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## PROBLEMS AND METHODS OF TURKOLOGICAL ART STUDIES

**Abstract.** The Turkic civilization is one of the most significant in the history of humankind. The Turkic realm occupied colossal geographical spaces. The empire of Genghis Khan became the largest in world history, and its territory was 28 million square kilometers. Today, the population of the Turkic world exceeds 200 million people who speak 42 or 43 Turkic languages. All this determined the diversity of Turkic culture, which, however, always remained integral.

But precisely as a holistic phenomenon, a single civilizational phenomenon, the art of the Turkic world has never been the subject of particular study. The report proposes a methodology to begin addressing this problem. It is based on the development of issues of chronology, iconography, and typology of art of the Turkic world.

In the course of studying the problems of chronology, models of economic development during the periods of development of art in Azerbaijan, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan were examined and were identified specific historical periods where art content and context aligned.

The iconographic types commonly found in miniature portrait genres in Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan have been identified. The iconographic type of seated figures in the sculptures of ancient balbals spread over large geographical areas from Mongolia to the banks of the Danube is described.

The problem of typology of Turkic art is considered in two aspects. The first one is related to the architectural structures study, for example,

octagonal tower mausoleums in Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Uzbekistan. The second aspect is the typology of creativity itself in Turkic culture. This aspect is illustrated by analyzing the reasoning (rational) type of creativity in Azerbaijani shebeke art. A multiphase creative process that involves creating numerous preparatory sketches, a scientific approach, and continuous improvement of technical means marks this type of work.

**Key words:** the art of the Turkic world, periodisation, iconography, typology, methodology.

**Introduction.** We introduced the term «Turkological art history» about fifteen years ago. In 2010, the I International Scientific Conference on «Turkological Art Studies: Problems and Prospects» was hosted in Baku. In 2014, Kazan organized an international conference on «Actual issues of art science development in Russia and CIS countries», where one of the sections was named «Turkological art science». It is noteworthy that Tatar art historians adopted this term on their own, independent of us. Additionally, during 2013–2014 seminars at the International Turkic Academy in Astana, our reports led to Kazakh and Uzbek colleagues approving and adopting the term «Turkological art studies».

Since then, the new scientific branch has passed a known progress path. The main problems and methods of Turkological art history have been defined. To date, it is possible to designate five such challenges: concepts of the universal history of art and the place of Turkic art culture in them; chronology and periodisation of Turkic art; the iconography of Turkic art; typology of the art of the Turkic world; methodology of Turkological studies in art history.

**The interpretation of the main material.** For 500 years, the universal history of art has been a subject of fascination for scholars and thinkers. Beginning from Giorgio Vasari and up to the philosophers of the Enlightenment, the conceptions of the artistic process periodicity have been put forward. Then, Romanticists and Hegel proposed the concept of the linear orientation of the history of art. The ideas outlined by Oswald Spengler in «The Decline of Europe» contained the vision of exclusivity and self-sufficiency of different cultures, including the art ones. The concept of the spiral artistic development, put forward by Fyodor Schmit at the beginning of the XX century, has been forgotten undeservedly.

It was this concept which showed that as we progress towards the contemporary stage, the periodisation step of the general history of art is trimmed inexorably. However, none of the listed ideas found a place for the Turkic culture and its most affluent artistic heritage. However, none of the listed concepts found a place for the Turkic culture and its most affluent artistic heritage. The same can be said about the models of civilizations development proposed in the works of Karl Jaspers, Arnold Toynbee and others. The contours of the great Turkic empires did not fit within the frame of definitions of «cultures», «societies», or «axial peoples» modelled by these outstanding intellectuals.

Meanwhile, the Turkic civilization is one of the most significant in the history of humanity. Genghis Khan's empire covered a colossal geographical space. Its area covered 28 million square kilometers. For comparison, the territory of the Soviet Union was only 22 million square kilometers. Somewhat inferior in size was the Seljuk Empire, with an area of 10 million square kilometers. Was it possible not to notice this civilization? The question is rhetorical.

