

# Legal Bases and Development of Handicrafts in Uzbekistan in the 19th and 20th Centuries

Jannat Khamidovna Ismailova<sup>1,2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Historical Sciences, State Museum of History of Uzbekistan, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

<sup>2</sup>Department of Museology, National Institute of Fine Art and Design Named After Kamoliddin Behzod, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

## Email address:

jannat.ismailova@mail.ru

## To cite this article:

Jannat Khamidovna Ismailova. Legal Bases and Development of Handicrafts in Uzbekistan in the 19th and 20th Centuries. *History Research*. Vol. 10, No. 2, 2022, pp. 83-87. doi: 10.11648/j.history.20221002.12

**Received:** April 30, 2022; **Accepted:** June 14, 2022; **Published:** July 26, 2022

---

**Abstract:** The history of handicrafts in Uzbekistan began to develop since ancient times. Over the centuries, various crafts have appeared and developed on this territory. The system of work of a master craftsman was initially built on a generalized basis. Later, artisans united in a special kind of activity, and the order of work of craftsmen was improved. The analysis of scientific sources studied on the basis of the study confirms that the masters used it as a legal document in the process of work. This article examines specific aspects of the history of handicrafts in Uzbekistan. The article also analyzes the legal aspects of the development of the activities of craft associations. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the style of work of craftsmen in the XIX-XX centuries, the importance of handicrafts, it is necessary to study and analyze the coverage of handicraft issues in the sources of that period. And then the comparison of these analyzes with the legal basis of handicrafts in the world gives a positive result in a full study of the subject. Unfortunately, the process of translating and scientifically circulating sources in Arabic, Persian and Chinese, created in the 9th-18th centuries, is slow. Due to the lack of specialists in this field and the difficulty of translating scientific works, the lack of scientific research in this area compared to other topics limits the possibility of in-depth analysis of the craft over time. The article analyzes the legal basis and development of handicrafts on the basis of available sources. In fact, this is a problem at the level of scientific research. Reading these sources, in a historical sequence, comparatively increases the chances of finding a solution to this problem.

**Keywords:** Craft, Master, Shop, Workshop, Apprentice, Blacksmith, Coppersmith, Charter (Risola)

---

## 1. Introduction

Artisanship is one of the most ancient directions in the process of human development, and over the centuries, its various branches and modern forms have been gradually developed. In the life of all countries, handicrafts have been formed and developed as the main source of economic and cultural activity.

If we look back at history, we can be sure that the handicraft started from the Paleolithic period.

In the last stage of the Paleolithic, there were cases of fine arts, making jewellery from bone, in the Mesolithic period, making bows and arrows, spear weapons, and painting on rocks. During the Neolithic period, the making of labour tools, spinning mills, and weaving looms emerged. Clothes were made of wool and plant fibre. A production economy

was formed. The discovery of copper and bronze in the Eneolithic period led to the development of axes, sickles, spearheads, daggers, jewellery and ornaments, and the discovery of the pottery wheel led to the rise of ceramics to the level of art. In agriculture, there were appeared the Omoch (plough), the wheel, the cart. The emergence of trade relations has accelerated the process of improving consumer goods and the exchange of experiences with neighboring countries. The foundations of the sedentary stratum began from this period. The formation and development of the handicraft industry laid the foundation for the establishment of productive farms. Over the centuries, these processes have served as the basis for the emergence of sectoral communities of handicrafts, uniting them into associations.

There are also manuscripts on the formation and development of handicrafts written in different historical periods, which, unfortunately, have not yet been read, analyzed and put into scientific circulation. Historians of small Chinese kingdoms have provided information about the history of China, as well as the countries around China, and most importantly, the cities and villages of the Great Silk Road network, their occupations and culture. Of course, this information includes information about the handicrafts of their time, the dynasty of craftsmen. They are written in Chinese, and the specialist who reads them is very few. Craftsmanship, the restoration of the continuity of traditional dynasties of artisans, the study of its history is a modern requirement. Researchers conducting research in this field in Uzbekistan are a minority. This article is a small step in that direction. Perhaps we hope that this article will encourage researchers to do more research on this issue.

