

**SADRIDDIN PACHCHOEV: THE LAST BUKHARA MINIATURIST AND THE
TRANSFORMATION OF TRADITION IN THE VISUAL CULTURE OF THE NEW
ERA**

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Abstract. This article examines the artistic legacy of Sadriddin Pachchoev, a former jeweler and master craftsman who occupies a distinctive place in the history of Bukhara miniature painting. In creating his works, Pachchoev did not merely reproduce objects mechanically; rather, he intuitively perceived the unity of individual details and produced a simple yet expressive image of the world through his own artistic vision. His works are marked by lyrical sensitivity, emotional intensity, decorative richness, and a close connection with folk artistic traditions. Particular attention is paid to the way in which the artist combined the conventions of traditional miniature painting with the themes, visual impressions, and social realities of a new historical period.

Keywords: miniature painting, fine arts, architectural landscape, perspective, Bukhara school, folk art, visual interpretation, artistic tradition.

In Bukhara, the development of fine art found a vivid expression in the creative work of Sadriddin Pachchoev, who is regarded as one of the last representatives of the miniature-painter tradition, as well as in the broader sphere of amateur artistic practice. This renowned folk master, who sought to respond attentively to every new tendency, began to engage in miniature painting from the mid-1920s. Inspired by the miniature illustrations found in manuscripts of that period, he created illustrations for such classical literary works as Jami’s Yusuf and Zulaikha, Navoi’s Farhad and Shirin, Layli and Majnun, Sab’ai Sayyor, and other manuscripts of classical literature. Unfortunately, many of these works were lost after the death of Master Sadriddin. According to Saida Pachchoeva, the artist’s daughter, her husband sold these illustrated manuscripts at the Bukhara market in the 1950s.

The Bukhara Art Museum preserves his miniatures created for Jami’s poem Yusuf and Zulaikha and for the manuscript Lazzat ul-Niso. Certain information about these miniatures, executed in a traditional style, has been published in the press. However, special attention should also be given to the miniatures preserved there on separate sheets. The miniatures created by the artist for Jami’s Yusuf and Zulaikha were executed in 1935. The manuscript is bound in a thick reddish leather cover. The miniatures are placed in specially reserved blank spaces in the middle of the manuscript pages. The pages containing miniatures are marked with special red silk threads, the ends of which are attached to small rectangular pieces of paper fixed to the corners of the pages.

A careful examination of the twenty-six miniatures in the manuscript suggests that the artist may have used a similar manuscript as a model. O.A. Sukhareva, who was among the first researchers to study Sadriddin Pachchoev’s art, noted that his miniatures for this poem were distinguished by pleasant colors and by the liveliness and expressiveness of the figures, despite the conventional nature of their execution.

One of the miniatures depicting an architectural landscape represents the famous Ismail Samani Mausoleum. The mausoleum is shown from the corner, with certain perspective reductions. With the delicacy characteristic of a jeweler, the miniaturist carefully drew each brick and each form of the monument. Although there are certain inaccuracies in the depiction of the dome and, to some extent, of the portal, the image of the mausoleum is rendered in a highly individual manner. In order to make the monument appear more vivid, the artist included plants growing around it and a dove flying in the sky. He also noticed such details as plastered areas of the wall and the foundation, which is shown not with uniform bricks as it appears today, but with two different types of brickwork.

The next miniature depicts the city’s largest architectural ensemble, popularly known as Poi Kalon. In this composition, arranged diagonally from the lower right part of the sheet toward the left, the portal of the Kalon Mosque and the Kalyan Minaret stand out due to their scale and height. The two figures and a cart shown in the square further emphasize the sense of space and scale. The figure in the foreground is dressed in a crimson robe, with the folds of his turban only slightly indicated, while the figure behind him is rendered almost as a small dot. The proportional relationship between these figures and the architectural structures intensifies the grandeur and monumentality of the latter.



The artist strove to present the architectural landscape on a broad scale. The large storks depicted on the portal of the Kalon Mosque and the stork nest at the top of the minaret serve as compositional accents forming a pyramidal structure. Alongside traditional images of storks, the electric poles visible behind the minaret—signs of novelty in the urban environment—did not escape the artist’s attention. Similarly, the structure once attached to the left side of the minaret, which no longer exists today, as well as the damaged lower part of the minaret marked with white pigment, all testify to the artist’s sharp observational ability.

