

Mirza Bukhari: The Journey from Entrepreneurship to Collecting

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Abstract: The article highlights the contribution of collectors to the formation of museum collections. In particular, the work of Mirza Bukhari, a local collector of ancient artefacts in Samarkand, his travels in Russian cities and his contribution to the formation of Central Asian collections in foreign museums is analysed on the basis of sources.

Keywords: collection, artifacts, museum, archeological finds, Afrosiab, agricultural exhibition, coins, seals, crafts, silk.

Introduction

Central Asia is renowned for its natural wealth, national traditions and agricultural products. Everyone who came to this country, irrespective of who they were, took with them samples of the *osori* *halam*, which reached the art level of the locals. We see among them scholars, lawyers, businessmen, merchants and ordinary citizens. In particular, there were collectors among them, and among the locals there were such unique masterpieces of *osori*-*Atica*. And there were many special ancient coins, *osori* - unwanted tokens and *vendors* - on the market. Among the artisans *Ham* could meet many of them.

Main body

Mirza Abdullah Bukhari is one such amateur collector and his name is mentioned in sources as Mirza Bukharin, Mirza Abdullin. Mirzo Bukhari was born in 1848 in the Tashkent mahalla of the Samarkand region. The reason for the calling was that in the 18th century a number of silk weavers, and shoemakers moved here from Tashkent.



Mirza Bukhari's father worked with the cocoon, later continued by his son. The production of family silk was carried out in the traditional way of that time. During this period Mirza Abdullah Bukhari was known in Samarkand as a famous collector who collected ancient coins, jewellery, ceramics and metal objects from different periods. However, industry was not his source of income.

The emergence of Russian factories in the country led Mirza Bukhari to the independent development of the textile industry. Mirzo Bukhari created a mechanism not only for the development of silk cultivation, but also for the production and transformation of silk into a product. He independently established his own business. Mirzo Bukhari, who mastered the field, soon became a second-rate merchant. The silk fabrics created by this man, who became a master of his craft, became popular not only locally but also in foreign markets.

Mirza Bukhari's collecting activities attracted travellers and representatives of the dictatorial regime interested in the history and culture of Central Asia. This situation enriched Mirza Bukhari's collections and increased the number of buyers.

The construction of the railway led to an influx of tourists, businessmen and scholars, as well as the establishment of an antique industry. The study of Afrosiab by Russian archaeologists further increased the local merchant's interest in the area. Meetings with scholars and receiving interesting information about their history became the basis for the emergence of science. Mirza Bukhari, who was very interested in the history of the region, met with many Russian researchers and archaeologists during his career. Even Afrosiab vowed to take part in archaeological excavations but could not do so because of the plague epidemic of 1873. In later periods these interests led him to take part in archaeological expeditions.

His acquaintance with the St Petersburg orientalist N.I. Veselovsky was a great incentive for him to collect his collections with scientific understanding. When the scholar heard about Mirza Bukhari's collections, he visited his house and was amazed to see his collection. He bought 1,202 artefacts, including gold, silver, copper coins, seals, women's jewellery and pottery. They consisted of 11 gold and 77 silver coins, 951 coins, 18 seals, 6 stones with images of people, animals, etc. [1]

The attention and recognition of Mirza Bukhari's collections paved the way for him to participate in many exhibitions.

Mirzo Bukhari repeatedly participated in various agricultural and industrial exhibitions. His first participation in an exhibition was the Turkestan exhibition organized in Tashkent in 1878 in which Mirza Bukhari participated with skullcaps, silk fabrics and scarves. He was awarded the gold medal of the exhibition in the nomination "For improvement and expansion of production of silk products" [2].

In 1886 he participated in the Turkestan Exhibition. Throughout his career he was active not only in his own country but also in exhibitions abroad.



At the 1886 Turkestan Exhibition

Mirza Bukhari pavilion

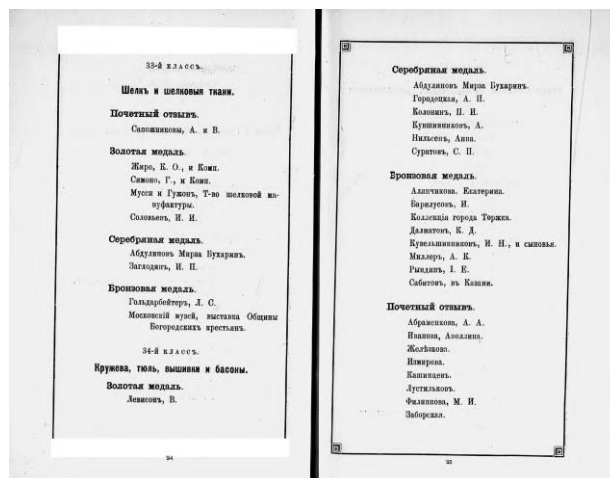
Mirza Bukhari participated in the Kharkov Agricultural Exhibition of 1887. On the day he arrived in Kharkov he stayed in a hotel, and the next day he went to the members of the committee with his honorary shepherd and two medals around his neck. Those who saw him in the street looked with great interest at his turban, his medals and the shepherd on his shoulders.

