

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES IN THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

UDC 069(575.146)

DOI: 10.33876/2311-0546/2024-1/116-126

Original Article

© *Nigina Sultonova*

THE STUDY OF MEDIEVAL COSTUME OF THE BUKHARA REGION BASED ON TERRACOTTA

The history of clothing from ancient times to the present day is a mirror in which the entire past of mankind is reflected. Among the material and spiritual cultural landmarks, they are considered as a criterion reflecting the national identity of peoples and showing their ethnic characteristics. Since clothing is considered the main part of everyday life, we can study it by looking at the preserved material samples of the past. We can analyze the clothes of the previous periods with the help of miniatures, photographs, wall decorations, handwritten sources and archaeological finds. Archaeological finds show that clothing appeared in the earliest periods of human development.

People made clay figurines of the gods they worshipped, and we study the patterns of clothing on these figurines. This article discusses costumes based on terracottas found during archaeological excavations. The author focused on the terracotta figurines stored in the fund of the Bukhara State Museum-Reserve and in museum expositions. Their similarities and differences were analyzed. The considered clothing details are used as a source on the history of the costume of the region during the early Middle Ages.

Keywords: *terracotta, Anahita, clothing, drapery, neckline, jewelry*

Author Info: **Sultonova, Nigina** — Senior Researcher, Bukhara State Architectural Art Museum-Preserve (Bukhara, Uzbekistan). E-mail: ngnsultonova@gmail.com

For citation: Sultonova, N. 2024. The Study of Medieval Costume of the Bukhara Region Based on Terracotta. *Herald of Anthropology (Vestnik Antropologii)* 1: 116–126.

Introduction

The history of mankind covers the process of growth from primitive ideas about nature and life, simple needs to the level of complex spiritual activity. At the beginning of human civilization, spirituality simultaneously stands out as a fruit of human thinking. Like other areas of people's lives, the study of national clothing is closely related to the study of the ethnic history and culture of each cultural group, their mutual connections with other groups. It is also a criterion that reflects the ethnic characteristics of peoples.

The history of clothing, from ancient times to the present day, is a mirror reflecting the entire history of mankind. Clothing has been formed over centuries and has become the most important source that allows us to appreciate the customs of people, their ethnic history and way of life by studying its evolution (*Abdullaeva* 1978).

Many scientists have conducted research on the history of clothing, special publi-

cations are dedicated to Uzbek national clothing. Research data from such scientists as O. A. Sukhareva (*Sukhareva* 1979), N. P. Lobacheva (*Lobacheva* 1989), M. K. Gorelik (*Gorelik* 1979), M. A. Bikjanova (*Bikjanova* 1960), N. B. Nemtseva (*Nemtseva* 1972), N. Sodikova (*Sodikova* 2006), provide a lot of information regarding the topic.

Clothing is a fundamental and integral part of the lifestyle, but we can only study and analyze earlier periods through miniatures, photographs, wall decorations, handwritten sources, and archaeological finds. Original examples of clothing from those periods have not survived, or their preservation is so fragmented that it is impossible to draw any definite conclusion about them. For this reason, historians, archaeologists and ethnographers have studied in great depth the types of clothing of the 19th and 20th centuries, but the previous periods are not so well-studied (*Rakhimova* 2005: 3).

Archaeological excavations indicate that clothing appeared in very ancient periods of human development (40–25 thousand years ago). It is known that in the initial periods, people smeared their bodies with various substances, that is, clay, soil, oil, in order to protect themselves from the effects of various climatic phenomena, as well as from animal and insect bites. Later, such pastes started to be colored by various plant dyes, so the custom of decorating bodies with various shapes and colors appeared. This was then followed by tattooing the body (injecting dyes under the skin) in order to extend the life of the protective shell. Feathers of various birds, teeth, animal bones, hair served a symbolic function and at the same time protected the body. Over time, more and more parts of people's bodies began to be covered jewelery (*Raxmatullaeva, Xodjaeva, Atakhanova* 2015: 5).

This article analyzes data on the early Middle Ages clothing and decorations, obtained by studying the terracottas found in archaeological excavations on the territory of the Bukhara oasis, currently stored in the museum fund and exhibited in the museum exhibitions.

