



Economic Foundations in the Craft System "Master Student" of the Ferghana Valley of Uzbekistan at the Present Stage

Lyudmila Mikhailovna Sokolova*

Department of History, Namangan State University

*Correspondence: Lyudmila
Mikhailovna Sokolova
Email: rkazakbaeva@mail.ru

Received: 07-06-2025
Accepted: 15-07-2025
Published: 30-08-2025



Copyright: © 2024 by the authors.
Submitted for open access publication
under the terms and conditions of the
Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY)
license
([http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/
4.0/](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)).

the resilience of traditional economic systems and the importance of apprenticeship for cultural continuity in the Ferghana Valley.

Abstract: *This study examines the economic and social foundations of the traditional master–student (usta–shogird) system in the Ferghana Valley of Uzbekistan at the present stage. The objective of the research is to analyze the mechanisms of apprenticeship, the terms of training, forms of payment, and the economic incentives that sustain this institution. The methodology employed is qualitative, based on field observation, interviews with craftsmen, and analysis of historical and narrative sources. The findings demonstrate that despite modernization and the expansion of formal education, the master–student system remains a vital mechanism for knowledge transfer and skill development in crafts such as blacksmithing, embroidery, shoemaking, and pottery. The results highlight that apprenticeship is influenced not only by professional training but also by economic calculations, cultural norms, and moral obligations. The duration of training varies between 7–10 years, with blessings (duo) from the master serving as a critical legitimizing factor for independent practice. In conclusion, the usta–shogird institution has preserved its conservative structure while adapting to new socio-economic realities. Its persistence underscores the*

Keywords: *Mouth, Shogird, Wasika, Forms of Payment for the Master, Term of Study, Organization of Own Business as a Student, Auxiliary Work*

Introduction

The craft economy of Central Asia, particularly in the Ferghana Valley of Uzbekistan, represents a unique synthesis of cultural tradition, economic necessity, and social organization. Among its most enduring institutions is the usta–shogird (master–student) system, a traditional apprenticeship framework that has survived centuries of social and economic transformation. Rooted in oral transmission, moral responsibility, and practical training, this institution remains an essential component of craftsmanship today.

Scholarly interest in this subject dates back to early works on medieval craft guilds and associations, which noted common elements such as workshop hierarchies, initiation rituals, and the role of mystical patrons in safeguarding artisans. More recent studies have explored the moral and worldview aspects of craftsmanship, its connections to tourism, and its adaptation to contemporary economic systems. However, empirical studies focusing specifically on the Ferghana Valley provide fresh insights into how traditional forms of

economic organization persist and transform under modern conditions.

The relevance of this research lies in its empirical grounding, built upon direct communication with artisans in Namangan, Rishtan, and other centers of craftsmanship. By documenting the selection process of students, the economic contracts—both oral and written (*wasika*)—and the dynamics of blessings and knowledge transfer, this study demonstrates how tradition continues to shape labor relations in Uzbekistan's craft sector. Furthermore, the analysis reveals both conservative aspects that resist change and innovative adaptations that allow the *usta-shogird* system to remain viable in today's market economy.

Research Method

Based on this, the research method is observation, analysis of narrative sources.

The skills and age-old traditions of national crafts, formed under the influence of the social, economic and cultural characteristics of different peoples, were passed down from generation to generation.

Today, this knowledge is of particular value for the preservation and development of the "master student" system. Masters in the selection of students take into account the peculiarities of their character: ingenuity, memory, skill, agreeableness, patience. If the master did not take these circumstances into account, he risked wasting time and creative effort.

U.A. Klychev in his dissertation research confirms the special nature of the "master-student" relationship in the craft of Uzbekistan. "The craftsmen always tried to select students from smart and hardworking youth. If the teacher does not leave behind a skillful and talented student, the memory of the master will disappear "[14, p. 28].

Even in such an innovative system as the electronic technology industry, the "mouth-shogird" system works, which is associated, again, with the only possibility of practical training - oral data transmission. Although technology has radically changed, the electronic industry still takes children from 12-14 years old who know that they will be dedicated to the master, most likely, before marriage. In the Uztelecom system, the same *Usta-Shogird* institute operates [13].

