



## **MODERNIZATION OF JEWELRY, ORNAMENTS, AND COSMETIC ADORNMENTS AMONG WOMEN IN THE SURKHANDARYA OASIS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The article analyzes the modernization of jewelry, ornaments, and cosmetic practices among women in the Surkhandarya Valley. The study highlights the traditional culture of jewelry and cosmetics, as well as their connection with social, economic, and cultural factors. It examines how the forms, styles, and meanings of jewelry and cosmetic items have changed from the early 20th century to the present, and how they developed under the influence of the Soviet era and modern cosmetology. The article explores the transformation of the material culture of women in the Surkhandarya Valley, focusing on the adaptation, integration, and modernization of traditions.

### **KEYWORDS**

Surkhandarya Valley, women, jewelry, ornaments, cosmetics, cosmetic practices, jewelry art, tradition, modernization.

### **Introduction**

One of the most vivid expressions of culture is the jewelry, ornaments, and cosmetic adornments used by women, which not only hold aesthetic value but also provide insights into the social, economic, and cultural structure of society. The traditional clothing and decorations of each people have distinctive characteristics, and their shape, material, and style reflect the mentality, lifestyle, and values of a particular region.

Among the inhabitants of the Surkhandarya oasis, traditional forms of jewelry and ornaments have existed since ancient times, indicating women's social status, age, marital status, and even economic level. From the beginning of the 20th century, the development of jewelry art in the region, the political and spiritual influences of the Soviet era, and foreign styles brought in from outside have transformed the traditional culture of ornaments and adornment. At the same time, jewelry and ornaments produced by local artisans showed qualitative improvement, and their economic value increased.

### **Results and Discussion**

The traditional clothing of each nation is complemented by jewelry and ornaments that harmonize with it in every aspect. It is well known that jewelry and ornaments have always reflected the distinct identity of a particular people or social group. They not only highlighted differences between peoples and tribes,

but also distinctions between urban and rural populations, the rich and poor, and even among women of different ages or social roles—such as girls, young women, brides, mothers, and elderly women. In fact, neighbors living on the same street could often be distinguished by their jewelry, revealing their profession or social status. For example, a butcher’s ring differed from that of a barber [1:33].

After the October Revolution, attention was given to developing various artistic forms in the republic, including jewelry art. In the first quarter of the 20th century, the main characteristics of artistic style shifted from large, intricate, densely patterned decorative items to simpler forms wherever possible [2:153].

From the second quarter of the 20th century, women’s interest in foreign jewelry increased. As a result, local jewelers faced competition between their products and imported jewelry. This, in turn, encouraged both groups to improve the quality of their work, paying more attention to the materials used—particularly metals and stones—and to increase the use of gold. Consequently, the value of jewelry rose, leading to higher prices in the jewelry market. For instance, a gold nose or ear ring was valued at 6 rubles, a silver bracelet at 3 rubles, a ring at 2 rubles, and rings at 50–60 kopecks [3].

Ethnological analysis shows that the growing interest in jewelry among women led to increased competition among jewelers, prompting both sides to enhance the quality of their products, modify their composition, and ultimately raise jewelry prices. This process followed a sequential system: demand for products, competition, changes in product composition, and price increase.

During that time, jewelry made of gold with engraved or stamped patterns and uniform “Moscow-style” designs appeared. In response, local jewelers began producing earrings based on local traditions, known as “oyzirak” and “sandiq zirak,” which became popular [4:153].

By the mid-20th century, local jewelers initially worked individually by hand and later organized into artels. They mainly produced earrings, bracelets, rings, and beads. Jewelry produced during this period began to reflect Soviet ideology. Gold earrings in crescent, box, and Kashgar-style forms incorporated revolutionary symbols such as the hammer and sickle or the five-pointed star. According to scholarly analyses, these gradual (evolutionary) changes in jewelry and their alignment with Soviet ideology diminished their magical, ceremonial, and symbolic significance. As a result, many forms of fine art, including jewelry art, developed further.

The most popular pastime for women in the Surkhandarya oasis was individually making beaded jewelry at home. Using techniques taught by master artisans, women produced many bead necklaces and adornments worn on the chest and around the neck [5:6]. This craft was closely connected to the worldview and mentality of the local population.

Uzbek women have always valued beauty and traditionally knew the secrets of adornment. Women in the studied region have long used local methods of cosmetic care, hair, and facial treatments adapted to their environment.