The Kharkovskie Vedomosti newspaper reported that the Samarkand merchant came to the exhibition with silk fabrics that attracted everybody's attention and were immediately sold out.

He managed to win a medal of the exhibition also.

Mirza Bukhari describes his trip to Kharkiv as follows: *"The visitors to the exhibition either came to buy something or came to visit me. When I asked them what they want to buy - they answered - nothing, we came to see you"*.

In 1889 the press reported that a resident of Samarkand exhibited his wares in Paris. Indeed, Mirza Bukhari participated in the Paris industrial exhibition with his products. His silk fabrics were very well received by the Parisians. Mirzo Bukhari was awarded two silver medals for production of silk fabrics, silk embroidery on cloth, velvet and saffiyon (sakhtiyon).



On the list of winners at the 1889 Paris Exhibition

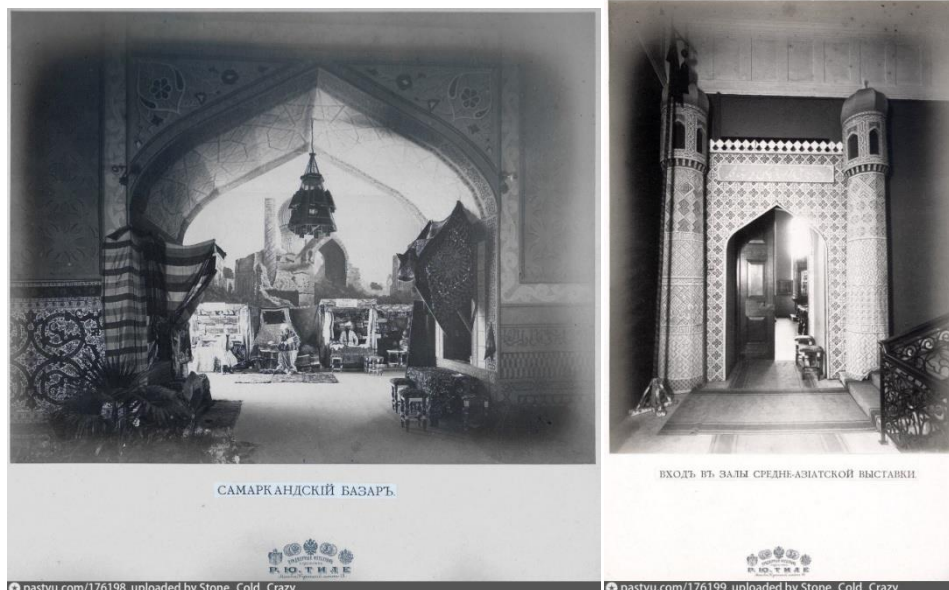
Abdullin Mirza Bukhari was also present

In the summer of 1890 the newspaper *Turkestan Tuzem* reported that Mirza Bukhari was awarded a gold medal and a special diploma at an exhibition in Tbilisi, Georgia. At the same time, he reported on his participation in exhibitions in Tashkent and Kazan.

The Central Asian exhibition in Moscow was organised in 1891 in the building of the Museum of Russian History. At the entrance to the exhibition the general view of the Samarkand Mosque, a pavilion decorated in oriental style and consisting of two parts: the first part has a front door and the second part has an artistic and ethnographic section. As one enters the door, one imagines oneself as if one has entered the streets of Bukhara and Khiva. After passing through the 2nd door, a caravan, and beyond the 3rd door, the colourful lifestyle of the bustling local market is depicted on the basis of mannequins. Asian and Oriental coins were exhibited here in the numismatic collections, and the exhibition was also visited by Emperor Alexander III. Mirza Bukhari again won a gold medal at this exhibition.



Gold medal of the Central Asian exhibition. Moscow. 1891.



Samples from the exhibition. 1891 y. Moscow. History Museum.