## 2. Literature Review

It is known that the high level of development of Islamic culture in the territory of Uzbekistan dates back to the IX-XII centuries. It is during this period that handicrafts and trade in our country also rose to a high level of development and may have led to the emergence of charters (*risola*).

In the late 19th century, scholars conducting research in the Turkestan region tried to collect and study the charters. It is known that the manuscripts of 14 pamphlets are kept in the library of the Turkestan Archaeological Club. Scholars S. M. Smirnov, N. O. Petrovsky, N. Likoshin [1], P. A. Komarov, V. P. Nalivkin and N. P. Ostroumov [2] translated a number of charters into Russian through the press and published. The charters were studied as a historical and cultural source, and some clarification was made of their type. For example, in 1885 in the printing house of S. I. Lakhtin "Farmer's charter" was published in 50 copies. In addition, N. P. Ostroumov published charters on a number of crafts, such as butchers, blacksmiths, tea sellers, coppersmiths, shoemakers, grocers, bakers, seamstresses, oil producers.

Preliminary data show that there are charters on 15 areas of handicrafts [3]. Subsequent research provides information on 23 of their areas [4]. They consisted of tailors, hot tea sellers, stonemasons, miners, oil producers, bakers, blacksmiths, and so on. According to historical sources, the Turkestan People's Library has 32 charters. In particular, in the fund of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the field of sewing "*Risola-i-bofandagi*", in grocery "*Risola-i-bakkoli*", in agriculture "*Risola-i-dehkoni*", "*Risola-i-chitgari*", in blacksmithing "*Risola-i-oxangari*" are among them. One of the urgent tasks of today is the scientific analysis of the historical significance and evolution of development of these charters.

## 3. Methodology

Resources play an important role in the development of handicrafts in a particular place. For this reason, handicrafts

have been constantly developing unevenly across regions. For example, in ancient mining areas, handicrafts such as jewelry, blacksmithing and coppersmithing were developed. In the coverage of this article, the theory of geographical determinism also used the methods of comparative analysis, historical, systematization, historical-retrospective.

The modernization of handicrafts is reflected in the process of urbanization (increasing the status of cities) during the development of society, including the creation of housing and workshops for artisans in cities, the creation of handicrafts. Although handicrafts are completely modernized (e.g., embroidery, fabric weaving, pottery, and jewelry), they retain traditional elements. Because they reflect the worldview, aesthetics, ethnic identity and economic traditions of the people. Craft modernization is a socio-historical event that covers the spiritual, cultural, economic, political and social spheres of life of the state and society. Modernization is associated with a mix of craft reforms and traditional and modernized values. That is, modernization does not deny traditions, but is based on them.

The structural-functional approach used in the article is based on the division of labor and the increase of professions in folk crafts at all stages of historical development of society, the production of products for demand and consumption, the relationship between artisans, their lifestyles, traditions, customs and rituals. allows you to learn. The historical method is the study of the present state of social events and phenomena in relation to their past. Using this method, the exact time, occurrence, and development of events and phenomena are studied as a whole based on concrete experience from a historical point of view.

## 4. Results

By the Middle Ages, there were trade unions in many countries around the world. Sources say that it appeared in Western Europe, including Italy in the 10th century, France in the 11th-12th centuries, England and Germany in the 13th century, the Transcaucasian countries in the 12th and 13th centuries, Central Asia and Iran in the 13th century [5]. There is very little research on craft associations, their charters. However, not only in Uzbekistan, but all over the world in the Middle Ages there were hundreds of such associations. Each of them had its own rules and characteristics. For example, in Paris in the Middle Ages there was the "Book of Trade and Crafts of Paris", in Denmark there was the "Charter of medieval Danish craftsmen and the rules of holidays in the shops".

The workshops united the artisans into a single association in their direction. It consists of a master, a master assistant, and apprentices. In the Middle Ages, independent labor was considered illegal. In the cities, artisans were considered members of some association and the association protected it. Each shop had its own flag and building, where they held meetings. Headmaster also supervised them and protected his members from the competition of artisans in other cities.

The workshops had a separate monopoly on the type of craft, controlling the production and sale of the product, controlling the communications between the master, the assistant master, and the apprentices.

