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TRADITIONAL SCHOOLS AND THE MASTER-APPRENTICE SYSTEM OF UZBEK CRAFTSMANSHIP

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Abstract: This article provides information on the traditional schools of Uzbek craftsmanship and the master-apprentice principle, including craft schools. Furthermore, digital platforms and hybrid festival formats have opened up new opportunities for artisans.

Keywords: master-apprentice principle, traditional schools of craftsmanship, Kokand, fair, Rishton school of ceramics, Margilan school of silk, Khiva wood carving, Bukhara embroidery and suzani, Gijduvon school of ceramics

Uzbek craftsmanship has developed over millennia based on the master-apprentice principle. The Minzifa Travel source describes this tradition as a process of mutual respect between the "master" and "apprentice" and the transfer of knowledge. In fields such as ceramics, embroidery, carpet weaving, wood carving, jewelry, pottery, and metal carving, young people have mastered the secrets of the craft under the supervision of masters. The Advantour site notes the activity of various schools in Uzbek cities – the potters' schools in Rishton and Gijduvon, Margilan's traditions of weaving atlas and adras, the art of embroidery and miniature in Bukhara and Samarkand, and wood carving in Khiva.

- **Rishton school of ceramics** – Famous for its bowls and plates decorated with blue "lapis lazuli" colored glaze. Glazed pottery was widely distributed at historical Silk Road trading points.

- **Margilan school of silk** – Known for silk fabrics like "atlas" and "adras" with ikat patterns. Additionally, the "Khan-Atlas" festival is held annually, showcasing the creative works of masters.

- **Bukhara embroidery and suzani** – Wall hangings and clothing are sewn with Uzbek national patterns featuring flowers, sun, and cosmic symbols.

- **Khiva wood carving** – The doors and shelves of old Ichan-Kala mosques and houses are decorated with intricate patterns.

- **Gijduvon school of ceramics** – Distinguished by its red background and bright patterns.

During the Soviet era, craftsmanship was consolidated into cooperatives and industrial enterprises, and folk applied arts were produced mainly for domestic markets. During this period, the master-apprentice system weakened, but from the 1960s, a certain revival began through Art Societies and the "Masters' Union". After independence, the government recognized





craftsmanship as an important element of socio-economic development. In 2017, the "Hunarmand" Association was established, providing artisans with credit, tax benefits, and training courses. New legislation was aimed at protecting intellectual property and traditional designs.

The forms of craft events are distinguished as festival, biennale, and market (fair). The following comparison matrix contrasts the purpose, audience, management model, financing, and outcome indicators of these formats.

Craft festivals are a powerful tool for promoting tourism and expanding export markets, diversifying the regional economy. Surajkund Mela attracts over 1 million tourists annually, making a significant contribution to the socio-economic life of Haryana state. Fenearte's 2024 edition featured 5,000 artisans and the event had an economic impact of 52 million reais. IFAM recorded a trade volume of \$2.4 million in 2012, with each booth earning an average of \$18,253. During Uzbekistan's Kokand festival, the country's tourism potential increased, tours across the Fergana Valley were organized for guests, and artisans secured export contracts.

In the digital economy, craft products are integrating with the design and fashion industries, becoming an integral part of the creative economy. Modern art platforms like the Révélations Biennale strengthen collaboration between artisans and designers. UNESCO's "traditional craftsmanship" concept views practical art not as products themselves, but as *skill and knowledge*, emphasizing the need to pass them on to future generations. The Kokand festival promotes "master-apprentice" schools, creating a foundation for young people to master crafts.

Although craftsmanship is traditionally a family occupation, the participation of women and youth has increased significantly today. Fairs like Surajkund Mela and Expoartesanías have introduced special pavilions, credit programs, and awards for women masters. In Uzbekistan, the "Hunarmand" Association created a club for women artisans and offers microfinance services. At the Kokand festival, young and women masters are also encouraged through special nominations.

With the popularization of craft festivals, the risk of counterfeit products and mass-market items appearing at them increases. Commercial pressure forces many masters to simplify authentic designs or use cheaper materials. This creates the risk of losing the original character of the heritage and reducing consumer trust. The organizing committee of the Kokand festival formed expert commissions to filter such products, but control mechanisms are still insufficient on a global scale.

The increase in tourist flow and festival infrastructure leads to ecological pressure in some areas. In particular, glazes and paints used in ceramics, and the depletion of forest resources in wood carving, can have a





negative environmental impact. Events like Fenearte and EACD have begun developing sustainability codes; the use of recycled materials is promoted at Surajkund Mela. Uzbekistan also needs to develop standards for eco-friendly raw materials and packaging.

The designs and patterns of artisans are often unprotected. Producers of counterfeit products copy original patterns and sell them in tourist markets. Many masters lack the opportunity to register intellectual property; information about government incentives and international conventions (e.g., WIPO treaties) is insufficient. In this regard, the "Hunarmand" Association and advocacy organizations need to provide assistance.

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