Mirza Bukhari's trips to St Petersburg and Moscow further strengthened his passion for his work and encouraged him to become a local historian and collector. He was able to see the Kremlin, the Tretyakov Gallery, the Polytechnic and the Rumyantsev Museum. He also visited the Hermitage for three days. In the library he saw Usman's Koran. He also described Alisher's Mir, Shahnameh, Iskardarnom, Sharafiddin Yazdi's Zafarnom, Nizami's works on Khamsa and many of the khans' labels in gold letters, dictionaries and books in various Arabic, Persian, Turkish and other languages.

The orientalist N.I. Veselovsky invited him to a meeting of the Oriental branch of the Russian Geographical Society. He was impressed by the scientific environment of the society and the scholars' knowledge of several Muslim languages. Upon his return to Samarkand, Mirza Bukhari presented 43 artefacts to the administration of the Russian Emperor.

As a result of reading books on archaeology and studying the history of finds, Mirza Bukhari started to publish a number of articles. In May 1888, the Turkiston Tuzem newspaper reported on the finds in the town of Afrosiab, noting that all the finds had been preserved. [5]

The Turkestan Vedomosti newspaper regularly published information about Samarkand merchants and collectors.

Count Bobrinsky, head of the Imperial Archaeological Commission, invites the Governor-General of Turkestan to inspect Mirza Bukhari's collection. Eventually, in October 1888, Mirza Bukhari's collection of six boxes was sent to St Petersburg. According to records, over 6,300 items were sent from Samarqand to St Petersburg, most of which were purchased. Information on this is stored in St Petersburg archives. Mirza Bukhari did not put a price on them and left the assessment to the commission. The commission accepted them and selected 2 items: an oriental bronze glass and a copper jug. These objects are now kept in the Asian collection of the Hermitage, together with other collected artefacts.

The relics collected by Mirza Bukhari are also popular abroad and there have been several requests to buy his collections. In particular, Dr. Trol, an Austrian, wanted to buy his collections for a large sum. Mirza Bukhari also turned down the president of the French Geographical Society, Leclerc. Mirza Bukhari did not need to make money from the collections. The reason was that his daily sales at fairs and exhibitions ranged from 500 to 3000 rubles. His large collection, which he sold to St Petersburg, cost 300 roubles and was paid in instalments by museums, as museums in Russia were limited at the time.

The foundation of the cooker collection kept in the Hermitage Fund is also connected with the name of Mirza Bukhari. Among them was the late 19th century archeologist N. I. There are

artifacts donated to the museum by Veselovsky. Most of them were purchased from private collectors.

It is reported that Mirza Bukhari also donated objects to the Tashkent Museum. The State Museum of the History of Uzbekistan also has a set of copper trays donated by Mirza Bukhari.

The poet Furkat Mirza, who visited Samarkand in the 1890s, recalls living in Bukhari's house, where he saw artefacts of Central Asian culture thousands of years old and older. [7]

On 12 October 1892, the World's Fair was to be held in Chicago to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the discovery of America. The Russian Empire was also invited to participate in the exhibition. In Chicago, the government of St. Petersburg planned to build a special pavilion to showcase the achievements of all regions of Russia. Mirzo Bukhari from Samarkand and the Niyazov brothers were also from Turkestan.

In 1892 the plague began to spread in Turkestan. Mirza Bukhari, who had survived the disease, thanked Allah and went on pilgrimage. It was in 1893 that the Hajj pilgrimage took place under unfavorable conditions due to a number of negative factors. An epidemic of plague had claimed the lives of more than 50,000 pilgrims. Pilgrims from Samarkand and Bukhara travelled to the Hajj via Afghanistan, India, Jeddah or Yambo by sea. Almost all those who reached Mecca were infected with the plague. Most of the pilgrims died on the spot. There were so many that it was difficult to distinguish between pilgrims personally and a citizen of which country. But Mirzo Bukhari of Samarkand was an unusual man. This was his last trip.

Conclusion

Thus, Mirza Bukhari did not return to his homeland. Had he been alive, he would surely have attended the show in Chicago and won an award.

From the rank-and-file amateur collector to local historian, this man dreamed of establishing all the enviable museums in his homeland and displaying unique collections. Unfortunately, we have not yet conducted a separate study of such collectors.

Collections of thousands of Mirza Bukhari's works served as a basis to replenish the collections of Russian and Tashkent museums, to form special collections promoting the rich history and culture of Uzbekistan in the world. Such people became known at that time as representatives of the local intelligentsia. As a specialist and entrepreneur who studies and promotes the history and cultural heritage of his country, he occupies a special place in the pages of history.

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