When accepting a student for training, the master is primarily guided by economic benefits. Since professional ethics and religious attitudes require that the master, like the student's own father, take care of the accepted one, form the student's morality in accordance with Sharia norms, and even teach the craft, it is clear that the master, accepting the boy for training, takes on great responsibility.

However, despite the really wide spread of this institution, the "mouth - shogird" mechanism does not cover government agencies, industrial enterprises, utilities, transport. Attempts to introduce the "mouth-shogird" system into public education and medical institutions are formal in nature and do not go beyond the reports of trade union committees.

A.M. Belenitsky reported that the main figures in the craft production were the master *ustad* - the owner of the workshop and the *shagird* - the student. "The relationship between

the master and the shagird is determined by a number of documents (wasika) - receipts that the student himself or his relative gave to the master that he, the student, "gives himself to the master for a fee for the entire period of apprenticeship. In turn, he also hires the same master for his training - usually for a smaller amount. Each receipt document specifically stipulates that the master is obliged to teach the student the art of this craft and everything related to it, so much so that the masters of this workshop approve of his work. This requirement of a masterpiece with a mandatory public and corporate assessment of it is common, as you know, also for European medieval craft "[3, p. 43-47].

In the Ferghana Valley, according to our research, usually the contract between the student's parents and the master is concluded orally. However, the following points are clearly stipulated: the forms of payment for the student; wizard payment forms; term of training (in case of successful training); the degree of participation of the master in organizing his own business as a student.

The number of students at the master ranges from 1 to 15-16. To train someone is to prepare competitors for yourself. Based on this, the number of specialists of a certain profile is formed. For example, the master of national embroidery Salokhiddin Shokhobiddinov stopped teaching students, since the products (suzans, choishobs, palaks) are not widely sold.

Brazier from the store on the street Navoi of the city of Namangan Shavkatzhon Mirzaev [9] and a tinsmith on the street. Hamrokh, Namangan Gainiddin Kirgizov [8] say that young men are extremely reluctant to learn their craft and, most likely, their sons will be the last in a series of hereditary artisans of these directions.

Result and Discussion

In contrast, Namangan paving slab stacker Bohodir Inamov [6] has 16 students.

Pupils, entering training, are usually still at school age - from 10 to 14 years. In the phone repair shop of the Chorsu Hotel in Namangan, we observed 10-year-old students; in Rishtan, potters take 14-15-year-old students.

If the student is a member of the family of an artisan (ustazod), then he learns skills from early childhood. So, hereditary artisans (knife grinders in Namangan, blacksmiths in Chust) say that they helped in the workshop from 5-6 years old, that is, they know their skills thoroughly.

The profession is also inherited in the production of cast-iron cauldrons, in which the city of Namangan specializes [12].

The format of the student's reward recorded by us is as follows:

- a. the master does not pay for the work of the student, referring that he rewards him with knowledge of the craft;
- b. the master gives the student money for lunch and travel;
- c. master increases payment;
- d. the master opens the outlet to the student on a shared basis. Moreover, blessings (veils) may not be given due to the fact that the student has not reached perfection.
- e. the master allows you to work in only one direction: for example, repair jewelry, but

not make them; repair phones, but do not install programs on them. So, a seventeen-year-old apprentice who currently works in a cafe on the street Sergali in Namangan Inamov Firdavs [7], received a blessing only for making barbecue.

- f. the master does not pay for the work of a student who has already achieved a certain degree of skill. In this case, the student turns to a kind of arbitrator - to the imam of the mosque, who makes an suggestion to the master.

Consider the options for the timing of the student's education. They are associated with two factors - cognitive and economic:

- a. during what period the student will master the skill;
- b. when the student is able to accumulate enough funds to start his own business.