Animistic beliefs about the magical power of hair and related customs, rituals, and superstitions still persist. Historically, even though grandmothers did not go about with uncovered heads, they paid particular attention to hair styling and care. Women traditionally washed their hair with yogurt. Girls wanted long, strong hair and would wash it early in spring with spring water, rainwater, or snow. To strengthen hair, grandmothers used growth water, egg yolk, and grass sap. To darken hair, they applied fermented rice water [6:93].

Women continued the traditions of their mothers and grandmothers in hair care, styling, and adornment, following their advice. For example, parting hair from the forehead upward was a common

practice throughout the region, though the method of creating “zulfs” (braids or locks) varied. Earrings hanging below the ear, called “kokil,” were considered a type of zulf. Among the settled Tajik population of Surkhandarya, these were called “zulf-kokil,” “picha,” or “pecha.” Interestingly, Tajik women wore two rows of zulfs: the first row from above the ear to the side, and the second row from the forehead behind the ear, reflecting ancient traditions. Today, this custom is gradually fading due to the widespread influence of modern cosmetology.

Women traditionally adorned their faces, eyebrows, hands, feet, and entire bodies. To enhance beauty, Uzbek women applied natural pastes, henna, and upa-elik on their faces and hands, and used rosewater for facial care. The popular saying, “Do not show your mother to your father with makeup,” reflects this tradition [7:157].

During the studied period, women used various traditional methods for cosmetic purposes. One such method was applying o’sma (a plant) to the eyebrows. The leaves of the plant were dried in the sun, squeezed, and the green liquid applied to the eyebrows. O’sma, which mainly grows in warm climates, was not used by all women; for example, women of the hoja class avoided it, considering it sinful or frivolous due to religious beliefs linked to their lineage tracing back to Prophet Muhammad and the caliphs. Besides eyebrows, young girls sometimes dyed their hair with o’sma, using a needle to apply it to the temples and forehead, creating artificial bracelets and rings on hands.

In addition to o’sma, kohl was applied to the eyes, particularly by older women. Kohl was homemade, prepared by burning cotton wicks soaked in oil, then mixing the resulting black powder with animal fats to produce the cosmetic [6:95].

Moreover, elderly women used miswak for oral hygiene and tishqoli (tooth powder) for dental treatment. Tishqoli was prepared by mixing the powder from pistachio leaves with heated iron [8:91; 9:448].

For facial care, women mainly used simple traditional methods. They protected their skin from dust, wind, and sun and softened it using yogurt, cream, animal fat, and grape leaves. To remove blemishes, they applied the milk of a nursing woman, fig juice, or the sap from fig fruit.

Historically, women created artificial beauty marks, a painful process using dyed threads and needles to embed color into the skin, leaving permanent marks on the face and forehead [6:96]. Today, this practice has almost completely disappeared, though Western influences have introduced temporary decorative tattoos on hands, waist, and neck.

Henna was another plant used for adornment. In festivals and weddings, women and girls applied henna to their hands and feet, a practice that continues today. Henna preparation, drying, crushing, and application methods were uniform across regions. The plant’s leaves were dried, crushed, applied to the palms, tied with clean cloth, and similarly applied to the feet. Henna produced a sharp yellow-red color and lasted about a month. It was also used in folk medicine as a healing herb [10,11:124].

In the early 20th century, there were no factory-made perfumes in the Surkhandarya oasis. Women purchased cosmetics made from natural herbs or substances like starch and silver powder from markets. To repel evil spirits, drive away insects, and emit a pleasant fragrance, women placed herbs such as mint, basil, and wormwood at the collar or hem of their clothing. Traditional cosmetic tools were also used, including peshxalta, qushkovak (ear cleaner), mo’ychinak (eyebrow comb), qoshchinoq, dandonkovak (tooth cleaner), and barak xo’rak (nose cleaner) [12]. Each item had a central compartment for perfume, was strung into circular chains, and worn on the chest [13:149]. Such elaborate cosmetic sets were typically found only among palace ladies, officials, and the wealthy.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that women's material culture is closely linked with social, economic, political, and cultural factors. From the early 20th century to the present, the form, style, and meaning of jewelry and cosmetic items have changed significantly. As a result of the political and ideological influences of the Soviet era, the introduction of foreign jewelry products, and the impact of modern cosmetology, traditional items evolved and were enriched with new forms and styles.

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