These workshops embraced the lifestyle of the artisans. If a war broke out, the warrior went to fight as a detachment. They have a common treasury, and the artisans were assisted in cases of illness or otherwise in the event of the loss of a breadwinner. The festivities were also held with members of the shop. The case of artisans who violated the charter was discussed at the meeting. The workshops were not considered a manufacturing association, as each artisan had his own tools and raw materials in his own workshop. They passed down their professions from generation to generation and had their own secrets. In the workshops, the master consisted of one or two master assistants and apprentices. However, the master himself was a member of the shop. To become a member of the shop, students had to study for about 7 years. First you have to work as a master assistant for a few years and then produce the product. To become a member of the shop, you had to pay a membership fee.

Master assistants, on the other hand, could work in other cities to improve their skills, and when they had mastered their craft and were ready for the position of master, they could open their own workshop.

The shop has established labor discipline, production and sales procedures. According to the charter, each craftsman produced a product in a specific direction. They are forbidden to produce more products or sell them cheaper. Because this situation had a negative impact on the activities of other masters. These unions controlled not only the working hours of their employees but also other non-working hours. Many European cities had streets of bakers, butchers, and knives. Thus the small-scale production direction of production was preserved.

Central Asian artisans also joined associations, and information about them was reflected in written sources. Among them, charters that serve as a source for a thorough study of some areas of handicrafts are of particular importance.

The development of handicrafts in the territory of Uzbekistan has developed in connection with the ancient way of life and cultural traditions of the people, the national and ethnic characteristics of the population, social status, occupation and foreign relations.

The upper class of craftsmen consisted of masters. They had a workshop and production equipment at their disposal. Craftsmen and artisans are united into unions (workshop). Each association had its own charter, which contained rules and regulations. The members of the association were present at meetings from time to time. When they became members of the association, they were paid in advance. If a student (khalifa) wanted to resign, he had to return the money to the workshop. If he did not return the money, then other workshops were immediately notified and the artisan was not hired anywhere.



Figure 1. Craftsmen's charter (risola).

What the charters looked like. The word "risala" (charter) in Arabic means letter, treatise, pamphlet, letter, appeal. It is a permanent book of craftsmen, the size of which is 1/16 or 1/8 of a sheet [6]. In almost all of the charters, it begins with praises to Allaah and the prophets, and then the craftsman is told which verses or prayers of the Qur'an to recite before starting work. In the final part of the charter, it is stated that artisans who do not obey the rules and regulations will be punished, and those who do so will be blessed by Allah. The craftsman, who always carried the charters with him, was promised the blessings of those who built a thousand mosques and madrasahs. It is said that artisans who do not have a charter will first face the wrath of their masters, elders, prophets, saints and angels. The founders and mentors (pirs) of the associations were prophets and saints. Everyone involved in the craft was sponsored by the mentor. In order for the craftsman to achieve good results in his work, he had to make dua to the elders before starting work, and then prepare a table for the masters and students, and perform the actions mentioned in the charter.

The mentor (pir) of the weavers was Eve, the mentor of the blacksmiths was David, the mentor of the boat builders was Noah, the mentor of the seamstresses was Prophet Andrew, and the mentor of the builders was the Prophet Muhammad, and the mentor of cattle and sheep was Pir Zangi ata and the Chopan ata [7]. There were a few piers of some craft industry. For example, the pir of the trumpeters was Saint Isrofil, the pir of the trumpeters was the prophet David, and the pir of the drummers was Alexander the Great.

There is no exact information as to when the artisans' charters appeared. But while some sources say they have existed since ancient times, some other scholars believe that they originated in the Middle Ages. However, in our opinion, the gradual development of the craft was the basis for its unification into communities of different forms and from ancient times it was called by different names.



Figure 2. Blacksmith's charter (risola). 1909.