Training lasts 7-10 years. Longer terms are rare. As an example, the owner of the Bonu grocery store in Namangan, Nuriddinov Gofurjon, could not receive a blessing for 15 years. This was due to the fact that he began his studies in the 90s, when the socio-economic situation in the republic was unstable. Gofurjon was able to accumulate the necessary funds to open his outlet only by 2005, having worked in several stores as an apprentice for almost a decade and a half. He now owns several outlets both in the city itself and in New Namangan [10].

For master finishers, the criteria are more focused on the student's skill level. Thus, the mentor of the house repair specialist Khasanboy Abdullayev, who lives in the village of Kumkurgan, Uychi district, instructed the latter to repair part of his house as a test for professionalism. After making sure that the student mastered the craft, the mentor gave him a blessing to work independently. In turn, Hasanboy has students currently working in Kazakhstan. Their mentor claims that they still have a lot of work to do to fully master the skill [2].

There are frequent cases when, for various reasons, the student does not graduate. In particular, the student is convinced that he does not like the craft. But there are opposite cases: a student of a bookstore seller on the street. Navoi Ismoil Gafurov, although he liked the future profession, could not save money for a retail outlet for 8 years, eventually went to work in a grocery store [5].

It should be noted that there are industries where long-term training is not required. For example, in confectionery, due to the opening of numerous private baking courses, you can get a certificate for mastering a profession in 2-4 months. But receiving a blessing in this case is mandatory. The blessing of the master is also considered mandatory in the field of making national sweets - candied almonds, parvards, etc.

Women's professions - sewing curtains, tablecloths, chapans also work according to the "mouth-shoghird" system.

Some artisans believe that if a student can no longer learn anything from a mentor, but he does not give him a "photo," then after working for a year, the student has the right to open his own business without the blessing of the mentor.

Even if a young man or girl is studying at an educational institution in a selected craft

specialty, he is still determined to be a professional craftsman.

In the field of relations, the "master" - the "student" is the most favorable case - when the master not only teaches the student skill, but also gives skills in a related field. So, the mentor of Anwar Soliev, a student at Namangan College of Law, taught the student sewing for 5 years. At the end of his apprenticeship, A. Soliev worked for another year in a clothing store, only then he received a blessing. Now A. Soliev has his own sewing workshop [11].

Sometimes the master transfers his work to the student after the rite of passage in full, and he himself goes on to another kind of activity. For example, the owner of a shoe workshop near the Sardoba market in Namangan, Dilshodbek Valiev, said that after 10 years of training in shoemaking, the master handed him a shop, and he himself began to trade in fabrics. Now the master shoemaker will teach his son, who is still in the second grade, shoemaking, he himself plans to start growing vegetables in the greenhouse [4].

Similarly, the butchers of the city of Papa Namangan region: if the student of the butcher later wants to learn how to sell meat, then again becomes shogirth. During the first year, he acquires theoretical knowledge, and in the second year he will be ready to trade himself.

If a student received a full amount of knowledge from one master and received veils from him, but wants to replenish knowledge in a related profession, he can turn to another master, learn from him a certain period of time - up to one year - and once again go through the same ritual.

At the heart of teaching the profession is the concept of "sabre" - patience. Craftsmanship does not hide the fact that among the methods of teaching and upbringing, physical punishment of students is also applied. For a long time, sometimes up to 2-3 years, the student must engage in unskilled auxiliary work, which does not contribute to increasing the student's self-esteem. Shogird must do hard physical work, his working day lasts 10-12 hours. From the same butchers of the city of Papa, Namangan region, in order to learn how to butcher a cow, a student studies for 3 years in an abattoir. During the first year of study, due to the fact that the student has no work experience, he is not allowed to use sharp knives, an ax, and so on. During the first year, the student gains theoretical knowledge by observation and acquires skills in helping the teacher. In the second year of study, the master gives the student practical knowledge and teaches him to use a knife. Only in the third year, after the student learns how to butcher a cow, is he considered ready for slaughtering animals. Thus, student training is a long-term psychophysiological test [1].

Conclusion

Learning a craft, in essence, is mastering a student with a certain, precisely established algorithm of production operations, a set of firmly established skills developed by previous generations of craftsmen.

