmens, Kyrgyz, and Kazakhs. This was witnessed, for example, by the French photographer Hugues Krafft on his travels in Russian Turkestan in 1898–1899, who states in his book *A Travers le Turkestan Russe* (1902):

When it comes to jewellery, they love it and wear as many jewels as they can [...] they are cylindrical cases or small silver boxes containing talismans or perfumes, fastened with chains and clips on the chest.²

In many instances, amulet cases were known in the region as *tumar*. Usually, it was a silver or gilded case, in which an amulet was placed as protection against evil spirits, especially against the evil eye, disease, and infertility. The word '*tumar*'³ derived from Arabic meaning a prayer written on paper.⁴ Prayers from the *Quran*, which most frequently served as a protective amulet inserted into a metal case, were usually written by *mullahs* for a small fee.⁵ In addition to prayers and various congratulatory formulas, other objects such as sharp objects, medicinal herbs, animal fur, coal, coins or salt⁶ were placed into the cases and were given magical meanings. The Khwarezmian Uzbeks are reported to have had a tradition of inserting hair from a child's first haircut into a silver *tumar*, which was then attached to their cap or the back of their clothing; this coincided with a belief in the protective power of hair.⁷ In the case of a serious illness, healers and shamans were able to restore people's health using the hair or nails placed

2 Krafft 1902, p. 152; translation by the authors. Hugues Krafft (1853–1935), on his journey through Russian Turkestan, took photographs of the local women, which he published in his book *A Travers le Turkestan Russe*. The photographs of women are valuable mainly because it was not possible to photograph women at the time, owing to the Muslim faith. According to Krafft himself, he was only allowed to photograph Jewish women, with the permission of their husbands and prostitutes. (Krafft 1902, pp.).

3 In Ancient Turkish, the term *bitig* was used for an amulet (*Drevnetiurksky slovar*, 1969, p. 3). Among the Tatars, this term was preserved in the form of *beti*, which was an amulet in the form of a triangle made of leather (Rashitov 2021, p. 27).

4 Fakhretdinova 1988, p. 141.

5 Sukhareva 1982, p. 108. In Central Asia, the name *mulla* is commonly used for local Islamic clerics.

6 For example, among the Turkmens, either a piece of paper with verses from the *Quran* or salt wrapped in a piece of cloth was inserted in *tumars* of a cylindrical form (attached to little boys' caps). (Vasil'eva 1986, p. 188).

7 Firshtein 1978, pp. 202–203.

into the *tumar*.⁸ These various objects placed in amulet cases suggest that the origin of this type of jewellery dates back to the pre-Islamic period and is often associated with the culture of nomadic herders. The subsequent significant expansion of this group of amulets amongst different ethnic groups can be explained by the migration of nomadic tribes. Under the influence of nomadic artistic and ritual tradition, amulet cases became popular amongst settled agricultural (rural and urban) societies. With the adoption of Islam, the amulet case changed its content. It became a case into which suras written on paper were inserted, and thus it transformed into an amulet, which is directly related to the holy book of Islam – the *Quran*, while retaining the echoes of earlier magical ideas.⁹

Amulet cases were most frequently of triangular, rectangular, and cylindrical shapes, equipped with various metal pendants, chains, and beads. They were attached to headgear, to clothing, worn as a single piece and in pairs on the neck, arms, chest, and in the armpits (most frequently using chains placed over the shoulder), i.e., in places that were in the greatest danger or most vulnerable in the situation.¹⁰

The amulet case was an integral part of the children's clothing and bride's trousseau. The trousseau usually contained several amulet cases, mainly of triangular and cylindrical forms, which were to ensure not only protection but also the fertility of the bride. Women wore these amulets until the birth of the first, sometimes the second child. In the case of frequent deaths of newborns, they were worn permanently.¹¹

Since the amulet case also performed an aesthetic function in addition to its magical function, attention was also paid to its jewellery design. The choice of material for the amulet case and its ornament were also, however, aimed at ensuring the protection of its owner from evil spirits.



Fig. 1. A young Karakalpak woman with a *tumarsha* amulet case (Aziatskaia Rossia 1914).

8 Information from the designer Aizhan Bekkulova, Kazakhstan, 2021.

9 Gyul 2008.

10 Fakhretdinova 1988, p. 141.

11 Borozna 1975, p. 291.

Types and forms of amulet cases

As already mentioned, amulet cases were in many cases known as *tumar*. However, depending on how it was worn, the amulet case could have had a different name. In addition, amulet cases had different names in different Central Asian ethnic groups, but their essence remained the same. Amulet cases differed not only in the form but also in the place they were worn. Their position on the body changed over time, however; in the 19th century, a precisely defined place for the amulet case was no longer observed, but was allowed to hang where required in the given situation.¹²

Originally, several basic types of amulet cases were distinguished. These were cases worn on the neck, chest, and in the armpits either separately or in pairs. In the terminology of individual Central Asian ethnic groups, however, certain differences in the names of the same type of amulet cases can be found, or, conversely, the same names for their different types.