The point is that the Turkic civilization did not fit into the narrow boundaries of Western development models. Turkic civilization interacted with the world in a completely different way. This feature allowed the ancient Turks not just to annex but to permanently integrate gigantic territorial and human resources into the system of their statehood system.

One can say with certainty that the Turkic civilization displayed such properties due to its high extent of tolerance. Tengrianism as an open system of worldview did not hinder the confessional diversity of the population of the Turkic empires. Subsequently, in various regions of Eurasia, the Turks, alongside Islam, professed Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Burkhanism, and shamanism [9]. The polyphony of the Turkic world, the population of which estimated to the most modest assessments in 2010 was at least 200 million people, manifests itself in linguistic diversity: 42 or 43 Turkic languages are spoken here [9]. In a word, the Turkic world has always been and continues to be a space of diversification. But with all this, the Turkic culture remained holistic at each historical stage.

However, as an integral phenomenon, a single civilizational occurrence, the art of the Turkic world did not become the subject of a particular study. It is still the case that we do not have a universal history of Turkic art. It is essential today to determine the methodology with which it is possible to

solve this problem. The principal means of this methodology in question is the development of the concerns of chronology, typology, and iconography of the art of the Turkic world.

The author of these lines has already considered the problem of the chronology of art within the boundaries of the geography of the Turkic world, and the results have been repeatedly published [7, pp. 17-54]. Primarily, to determine the chronology of Turkic culture, it is necessary to find a common point of reference and seek to clarify the inheritance subject in this cultural tradition throughout the centuries. Kazakh authors demonstrate the most solidary position regarding the common starting point of chronology. For example, Kanat Serikpaev believes that «the first period of development of Turkic culture covers the time from 6 to 1 thousand BC and is the culture of proto-Turkic tribes» [8, p. 198]. N. Ayupov shares the same opinion and designates the next stage at the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium – IV–III centuries B.C. as the period of «Culture of Turan» [1].

In the course of the study, the national models of periodisation of the art of Azerbaijan, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan were analysed, comparative chronology tables were drawn up, and periods of content coincidence were identified at certain historical time intervals. The ancient period, the XI–XII centuries, the end of the XV–XVI centuries, the second half of the XIX – early XX centuries, and the period of independence were such stages.

The coincidence of the content in question is due to the unity of the development processes of particular types of art in all or at least several regions of the Turkic world. The ancient period is marked by the near ubiquity of the so-called animal style and balbal sculpture, XI–XII centuries – by the appearance of the architectural type of octagonal tower mausoleum, etc. All these common artistic phenomena turn us to the issue of iconography of Turkic art.

Take, for example, miniature painting. The discussion of miniature paintings on these pages is all the more relevant because this type of art was included in the UNESCO Representative List in 2021 as a joint cultural heritage of Azerbaijan, Turkey, Uzbekistan, and Iran. Miniature defines the coincidence of content of the XV–XVI centuries when this type of art reaches its highest blossom. The Azerbaijani scholar S.Dadash, in general, rather thoroughly researched the peculiarities of the pictorial

language of Turkic miniatures. One of the basic postulates of S.Dadash states that a culture cannot borrow another culture's visual language [4, p. 14]. According to his concept: «1. the more complex the elements that make up the system, the simpler should be the links between them, because complex elements are not capable of multilevel interrelationships; 2. the simpler the elements that make up the system, the more complex should be the links between them, because simple elements need multilevel interrelationships» [4, p. 34]. According to S.Dadash, the difference between the grammar of the Turkic visual language and the European graphic language is just that the miniature is a system with complex interrelations of simple elements, while the Western classical painting is, on the contrary, a system with simple interrelations of complex elements. However, S.Dadash investigated the Turkic miniature as a system in the spirit of structuralism. The iconological method involves analysing the mere work and the visual symbols included.

From the point of view of Erwin Panofsky (1892–1968), the progenitor of iconology, «iconography is a section of the history of art that studies not the form, but the subject of a work» [6]. The scope of iconography includes the identification of “images, plots and allegories” [6] contained in a work, which are carriers of conventional meaning, allowing one to associate artistic motifs with particular themes and concepts. In turn, the discovery and interpretation of the «symbolic values contained in a work of art belong to the field of history of art, which, in contrast to iconography, can be called «iconology» [6].