What was the content of the charters? As an example, we analyze the booklet of blacksmiths. First, in its introductory part, it is explained who and how the profession in this field was founded. The pamphlet states that the father of the Prophet David was a blacksmith. The Prophet had many brothers, the youngest of whom was the saintly prophet David. This craft became known throughout the world because of the prophet David [6]. When asked how many blacksmiths there are in the charters, there are four: the first is Saint Adam, the second is Saint Noah, the third is Saint Ibrahim, and the fourth is Muhammad. After the Prophet David, the saints Hodja Jalaliddin, Hodja Ibrahim, Abul Hassan, Hodja Abdullah, Hodja Muhammad Murshid, Hodja Yusuf Arab, Hodja Tiraz, Hodja Sherozi, Hodja Hisomiddin spread this profession all over the world [8].

The charter also outlines what prayers should be recited during the work process before starting work. It is impossible to use meaningless words in the workshop, but it is necessary to speak with respect. The above information is only a few parts of the charter on blacksmithing.

The workshop's charter set out the rules of the shop, which the craftsmen strictly adhered to. The artisans were located in the shops across the city and did not interfere with each other. On one street or part of the market lived blacksmiths, on the other part machinists and other professionals. Visitors to the market have a wide range of opportunities to get acquainted with the conditions of production in each profession. Local artisans are considered to be talented by nature and were able to make things that were previously completely unfamiliar to them, but meet the demands of Europeans, at a glance.

In Central Asia, there is a tradition of "kamarbast", which is performed when a student reaches the level of a master. This tradition was practiced by artisans who reached the level of masters. One of the main directions of artistic handicrafts is textile, blacksmithing. They were mainly of a familial

character inherited from their ancestors. The order, mystery, and subtleties of the craft passed from master to student more to the master's eldest son. Until the beginning of the twentieth century, men were engaged in weaving and women in spinning. In making pottery, women worked by hand, while men worked on pottery. In the booklet of weavers, the process of "belt" is carried out in the following order. On either side of the student stood the members of the shop, wrapped a special belt around his waist three times, and he was asked a question according to the information in the pamphlet. Then the head of the shop asked the master if he dressed his student, gave him money, did it, drank it, and when he asked if he regretted it, he replied that the master did not exist. When the student was asked if he regretted his service, the student replied that he did not. The student wore a cloak as a symbol of gratitude to his teacher.

The shoemaker's master showcased his student's product to the market. In pottery, the master brought his student's products to the market and collected the proceeds for the "kamarbast" ceremony. At the "Kamarbast" ceremony, the head of the shop, who read the information in the charter, tied a belt around the student's waist, and the master handed him tools with ceramic equipment, and shared gifts. If the master taught his profession to his family, then such ceremonies were not held. The master's widow had inherited the right to continue her husband's work. Professions have been inherited not only by men but also by women. Thus, such ceremonies between master and apprentice played an important role and played a major role in making them independent craftsmen [9].



Figure 3. Farmer's charter (risola). 1909.

Crafts associations in the Fergana Valley also have a long history. These organizations retained their traditional form of structure in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and in the valley they operated until the 1920s. In the Fergana Valley, a craft association is called a "kasaba," meaning

"artisan" in the Middle East, "amkar" in the Caucasus, and "ulpagar" in Khorezm. Each craft network has its own association, and they usually resided in the neighborhood of the same name in towns or villages. In particular, the presence of handicraft mahallas in Kokand during the period under study, such as Jiyakchilik, Misriq, Chinnisoz, Elakbof, Taraqchilik, Dastorbof, Adrasbof, Kandakor, Karbosbof, Konchilik, Korpabof, Chilangar, confirms the above opinion [10]. Most of the handicraft traditions and customs were in a state associated with ancestral cult. The manufacturers of the product consisted mainly of masters, hired masters, and apprentices. Bobo was a union leader, elected from among the prestigious artisans, and in most cases held that position until the end of his life. The position of grandfather remained mainly until the beginning of the XIX - early XX centuries. A number of other crafts, including blacksmithing, degreasing, coppersmithing, carving, tanning, and other trades, were also referred to as elder or conqueror [11].

The charters called on artisans to always be conscientious, honest, chaste and respectful and faithful to their profession and the early owners of this profession. The pamphlet emphasizes the need to remember the names of the pir, who are considered the founder and patron of every branch of the craft, and to be effective in relation to his disciples.