Methods and the Review of Previous Studies

Museums perform important tasks such as studying the history of the people, preserving and displaying their material and cultural heritage, studying it scientifically and passing it on to the next generation. Today, it is known that there are more than 100 thousand museums in the world. They include the Bukhara State Museum-Reserve with its rich and large collection. The Bukhara State Museum-Reserve, which started its activity in 1922 (*Niyazova* 1994: 38), collected more than 130 thousand artifacts during the past century. Its collection includes archaeological finds, documents, numismatics and ethnographic items (*Juraev* 2021: 67).

First, materials from archaeological excavations conducted by V. L. Vyatkin in Afrasiab were handed over to the museum. During the years 1937–1939, based on the materials of V. A. Shishkin's expedition, the museum fund received remarkable archaeological objects. In addition, through the fruitful actions of the Uzbek archaeologist Y. Gulomov, rare archaeological objects were obtained.

Items transferred to the museum were studied by museum researchers, as each item requires a scientific passport, defining the validity of these objects and their value as a scientific source. In the process of preparing such a passport, general preliminary conclusions are given to each object. And further information is deepened by scientific applicants who conduct their own research.

The Uzbek people, like other ethnic groups, have undergone complex ethnic processes, which took place in the territories of the emerging unions of certain tribes or states in the

most ancient periods and throughout the Middle Ages as a result of migrations and intermingling. This had a huge impact on the way of life, culture, and customs of people. Naturally, this was reflected in the clothing culture of people of those times. When analyzing the medieval clothing, we studied terracottas used in religious rituals.

People made clay figurines of the gods they worshipped. Terracottas have been the focus of attention since the beginning of the archaeological study of Central Asia as a vivid image of ancient culture. Terracottas are important as objects in the study of ancient material culture. The reconstruction of the religious and mythological worldview of different historical periods and the study of the style of pictorial subjects of terracottas can help resolve the problems of the interaction of different cultures. We will also study examples of clothing pictured in these figurines. Many ceramic figurines of Anakhita have been found in archaeological excavations. Among the works of ancient art, there are many sculptures of Anakhita, who is considered the goddess of land, water, and prosperity. Sculptors depicted Anakhita as a woman holding a pomegranate, wheat or apple in her hand.

Anakhita is also reflected in “Avesto”, which is the sacred word of the religion of fire worship (Avesta 2001: 184).

Professor L. I. Rempel describes it as follows: “Anakhita” is a person who represents human femininity and beauty, as a well-dressed beautiful woman, who gives strength and success to heroes. Anakhita can always be seen as a beautiful, strong, high-belted, gold-embellished, a girl wearing a mursak with many folds. It can be seen that the character of Anakhita is described as a living person. So, the symbol of this was created throughout the centuries and had a different appearance in the art monuments found in different regions of our country (Rempel 1960: 41).

Main Results

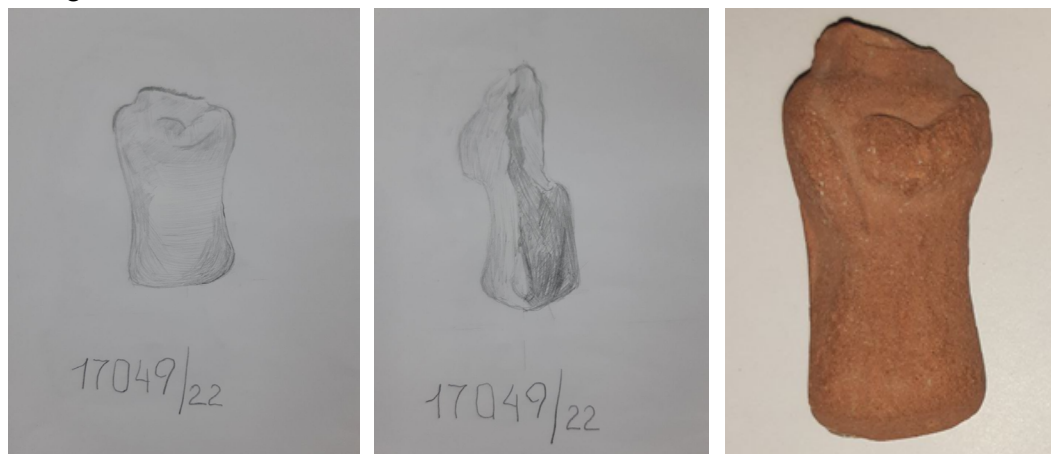
The study of the monuments of the Bukhara oasis began in the beginning of the 20th century. The works of archaeologist V. L. Vyatkin, who studied the monuments of Bukhara in 1920 and the mausoleum of Ismail Samoni in 1925, provided valuable information on many of them. Later, this research was continued by many archaeologists. Most of the fortresses of the Bukhara oasis were identified along the left bank of Zarafshan. The study of these monuments began in 1952 by O.V. Obelchenko, several monuments were found in Kuyimozor and Lavandak cemeteries.

