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TYPES OF HANDICRAFTS IN THE CITIES OF THE EMIRATE OF BUKHARA AND THEIR DEVELOPMENT (SECOND HALF OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY – EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY)

Saidusmon Sharapov Saidahmadovich
Teacher at Termez State University
e-mail: sharapov71@gmail.com

Abstract

This article analyses, from a historical and economic perspective, the formation, specialization, and development of handicraft sectors in the cities of the Emirate of Bukhara during the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. It examines the role of textile production, silk processing, embroidery, gold embroidery, pottery, blacksmithing, coppersmithing, jewellery, leatherworking, woodworking, and other crafts in the urban economy. Particular attention is paid to the links between handicraft production, locally available raw materials, domestic markets, interregional trade, the master-apprentice tradition, and occupational specialization. Using Bukhara, Qarshi, Shahrisabz, and Kitab as examples, the article considers economic relations between cities and the regional characteristics of particular crafts. It also analyses the effects on traditional handicrafts of the growing political and economic influence of the Russian Empire, competition from industrial goods, and changes in market relations. The study argues that handicrafts should be examined as an important historical factor shaping the economic stability, social structure, and cultural heritage of cities.

Keywords: Emirate of Bukhara, urban history, handicrafts, textiles, silk processing, gold embroidery, pottery, blacksmithing, coppersmithing, jewellery, leatherworking, master-apprentice tradition, guzar, domestic market, trade relations.

Introduction

During the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, the cities of the Emirate of Bukhara were among the important economic and cultural centres of Central Asia. Handicrafts occupied a distinct place in their economic life, supporting employment, supplying the domestic market with goods, promoting trade relations, and sustaining local cultural traditions.

Interpreting handicrafts merely as a sector of production based on manual labour does not fully reveal their historical significance. Handicrafts were closely connected with the economic structure of cities, occupational specialization, the division of labour, and social relations. Artisans interacted with suppliers of raw materials, merchants, farmers, and consumers. Studying handicraft history can therefore also help identify the internal mechanisms of urban economies and regional economic relations.

A range of crafts developed in the Emirate of Bukhara, including textile production, silk processing, embroidery, gold embroidery, pottery, blacksmithing, coppersmithing, jewellery,

leatherworking, and woodworking. Some crafts met everyday needs, while others required advanced skills, specialized raw materials, and complex technological processes. Certain products were made for local markets, whereas others also played an important role in interregional trade.

R. E. Kholikova's study of handicrafts in the Emirate of Bukhara discusses textile production, pottery, carpentry, leatherworking, jewellery, gold embroidery, and blacksmithing [1]. F. Ochildiev's article on handicrafts in the second half of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century examines different forms of traditional production and their historical characteristics [2]. N. N. Tursunov and F. B. Khudoyorov's study establishes an important line of inquiry into the relationship between handicrafts and trade in the principalities of Eastern Bukhara [3].

The topic is relevant because it is not enough simply to list different crafts. It is necessary to determine the economic and social conditions under which they developed, the forms of specialization that emerged among cities,

The aim is to analyse, on the basis of historical sources and scholarly literature, the types of handicraft sectors, production characteristics, regional specialization, and factors influencing their development in the cities of the Emirate of Bukhara during the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century.

1. To identify the economic and social significance of handicrafts in the cities of the Emirate of Bukhara.
2. To describe the raw-material bases, products, and production methods of the principal crafts.
3. To examine regional specialization using Bukhara, Qarshi, Shahrisabz, and Kitab as examples.
4. To explain the master-apprentice tradition, family production, and the transmission of professional knowledge across generations.
5. To assess the effects of domestic and external trade, competition from industrial goods, and political and economic changes on traditional handicrafts.

The article uses the principles of historicism, comparative-historical analysis, a systems approach, and critical examination of sources. Handicraft sectors are considered in relation to other parts of the urban economy, including trade, agriculture, raw-material supply, and consumer markets.

The source base may include O. A. Sukhareva's historical and ethnographic study of the cities of the Bukhara Khanate; the works of N. N. Tursunov and F. B. Khudoyorov on handicrafts and trade relations in the principalities of Eastern Bukhara; and scholarly articles devoted to handicraft history [3; 4]. Administrative reports, statistical materials, travel accounts, local historical works, and contemporary descriptions of cities may also strengthen the evidence.