With the Uzbeks and Tajiks, the neck amulet was called *buyin tumar* (*buyin* – ‘neck’).¹³ The case took the form of a triangle, which was often decorated at the top with a ram’s horn motif, here called *ikki shokhlik* – ‘two-horned’ [No.1]. The composition of the pattern was fully subject to the form of the amulet. In the central triangular field, the floral motif was most often engraved or stamped, sometimes highlighted with a blackening technique. The border was often decorated with stamped ornaments or turquoise cabochons. A number of small pyramids were created by the granulation technique on the hypotenuse of the triangle, which symbolized the grapes of a vine. In the lower part, there were hanging chains with various pendants which mostly consisted of beads of mother-of-pearl or coral. The metal pendants included, for example, coins and small needles called *zilzila* – ‘earthquake’, which they were probably supposed to protect from. The *tumars* were decorated mainly with metal pendants in the shape of a diamond with stamped motifs, or in the shape of leaves called simply *bargak* – ‘leaf’.¹⁴ Bells were relatively frequent pendants, especially on the large amulet cases of the Karakalpaks, whose sound, along with other hanging ornaments, drove away evil spirits. Triangular-shaped amulets in the 19th century did not only serve for decoration of the neck. They were also worn on skullcaps, temples, chest, and on the back. Rectangular and cylindrical amulet cases were also worn around the neck. In the early 20th century, floral motifs in the central field were replaced with the inscriptions *zebi tumar* – ‘*tumar* – ornament’ –, which emphasised its aesthetic function. *Tumars* were also made without a lid at a later point and gradually lost their original significance of storing the amulet.¹⁵

The breast amulet of the Uzbeks and Tajiks, called *kokrak tumar* (*kokrak* – ‘chest’), consisted of a rectangular and cylindrical case. Tashkent and Samarkand jewellers also

12 Fakhretdinova 1988, p. 144.

13 Among the Kazakhs, the term *boitumor* was used to refer to a case of a cylindrical form, *tumorsha* was triangular and rectangular, *koltyksha* was worn in the armpit (Gyul 2008). Turkmens use the term *tumar* to refer to an amulet case consisting of a triangular component joined at the base to a hollow cylinder, which is edged with chains and pendants (Diba 2011, p. 170; Khramov 2003, pp. 83–87; Star 2008, p. 81).

14 Borozna 1975, p. 288. Identical pendants in the Kazakhs are called *zhylan basy* – ‘snake head’, the same as they call the cowrie shells (Tokhtabaeva 1991, p. 98).

15 Fakhretdinova 1988, p. 143.

produced paired *qosh tumar* in the form of rectangular cases with rounded edges that were connected by chains [No. 2]. The decoration was similar to the *buyin tumar*. The *qosh tumar* (*qosh* – ‘united’) amulet case was worn not only on the chest, but also served as a braid accessory.

With the Uzbeks and Tajiks, an amulet case worn in the armpit (most frequently using chains placed over the shoulder) was called *qoltiq tumar* (*qoltiq* – ‘armpit’) *tumar* [Nos. 3–4]. This *tumar* of Tashkent and Kokand jewellers was a rectangular case similar in design to the *qosh tumar*. In particular, the inscription ‘*zebi tumar*’ was used as a decoration placed between the motifs of plant shoots in the central field. In the early 20th century, a clock face motif also appeared on Tashkent *qoltiq tumars*. Like other amulet cases, the *qoltiq tumar* was also worn on the chest. *Tumars* worn over the shoulder were designed to protect the human soul, which leaves the body through the armpits. This idea can also be associated with the sewing of decorated textile wedges into the armpits of clothes, which were called *kulfak* in the Tajiks – ‘little lock’.¹⁶

Amulet cases, which have different forms in different ethnicities, include *haykel* (*haykal*). For the Karakalpaks, the *haykel* [No. 5] was one of the most important pieces of a bride’s jewellery. It is a large silver breast jewellery made of silver, decorated with an engraved or chased pattern, sometimes gilded, with filigree, three to nine carnelians, or coloured glass. The central part of the *haykel* consists of a long, flattened tube with a removable cap, which is used to store the amulet. The shape of the upper part had four different variants – horns bent upwards, horns bent downwards, three separate figures ending in stylised lilies, and a single narrowing lily.¹⁷ The lower part consisted of a plaque to which a fringe of chains, decorated platelets, and sometimes bells attached.

In Samarkand and Tashkent, the *haykel* took the form of large medallions sometimes in the shape of a cross, resembling a human figure.¹⁸ In the Lakai Uzbeks (also in the Turkmen),¹⁹ it mostly took the form of a metal, leather, or textile bag and commonly of a square shape, which was worn over the shoulder. This type of *haykel* was used to store the *Quran*. Many researchers believe that this case originally housed an amulet in the form of a figurine of a deity, the wearing of which was later eliminated by Islam. This opinion is also supported by the meaning of the word ‘*haykel*’ itself in Persian, but also in Turkic languages, translated as ‘statue, memorial, monument, idol’. The mountain Tajiks use another term, *haykaldon* – ‘case for a statuette’ –, and as early as the early 20th century, Tajik women wore an amulet depicting the female demon *albasty*²⁰ on paper. They also embroidered an imaginary form of *albasty* on a sheet intended for the wedding night.²¹ In this context, it is worth mentioning that the Pamir Kyrgyz people use an ornamental motif of *kaykalak*, in the form of a sloping cross, often explained as a stylised human figure with limbs stretched out in four directions.²² Evidence of the

16 Fakhretdinova 1988, pp. 144–145.

17 Allamuratov 1989, p. 78

18 Sukhareva 1975, p. 33.

19 The Turkmen decorated the front of the leather *haykel* with a silver plate with an engraved plant ornament, gilding, and carnelians.

