

FROM THE HISTORY OF THE MEDIEVAL WOODWORKING CRAFTS OF THE FERGANA VALLEY

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Abstract: This article analyzes the history of the medieval wooden crafts of the Fergana Valley. The main attention is paid to the factors of development of the woodworking craft in the region during this period, the analysis of source data reflecting the state of the industry at that time, the description of woodworking products, and the study of the reasons for the preservation of such traditions in later historical periods.

Keywords: Fergana Valley, middle ages, woodworking, bow arrow, Koroskon village, birdcage, whip handle, tobulgu tree, shoemakers, basketry.

By the XVth – XVIth centuries, the Fergana valley was administratively divided into 7 towns. That is, they consisted of Akhsi, Koson to the north of the Syrdarya, and Andijan, Osh, Margilan, Khujand and Isfara to the south of the river. The population of these towns developed various crafts in the middle ages. Some sources also contain important information on this issue. However, the history of the medieval wooden crafts of the Fergana valley population has not yet been sufficiently covered. Information in this area has not been systematized.

We know that wooden objects are poorly preserved as a material resource and are not resistant to external natural influences. For this reason, we relied mainly on information from historical sources in our analysis. We tried to clarify some considerations based on the traditions of woodworking of a later period.

One of the diverse crafts of the Uzbek people, the craft of making wooden products, is divided into several sub-branches according to the type of wooden products made in it, and the method of decorating them. This aspect was also characteristic of medieval woodworking crafts. In particular, spear making, bow making, and arrow making can be cited as examples of such sub-branches of woodworking. Researchers emphasize that the craft of making bowstrings in the middle ages was part of weaponry. Nevertheless, since its manufacture was related to woodworking, we consider it appropriate to analyze the craft in the woodworking branch.

During the reign of the Timurids, measures were taken to strengthen the country's defense and increase the production of various types of weapons in all the principalities of the empire, especially in the Fergana estate. We know that Tashkent (Choch) and the Fergana valley were known in the East for their high-quality weapons, namely steel swords, daggers, and bows and arrows. For example, the work "Hudud ul-olam" of the Xth century, whose author is unknown, provides the following information about the Tashkent (Choch) region: "It is a large and prosperous district, ... there the Chochi bow, its arrows and khalanj wood are made in abundance [1:18]. The term "khalanj" mentioned here is interpreted in the scientific literature as juniper (heather). However, in this text, "khalanj wood" refers to a mountain willow branch. It was widely used to make various items, especially baskets. Also, Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur, in his work Baburnama, notes that the expression "Chochi kamoni" - that is, "Tashkent bow" - was widespread in the middle ages [2: 31].

Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur notes that in Tashkent bows and arrows were made of high quality, and even a separate craft district of the same name emerged in the city. Bow arrows were made in this period in feathered and featherless forms. Craftsmen with such skills were highly valued [3:17].

We know that Tashkent, Iloq and the north of the Fergana valley are located on the same geographical line, and the composition of the mountain and foothill flora here, in particular the types of trees, was almost the same. For this reason, the manufacture of products from the branches of mountain trees was widely popular in the economy of this region. Due to such specialization, some information about the manufacture of bow arrows in the valley during the Timurid period is reflected in historical documents and sources. In particular, Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur's work "Boburnoma" emphasizes that high-quality bows and arrows were made in the Fergana valley, used to supply the army, and some were even exported as goods [4: 8].

So, in the late XVth and early XVIth centuries, the population of a number of foothill villages of the Fergana valley was engaged in the manufacture of bows and arrows. They specialized in this craft. In our opinion, we believe that two aspects should be given importance here. First, since bow and arrow manufacturing has been developed in the Fergana valley since ancient times, the state collected such taxes from the population of the region in kind or in cash. Second, since the defense of the country was mandatory for all regions of the Shaybanid state, including the Fergana region, such taxes were also collected from the population of this region for the benefit of the state.

Therefore, in the list of state taxes, a type of tax was formed called "tircho'p", that is, a tax collected for the provision of military weapons [5:40]. In particular, historical documents indicate that in the XVIth – XIXth centuries there were more than 90 types of taxes in the Fergana valley, of which the XIth type was the "tircho'p" tax [6: 34-35]. This tax was a heavy economic burden for the common people, and only the privileged classes in society were exempt from such a tax burden. Various inoyatnama, shahodatnama, and waqf documents that appeared in the XVIth – XVIIth centuries on the basis of confirming tax privileges for representatives of the local upper class provide valuable information on the topic we are studying [7: 3].

Such a privilege was reflected in the certificates issued to the sayyids of the village of Koroskon near Akhsikent in the Fergana valley during the reign of the Shaybanids. A document from this period, in the certificate of the Sultan Muhammad Darvish to the sayyid Muhammad Khoja, also contains information about the "tircho'p" tax [8:1]. Or the certificate of the Shaybanid ruler Navruz Ahmad Khan dated 961 AH (1553/54 AD) and several other documents from the XVIth century also mention this type of tax [9:1]. The Navruz Ahmad Khan certificate states that the sayyids of the village of Koroskon near Akhsikent were exempted from the "tircho'p" tax [10:210].

The "tircho'p" tax was understood as the collection of the cost of transporting special tree branches from the mountains from which bow arrows were made and the collection of the cost of making bow arrows from them as a mandatory tax from the people. In the localization of the village of Koroskon, it is important that V.P. Nalivkin in his work stated that the village of Koroskon was located in the area of the tomb of the famous priest Sultan Sayyid in the Namangan region [11:1]. It is noteworthy that the documents also provide important information about the villages of Adak, Govkhona and Kyzylrabort in this area, along with the village of Koroskon. This indicates that the term "tircho'p" can be understood as the name of the tax collected from craftsmen who made bow arrows and their raw materials [12:232].

It is interesting to note why the state imposed such taxes on the residents of these areas. Because in these regions, since ancient times, trees with strong wood, suitable for making various handicrafts, have grown. The local population has developed the skills to make very high-quality handicrafts from it. As a result, the government also paid attention to this. In connection with this, special types of taxes have arisen. This is also confirmed by the information given above in the "Boburnoma".

In conclusion, in the middle ages, the Fergana valley was a place where woodworking, which can be interpreted as a branch of woodworking, developed crafts such as making bows, birdcages, whip handles, and various basketry. This is confirmed by information in historical

documents of the period. Such traditions of local crafts, further refined on the stage of history, were preserved in the crafts of the subsequent period. Such traditions also played a worthy role in the high reputation of the craftsmen of the Fergana valley.

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