The Uch-kulokh monument, located 8 km to the east of Varakhsha, also functioned as a fortress in its time. The external appearance of the monument has a triangular shape, and because of the three elevations present in its parts it was called Uch-kulokh (Tree Ears). The base of Uch-kulokh is a majestic Early Medieval castle and a rural area adjacent to it from the east. The preserved height of the ruins of this construction is 7.6 and 4.0 m above ground level. The Uch-kulokh monument was researched by J. K. Mirzaakhmedov, a scientist of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan Y. Ghulomov Institute of Archeology, and the Uzbek-Italian international expedition headed by Professor Chiara Silvi Antonini of the University of Rome.

Poykent is located downstream of Zarafshan, 50 km southwest of Bukhara and was one of the major cities of the oasis. The city consists of an ark, two cities and a rabad. At the end of the 4th century BC, it first appeared as a village and later became a fortress. It was during this period that Poykent was an important military and commercial center located

on the western borders of Sughd and had an important strategic position as a trade node connecting southern countries. For many years, the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan Institute of Archeology and the joint expedition of the State Hermitage of Russia have been conducting archaeological excavations in the ruins of the city.

In 1968–1970, Ya. A. Amirov started small excavation works in “Setalak 2”, the north-western edge of the Bukhara oasis. Since 1972, Zarafshan archaeological group led by R. Kh. Sulaymonov has been conducting research of the ancient culture of the Bukhara oasis. The finds include glass and stone beads, bronze and bone objects, and terracottas dating back to the III–VI centuries.



Picture 1. The terracotta belonging to the 5th–4th centuries. Kuyimozor cemeteries

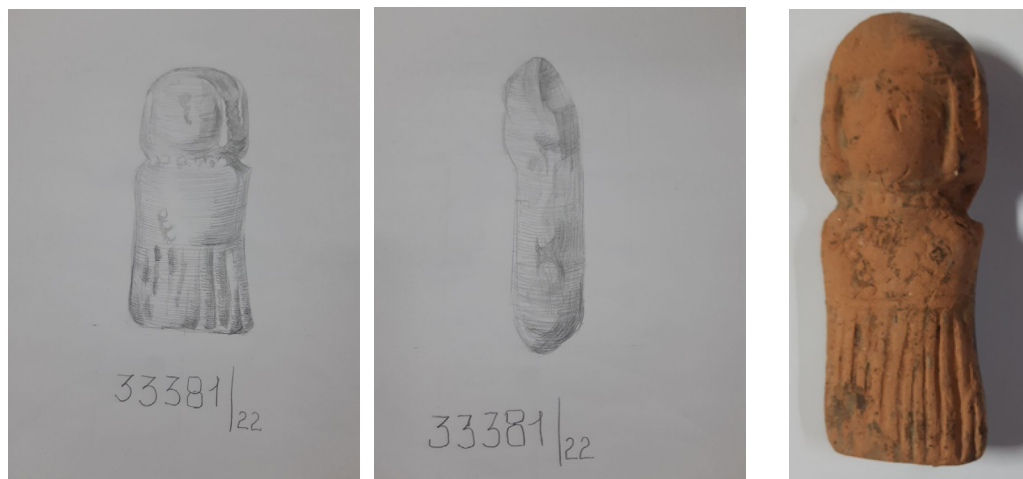
The fund of the Bukhara State Museum-Reserve has been enriched with a number of rare items given by people who presented their personal collections, formed as a result of their personal interest and research, to the museum. In 1983, one of them, the school teacher, local historian, geographer A. V. Miller presented the archaeological objects collected during his career to the museum. Among these items there were also terracottas from VI–VII centuries.