20 *Albasty* represented a demon in the form of a woman with long breasts and hair outside Central Asia as well. It harmed women and their fertility in particular. If a person managed to overpower her, however, she became his helper.

21 Gyul 2013, p. 80.

22 Sukhareva 1982, p. 123.

use of deity figures as amulets can also be found in written sources. In his work *Tarikh-i Bukhara* (History of Bukhara), the Bukhara scholar and historian Muhammad Narshahi (ca. 899–959 CE) talks about the daily sale of idols at the bazaar in Bukhara.²³ The tradition of making ‘pocket’ figurines was probably a legacy of earlier periods, which left a large number of terracotta portraits of various cult figures. With the strengthening of the position of Islam and the consequent struggle against the worship of idols, this practice ceased.

Amulet cases of a cylindrical form called *bozuband* [Figs. 2–3; Nos. 6–7] were very popular especially amongst Uzbeks and Tajiks. It is a horizontally worn ‘tube’ on both sides ending with cupolas, one of which forms the cap. The techniques of stamping, filigree, granulation, enamel, and blackening were the most frequently used in surface decoration. The cupolas were often lined with turquoise cabochons. The ornament was most frequently made up of floral and geometric motifs, and various Arabic inscriptions used. Coral beads and metal pendants were often hung on several eyelets attached to the bottom of the *bozuband*. *Bozuband* was attached to a short chain with a hook to attach to clothing or on which to hang another piece of jewellery. Amulet cases of this form were worn on the arms, chest, headgear, and in the armpits.

In India, however, the term *bazuband* refers to a bracelet worn on the arm below the shoulder, which usually consisted of three interconnected parts. The upper part is decorated with precious stones, while the lower part is made with the enamel technique. A golden, elaborate *bazuband* is a sign of grandeur. Also, in Iran, the *bazuband* (*bazu* – ‘arm, shoulder’, *band* – ‘tape, ribbon’) in the form of a bracelet was a common decoration.²⁴ Due to the form and name of the Central Asian cylindrical amulet cases, it is believed that these amulet cases originated from bracelets originally worn on the arm. The Uzbek researcher D. A. Fakhretdinova adds another theory to the topic of cylindrical amulet cases which, in her opinion, originally had a utilitarian function. They were created as imitations of hollow animal bones, in which needles were stored and thus served as needle cases. The needle itself can be considered an amulet.²⁵ The term *bozuband* did not only, however, refer to cylindrical amulet cases in Central Asia. In the 19th century, the term was also used in Bukhara to refer to rarely worn amulets in the form of a medallion made of carnelian with calligraphic inscriptions created by Indian and Iranian jewellers. The carnelians decorated in this way were then inserted by the Bukhara jewellers into a silver bed decorated with turquoise, corals, and pendants. These amulet-medallions were worn on the chest or the back.²⁶

With the Karakalpaks, the silver amulet case of the cylindrical form was called *tumar*. If the case was decorated with carnelians or coloured glass, it was called *tumarsha* [Fig. 1]. Larger examples were worn on chains around the neck while smaller ones were sewn into clothing.²⁷

23 Narshahi 1897, p. 30.

24 Untracht 1997, pp. 250–251, 354.

25 Fakhretdinova 1988, p. 148.

26 Fakhretdinova 1988, p. 149. For the sake of completeness, it is worth mentioning that in the Teke and Salor Turkmens, *bez bent* represented a large circular ornament made of silver, decorated in the middle with a carnelian, which was attached to the back of the festive mantle. Sometimes two amulet cases of a cylindrical form were also attached to this type of *bez bent*. The Turkmens were also known to use a pair of circular *bez bents*, worn on the shoulders (Vasil'eva 1986, pp. 186–187).

27 Richardson and Richardson 2009, *Ha'ykel*.

Amulet cases consisting of all three basic forms, are no exception. In Khwarezm, they were called *duo tuzi* – ‘prayer – pendant’ or ‘prayer – ornament’. In the centre of this richly decorated amulet was a rectangular case. The upper part was in the shape of a triangle and in the lower part, a case of a cylindrical form with rich pendants was placed. All three parts were connected so that they could move. The *duo tuzi* was worn in pairs on the head in the area of the temples, but also on both sides of the chest. It was called *kokrak tuzi* in this case.²⁸ a variant of the cylindrical form is also the Uzbek *oltyn tumar* – ‘golden *tumar*’, which consisted of two to four hexagonal tubes with cupolas on the sides. They were decorated with the same technique as cylindrical *bozubands*.