In this picture, executed in brownish-yellow tones, the tiles on the portal of the Kalon Mosque and the blue decorative patterns beneath the muqarnas of the minaret stand out from the general scene with particular sonority. The perspective inaccuracies, especially in the depiction of the platform and cart on the left side of the square, recall the simplicity of a childlike vision. At the same time, the scene conveys the impression of a “living” irregularity typical of a folk master’s hand, rather than the rigid precision of an academically correct drawing. In this work, the hand of the folk craftsman is immediately recognizable.

The same features are also characteristic of the artist’s miniature depicting Chor-Minor. When Rempel described such works as standing “between miniature painting and drawings intended for metal engraving” [1], he may well have had these very miniatures in mind. Indeed, in these works, line performs the principal artistic function. At the same time,

however, their distinctive interpretation and the artist’s observational sensitivity give them considerable artistic value.

The miniature depicting the Abdulaziz Khan Madrasa, inventory no. 8065/12, is not merely a landscape, but a vivid scene observed from the urban life of that period. At the far end of a broad, not very high platform behind a paved street, the seventeenth-century architectural monument—the Abdulaziz Khan Madrasa, remarkable for its elegant proportions—comes into view. The ornamental tiles on the portal and walls of the madrasa are rendered with almost ethnographic precision. Of the ten panels on the portal, six are shown as preserved; based on the fully preserved decorative tiles on the right side, one can reconstruct the decoration of the completely undecorated wall on the left. At the top of the portal, a stork, its two young, and nests in the corner minarets are depicted.



In the right corner of the platform in front of the madrasa, a shoemaker and his customer are shown. The young shoemaker sits on a low stool, absorbed in his work. He wears a fur-trimmed hat, a blue shirt, and a crimson-violet robe with white dots. The rolled-up sleeves, the material placed on his knees, and the tools arranged around him on the brick-paved platform testify to the master’s skill and agility. Opposite him, on the edge of the platform, sits an elderly man. He wears a blue turban, a dark green alocha robe, and coarse trousers, and is handing one of his boots to the craftsman. His bare foot rests calmly on a footcloth spread on the ground. Behind him, a donkey with a saddle and saddlebags suggests that he has come from the countryside.

On the right side of the madrasa, a passerby moving along the street and a part of Abdullah Khan’s tim are visible; on the left, residential buildings can be seen behind a whitewashed wall with windows. Observing this scene from in front of the Ulugbek Madrasa, the artist depicts the paved road in darker tones, the platform in lighter tones, and the sky even lighter. In doing so, he attempts to follow the spatial principles of miniature painting. The aspiration toward a realistic representation of reality is visible not only in this work, but also in all the elements of the scene. It indicates that the artist possessed a new artistic imagination and a new mode of thinking in the context of a changing historical period. In the memoirs of L.I. Rempel, who was acquainted with Sadriddin Pachchoev during those years, the following lines appear: “He treated his works very seriously, yet within this seriousness there was the painful anxiety of an amateur who had placed his creative product before the judgment of a professional critic. This was the reason for his withdrawal from people and his isolation within himself” [2]. On the one hand, these words reveal the viewpoint of a critic educated in the traditions of Western fine art; on the other hand, they vividly express the painful inner experiences of an artist striving to move beyond the laws of traditional

miniature painting toward realistic art. This can be seen especially clearly in his miniatures devoted to themes of real life.

His miniature Cotton Picking, inventory no. 8063/12, demonstrates the artist’s attempt to solve the work in a completely new manner, assigning a decisive role to color. The pictorial scene is divided vertically into two parts and diagonally into several sections. On the left side, six women are shown picking cotton in the field, placing it into the hems of their garments. By depicting each of them in a different bodily position, the artist achieves a sense of natural movement. The bodies of two women at the edge of the scene extend beyond the limits of the paper, creating the impression that the action continues outside the frame. A similar device is visible on the right side, where the head of one of the men picking cotton in another area is cut off by the edge of the sheet. In addition to them, several sections of the cotton field are also cut by the boundaries of the image, which further contributes to the impression of spatial breadth.