1. The terracotta belonging to the 5th–4th centuries BC was found in the Kuyimozor cemeteries and was one of the exhibits that was received by the museum in 1982 and registered in the main museum catalogue (KP 23). This statuette has a broken head, it depicts a simple dress without embroidery. The dress is trapezoidal, and the neckline is circular. The waist of the dress is narrow and the back is wider. (Picture 1).
2. Another terracotta found in the Bukhara oasis belongs to the II–III centuries and depicts the goddess Anakhita. The height of the figurine according to the catalogue (KP 48) is 9.8 cm. What looks like an embroidered scarf is depicted hanging from the two shoulders of the terracotta. One hand is on the waist, the other one is around the breast, holding an object that resembles an ear of wheat. The lower part of the waist is also treated specially (Picture 2).
3. The terracotta figurine (KP 48) found in the area of Uch-Kulokh is also decorated with a special dress. Its height is 9.5 cm, scientific research shows that the figurine belongs to IV–V centuries. The lower part of the terracotta dress is trapezoidal from the chest and has vertical folds. Neckline (cutout) is triangular in shape, decorated with 2 rows of patterns. A thin band is embossed at the waist (Picture 3).

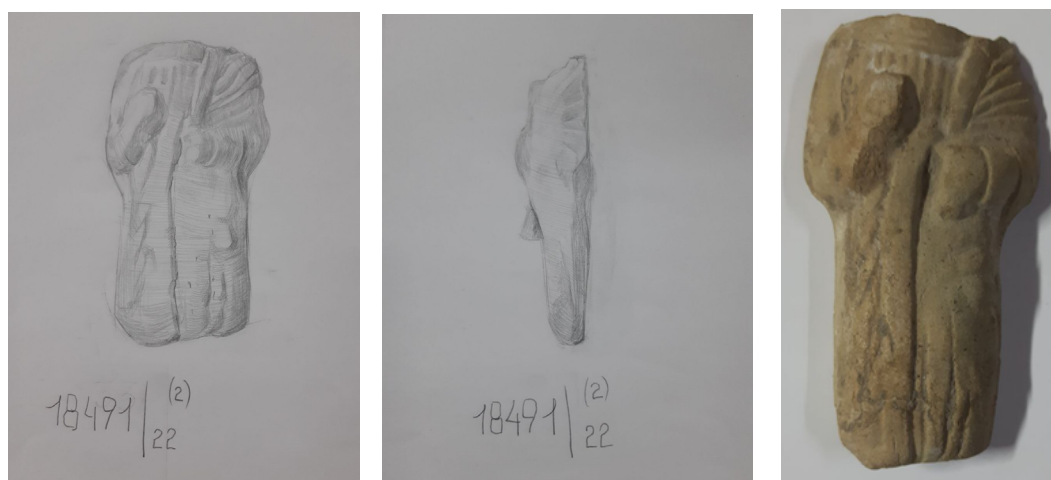


Picture 2. Terracotta found in the Bukhara oasis belonging to the II–III centuries

4. The terracotta accepted to the museum fund in 1983 was found in the southwest of the Bukhara oasis (Takhmachtepa). This terracotta from the A.V. Miller (KP 26) collection is 9.5 cm tall, its head is not preserved. The terracotta (god Anakhita) belongs to the VI–VII century, and its dress is also of special importance. The terracotta dress is described as a covering, and the right shoulder part is lowered by drapery. Vertical folds come down from the chest to the waist. This suggests that there are two layers of clothing in this terracotta. The upper layer is in the form of a covering, and is lowered over the waist. The sleeve parts are shown in the exact size (Picture 4).
5. In the terracottas exhibited at the “History of Ancient Poykent” museum, we can see the samples of ancient costumes. In 1999, the terracotta found in Shakhristan-I during the archaeological excavations conducted by archaeologists G. L. Semenov, Dj. K. Mirzaakhmedov (Semenov, Mirzaakhmedov 2000) was accepted into the museum fund in 2002 (KP 48). This figurine belongs to the II–VII century, its condition is good, it is completely preserved and is 12 cm tall (Picture 5). The description contains information on an above-the-waist visible dress made of thin fabric with a triangle collar and pants with horizontal drapery on the legs. In the waist part, the knot of the belt that fastens the trousers is visible.
6. The terracotta (KP 21) found at Setalak Tepa is 9 cm high, its head part is broken. Its right arm was bent at the elbow and attached to its body, and its left arm appeared to be below the waist. The terracotta dress is made in two layers: the chest coquette (the part of the dress above the waist) is shown with special lines. There is a belt-like bulge at the waist. Traces of drapery are visible on the left shoulder of the upper covering (kaftan). The rest of the kaftan is made without pleats (Picture 6).
7. The terracotta (KP 50) found in the southwest of Poykent was handed over to the museum fund in 2013 by archaeologist J. K. Mirzaakhmedov. The height of the terracotta is 10.7 cm, and this figurine, found intact, is decorated with exquisite ornaments and hairstyles. An iconographic sign (nimb) is visible at the top of the head. The jeweled beads on its neck fall down to its chest. Its two hands are on its waist and large vertical draperies from the waist down. There are traces of draperies on the sides (Picture 7).