Fig. 2. An Uzbek girl from Tashkent with a pair of *bozuband* amulet cases (Krafft 1902, p. 154)



Fig. 3. A young Uzbek woman with a *bozuband* amulet case hanging from a rich coral necklace (Aziatskaia Rossia 1914)

Material and jewellery-making techniques

The most important precious metal used in the crafting of jewellery was silver. There was a widespread belief in its magical power in Central Asia and seeing silver in a dream meant great wealth.²⁹ Due to its high price, gold was rarely used, but especially in the late 19th century, the technique of gilding was widely used.

Precious stones or their imitations were an important decoration of amulet cases. The most frequently used were turquoise, carnelian, lazurite, garnet, ruby, and beryl. Jewellery was also commonly decorated with mother-of-pearl beads, corals, and cowrie

²⁸ Fakhretdinova 1988, p. 150.

²⁹ Tokhtabaeva 1991, p. 92.

shells.³⁰ One available imitation of precious stones was coloured glass, especially red,³¹ green, and blue, which replaced the expensive ruby, emerald, and sapphire. Especially in the late 19th century, light blue opaque glass was widely used, serving as an imitation of the popular turquoise.³² Transparent glass was also inserted into the jewellery, which was placed on coloured foil.

Turquoise (*firuz* or *piruz*) and coral (*marjon*) were the most characteristic of the Tajik and Uzbek amulet cases, while carnelian was especially popular with the Karakalpaks. The popularity of turquoise was associated with the name of this stone (from Persian '*firuz*' or '*piruz*') meaning 'victory, victorious'. The amulet, decorated with turquoise, thus gained another magical ability. As far as coral is concerned, women believed it could help them become pregnant. Precious stones are traditionally perceived as objects endowed with healing and protective abilities that affect a person's destiny. Individual types of stones played specific roles in the protection of their wearer. Turquoise strengthened the heart, suppressed fear, brought victory, protected against enemies, drowning, from being struck by lightning, and from dangerous animals such as snakes and scorpions. Girls and women also wore turquoise to win the love of their chosen man.³³ Coral, as a marine organism of a bright red colour, was guaranteed to strengthen a woman's reproductive abilities and also protected her against the evil eye. Garnet protected against mental illness, mother-of-pearl relieved the heart of sadness and worry, strengthened eyesight, stopped bleeding, and treated inflammation of internal organs,³⁴ while carnelian protected against the evil eye.³⁵

Central Asian jewellers used traditional jewellery decorative techniques, including filigree, granulation, stamping, chasing, engraving, inlay, enamel, blackening, and gilding.³⁶ The *tagnishin* technique was widely used by Bukhara jewellers, especially in the 19th century. The name of this technique derives from the Persian term *tah nishin* – 'sitting below'.³⁷ In northern India, a technique with a similar name was known – *tah-i-nishan*, which was a method of inlaying metal with gold or silver.³⁸ The Bukharan *tagnishin* technique consisted of inlaying metal with tiny turquoises. Honeycomb-like cells were formed on the smooth surface of the jewellery using a silver, flattened wire

30 *Cypraea moneta*, or cowrie shells, were widely used throughout Central Asia. They served not only as an ornament, but above all as an amulet protecting against the evil eye.

31 In Central Asia, red glass for jewelry was later also obtained from broken traffic lights. This is mentioned by witnesses in the Facebook group *Starie fotografii Srednei Azii* (Old Photographs of Central Asia). Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/682887498550984/search/?q=семафорное%20>. Although this information does not come from professional works, the authors consider it appropriate to mention it.

32 Fakhretdinova 1988, p. 74.

33 Borozna 1975, p. 292.

34 Fakhretdinova 1988, p. 74.

35 Tokhtabaeva 1991, p. 91.

36 Pisarchik 1987, p. 30.

37 *A Dictionary of the Persian and English Languages*, 1885, p. 179.

38 This technique developed in northern India mainly in the period from the 17th to the 19th centuries and was highly valued. A groove was cut into the metal, in which silver or gold was applied. Connoisseurs call this 'true inlay' in English, as opposed to 'overlay' where gold or silver only adheres to the surface of an object. In the late 19th century, the quality of this technique began to decline greatly and consisted only in the surface application of gold or silver. (Hendley 1892, pp. 7–9).

1–1.5 mm thick, into which shape-matched turquoises were set, additionally fixed with filler. The entire surface was finally polished smooth.

Enamel (*cloisonné*, *champlevé*) was also a common technique used in jewellery, but it was the *basma* – ‘imprint’ – stamping that was widely used.³⁹ For various separate details of jewellery, metal matrices were produced, most often with floral, geometric, and zoomorphic motifs and patterns. A thin sheet of metal was placed over the matrix, and with the aid of a sheet of lead and a hammer, it was beaten into the matrix so that the entire pattern was embossed and became three-dimensional. The *basma* technique was also used to decorate the whole body of the jewellery. Many decorations were only made from a thin metal sheet filled with a special filler, which made the jewellery look more solid. Hollow cupolas and spheres were also created using the *basma* technique. The spheres were created from two separately stamped hemispheres, which were then soldered together.

