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INTANGIBLE CULTURE RELATED TO CRAFTSMANSHIP

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Abstract

This article highlights the types of intangible cultural heritage associated with the manufacture of wooden products in crafts, including shelves, chests, khantakhta, various boxes, chairs, cradles, spinning wheels, axes, keli, juva, chekich, wooden bowls, and carts. The article discusses the intangible cultural heritage associated with wood, as well as the preservation and transformation processes of values and unique traditions passed down from generation to generation.

Keywords: Crafts, intangible cultural heritage, shelves, chests, khantakhta, various boxes, chairs, cradles, spinning wheels, axes, keli, juva, chekich, wooden bowls, ox carts, camel carts and donkey carts, international crafts festival, wooden shovels, patron saints, traditions, ceremonies.

INTRODUCTION

In the sedentary population of the Fergana Valley, as in many other societies, the production and use of wooden products have long played a significant role in everyday life. It should be noted that woodworking developed in close connection with the lifestyle and economic activities of the local population.

The inhabitants of the valley mastered this craft to a high level, resulting in the emergence of well-known carpentry centers throughout the region. In particular, carpentry flourished in the villages of Shahand, Sang, and Chodak in Namangan

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Uyezd; Shahrixon, Qorasuv, and Jalaquduq in Andijan Uyezd; and Bekobod and Yangiqo'rg'on in Kokand Uyezd.

Wooden products occupied an important place in the daily lives of the sedentary population, and most household items were made of wood. These included cupboards, chests, low dining tables (*khontaxta*), various boxes, chairs, cradles, spinning wheels, rolling pins, mortars, pestles, hammers, wooden bowls, spindles, smoking pipes, sieves, saddles, and musical instruments, which were produced and sold in local markets.[1]

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

The principal tool used in carpentry was the turning lathe known as the *yig'chi do'kon*, which was also popularly called the *chakchi do'kon* among local people.[2] The device consisted of a wooden frame, a rotating wheel, and a bow mechanism.

Urban carpentry demonstrated a noticeable degree of specialization in the production of specific goods. Thus, craftsmen specializing in cart-making, plow-making, cradle-making, comb-making, saddle-making, and sieve-making emerged as distinct branches of the profession.[3] The constant demand for these products among the population encouraged such specialization. However, in villages located far from urban markets, where highly skilled artisan dynasties existed, more complex branches of carpentry, including cart-making, were also developed.

In large villages, carts were produced as commercial goods. For example, specialized cart-making workshops operated in Shahand village of Namangan Uyezd and Shahrixon village of Andijan Uyezd. In more remote settlements, such as Avval village in the southern part of the Fergana Valley, carts were produced only upon order. Craftsmen supplied the cart needs of the residents of Kaptarkhona, Novkat, and Vodil villages.[4] Cart-making also developed in Sang

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and Bekobod villages, where different types of carts were produced, including horse carts, ox carts, camel carts, and donkey carts.[5]

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The construction of a cart was a labor-intensive process. In the Fergana Valley, a master craftsman and his apprentices could complete a cart within 14–17 days, whereas in Khorezm the process required approximately 30–35 days. Craftsmen usually built carts at the customer's home using the customer's raw materials. Payment for the finished product was often made in kind, usually in grain.

In rural areas, carpentry was closely linked to the economic orientation of the local population. In agricultural regions, there was a high demand for plows, yokes, threshing boards, wooden shovels, and wooden containers used for storing harvested crops. For example, Uzbek carpenters in the villages of Kenagas and Bekobod in western Fergana produced large wooden grain-storage chests known as *tuya-sandiq* ("camel chests"), made from elm and walnut wood and reaching up to two meters in length.

Cradle-making was another highly developed branch of woodworking among sedentary Uzbeks, Tajiks, and Uyghurs of the valley. The craft reached a particularly high level of mastery in centers such as Shahand and Chodak in the north, and Shahrixon and Qo'qonqishloq in the eastern part of the valley.

The reforms and transformations currently taking place in Uzbekistan have also significantly influenced the handicraft sector. The first International Handicrafts Festival was held in Kokand on September 10–15, 2019; the second festival took place on September 23–25, 2023; and the third festival was organized on September 19–21, 2025, in the park area surrounding the Khudoyor Khan Palace in the city center.

The primary objectives of the International Handicrafts Festival are to promote the development of handicrafts, revive traditional craftsmanship schools and

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techniques, encourage scientific research, facilitate the exchange of experience, organize master classes, and support talented artisans.

In addition, the festival seeks to comprehensively study the history, schools, and styles of handicrafts, investigate their role in the socio-economic development of different countries, collect manuscripts and traditional knowledge related to ancient crafts and applied arts, further develop various craft traditions, and enhance the significance of handicrafts in Eastern and Western cultures and economies.

During the International Handicrafts Festival, an interview was conducted with the renowned carpenter and craftsman from the valley, Rahmatillayev Adhamjon Ota. The conversation provided valuable information about Kokand carts and the unique expertise preserved within families that have practiced this craft for generations.

According to Adhamjon Ota, because the Fergana Valley contains numerous streams and sandy terrains, the wheels of transport carts were made with large diameters to facilitate movement. A skilled craftsman could produce up to ten carts per year. Carts manufactured around Kokand were not only distributed throughout different regions of Uzbekistan but were also exported to neighboring countries. The price of a single cart was equivalent to the value of ten sheep.

Adhamjon Ota explained that his ancestors were famous craftsmen known for producing horse carts throughout the valley. Using elm and willow trees measuring between twelve and fourteen meters in length, they constructed single-horse carts. Depending on their size and purpose, carts were classified into several types, including horse carts, camel carts, mule carts, and donkey carts.

The primary materials used in cart production were willow and elm wood. After being cut, the logs were submerged in water for two to three years. When the wood was brought to the workshop, craftsmen first spread sawdust on the floor and then covered it with a 10–15 cm layer of rice husks. The wood was wrapped and heated over a fire for drying and softening. To bend a ten-meter willow log

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into the required shape, at least ten liters of water would drain from the wood during the process.

This demonstrates that the ancestors of the valley's inhabitants possessed sophisticated technologies for bending and shaping wood. While carts in the Fergana Valley were generally produced through this bending technique, carts in oasis regions were usually made by cutting wooden pieces and joining them together. The fame of Kokand carts largely resulted from their construction from a single bent piece of wood rather than assembled sections.[6]

CONCLUSION

The handicraft traditions of the Fergana Valley and the knowledge and skills associated with them have not yet been comprehensively studied as a distinct subject within the broader system of Uzbekistan's cultural heritage. Throughout different historical and social periods, handicrafts continuously evolved and diversified into numerous specialized branches.

The development and advancement of each type of handicraft were significantly influenced by the availability of natural resources in particular regions. Consequently, environmental conditions played an essential role in shaping local craft traditions.

In the contemporary era of globalization, the study, preservation, and promotion of intangible cultural heritage associated with traditional handicrafts have become increasingly important. Protecting these cultural values not only contributes to the preservation of national identity but also ensures the transmission of traditional knowledge and craftsmanship to future generations.

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