Pictures 3. The terracotta found in the area of Uch-Kulakh, Bukhara



Picture 4. The terracotta, accepted to the museum fund in 1983, was found in the southwest of the Bukhara oasis (Takhmachtepa)

Conclusion

The following conclusions can be drawn based on the study of the described terracottas:

The dresses depicted on the terracottas are similar to Indian (*Picture 5*), Egyptian (*Picture 1, 3, 6*) style, and draperies from the shoulders are similar to the Roman style (*Picture 2, 4*). This suggests that since the ancient times, Zoroastrian period philosophical-aesthetic thought developed in various forms of art among different cultural groups, and at the same time life-style and social needs were directly formed by local conditions. As a result, we can see both similarities in the images of the gods and the absorption of different local traditions.

The fact that the drapery method was used in different parts of the costumes on the figurines means that they were glorified as a high class (*Pictures 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7*). They were both sacred figures and represented an aesthetic ideal. In ancient Egypt, drapery is found mainly in the clothes of pharaohs and gods (*Rakhmatullaeva, Khodzhaeva, Atakhanova 2015: 10*). So, such dresses are made only for special characters.

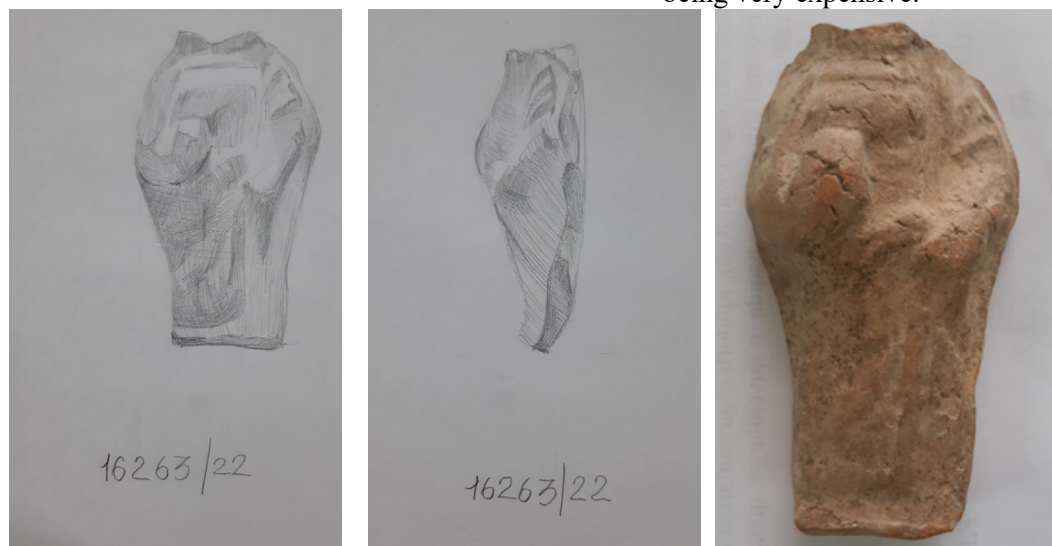


Picture 5. In 1999, the terracotta found in Shakhristan-I during the archaeological excavations conducted by archaeologists G. L. Semenov and Dj. K. Mirzaakhmedov

There is an iconographic symbol of «nimb» (Somov 1897: 154) on the head of the terracottas (Picture 7). It symbolizes brightness around the head of holy saints, and such iconographic symbols can be found around the head of most of the figurines found in archaeological excavations.

The statues of gods worshiped by people, were also specially decorated with jewelry, they were symbol of grandeur (Pictures 3, 5, 7).

Coverings (kaftans) on the upper part of the two-layer dresses depicted on terracottas (Pictures 2, 4, 5, 6, 7) are off the shoulders in a drapery manner. It can be sewn only on thin and silk fabrics. In most cases, these fabrics were made or purchased mainly by nobles and upper-class members, being very expensive.