Chasing and engraving in flat relief were also used to decorate the metal. The pattern was applied without the use of templates, using only a cane pen, which indicated the basic lines. The sophistication and picturesqueness of the ornament then depended only on the talent of the jeweller himself.

Uzbek and Tajik amulet cases were also richly decorated with filigree and granulation. Karakalpak jewellers preferred engraving and stamping when decorating jewellery, and filigree was used to a lesser extent. Bukhara and Samarkand amulet cases of the cylindrical form, created with the open filigree technique, were especially renowned for their impressive artistic design [No. 8]. By means of granulation, various geometric patterns were created on the amulet cases and it was also used to decorate the edges of the cases.

The engraved ornament on silver was also highlighted with the blackening technique (*niello*, *tula*). Several recipes for this technique are known in Central Asia. One way was to melt five parts lead, one part sulphur, and one part silver. This alloy was then filed when cold to create a dust that was sprinkled into the hollows in the pattern that had been spread with glue. The jewellery was then held over hot coals in order to melt the mixture. The product was further finished with a file, polished with metal dust, and cleaned with felt.⁴⁰

It should be noted that in addition to jewellery amulets, some Central Asian ethnic groups also wore triangular textile amulets. The Karakalpaks referred to them as *zhauyrynsha* and *duashik* – small triangles made of red fabric. The size of these amulets varied, ranging from 4 × 4 up to 26 × 20 cm. *Zhauyrynsha* were most often sewn to the back of children’s and men’s clothing, such as winter coats (*ton*, *postyn*). They were decorated with fine embroidery of silk threads, at the bottom with fringes and tassels of silk threads (sometimes with beads at the ends), or thin braids of hair.⁴¹ Sewn coins from the late 19th and early 20th century or from the Soviet period can also be found on individual specimens. The way the amulet was worn on the back had its own logic, as explained by its name ‘*zhauyryn*’ – ‘scapula, shoulder

39 This technique was also used in other types of arts and crafts, such as ceramics, colour print and artistic leather processing. The term *basma* also occurs in Central Asian embroidery. In this case, it is the name of one of the types of stitches.

40 Ivanov and Antipina 1968, p. 99.

41 Bogoslovskaja 2019, pp. 138–139.

bone'. The back was considered the part of the body that was most vulnerable and needed protection.

Duashik was attached to a reed mat (*esik*) that covered the entrance to the yurt. Again, this is protective magic – evil forces shall not pass through such a protected door. The word '*duashik*' derived from the word '*dua*', meaning supplication, prayer addressed to God. This name was also not coincidental, however, as a piece of paper with written prayers from the *Quran* was sewn into the amulet. It is highly probable that various fruits and seeds of aromatic plants, such as onion, garlic, pepper, harmala, or caraway, which have the power to drive away evil forces, were originally sewn into such a fabric case.⁴²

Ornament

Of the utmost important elements of the amulet case was its ornament which also had magical properties. The motifs used were to protect the wearer of the amulet case against evil spirits and ensure fertility and happiness. The Islamic prohibition against depicting living beings on objects of a religious nature gave rise to the predominance of floral and geometric patterns. Amulet cases, as a pre-Islamic heritage, also remained decorated, however, with zoomorphic motifs; this was mainly about depicting the horns of totem animals. Texts from the *Quran*, congratulatory formulas, and the names of important people were also used to decorate amulet cases. Amulet cases became a kind of synthesis of pre-Islamic (folk magic) and Islamic (inscriptions from the *Quran*) ideas, i.e. An expression of 'folk Islam'.

As for the amulet cases of rectangular and triangular forms, the decoration was usually divided compositionally into a central field with a wide border which formed several rows. The area of the cylindrical case was often divided into several border strips or the whole was decorated with repeating floral and geometric motifs. The floral motifs were most frequently various stylised flowers, leaves or vine, or bindweed shoots symbolising wealth and vitality. Especially popular was the almond *bodom* motif – a symbol of fertility. Amongst the Uzbeks, newborns and women at the time of childbirth were protected from evil forces by amulets resembling an almond or bell pepper (*kalampir*) which is very similar to the almond motif but took a more elongated form. In general, the *bodom* motif is known by the Persian term *mir-e boteh*, translated as the 'Lord of the Fire Pit', which probably refers to the ancient Persian cult of fire, Anahita, which flourished especially during the reign of the last pre-Islamic dynasty of the Sasanians (224–651 CE). It is probable that *boteh* was reinterpreted in Central Asia as *bodom* in a later vernacular Turkification, although with its curved tip it is not very similar to an almond. In this context, it is worth mentioning that in Khwarezm, the cult of Anahita can be traced up until recently.⁴³ This motif is very popular in Central Asia, and its origin is also sought by some researchers in the depiction of a bird, having acquired this form as a result of gradual stylisation.⁴⁴ The bird was a traditional and very popular motif associated primarily with happiness. It also symbolised the human soul and was considered a mediator between the real and mythical worlds. It was probably also associated with the image of Khvarenah, divine

