

## RISHTON POTTERY YESTERDAY AND TODAY

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### Abstract

This article analyzes the history of the emergence and development of the Rishton pottery center in Central Asia, as well as its current development. The focus is on highlighting the factors that played an important role in the emergence of this pottery school, the local characteristics of Rishton pottery and their formation, and the activities of the skilled artisans who revived these traditions. The observations made are substantiated by historical data and the results of field research.

### Keywords

Rishton pottery school, development of the mid-19th century, local traditions, master Abdullo's style, lazurite blue-green colors, transparent alkaline glaze, the work of Master Alisher Nazirov.

After the Republic of Uzbekistan gained independence, the handicraft industry, like other industries, began to develop rapidly in our country, and the necessary legal foundation was created for this [1:1]. It is known that various branches of artisanship have emerged in our ancient land since ancient times and have developed over the centuries. These industries play an important role in the lives of the local population, and a significant portion of the population is employed in the sector. During the development of this industry, a number of dynasties of famous artisans have emerged from our country, and they have gained a high reputation with their works of art not only in our country, but also in distant lands. However, during the Soviet era in our country, the development of the industry suffered a certain decline, and the traditions of the industry lost their former position.

In today's era of globalization, the need to revive centuries-old traditions of national crafts, the issue of widely promoting their rich experience among the younger generation, makes the in-depth scientific study of the history of the industry relevant in every way.

One of the oldest and most widespread branches of our national crafts is pottery. The craft of pottery has long been developed in many cities of Central Asia and in some scattered artisan villages that specialize in this field. Examples of this are the pottery centers of Gijduvan, Shahrisabz, Khujand, Madyr, Bogat and Rishton in our country. In particular, Rishton is one of the largest pottery centers in our country, and according to some information, pottery appeared here eight centuries ago. Originally, a small pottery village, Rishton had developed into a major pottery center in Central Asia by the mid-19th century [2:202]. Today, more than 1,000 potters are active here, a testament to these traditions. Most of these artisans are 7-8 generations of dynastic potters.

It should be noted that a number of studies have been conducted to study the history of the emergence and historical development of the Rishton pottery center. The results of a number of studies on this issue have also been published. However, research shows that the various local legends and folklore related to the emergence of the pottery center have not yet been fully analyzed scientifically. In addition, the latest news in the field have not yet been fully reflected in research. For this reason, we considered it important to highlight these changes.



It is known that the history of the Rishton pottery school dates back to ancient times. This is confirmed by artifacts found during archaeological research, archival sources, and new information related to the genealogy of potters. The study of traces of pottery dating back to the BC period confirms our opinion. The development of crafts in the region continued unabated. In particular, that is, by the 9th-10th centuries, the Middle Ages formed the art of glazing pottery formed in Rishton. The products of this center were valued in the trade of the Great Silk Road. In addition, it was precisely because of this trade artery that many innovations came to the craft from other countries. Some researchers attribute the spread of styles in Rishtan pottery that were in harmony with the centers of Iranian pottery to this period [3:1]. Pottery, especially in this place, developed further in the 19th century.

It can be said that the emergence of the Rishton pottery center was due to a number of factors that made its products widely known not only among the surrounding population, but also among the population of distant lands. First, the soil of the area where the village of Rishton is located is an extremely fertile, high-quality raw material for pottery, which played a key role in the emergence of the industry. This is confirmed by numerous reports from local artisans and studies of soil samples.

On the other hand, local potters have developed unique local traditions over the centuries in producing high quality and artistic pottery in Rishton. Thirdly, the village of Rishton was geographically located in the south of the Fergana Valley, between the densely populated agricultural centers of Margilan and Kokand. The large purchasing power of the population in these areas for pottery products certainly had a significant positive impact on the development of the industry.

The role of famous masters in the formation of the "craft brand" of Rishton pottery, in modern terms, was also invaluable. For example, according to historical data, pottery in Rishton began to develop rapidly in the middle of the 19th century, and the role of the famous master Abdullo was significant [4:4]. Master Abdullo, as one of the most famous potters of his time, made a great contribution to the development of the craft in Rishton, especially the field of porcelain. It should be noted that Master Abdullo did not have a son, but his only daughter was engaged in drawing patterns on ceramic objects, that is, painting. For this reason, the skilled artisan taught all his knowledge and skills to his student Mazoir.