Picture 6. The terracotta found at Setapak Tepa

Terracottas found in archaeological excavations are found broken. This situation is explained in Narshakhi's work "History of Bukhara" as follows: "Every year on the eve of Navruz, the residents gathered around the market "Mokh" (currently "Magoki Attor" mosque) and bought new figurines to replace the old broken ones" (Narshahiy 1993: 26). If we take into account that the neck and waist of the terracotta are finely cut compared to the

rest of the body, we can see that the terracottas that have been preserved are mostly broken at the neck and the waist (*Pictures 1, 2, 4, 6*).

Terracottas are made in two different styles: either casted (using a mold) or hand-made. The back side of the hand-made terracottas is also given special attention, and the neck and waist parts are finely crafted (*Pictures 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7*).

The fully preserved terracottas were molded in the casting style, and their thin neck and slender waist are

completely preserved as they are fused to the base (*Picture 5*). In figurines made in this way, the front view is important, and the clothes and jewelry are treated separately. It should be noted that some of the terracottas also resemble male figures in shape and facial expression (*Picture 1*). Here we quote the following opinion of G. A. Pugachenkova: “It is customary to refer to the group of figurines found in Afrosiab as “Anakhites”, the goddess of Sogdiana who represents the life-giving forces of nature. It is a collective image of gods such as Anakhita, Ashakh and Khayrvatat associated with the Avesta, which were then embodied by adapting to different local conditions (*Pugachenkova, Rempel 1965: 72*).

The terracotta is made of upright stature and broad shoulders. The reason is that in ancient times, a beautiful image of the body was of special importance (*Avesta 2001: 184*). That is why most figurines depict broad shoulders, tall stature, and a thin waist.

The figure is clearly depicted in the studied terracottas. This shows that much attention was paid to social origin in shape and size.

Studying the ethnography, social lifestyle and culture of ancient Bukhara based on archaeological sources remains a relatively under-researched issue. Today, in the Republic of Uzbekistan, a wide range of opportunities have been opened for the study and development of historical monuments, including the history of handicrafts, on a new basis. The historical importance of clothing as an ethnographic source, is now widely recognized. The study of costumes, considered one of the traditional forms of craftsmanship and art, is of great importance in determining the place of the oasis of Bukhara in the fields of crafts, art, culture and trade in Central Asia.

Sources

Avesto 2001 — Avesto. Historical-literary monument. Translation of Askar Mahkam. Tashkent: Sharq, 2001. 184 p.

KP — The main inventory book of the Bukhara Museum-Reserve.

Somov 1897 — Somov A. I. Nimbus // Encyclopedic Dictionary of Brockhaus and Efron. 1897. P. 154.