42 Paine 2004, pp. 136, 138.

43 Seiwert 2009, pp. 199, 201.

44 Bogoslovskaja and Levteeva 2006, pp. 46–47.

grace descending from heaven on wings.⁴⁵ The depiction of birds in jewellery was very popular, especially among Kokand jewellers.⁴⁶

Frequently used zoomorphic motifs included depictions of horns, most often rams' horns, representing strength and protection. This motif is very ancient and is widely used amongst many Turkic ethnic groups from Siberia to Asia Minor. The ram (*qochqor*) had primarily a protective significance. A ram's skull was attached to the door of the house or placed in orchards. In families where sons often died, the newborn was given the name *Qochqor*, which was to reflect the power of the totem animal and protect the child. The Khwarezmian Uzbeks often kept a ram in the house, as it was believed that evil would be caught in its corners, where it would lose its power. In addition, rams served as sacrificial animals and their scapula was used for divination. In Central Asia, the ram was also referred to as *rahmoni*, derived from the Arabic word *Ar-Rahmān* – 'Merciful' –, which is one of God's names in Islam.⁴⁷

The motif of horns, especially the spiral variant, is also explained as an old cosmological motif symbolising the universe and eternal motion. Horns in the form of two spirals decorated mainly the upper part of the amulet and are seen mainly on the amulet cases of the Karakalpaks. This is not a coincidence. Despite converting to Islam, the pastoral society still retained their original magical ideas. Geometric ornaments and forms also had their magical meaning. The circle traditionally symbolised the universe and celestial bodies, especially the Sun and the Moon, protecting people from impure forces. The square represented the four sides of the Earth. The triangle was predominantly associated with fertility – the tip upwards symbolized the masculine principle, the tip downwards the feminine principle.⁴⁸ a usual geometric motif was also a rhombus which is also referred to as a symbol of the feminine principle, as a solar symbol, or understood in a broader sense as a symbol of fertility.⁴⁹

In general, the development of forms and ornament was a complex and ambiguous process. The set of traditional motifs gradually changed. In the early 20th century, as the belief in the magic of amulet cases weakened and they began to be worn as ordinary jewellery, innovations such as the clock face motif appeared [Fig. 4]. It is likely that such a 'novelty' indicated that women tried to conform to European fashion and disbelieve old prejudices. The same clock faces were stamped on women's metal bracelets, which were to imitate a wristwatch.

45 Khvarenah is an Avestan word for a Zoroastrian concept literally denoting 'glory' or 'splendour' but understood as a divine mystical force or power projected upon and aiding the appointed. The term also means '(divine) royal glory', reflecting the perceived divine empowerment of kings. The term also carries a secondary meaning of 'fortune'; those who possess it are able to complete their mission or function (Lubotsky 1998).

46 Borozna 1975, p. 283. Not only depictions, but mainly bird feathers and claws were one of the most frequently used amulets against evil spirits in Central Asia. Feathers and claws were attached to clothing (especially children's and women's hats) and also formed part of the jewellery.

47 Bogoslovskaja and Levteeva 2006, p. 48.

48 Bogoslovskaja and Levteeva 2006, p. 48.

49 Bogoslovskaja and Levteeva 2006, p. 49.



Fig. 4. Amulet case with a clock face motif. Early 20th century, Samarkand, private collection.

Conclusion

The types of jewellery in Central Asia were designed not only to decorate, but also to protect their wearer, especially from the evil eye. It was in amulet cases, however, that the protective function was of paramount importance. In this respect, amulet cases hold a special place within jewellery production in this area.

Amulet cases, which were already made in the pre-Islamic period (it is difficult to talk about the exact dating), maintained their popularity up until the beginning of the 20th century. They were originally associated with pagan protective magic. Later, with the spread of Islam, the amulet cases were adapted perfectly to the new cultural context. They no longer contained sharp objects, medicinal herbs, hair, and other means against evil spirits, but pieces of paper with written sacred formulas or prayers. With their new content, the amulet cases were thus connected primarily with the holy book of the Islamic religion – the *Quran*. Amulet cases are a prominent example of folk Islam which combines Islamic (texts from the *Quran*) and pre-Islamic (belief in the protective function of the amulet, totem symbols in ornament) elements.

The amulet cases of the Karakalpaks, whose name '*haykel*' in all probability refers to the worship of idols, demonstrate the closest connection with the pre-Islamic faith. As a reflection of the belief in the protection of the power of totem animals, the preservation of the horn motif is also more typical of the Karakalpak amulet cases. Cylindrical cases of the *bozuband* type are in all probability amongst the earliest forms of amulet cases and are closest to a possible prototype – a hollow bone in which a sewing needle was kept.

The form and the ornament of the amulet cases of the settled population were changing. The most popular, however, were rectangular amulet cases, the appearance of which is often associated with the boards of the *Quran*. The cylindrical form is preserved, however, in later specimens.