Of course, iconography deals primarily with established iconographic types. On the material of the Tabriz school of miniature, such kinds are well enough researched and widely known. In the XVI century, during the highest prosperity of miniature painting, «a special scheme of ceremonial portraiture was developed, depicting in certain, repetitive poses and movements idealised images of young dandies» [5, p. 51]. In this quotation from the work of Kerim Kerimov, of course, this is about an iconographic type. This type is reflected in the miniatures by Sultan Mohammed, such as «A Young Man with a Book» (1540), «A Young Man with a Book by a Tree» (first half of the XVI century), «Portrait of Shah Tahmasib with a Falcon» (XVI century), by Kamal Tebrizi «Prince with a Falcon» (1575) and others. «By composition, figurative and colour structure, decorative treatment, as well as by external similarity, these portraits are so close that it

is difficult, sometimes impossible, to catch the distinctive stylistic features of one or another artist, to which they are now attributed in the literature» [5, c. 51]. Somewhat later, in the early XVII century, the same iconographic type was repeated in Uzbek miniature, particularly in the illustrations of «Babur-name» from the British Museum in London. The portrait of very Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur, depicted with a book in his hands, exactly corresponds to this type.

Another example is the balbals sculpture. This art belongs to the most ancient period of development of Turkic culture. It is the balbals that mark almost the entire space of the geography of the Turkic world. In the early stages of the development of Turkic civilization, these stone sculptures were erected in the expanse from the Mongolian river Orkhon to the shores of the Caspian Sea. «After the Kipchak era, stone sculptures spread in the North Caucasus, Russia, Ukraine, and further west - till the Danube» [3]. A few years ago, balbalas were discovered on the territory of Italy. Although the art of balbals is studied extremely insufficiently, we can speak about several iconographic types in this kind of sculpture. It is known, let's say, that «influential figures close to the Kagan sit cross-legged or stand holding a bowl in their right hand» [3]. The iconography of balbals changed as they advanced westwards.

The problem of the typology of Turkic art may be considered in two aspects. The first aspect is connected to research on the different ilks of architectural structures, ornaments, etc. It represents a relatively well-studied area of artistic creativity of Turkic peoples. The perspective of the octahedral tower mausoleum can be attributed to this sphere.

The formation of the classical type of octagonal mausoleum is preceded by a particular form-forming process traced by researchers in the medieval architecture of Uzbekistan and Central Asia as a whole. In their opinion, the octagonal mausoleum of Shuburgan-ata (XI century) in Bukhara province served as a model for further architectural resolutions to be developed.

With the Seljuk state formation, the capital of the sultanate Konya achieved lush prosperity. One of the main monuments of this period is a complex of buildings consisting of a mosque, a madrasah, and two tower mausoleums. One of the mausoleums is the tomb of Kylych Arslan, representing a monumental octahedron with a hipped dome. Along with the capital, other cities of the sultanate were also developing intensively, in

many of which octagonal mausoleums were constructed. For example, in Kirshehir, an octagonal mausoleum of Melik Gazi (1250) was erected. The tradition of morphogenesis based on the octahedral composition continued in Konya during the Ottoman Empire. The central monument of the historical buildings part of the city, now called the Mevlana Centre, which consists of 22 buildings, is significant in this respect. The majority is designed based on an eight-part composition, including the mausoleums of Sinan Pasha (1574), Fatma Khatun (1585), and Hassan Pasha (1573).

At about the same time, the octahedron composition was further developed in the works of the greatest Turkish architect, Koca Sinan (1489/90 - 1588), who created about 300 pieces during his long life. In Istanbul alone, he built five octagonal mausoleums. These are the mausoleums of Khosrow Pasha, Zal-Mahmud Pasha, Shehzade Mehmed, Hayreddin Barbarossa, and Sultan Suleiman. Turkish authors have repeatedly explicitly cited the immediate connection between the architectural solutions of the mausoleums built in Istanbul by Sinan and the creations of Ajami Nakhchivani. The central work of the master within the framework of the theme under consideration is the mausoleum of Yusif, son of Kuseyir (1162).