Picture 7. The terracotta (KP 50) found in the southwest of Poykent

References

- Abdullayeva, T. A. and S. A. Khasanova. 1978. *Odezhda uzbekov (XIX–nachalo XX v.* [Uzbek Clothing (19–early 20th centuries)]. Tashkent: Fan. 115 p.
- Bikzhanova, M. A. 1960. Mursak — starinnaja verhnjaja odezhda uzbechek goroda Tashkenta [Mursak — the Ancient Outerwear of Uzbek Women of Tashkent City]. In *Pamjati Mihaila Stepanovicha Andreeva. Sbornik statej po istorii i filologii narodov Srednej Azii. Trudy Instituta istorii, arheologii i etnografii Akademii nauk Tadjhikskoj SSR* [In memory of Mikhail Stepanovich Andreev. Collection of Articles on the History and Philology of Central Asia peoples. Works of the Institute of History, Archeology and Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences of the Tajik SSR]. Vol. CXX. Stalinabad: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk Tadjhikskoj SSR. P. 47.
- Gorelik, M. V. 1979. Sredneaziatskij muzhskoj kostjum na miniatjurah XV–XIX vv. [Central Asian Men's Costume on Miniatures of the 15–19 centuries]. In Sukhareva, O. A. (ed.). *Kostjum narodov Srednej Azii. Istoriko-jetnograficheskie ocherki* [Costumes of the Peoples of Central Asia. Historical and Ethnographic Sketches]. Moscow: Nauka. P. 49–69.
- Juraev, Sh. G. 2021. Iz istorii Buharskogo gosudarstvennogo muzeja-zapovednika. Sozdanie muzeev i vystavok [From the History of the Bukhara State Museum-Reserve. Creation of Museums and Exhibitions]. In Berezhnova, M. L., A. A. Ilina, and S. N. Korusenko (eds.). *Kul'tura i vzaimodejstvie narodov v muzejnyh, nauchnyh i obrazovatel'nyh processah — vazhnejshie faktory stabil'nogo razvitija stran Evrazii: sbornik nauchnyh trudov* [Culture and Interaction of Peoples in Museum, Scientific and Educational Processes as the Most Important Factors for the Stable Development of the Eurasian Countries]. Part. 2. Omsk: Izdatel'skij dom «Nauka». P. 67–73.
- Lobacheva, N. P. 1989. O nekotoryh chertah regional'noj obshhnosti v tradicionnom kostjume narodov Srednej Azii i Kazahstana [On Some Features of Regional Community in the Traditional Costume of the Peoples of Central Asia and Kazakhstan]. In Lobacheva, N. P. and M. V. Sazonova (eds.). *Tradicionnaja odezhda narodov Srednej Azii i Kazahstana* [Traditional Clothing of the Peoples of Central Asia and Kazakhstan]. Moscow: Nauka. P. 5–38.
- Narshakhiy, Abu Bakr Mukhamad ibn Zafar. 1993. *Bukhoro tarikhi* [History of Bukhara]. Toshkent: Sharq baezi. 126 p.
- Nemtseva, N. B. 1972. K istorii tkanej i odezhdy naselenija Srednej Azii XV veka [On the History of Fabrics and Clothing of the Population of Central Asia of the 15th century]. In G. A. Pugachenkova (ed.). *Iz istorii iskusstva velikogo goroda (K 2500-letiju Samarkanda)* [From the Art History of the Great City (On the 2500th Anniversary of Samarkand)]. Tashkent: Izdatel'stvo literatury i iskusstva imeni G. Guljama. P. 243–251.
- Niyazova, M. I. 1994. Iz istorii dejatel'nosti Buharskogo muzeja [From the History of the Bukhara Museum]. In *Iz istorii kul'turnogo nasledija Buhary* [From the History of the Cultural Heritage of Bukhara]. Vol. 2. Bukhara. P. 31–38. (See The opening ceremony of the first museum in Bukhara. In *Bukhoro akhbori* № 112. 1922. 23 November).
- Pugachenkova, G. A. and L. I. Rempel. 1965. *Istorija iskusstv Uzbekistana s drevnejshih vremen do serediny devjatnadcatogo veka* [Art History of Uzbekistan from Ancient Times to the Middle of the Nineteenth Century]. Moscow: Isskustvo. 711 p.
- Rakhimova, Z. I. 2005. *K istorii kostjuma narodov Uzbekistana. Kostjum Buhary i Samarkanda XVI–XVII vv. (Po dannym srednevekovej miniatjurnoj zhivopisi)* [On the History of the Costume of the Peoples of Uzbekistan. Costume of Bukhara and Samarkand in the 16–17 Centuries (According to Medieval Miniature Painting)]. Tashkent: Izdatel'stvo zhurnala “Sanat”. 140 p.
- Rakhmatullayeva, D., U. Khodjaeva and F. Atakhanova. 2015. *Libos tarikhi* [History of Clothing]. Toshkent. 173 p.
- Rempel, L. I. 1960. *Vydajushhiesja pamjatniki izobrazitel'nogo iskusstva Uzbekistana* [Outstanding Monuments of Fine Art of Uzbekistan]. Tashkent: Goslitizdat UzSSR. 328 p.
- Semenov, L. G. and J. K. Mirzaakhmedov. 2000. *Raskopki v Pajkende v 1999 godu* [Excavations in Pikend in 1999]. St. Petersburg. 89 p.

- Semenov, L. G. and J. K. Mirzaakhmedov. 2004. *Raskopki v Pajkende v 2003 godu* [Excavations in Pajkend in 2003]. St. Petersburg. 59 (111) p.
- Sodikova, N. 2006. *Uzbek milliy kiyimlari (XIX–XX asrlar)* [National Uzbek Clothes (19–20 Centuries)]. Tashkent: Gafur Gulom. 159 p.
- Sukhareva, O. A. 1979. The Experience of Analyzing the Cuts of Traditional “Tunic-like” Central Asian Clothing in Terms of Their History and Evolution. In Sukhareva, O. A. (ed.). *Kostjum narodov Srednej Azii. Istoriko-jetnograficheskie ocherki* [Costumes of the Peoples of Central Asia. Historical and Ethnographic Sketches]. Moscow: Nauka. P. 77–102.