By the late 19th century, amulet cases had appeared in Bukhara, the form of which completely loses its functionality. These are cylindrical *bozubands* made with the open filigree technique into which nothing could be inserted. This transformation is quite legitimate. It indicates that the protective properties of the inserted objects moved to the very form of the jewellery and were no longer needed. Another example of the reassessment of the functionality of amulet cases are Tashkent *qolliq tumars* from the early 20th century with a picture of a clock face on their front. These kinds of *tumars* probably had nothing to do with protective magic. Rather, they appeared as a result of European (Russian) influences, the desire of women to have a fashionable, but not widely affordable, accessory such as a watch.

After the amulet cases underwent a transformation – from an amulet case to a decorative ornament that lost its function as a case – they gradually began to disappear from normal use. Their decline was associated with ideological changes in society, the strengthening of atheism, and the simplification of the jewellery set of Central Asian women.

No. 1

Buyin tumar amulet case

Uzbeks, Tajiks, Tashkent

Late 19th century

Silver alloy, gilding, blackening, granulation, glass, pearls

6 × 7.3 cm

State Museum of Arts of Uzbekistan, Inv. No. 3

Buyin tumar in the form of a triangle; its top is decorated with a motif of ram horns. The ornament of the triangular part is completely subject to its form. A smaller triangle is highlighted in relief, in which a floral motif is depicted in the blackening technique in the centre. It is framed by a border with turquoise glass cabochons. A series of small pyramids made with the granulation technique are at the bottom of the amulet. Attached to them are pendants with pearls, garnets, and small metal details.

No. 2

Qosh tumar amulet case

Uzbeks, Tajiks, Tashkent

1910

Silver, gilding, blackening, red coral, glass

12 × 6 cm, 219.7 g

State Museum of Arts of Uzbekistan, Inv. No. 6

Qosh tumar was always worn in pairs. Both cases are of a rectangular shape with rounded edges. There is a protruding elongated medallion with an extended centre and ends on the front. The medallion is decorated with floral motifs in the blackening technique and is framed by glass turquoise cabochons (most of them are now missing). The motif of large ram's horns above the rectangular case is also decorated in the same way. The lower parts of the cases are decorated with pendants consisting of coral beads, openwork beads and metal 'bells'. The cases are connected to each other by a chain with pendants of the same type.

No. 3

Qolitiq tumar amulet case

Uzbeks, Tajiks, Bukhara

Early 20th century

Silver alloy, gilding, blackening, red coral, glass

11 × 7 cm

Samarkand State Museum-Reserve, Inv. No. KP-3429/2 E-79-377

A rectangular *tumar* with a slight cut-out at the top indicating that it was worn over the shoulder, like a small bag. The front of the case is chased, decorated with gilding and blackening. The composition of the ornament consists of a central field framed by several borders. One of the borders is inlaid with turquoise glass cabochons. At the bottom are attached pendants made of corals and coins. Attached to the amulet are four chains, which form a kind of wide strap which was thrown over the shoulder when worn or used as a regular necklace. Rectangular medallions are attached in six places along the entire length of the chains allowing the chains to be kept in a single strap. The case with chains is connected by stamped medallions with pendants.

No. 4

Qolitiq tumar amulet case

Uzbeks, Tajiks, Bukhara

Early 20th century

Silver alloy, gilding, blackening, red coral, glass

11 × 7 cm

Samarkand State Museum-Reserve, Inv. No. KP-3394/3 E-79-292

A rectangular *tumar* with a slight cut-out at the top indicating that it was worn over the shoulder, like a small bag. The front of the case is chased, decorated with gilding and blackening. The decoration apparently imitates the boards of the *Quran*. At the bottom are attached pendants consisting of coins.

The amulet is hung on four chains and forms a kind of wide strap that was worn over the shoulder. In six places along the entire length, the chains are connected by four rectangular medallions and two cabochons which allow maintaining the shape of a single strap. The chains are attached to the case using stamped medallions decorated with a pair of horns with coral pendants.

No. 5a

Haykel amulet case without pendants

Karakalpaks

Late 19th century

Silver, gilding, chasing, filigree, cornelian

14 × 10 cm, 116.4 g

State Museum of Applied Art and History of Crafting of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Inv. No. KP-5867-419

Haykel consists of interconnected parts: a flattened cylindrical hollow case, a top and a bottom part. The case is decorated with three carnelians. The top part is formed with

three stylised lilies, each of which is also decorated with carnelian. The bottom plate is rectangular, decorated with three rhombi with flower motifs. Along the edges of the plate are motifs of half-palmettes which were very typical of the artistic metal of the pre-Islamic period. The pendants of this *haykel*, as well as the strap with which the case was worn on the chest, have not been preserved. In general, its design is dominated by a floral theme – motifs of flowers as symbols of fertility.