For this reason, Master Mazoir also made a significant contribution to the further development of the industry. Master Mazoir gained a reputation in Rishton for creating mysterious tile patterns. For this reason, Master Abdullo and his student Master Mazoir, as accomplished tile makers of their time, were invited to the responsible task of decorating the Khudoyorkhan Horde, which was being built in the city of Kokand, the capital of the Kokand Khanate, with tiles in the second half of the 19th century. In the decoration of the Horde, the tiles are glazed using a wide range of lazurite-blue colors typical of the Rishton pottery school. The tiles are glazed using all the centuries-old traditions of the craft, which also allowed them to be preserved for a long time.

It is noteworthy that during the process of making tiles in the city, Master Abdullo also taught local youth how to skillfully bake tiles. As a result, there is a view that tile making has also found a new development in the city of Kokand. The master's fame in construction has increased so much among the people that a number of folk legends have emerged during this period related to his activities. According to one such legend, the khan was so pleased with the decorations that the master gave to the Horde that he informed the khan that he could ask the master for a large reward for his work. The master asked Khudoyorkhan to reduce the tax levied on potters. There is a story that the khan granted his wish, saying: "Even if you asked for the governorship of the city of Margilan, I would give it to you."



Along with artisanship, Master Abdullo was also engaged in various charitable works. According to local artisans, during his time he also built a mosque and madrasahs in Rishton with his own funds. Unfortunately, these structures have not been preserved to this day. However, we consider it an urgent issue for researchers of the history of the social life of local artisans to analyze the data on this topic.

Rishton pottery developed further at the beginning of the 20th century. This is confirmed by the following information. Rishton products of this period were awarded a gold medal at an international exhibition in France. Even at the beginning of the 20th century, the Emir of Bukhara Olimkhan bought land in the Yalta resort in Crimea and began to build an “Uzbek teahouse” in the national style here. Rishton artisans also participated in the decoration of this teahouse, skillfully demonstrating their art.

Throughout its development, the Rishton pottery school developed in constant contact with other centers in the valley, namely the Kokand, Namangan, Gurumsaray, and Andijan pottery centers. Rishton masters also developed the industry in constant contact with masters of the Uratapa, Khujand, and Konibodom pottery schools in the west of the valley, and Tashkent in the north. Rishton pottery was closely connected not only with these schools, but also with other pottery schools in Central Asia, in particular the Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khorezm pottery schools. The numerous types of products confirm this, in particular, the similarity of their shapes and colors, and the closeness in the styles used.

It is known that many skilled artisans from Rishton also worked in these centers. In this way, Rishton masters also made a significant contribution to the development of Central Asian pottery. These traditions have been passed down from generation to generation for centuries. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, these methods were further developed. What is noteworthy is that these traditions are developing steadily again today.

However, despite this, the unique development path of Rishton pottery, the shape of the product, and the style of decoration have always been somewhat different from the traditions of other pottery schools. Rishton pottery has always had a number of unique aspects that distinguish it from the products of other pottery schools. For example, while in Namangan pottery, the surface of the object is decorated with fewer and simpler patterns, in Rishton, the patterns are more intricate and complex. While Bukhara and Gishduvan pottery designs were mostly made with lead yellow and red colors, Rishton pottery adopted the traditional method of applying patterns in light blue and turquoise colors with an alkaline colorless glaze. According to the potters, this did not result in a sharp change in colors, but it created a very elegant, soft, and majestic appearance.

Researchers give different information about the emergence of this style. True, this method is similar to traditional Chinese methods in some respects. Therefore, according to one legend, there is also a view that this method of applying color glaze and patterning appeared during the Timurid era, similar to the high-quality ceramics of the Ming Dynasty in China [5:1]. But potters emphasize that this style is based on local raw materials and the experience of masters formed over the centuries. According to the masters, according to Eastern traditions, turquoise color gives a person happiness and health. There are also those who believe that wisdom is the color of the sky. In terms of the brilliance of colors, the Rishton school is only comparable to the Khorezm pottery school in our country [6:16]. The patterns that the masters put on the objects amaze people with their beauty, transparent glaze, and unique color-changing effect.