This is how the markets in Tashkent were described in the 1960s. In the central market of the city there are 150 shops selling combs, angishvona and other items, more than 100 shops selling alacha, chit, boz, kerchiefs and fur, about 100 shops selling ethics, maxi kovush, horseshoes, hoops, nails, sickles, saws, and about 60 shops selling other goods, canvas, beqasam, lining fabric, 60 shops selling 32 shops selling copperware, 20 shops selling jewelry, as well as carpets, bedding, soap, shagam, cigarettes, tobacco, saddles, knives. There were more than 100 shops selling dishes [12].

In the second half of the XIX century in Tashkent there were 775 weaving workshops, 89 tanneries, 95 dyeing and other workshops. There are special artisan neighborhoods in the city, which are called by such names as degrezlik, jewelry, knife-making, tannery, coppersmithing.

It should be noted that in addition to their profession, artisans were also engaged in agriculture. Most of them were engaged in gardening and farming. According to 1872 data, 42 of the 117 artisans in the Shayhantahur part of the city had land from 1/8 to 2 tanob (1tanob = 8,33 acres) [13].

The products produced by artisans were distinguished by their quality and beauty. In particular, silk, semi-silk, yarn fabrics, copper, ceramics, as well as jewelry had a unique character and high artistic value.

## 5. Conclusion

The processes of production and sale of products by artisans were unique. Most of the shops in the market also serve as workshops, where the process of making and selling the product is done in one place. Craftsmen tried to produce products that met the needs of the settled and nomadic population.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the craft

industry was in some crisis. This is because the goods imported from Russia to Turkestan have weakened the handicraft market. But local artisans soon rebalanced themselves with new products, ways to imitate foreign products. These circumstances also undermined the importance of the charters in the workshops. Nevertheless, once or twice a week, artisans gathered in the workshop to read and explain the charter.

Although the pamphlets were not as popular among the people, they did not lose the value of this or that profession among the artisans, which increased its value and attracted the people. At the same time, the ideas presented there did not fail to exert their high moral impact.

By the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, in addition to individual (family) handicrafts, the city began to have workshops that hired workers. The study of such charters provides valuable information about the history and development of ancient crafts of our people, the traditions of teachers and students, the customs and traditions of the Uzbek people.

---

## References

- [1] N. Lykoshin. (1901). *Risolya o strelbe* [Handbook about arrow]. *Turkestanskije vedomosti*. 1901. № 38.
- [2] *Zapiski Vostochnogo otdela Imperatorskogo russkogo archeologicheskogo obshestva* [Notes of the Eastern Department of the Imperial Russian Archaeological Society]. T. GOOD. 1908 Vol. 4.
- [3] *Materials on Islam*. Vol. 1. 31-32 b.
- [4] N. P. Ostroumov 1885. *Risolya zemledetsev* [Farmers Hadbook].
- [5] O. Danilets. *Tsexovoy stroy v Zapadnoy Evrope* [Workshop system in Western Europe], 2002, p. 4.
- [6] M. Gavrilov. *Risolya sartovskix remeslennikov* [Charter of Sart craftsmen]. T. 1912. p. 1.
- [7] *Turkestanskije vedomosti* for 1901 g. № 38. [Handbook about arrow].
- [8] M. Gavrilov. *Risolya sartovskix remeslennikov*. [Charter of Sart craftsmen] T. 1912: Handbook of Blacksmiths. p. 35.
- [9] D. Atadjanova. *Remeslennyy obryad "kamar baste"* (posvyashchenie uchenika v mastera) v Sredney Azii [Craft ritual "kamar baste" (initiation of a student into a master) in Central Asia] [www.sanat.orexca.com](http://www.sanat.orexca.com).
- [10] Z. Yu. Esonov. Fergana Valley Craftsmen Association and its charter. *Oriental Art and Culture "Scientific-Methodical Journal - Volume 2 Issue 4 / December 2021*. 576 p.
- [11] S. Davlatova. Uzbek National Crafts: Traditions, Traditions and Rituals. *Journal of social, humanities and administrative sciences*. 2017. 30. 09. p. 69.
- [12] F. Ozodaev. Excerpts from the history of Tashkent. T. 1960 y. p. 31.
- [13] National archive of the Republic of Uzbekistan. f. 36. List 1. work 859, p. 3.