No. 5b

Haykel amulet case with pendants

Karakalpaks

Late 19th century

Silver, gilding, chasing, stamping, filigree, carnelian, glass

18.5 × 18.5 cm, 1.20 cm, 269.6 g

State Museum of Applied Art and History of Crafting of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Inv. No. KP-5866-418

Haykel was considered one of the main ornaments of the Karakalpak bride and was worn throughout the fertile age of the woman. This *haykel* consists of three interconnected parts: a cylindrical flattened hollow case decorated with four carnelians, a top plate, and a bottom plate. The top plate is in the shape of horns and is decorated with carnelian in the centre. It is believed that the horns twisted upwards to represent a bull and the horns twisted downwards to represent a ram. If we stick to this interpretation, this amulet bears the image of a bull. In many early cultures, the bull was considered a symbol of fertility, the natural elements, and the embodiment of the cosmic beginning. Its significance as a symbol of fertility is emphasised by a floral ornament consisting of motifs of spiral shoots (*islimi*) on the bottom plate. Using chains, stamped pendants in the form of rosettes, rhombi (grains), and bells are attached to it in rows.

At both ends, a wide strap is attached to the *haykel*, consisting of plates decorated with carnelians, by means of which the amulet case was worn as breast jewellery.

No. 6

Bozuband amulet case

Uzbeks, Tajiks, Bukhara

Early 20th century

Silver, stamping, enamel, red coral, cork

L. 7.2 cm, diam. 1.2 cm

National Museum – Náprstek Museum, Czech Republic, Inv. No. A 18 439

A representative of a functional amulet case. One of the cupolas with a cork stopper serves as a closure. *Bozuband* is all silver and is decorated in the *basma* technique. The body of the case is vertically lined with three border strips with an elaborate motif of small flowers and leaves on a winding culm. The cupolas are puttied inside and decorated with the same border strip on the surface along the edges. The only difference in the decoration here is the use of the deep blue *champlevé* technique. Four small pendants with coral beads are attached in a row at the bottom. The case is hung on two short chains with corals, which are connected by a small hook used to attach to clothing or to a set of other jewellery.

No. 7

Bozuband amulet case

Uzbeks, Tajiks, Tashkent

Early 20th century

Silver, parcel-gilt, stamping, red coral, glass

L. 8.2 cm, diam. 1.5 cm

National Museum – Náprstek Museum, Czech Republic, Inv. No. A 18 434

Bozuband consists of a fully puttied, metal shell which loses the original meaning of the case into which an amulet was inserted. The silver casing is gilded and decorated with the *basma* stamping technique. The ornament consists of three rhombi. Inside each of them is a flower motif, the centre of which is decorated with turquoise cabochon. These are not real turquoises, but are turquoise glass. The area around the ornament is decorated with a fine diagonal grid. The cupolas on the sides are created using silver border strips decorated with stamping and a series of turquoise cabochons and a gilded, slightly conical rosette. The *bozuband* is hung on two short chains with corals and green glass beads (one is now missing). The chains are connected using a diamond-shaped medallion, which is decorated in the central field with a flower motif in the stamping technique and is lined with small turquoise glass cabochons. In addition, the edges of the medallion are lined with granulation and a small hook is attached to the top. The bottom part consists of a series of pendants made of corals, hollow silver beads and leaves. The leaves are made of silver plate and the edges are decorated with a stamped motif of arches. Smaller gilded leaves with a flower motif are soldered on them.

No. 8

Bozuband amulet case

Uzbeks, Tajiks, Bukhara

Early 20th century

Gold, filigree, granulation, red coral

L. 5 cm, diam. 1.2 cm

State Museum of Arts of Uzbekistan, Inv. No. 196

Bozuband made using the open filigree technique, making it impossible to put anything in the case. This solution indicates a gradual neglect of the original significance of *tumars*. The lower part is decorated with three small pyramids created using the granulation technique. Coral beads are probably a later addition.

No. 9

Tumar amulet case

Uzbeks, Tajiks, Tashkent

Early 20th century

Silver, parcel-gilt, stamping, turquoise, glass, red coral

2.5 × 5.3 cm

National Museum – Náprstek Museum, Czech Republic, Inv. No. A 18 440

A rectangular *tumar* fully puttied inside. The front part is gilded and decorated with the stamping technique. The central field is formed by a protruding rectangular relief with

geometric and floral motifs. The central motif of the ornament consists of a stylised flower decorated in the middle with a rectangular turquoise and four turquoise glass cabochons on the sides. Others are set around the lateral motifs. The border consists of a number of small stamped flowers. The back of the case is silver decorated with a diagonal grid. Pendants consisting of corals and silver or gilded leaves are attached on the sides and in the lower part. At the top are three eyelets with corals attached to a silver medallion of irregular shape with a floral ornament. At the top of the medallion is an eyelet used to thread a chain or to attach a hook.

No. 10

Amulet case of the *bozuband* type

Uzbeks, Tajiks, Bukhara

Early 20th century

Silver, engraving, red coral

6 × 2.5 × 0.8 cm

State Museum of Arts of Uzbekistan, Inv. No. VP-742

A small *bozuband*-type amulet case in the form of a hollow flat oval case with an engraved ornament consisting of motifs of four-leaf rosettes on a gridded background. The case is attached to a cord with untreated corals combined with silver coins and openwork beads.

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Pl. 1



No. 1



No. 2



No. 3



No. 4



No. 5



No. 6



No. 7



No. 8



No. 9



No. 10