In the cities of the Emirate of Bukhara, handicrafts were among the principal economic activities supporting everyday life. Urban residents met many of their needs for clothing, household goods, tools, vessels, ornaments, and building materials through products made by local artisans.

The development of handicrafts was associated with several factors. First, permanent urban markets provided opportunities to sell manufactured goods. Second, links with agricultural areas ensured supplies of cotton, wool, leather, silk, and other raw materials. Third, the status of cities as administrative and cultural centres generated demand for a variety of products.

Relations between producers and merchants were also important. Some artisans sold their products directly in markets, while others may have worked to order or supplied goods to other regions through merchants. This suggests that the internal organization of handicraft production was not uniform.

Artisans' activities were often associated with particular markets, workshops, and occupational groups. Specialization allowed production experience to accumulate, skills to be passed from generation to generation, and certain products to become associated with particular cities.

However, the level of handicraft development cannot be measured solely by the number of different crafts. The number of artisans, volume of production, availability of raw materials, sales markets, and organization of skilled labour must also be considered. Cities can be compared reliably only where regional and chronological data are sufficient.

Textile production was one of the important sectors of handicraft activity in the cities of the Emirate of Bukhara. It encompassed processing cotton fibre, silk, and wool; spinning; weaving; dyeing; and manufacturing finished products.

The development of textiles depended on local raw materials and market demand. The need for everyday clothing, household fabrics, and textiles used in ceremonies helped sustain production. Product type, quality, and price determined the range of potential consumers.

Silk processing and the manufacture of silk fabrics required technical experience and careful preparation of raw materials. Handling silk fibres, spinning, weaving, and finishing textiles involved specialized skills. Demand for silk products was an important factor in maintaining this branch of urban handicraft production.

Embroidery involved decorating fabrics and applying artistic designs to clothing and household goods. Embroidered products served practical purposes but also expressed local aesthetic values, decorative traditions, and social status.

The study of textiles and embroidery should take account of the gender dimensions of production. Some tasks may have been performed within the family economy; however, the division of labour between women and men in a particular period and region must be verified through reliable sources.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the growing economic influence of the Russian Empire and the arrival of factory-made fabrics created new competitive conditions for traditional textile production. At the same time, the quality, ornamentation, practical uses, and established consumer preferences for local fabrics may have enabled certain products to remain in demand.

The history of textiles should therefore be studied not only in terms of competition with industrial goods, but also in relation to local raw materials, production technologies, family labour, market demand, and artistic traditions.

Gold embroidery occupies a distinctive place in the history of handicrafts in Bukhara. It involved decorating fabric with gold thread and other ornamental materials and required specialized skills, patience, and a high level of artistic ability.

Gold-embroidered products, particularly ceremonial garments and decorative items, served everyday and ceremonial purposes and expressed social status. The development of this craft depended on raw materials and artisans' skills, as well as patrons' economic means and prevailing social expectations.

Jewellery-making involved producing ornaments from gold, silver, and other metals. Rings, bracelets, earrings, necklaces, and other items required skills in metalworking, shaping, and decoration.

The economic value of jewellery depended on the raw materials, the artisan's skill, the complexity of the ornament, and demand. In this respect, jewellery-making differed from the production of ordinary consumer goods.

Scholarly literature records Bukhara's importance as a centre of gold embroidery and jewellery [1]. Determining production scale, the number of artisans, and the distribution of these products to other cities requires comparison of historical documents, museum collection catalogues, and descriptions from the period.

The study of gold embroidery and jewellery demonstrates the relationship between the economic and cultural aspects of handicrafts: material value was accompanied by artistic expression, ceremonial functions, and local traditions.

Pottery played an important role in everyday economic life. Earthenware vessels were used to store food, carry water, prepare meals, and meet household needs. Some products also served decorative and architectural purposes.

Pottery production depended on the properties of clay, access to water, fuel supplies, and the availability of kilns. Artisans needed to master clay preparation, shaping, drying, glazing, and firing. Product quality depended on the combination of raw materials and technological experience.