Thus, there are no significant transformations in the structure of master-student relationships. The economic model that defines this relationship has remained relevant since ancient times, which is explained not only by the viability, but also by the conservatism of the craft economic system.

References

- Abashin, S. (2020). Craft traditions and transformations in Central Asia. *Central Asian Survey*, 39(4), 567–584.
- Abdisamadov Avazkhon is a student of a butcher, lives on 10 Dustlik Street, Pap District, Namangan Region.
- Abdullaev Khasanboy, a master repairman, lives in the village of Kumkurgan, Uychi district, Namangan region.
- Atabaeva, D. (2021). Cultural heritage and tourism development in Uzbekistan. *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 16(6), 621–635.
- Bekmurodov, A. (2019). Small business and traditional crafts in Uzbekistan: Socio-economic perspectives. *Economics and Culture*, 16(2), 34–45.
- Belenitsky A.M. Craft organization in Samarkand XV-XVII centuries. - Moscow-Leningrad, 1940. - P.43-47.
- Bobojonov, I., & Namazov, A. (2022). Youth apprenticeship and traditional crafts in the Fergana Valley. *International Journal of Central Asian Studies*, 27(1), 87–103.
- Fuchs, C. (2021). *Social Media: A Critical Introduction* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Gafurov Ismoil, a merchant, lives in the village of Mashad, building 10, Uychi district of Namangan region.
- Gafurova, N. (2020). Apprenticeship practices in modern Uzbekistan: Continuity and change. *Ethnologia Polona*, 41, 213–229.
- Inamov Bohodir, a paving machine, lives on 3 Ahsikent Street, house 120 in Namangan.
- Inamov Firdavs, a cook, resides at 100 Muzal Mahalla, Namangan Town.
- Kadyrov, S. (2019). Rituals and blessings in Uzbek crafts: A socio-religious perspective. *Anthropology of the Middle East*, 14(2), 95–112.
- Kennedy, H., & Hill, R. (2023). Digital inequalities in everyday life and cultural transmission. *Information, Communication & Society*, 26(4), 455–472.
- Khakimov, U. (2021). The role of traditional crafts in rural economies of Uzbekistan. *Economic Annals-XXI*, 191(7-8), 44–52.
- Kirgizov Gainiddin, a tinsmith, lives on Samarkand Street 3, house 58 of the city of Namangan.
- Matyakubov, M. (2022). Oral traditions and the preservation of intangible cultural heritage in Uzbekistan. *International Journal of Intangible Heritage*, 17(1), 75–89.
- Mirzaev Shavkat, a copper, lives on 86 Boburshokh Street, apartment 30, Namangan city.
- Nasritdinov, E. (2019). Everyday Islam and apprenticeship in Central Asia. *Journal of Contemporary Islam*, 13(3), 221–240.
- Nuriddinov Gofurjon, a merchant, lives at 45 Rowuston Street, Namangan.
- Olimov, B. (2020). Craftsmanship and identity in the Ferghana Valley. *Cultural Studies Review*, 26(2), 102–118.
- Qlichev U.M. O‘zbekiston milliy hunarmandchilikning rivojlanishi (1991–2006 yy): T.f.n. dar. olish uchun. yozilgan diss. – Tashkent, 2010. – B. 85.
- Rakhimov, K. (2023). The sustainability of artisan economies in Uzbekistan. *Journal of Economic Development Studies*, 41(2), 56–70.

Secrets of the production of cast-iron cauldrons of Uzbekistan! Blog by Paulie Comtina // <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v1PolyKostina>. - Date of contact 16.03.2024.

Soliev Anvar, the owner of the textile workshop, lives on Lutfiy Street, house 26, apartment 31 of the city of Namangan.

Turakulov, M. (2024). Apprenticeship and informal education in Uzbek crafts. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 45(1), 12–28.

UNESCO. (2021). *Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in Central Asia: The case of Uzbekistan*. Paris: UNESCO Publishing.

Valiev Dilshodbek, a shoemaker, lives in the village of Zhumashui, Namangan region.

Yakhyoiev Ismatillo is an electronics engineer, lives on Nodim Namangani Street, 28 Namangan City.