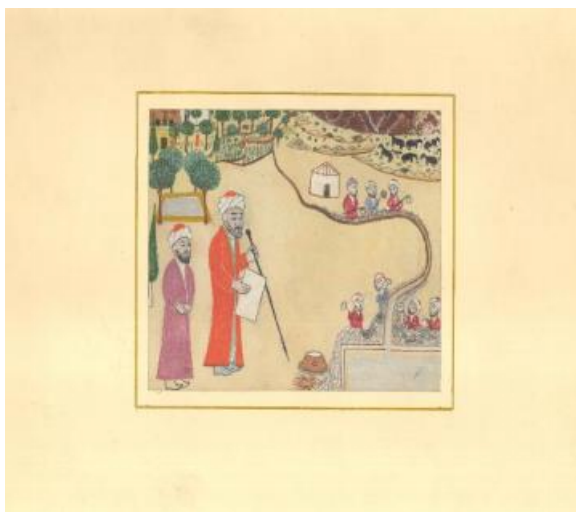
In order to enliven the movements of the women and men in the cotton field, the artist depicts an elderly woman sitting on the ground and smoking a water pipe in the front left part of the scene. Only in the depiction of this woman’s body does the contour line become more prominent. In the images of the men and women, however, the line is used mainly to render their faces. This suggests that the artist consciously tried to avoid sharply defined contours and to express the pictorial scene through color. As a result, the contours of the human figures in this miniature are softened. They merge with the colors of the cotton field, a harmony supported by the green, red, and white tones used both in the clothing of the figures and in the depiction of the cotton field.

Thus, the work created by a folk master who came from among the people and knew the life of the people well—as seen in the last two miniatures representing both urban and rural life—has preserved its popular essence to this day through its vitality and truthfulness. In this respect, it differs from works created by professional artists who were more quickly influenced by ideological demands.

The miniatures devoted to the life of Alisher Navoi also freely express this same folk



way of thinking. The series begins with a scene showing young Alisher being sent to school by his parents. In front of a house at the edge of a village, the mother places her hand on the child's shoulder and sees him off with affection. The father extends both hands toward his son, giving him a blessing. Young Alisher wears a small turban, and in his folded hands he holds a book. Behind them are two young children, one of whom holds a bird. While his peers are occupied with their own activities, young Alisher is distinguished by his seriousness and aspiration toward knowledge. The half-open gate of the courtyard, the patterned door in the distance, the field to the right, the trees, and the grazing goat lend the scene a calm rural atmosphere. These elements, vividly reflecting the local spirit, are the result of the artist's direct observations.



The second miniature is devoted to Hazrat Navoi's activity in the field of construction. In the foreground, the poet is depicted larger than the other participants in the scene. He is already advanced in age, holding a cane in one hand and a document in the other. He hands the document to the head of construction—the supervisor. Behind the supervisor, work is in full progress: craftsmen are engaged in building activities. One of them is planing wood with an adze, another is working wood with a chisel and mallet, while several others are sawing timber. Another group of people is filling the walls of a wooden house with brick and clay. The process of constructing a wooden house, characteristic of

Bukhara folk architecture, is represented here with great accuracy.

In order to show the construction process more clearly, the madrasa depicted in the front right part of the miniature is shown smaller than Navoi and the person standing before him. However, in the depiction of the madrasa and the porticoed building behind the poet, the local color is reflected in the interpretation of constructive and decorative features characteristic of local architecture. The miniature conveys the living atmosphere of city life.



movements convey energy and enthusiasm.

When the viewer's gaze rises to the upper part of the miniature, it follows the irrigation ditch, the courtyards surrounded by gardens, and the horses grazing in grassy fields, finally reaching the mountains in the distance. Around the poet are fruit trees and a pond. It seems as if the work being carried out anticipates that, once the water soon flows from the mountains through the ditch, the excavated pond and the neglected land around it will turn into gardens and orchards. Since these works are guided by the enlightened poet, there remains no doubt about their realization. The poet's larger and more prominent depiction, as well as the attitude shown toward him, serves to express this confidence in the scene.

The fifth work in Sadriddin Pachchoev's series depicts the tragic event that occurred shortly before the death of Alisher Navoi. According to the historian Khondamir, on December 31, 1500, Khoja Shahobiddin brought joyful news to Khoja Abbas that Sultan Husayn and his retinue were approaching. Upon hearing this, Alisher Navoi hastened to meet his close friend. However, after some time, Alisher Navoi turned to Khoja Abdullah and said: "I feel unwell; what has happened to me?" With the help of Khoja Abdullah and Khondamir, Alisher Navoi approached Husayn Bayqara, kissed the king's hand, lost consciousness, and sank to the ground. On the early morning of January 3, 1501, Alisher Navoi passed away.

The final work in this series is devoted to the funeral ceremony of the great poet. The poet's body, wrapped in blue cloth, is carried in a coffin on its final journey. Herat is in mourning. The city appears deserted. In the distance, women from the palace are shown weeping bitterly. This series of the artist's works is painted in restrained and quiet tones.

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