O. A. Sukhareva's study of the history of the cities of the Bukhara Khanate is an important scholarly work for researching urban economic life and handicrafts [4]. Later studies drawing on this research have noted decorative characteristics of pottery from Shahrisabz and Kitab and the distribution of such products in markets elsewhere [5].

To study pottery in Qarshi, Shahrisabz, and Kitab, it is important to compare product shapes and decoration, glazing methods, raw materials, and the distribution of archaeological finds. Such analysis can help identify distinctive local production traditions.

Carpentry, wood carving, and metalworking were also associated with construction and urban infrastructure. Doors, windows, columns, chests, furniture, and other objects required woodworking skills. Construction-related crafts played an important role in building and maintaining mosques, madrasas, houses, commercial buildings, and other structures.

These crafts helped shape cities' architectural appearance and provided artisans with continuing work and commissions. The study of pottery, carpentry, and construction crafts is therefore closely connected with the history of urban material culture.

Blacksmithing was an important craft supplying everyday economic and production needs. Iron was used to make tools, household items, building components, and other products. Demand for such goods was linked to agriculture, animal husbandry, construction, and domestic life.

Blacksmithing depended on metal supplies, fuel, workshop conditions, and technical skills. Some items were made to order, while others were produced for everyday markets.

Coppersmithing and the working of other non-ferrous metals involved producing vessels, trays, jugs, and household objects. Metal goods could also be decorated with engraved or other artistic designs. Coppersmithing thus combined technical skill with artistic ornament.

Leatherworking involved processing animal hides and manufacturing products from leather. Leather was an important raw material for everyday goods and certain production needs. The development of leatherworking was connected with livestock products, hide-processing techniques, and demand for finished goods.

Links between craft sectors were important. Tools made by blacksmiths were used in other crafts and in agriculture, while leather products met everyday needs. Handicrafts should therefore be studied as an interconnected production system rather than a collection of separate occupations.

At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, the arrival of some industrially manufactured metal goods and other products may have affected local artisans. The extent of this influence and the crafts most strongly affected require evidence concerning prices, import composition, and workshop activity.

One important factor ensuring the continuity of handicrafts in the cities of the Emirate of Bukhara was the transmission of professional knowledge and experience from one generation to the next. Through the master-apprentice tradition, young people learned a craft through direct participation in workshop activities. They acquired practical skills as well as professional conduct, work discipline, and standards of product quality.

Professional experience involved more than technical procedures. Artisans needed to select raw materials, shape products, use tools, deal with customers, and sell finished goods. Learning therefore took place through gradual participation in production.

Family labour was important in some branches of handicraft production. Transmitting professional knowledge within families helped preserve experience. However, not all crafts and regions necessarily followed the same system of hereditary occupation; this issue should be examined through local documents, ethnographic evidence, and descriptions of professional traditions.

Artisans' activities influenced the social structure of cities. Relations among masters, apprentices, raw-material suppliers, and merchants formed an important part of the urban economy. The concentration of certain occupations in particular guzars—urban neighbourhoods or quarters—may have reflected the spatial organization of occupational specialization.

It is therefore important to investigate the relationships among workshops, occupational groups, guzars, and markets. This approach can deepen understanding of urban economic structures and the social significance of handicrafts.

Not all cities within the Emirate of Bukhara practised the same crafts to the same extent. Specialization was influenced by sources of raw materials, consumer markets, transport routes, local traditions, and accumulated production experience.

Bukhara is associated in the literature with gold embroidery, jewellery, textile production, and other highly skilled crafts. As an administrative and cultural centre, the city brought together consumers, patrons, and merchants from different social groups. This environment created economic opportunities for elaborate decorative items and specialized goods.

Handicrafts in Qarshi and the Kashkadarya oasis were linked to domestic markets, agricultural areas, and interregional connections. Textile production, pottery, metalworking, and other crafts helped meet local economic needs. Studying the relationships among these sectors can clarify the structure of the urban economy.

The handicraft traditions of Shahrisabz and Kitab are associated with pottery, textile production, jewellery, coppersmithing, and woodworking [1; 4; 5]. The shapes and decorative characteristics of pottery are particularly important for investigating regional production traditions.

The relationship between handicrafts and trade in the principalities of Eastern Bukhara constitutes a distinct field of research. The study by N. N. Tursunov and F. B. Khudoyorov indicates the importance of examining occupational specialization, the exchange of goods, and trade relations together [3].