Noteworthy is that octahedral mausoleums are erected first in places of spreading Sufism - these are well-known regions of Central Asia, the city of Konya, and others. It is also appropriate to recall the octagonal mausoleum of the Sufi teacher Seyid Yahya Bakuvi, belonging to the complex of the Shirvanshahs' Palace in Baku. However, nowhere does the octagonal composition achieve such harmony of construction and ornamental techniques, such perfection, as in the mausoleum of Yusif son Kuseyir, erected by the great Ajami Nakhchivani.

The second aspect of the discussed issue is the typology of mere creativity in Turkic culture. In recent studies, it is customary to distinguish four types of artistic creativity: irrational, reasoning, conflict, and harmonious [2, pp. 125-129]. Irrational and reasoning types are opposite poles here. The main feature of the first type is the unconscious nature of creativity, implying improvisation, the absence of scientific methods and a coherent idea of the work.

On the contrary, the reasoning type is inherent in the rational nature of creativity, denying everything random. Here, all are based on the performance of scientific methods and technical facilities and the preparation of numerous

preparatory sketches [2, p. 126]. The aesthetic function of a work of art in rational creativity is pushed into the background.

Based on the material of shebeke art, we studied the problem of typology of artistic creation. Shebeke is a decorative plane assembled from many carved wooden elements and pieces of coloured glass fixed between them without the help of glue or nails. The size of the shebeke surface can vary from a few square centimeters to several square meters, depending on the functional purpose of the objects created by the masters of this art form. Such objects are a window, a door, a screen, a pergola, a luminaire, a trunk, a cupboard, and decorative panels on the facades of buildings, verandas, and staircase railings. The most common compositions of shebeke are multi-beam stars of regular geometric shapes.

The creation process of shebeke compositions bears all the features of a reasoning type of creativity. An exceptional role in the activity of the master of shebeke involves preparatory sketches, a scientific approach, deep knowledge of geometry, usage and constant improvement of technical means. In addition, the master of shebeke is extremely limited by the framework of tradition in artistic terms. He has to stick to several types of compositions, which in the Azerbaijani language correspond to the names of numbers 6, 8, 10, 12, and 16 - «alty», «sekkiz», «on», «on iki», «on alty». In addition, a shebeke artist shall comply with the traditional colour palette: he has only red, yellow, blue, and green colours at his disposal. All this completely excludes any improvisation in the art of shebeke.

We will separately dwell on such a characteristic of the reasoning type of artistic creativity as «multi-stage structure, multi-phase creative process» [2, p. 126]. This property of the reasoning type of creativity determines the successive stages of a work of art fulfilment. As a rule, the master makes wooden and glass elements in advance and arranges them per the size and place they will occupy in the structure of the future work. Unlike wall painting, the shebeke composition is not executed on the spot, in direct contact with the architectural object. Having completed the composition sketch, the master of shebeke begins to create the work itself, and it is a process consisting of several phases. First, wooden and glass parts are made. Then, the shebeke mosaic is assembled. The third phase is mounting the shebeke plane on the architectural object.



**Conclusion.** Therefore, the critical issue in creating a universal history of Turkic art is to solve the problems of its chronology, iconography and typology. The periods of content coincidence within the geography of the Turkic world act like anchor points, «assembly points» of the general picture of art development. Namely, these periods allow us to take a closer look at the iconography of the common subjects, motifs and images of Turkic art and to identify the main characteristics of Turkic artistic thinking. The prevalence of one or another type of creativity and its configuration in the course of the historical-artistic process reveals not only the academic and art science problem of the typology of creation but also the global problem of the role of Turkic culture in the world civilisation.