In Rishton, the glaze was applied to the object through a transparent glaze made from alkali, which was prepared by burning the forty-legged plant that grows in the mountains, and then using the raw materials obtained from it. This method was quite complex, laborious, and began to be forgotten over time. However, in recent times, due to the special attention paid to the



development of pottery in our country, great work has been done to revive the traditions of pottery in Rishton. The traditions of artistically high-quality production, decoration of objects, and the preparation of alkaline glazes have been reestablished.

In this, the contribution of such famous artisans as master potters M. Ismoilov, I. Komilov, Sh. Yusupov, A. Nazirov, M. Saidov was significant. They have somewhat restored the method of making products in accordance with the rules of the traditional Rishton pottery school. In their work, they are trying to preserve the unique techniques of pottery that our ancestors have accumulated over many centuries.

One such dedicated, skilled potter is Alisher Nazirov. Today, Alisher Nazirov is known as one of the most skilled potter masters and artisans in our country. The young master entered the pottery trade at the age of 12. He studied the secrets of pottery and became a skilled artisan, and from his youth he sought to reveal and revive the essence of the mysterious Rishton alkali tradition [7:1]. The master grew up and worked as a potter, then as a chief artist at the Rishton pottery factory. During the period of independence, he had the opportunity to realize his cherished dreams.

He first managed to open his own pottery school workshop in Rishton in 1998. In this school, he began to teach the secrets of the craft to young people, ensuring that the traditions of Rishton pottery would be passed on to future generations [8:4]. Most importantly, he worked tirelessly to restore the traditions of the Rishton pottery school, conducted experiments, and exchanged ideas with dynastic potter masters. As a result, he has managed to restore several ancient traditional forms and patterns of Rishton pottery to this day. The pottery he created in the traditional Rishton school method has also begun to be recognized in the international market.

In particular, he first exhibited his ceramics in Hanover, Germany, in 1989, and in Moscow, Russia, in 1991. Later, he widely exhibited his works at international exhibitions such as Komatsu in Japan, Paris in France, Munich in Germany, Rome in Italy, and Madrid in Spain. In 2015, he organized his own large-scale exhibition in Vienna, Austria. This event was of great importance in further promoting the Uzbek people's ceramic traditions in the world.

His works are now included in the collections of the State Museum of Arts of Uzbekistan, the Academy of Arts of Uzbekistan, the Museum of Oriental Art in Moscow, the Museum of Ethnography in St. Petersburg, and the Asakura Art Ceramics Museum in Japan. This information confirms how great the interest in the traditions of the Rishton pottery school is growing worldwide. In 2016, he was awarded the high title of "Keeper of Traditions" for his significant contribution to the preservation of the cultural heritage of Uzbekistan, effectively rewarding his work in restoring the traditions of our national pottery.

Today, the products made by Alisher Nazirov are distinguished by their elegance and harmony of form. Master Alisher emphasizes that he draws inspiration from nature itself, which is why beautiful flowers, trees, and branches are often depicted in his work. In addition, the form and structure of his works have always amazed art lovers with their inclusiveness and unique style.

Another famous representative of the Rishton pottery school is the master potter Sharofiddin Yusupov. He was born in 1948. His father was also one of the famous potters of his time. He worked at the Rishton pottery factory. In his youth, the master learned the secrets of pottery in the family workshop at home. The master himself stated: "I was born into this world to be a potter. I did not dream of any other profession. My labors were not in vain. Today, my works are kept in many museums around the world. I am very happy that my work is recognized by our state. If I sell my works of art abroad, a piece of my heart goes with that item. Because I work with love for my works from the heart," says the master [9:1]. The works of Sharofiddin



Yusupov also reflect the best traditions of the Rishton pottery school. The shape of the item, its secret, and the patterns and decorations given confirms this.

In general, the Rishton pottery school is a large pottery center with a centuries-old history. This school is known for its high-quality pottery not only in our country, but also in distant foreign countries. What made Rishton pottery famous is the formation of its own production traditions. Natural, economic and social factors influenced the emergence of such traditions.

One of the current pressing issues is the restoration, redevelopment, and wide promotion of these centuries-old traditions of Rishton pottery in the international arena. National crafts, in particular pottery, have a special place in the development of our country and the well-being of our people. After all, as long as there are potters, the world will be prosperous, creativity will not stop.

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