A particular craft should not, however, be attributed exclusively to one city. Several cities may have practised the same craft while differing in product style, quality, raw materials, or production experience. Comparative analysis of products and sources is essential for identifying specialization by city.

The development of handicrafts was closely linked to domestic and external trade. Urban markets enabled products to be sold, raw materials to be purchased, and connections to be established between producers and consumers. Interregional trade also helped certain products circulate more widely.

Trade may have broadened artisans' sources of income, but its benefits were not equal for all producers. Product quality, production costs, dependence on intermediaries, and access to markets affected artisans' economic circumstances.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, the growing political and economic influence of the Russian Empire also affected the external trading conditions of the cities of the Emirate of Bukhara. The expansion of trade in industrial goods may have increased competition for certain local crafts. At the same time, closer links between markets may have created new opportunities for some handicraft products.

It would be one-sided to assess the changes of this period solely as either the decline of handicrafts or the development of trade. Some sectors may have faced competitive pressure, while others continued because of local demand or the distinctive nature of their products.

A precise assessment requires information on trade volumes, product prices, the number of workshops, production tools, and artisans' professional activities. Where such evidence is available, it becomes possible to draw substantiated conclusions about the effects of external economic relations on individual sectors.

Discussion

The scholarly literature reviewed indicates several interrelated issues that should be considered in the study of handicrafts in the Emirate of Bukhara.

First, handicrafts were an independent sector of the urban economy while also being closely connected with agriculture, raw-material supply, trade, and consumer markets. Their development cannot be separated from the overall structure of the urban economy.

Second, the diversity of crafts reflected the economic and cultural specialization of cities. Gold embroidery and jewellery required advanced skills and were associated with specialized commissions, whereas pottery, blacksmithing, and other crafts played important roles in meeting everyday needs.

Third, the master-apprentice tradition and family labour helped preserve handicraft skills. The organizational forms of these relationships may, however, have differed among crafts and cities.

Fourth, market changes at the end of the nineteenth century affected handicraft sectors in different ways. Competition from industrial goods may have created difficulties for some producers, while expanding trade relations may have opened opportunities for others. Regional and sector-specific evidence is needed to assess these processes.

The article's claim to scholarly novelty lies not merely in describing different crafts, but in analysing them through the relationships among the urban economy, raw-material base, occupational specialization, trade relations, and technological change. To substantiate this approach fully, future research should incorporate specific evidence from primary documents, product catalogues, statistical materials, and local historical sources.

Conclusion

During the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, handicrafts formed an important component of the economic life of the cities of the Emirate of Bukhara. They helped meet the population's needs, supply local markets, preserve professional experience, and sustain cultural traditions.

The study leads to the following conclusions:

1. A range of handicraft sectors developed in the cities of the Emirate of Bukhara, including textile production, silk processing, embroidery, gold embroidery, jewellery, pottery, blacksmithing, coppersmithing, leatherworking, and woodworking. Each met particular needs within the urban economy.
2. The development of handicrafts was linked to locally available raw materials, domestic markets, professional skills, and trade relations. The stability of production depended to a considerable extent on raw-material supplies and demand.
3. The handicrafts of Bukhara, Qarshi, Shahrisabz, and Kitab differed according to local historical conditions and production experience. Identifying the regional predominance of particular crafts requires comparative study of the number of artisans, production volumes, and trade data.

4. The master-apprentice tradition, family labour, and the transmission of professional experience across generations helped ensure continuity. These relationships transmitted technical skills as well as professional conduct and standards of quality.
5. The expansion of external trade and the arrival of industrial goods in markets at the end of the nineteenth century created new economic conditions for traditional handicrafts. The effects varied according to craft, product quality, price, and local demand.
6. The study of handicraft history requires integrated analysis of production technologies, urban occupational specialization, trade routes, and social relations. This approach enables a deeper understanding of cities' economic structures and material culture.

Overall, handicrafts in the cities of the Emirate of Bukhara were an important foundation of the traditional economy and helped shape urban social structures and cultural identities. Studying their development is important for clarifying the economic and cultural history of the Emirate of Bukhara in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and for identifying the historical continuity of local production traditions.

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