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## TÜRKOLOJİ SƏNƏTŞÜNASLIĞIN PROBLEMLƏRİ VƏ METODLARI

Qədim Türk sivilizasiyası bəşər tarixində ən mühüm sivilizasiyalardan biridir. Türk imperiyaları nəhəng coğrafi məkanları əhatə edirdilər. Çingizxanın imperiyası dünya tarixində ən böyük imperiya idi, onun ərazisi 28 milyon kv. kilometr təşkil edirdi. Bu gün türk dünyasının əhalisinin sayı 200 milyondan artıq insandan ibarətdir ki, onlar 42, yaxud 43 türk dilində danışılar. Bütün

bunlar türk mədəniyyətinin müxtəlifliyini şərtləndirir, lakin o, hər zaman bütövlüyünü qoruyub saxlamışdır.

Lakin məhz bütöv fenomen kimi türk dünyası incəsənətinin vahid sivilizasiya olması ayrıca tədqiqatın predmetinə çevrilməmişdir. Məruzədə metodologiya təklif olunur ki, onun köməyi ilə bu problemi həll etməyə başlamaq olar. Bu metodologiya türk dünyası incəsənətinin xronologiya, ikonoqrafiya və tipologiya məsələlərinin işlənilib hazırlanmasına əsaslanır.

Xronologiya problemləri tədqiqatının gedişində Azərbaycan, Türkiyə, Özbəkistan, Qazaxıstan, Qırğızıstan, Türkmənistan incəsənətinin dövrləşdirilməsinin milli modelləri təhlil edilmiş və zamanın müəyyən tarixi kəsirlərində kontent, məzmun uyğunluğunun dövrləri müəyyən edilmişdir.

İkonoqrafiya problemi miniatür rəngkarlığı və balbal heykəltəraşlığı materialı zəminində işlənmişdir. Azərbaycan və Özbəkistan miniatüründə portret janrının ümumi olan ikonoqrafik tipləri müəyyən edilmişdir. Monqolustandan Dunay sahillərinə qədər böyük coğrafi məkanda yayılmış qədim balbal heykəltəraşlığında oturmuş fiqurların ikonoqrafik tipi təsvir edilmişdir.

Türk incəsənətinin tipologiya problemi iki aspektdə nəzərdən keçirilmişdir. Bunlardan birincisi müxtəlif tipli memarlıq qurğularının, misal üçün, Türkiyədə, Azərbaycanda, Özbəkistanda səkkizguşəli qülləvari məqbərələrin tədqiqi ilə əlaqədardır. İkinci aspekt – türk mədəniyyətində yaradıcılığın özünün tipologiyasıdır. Bu aspekt Azərbaycan şəbəkə sənətində şüurlu (rasional) yaradıcılıq tipinin təhlili ilə illüstrasiya edilmişdir. Bu tip yaradıcılıq prosesinin çoxfazlı olması, çoxsaylı hazırlıq eskizlərinin yaradılması, elmi yanaşma, texniki vasitələrin daim təkmilləşdirilməsi ilə xarakterizə edilir.

*Açar sözlər:* Türk dünyası incəsənəti, dövrləşdirilmə, ikonoqrafiya, tipologiya, metodologiya.

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## **ПРОБЛЕМЫ И МЕТОДЫ ТЮРКОЛОГИЧЕСКОГО ИСКУССТВОВЗНАНИЯ**

Тюркская цивилизация является одной из самых значительных в истории человечества. Тюркские империи занимали колоссальные географические пространства. Империя Чингисхана стала самой большой в

мировой истории, ее территория составляла 28 млн. кв. километров. Сегодня численность населения тюркского мира превышает 200 млн. человек, которые говорят на 42 или 43 тюркских языках. Все это определяло разнообразие тюркской культуры, которая, однако, всегда оставалась целостной.

Но именно как целостный феномен, единое цивилизационное явление искусство тюркского мира так и не стало предметом специального исследования. В докладе предлагается методология, с помощью которой можно начать решать эту проблему. Она основана на разработке вопросов хронологии, иконографии и типологии искусства тюркского мира.

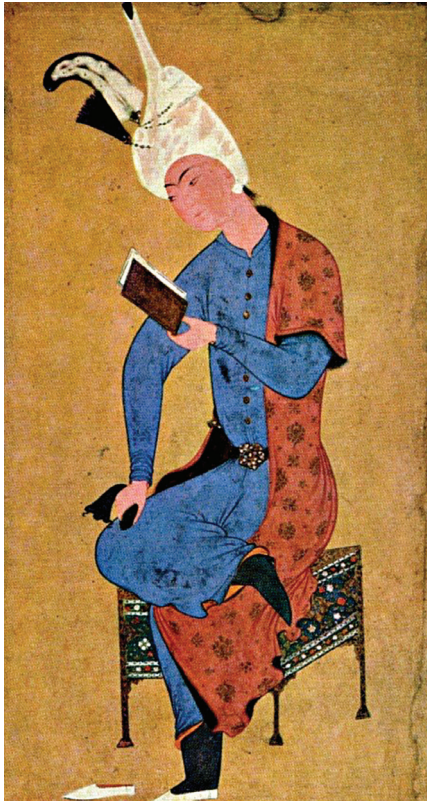
В ходе исследования проблем хронологии были проанализированы национальные модели периодизации искусства Азербайджана, Турции, Узбекистана, Казахстана, Кыргызстана, Туркменистана и выявлены периоды совпадения контента, содержания на определенных исторических отрезках времени.

Проблема иконографии была разработана на материале миниатюрной живописи и скульптуры балбалов. Определены иконографические типы, общие для жанра портрета в миниатюре Азербайджана и Узбекистана. Описан иконографический тип сидящих фигур в скульптуре древних балбалов, распространенных на больших географических пространствах от Монголии до берегов Дуная.

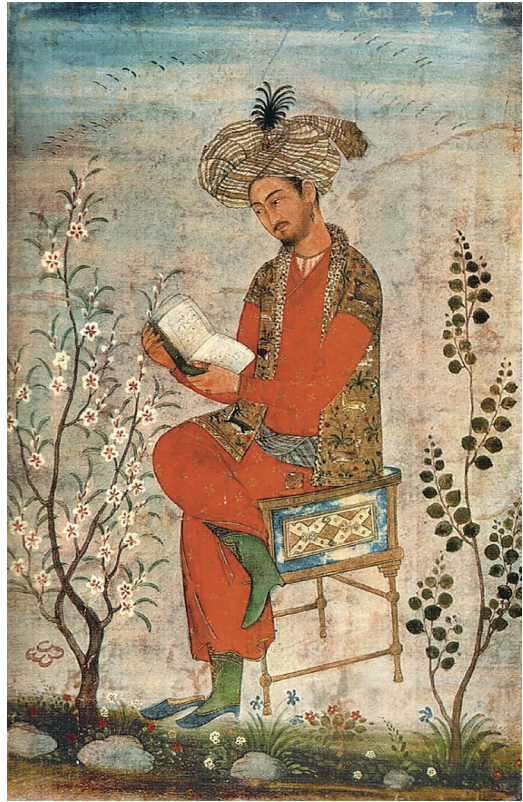
Проблема типологии тюркского искусства рассмотрена в двух аспектах. Первый связан с исследованием различных типов архитектурных сооружений, например, восьмигранных башенных мавзолеев в Турции, Азербайджане, Узбекистане. Второй аспект – это типология самого творчества в тюркской культуре. Данный аспект проиллюстрирован анализом рассудочного (рационального) типа творчества в азербайджанском искусстве шебеке. Этот тип характеризуется многофазностью творческого процесса, созданием многочисленных подготовительных эскизов, научным подходом, постоянным совершенствованием технических средств.

**Ключевые слова:** искусство тюркского мира, периодизация, иконография, типология, методология

## FIGURES



**Fig. 1. Iconography.**  
Young man with the book.  
Miniature. First half of the XVI<sup>th</sup>  
century. Tabriz.



**Fig. 2. Iconography.**  
The portrait of Zahiriddin Muhammad  
Babur. Miniature. Beginning of the XVII<sup>th</sup>  
century. Uzbekistan.