MASTER–APPRENTICE TRANSMISSION AND THE DECLINE OF TRADITIONAL TECHNOLOGIES IN CONTEMPORARY FERGANA VALLEY POTTERY

Shamsiddinov Bahodir Mirzaakhmad ugli

Lecturer, Department of Social and Humanitarian Sciences

Kimyo International University in Tashkent, Namangan Branch

Doctoral Student (PhD), Namangan State University

E-mail: b.shamsiddinov@kiut.uz

ORCID: 0009-0008-8054-5065

Abstract.

This article examines the contemporary condition of master–apprentice transmission and traditional production technologies in the pottery centres of the Fergana Valley. Rather than treating continuity as the mechanical repetition of old forms, the study analyses how professional knowledge is embodied in workshop practice, transmitted through observation and participation, and reshaped by tourism, market demand, industrial materials, and formal education. Historical-ethnographic and comparative methods are applied to published field evidence, descriptions of Rishtan and Gurumsaray workshops, heritage policy documents, and studies of craft learning. The findings distinguish four interdependent knowledge domains: preparation of local clay, wheel-forming skills, glaze and firing knowledge, and ornamental composition. The most vulnerable elements are tacit procedures that cannot be reconstructed from finished objects alone, particularly plant-ash glaze preparation, kiln management, local terminology, and the sequencing of work. The article argues that the master–apprentice institution remains viable but has shifted from a guild-regulated social institution to a flexible family, workshop, and project-based model. Effective safeguarding therefore requires support for living workshops, long-

term apprenticeships, documentation of complete technological processes, ethical market labelling, and cooperation between artisans, museums, universities, and local communities.

Keywords: Fergana Valley, pottery, Rishtan, Gurumsaray, master–apprentice system, craft knowledge, traditional technology, alkaline glaze, kiln practice, intangible cultural heritage, cultural transmission, workshop, commercialization, safeguarding, historical ethnography.

Annotatsiya

Maqolada Farg‘ona vodiysi kulolchilik markazlarida usta-shogird tizimi va an’anaviy ishlab chiqarish texnologiyalarining zamonaviy holati o‘rganilgan. Kasbiy bilimning ustaxona amaliyotida mujassamlashishi, kuzatish va bevosita ishtirok orqali uzatilishi hamda turizm, bozor talabi, sanoat materiallari va rasmiy ta’lim ta’sirida o‘zgarishi tarixiy-etnografik hamda qiyosiy usullar asosida tahlil qilinadi. Natijalar mahalliy loyni tayyorlash, charxda shakl berish, sir va pishirish, naqsh kompozitsiyasi kabi to‘rtta o‘zaro bog‘liq bilim sohasini ajratish imkonini berdi. Tayyor buyumni o‘rganish orqali to‘liq tiklab bo‘lmaydigan yashirin amaliy ko‘nikmalar, xususan, ishqoriy sir tayyorlash, xumdonni boshqarish, mahalliy terminlar va ish ketma-ketligi eng zaif qatlam ekanligi asoslanadi. Usta-shogird instituti saqlanib qolgan bo‘lsa-da, u sex tartibidagi ijtimoiy institutdan moslashuvchan oilaviy, ustaxona va loyiha shakliga o‘tgan. Uni muhofaza qilish uchun faol ustaxonalarni qo‘llab-quvvatlash, uzoq muddatli shogirdlik, texnologik jarayonlarni to‘liq hujjatlashtirish va hunarmandlar, muzeylar hamda universitetlar hamkorligi zarur.

Kalit so‘zlar: Farg‘ona vodiysi, kulolchilik, Rishton, G‘urumsaroy, usta-shogird tizimi, kasbiy bilim, an’anaviy texnologiya, ishqoriy sir, xumdon, nomoddiy madaniy meros, madaniy uzatish, ustaxona, tijoratlashuv, muhofaza, tarixiy etnografiya.

Аннотация

В статье исследуется современное состояние системы «мастер–ученик» и традиционных производственных технологий в гончарных центрах Ферганской долины. Историко-этнографическими и сравнительными методами анализируется воплощение профессионального знания в практике мастерской, его передача через наблюдение и участие, а также изменения под влиянием туризма, рынка, промышленных материалов и формального образования. Выделены четыре взаимосвязанные области знаний: подготовка местной глины, формование на круге, глазурование и обжиг, орнаментальная композиция. Наиболее уязвимы неявные практические навыки, которые невозможно восстановить только по готовым изделиям: приготовление растительной щелочной глазури, управление печью, местная терминология и последовательность операций. Институт ученичества сохраняется, но трансформировался из цехового социального института в гибкую семейную, мастерскую и проектную модель. Для охраны традиции необходимы поддержка действующих мастерских, длительное ученичество, документирование полного технологического процесса и сотрудничество ремесленников, музеев, университетов и местных сообществ.

Ключевые слова: Ферганская долина, гончарство, Риштан, Гурумсарай, мастер–ученик, ремесленное знание, традиционная технология, щелочная глазурь, обжиг, нематериальное культурное наследие, передача культуры, мастерская, коммерциализация, охрана, историческая этнография.

INTRODUCTION. Pottery is sustained not only by objects, designs, or recipes but by trained bodies working in a social environment. A potter learns how wet clay should feel, how quickly a vessel wall can be raised, when a surface is ready for painting, and how the colour of flame signals conditions inside a kiln. Much of this knowledge is tacit: it is difficult to reduce to written instructions because judgement develops through repeated participation. For this reason, the decline of a workshop or

the interruption of apprenticeship may cause a greater cultural loss than the disappearance of a single vessel type.

The Fergana Valley contains historically connected yet locally distinctive pottery centres, among which Rishtan and Gurumsaray have received particular attention. Their production has been shaped by local clay, alkaline glaze traditions, wheel technology, workshop lineages, regional trade, Soviet institutional reorganisation, and post-independence heritage revival. Contemporary workshops now operate in a different environment: tourists and online buyers influence form and scale; ready-made pigments and glazes are accessible; young artisans combine family instruction with colleges, short courses, and digital media.

The aim of this study is to analyse the relationship between master–apprentice transmission and technological continuity in contemporary Fergana Valley pottery. Its objectives are to identify the structure of craft knowledge, compare historical and current modes of apprenticeship, determine the most vulnerable technological elements, assess the effects of commercialization and institutional support, and propose a safeguarding model centred on living workshop practice. The article deliberately avoids repeating a general chronological history of Fergana pottery and instead focuses on the social mechanisms through which knowledge is reproduced.

LITERATURE REVIEW. Early scholarship on Central Asian pottery documented production centres, vessel types, glazing, workshop organisation, and the names of prominent masters. M. K. Rahimov’s study of Rishtan and the collective album by L. A. Zhadova, G. G. Derviz, D. Yu. Mitlyansky, and I. A. Zhdanko remain important for reconstructing twentieth-century technologies and stylistic distinctions [1; 2]. N. N. Vakturskaya’s descriptions connect ceramic form and decoration with the broader material culture of Central Asia [3, pp. 99–103]. Although these works primarily classify objects and styles, their records preserve information about material practice that can no longer be observed in identical form.

E. M. Peshchereva examined urban pottery production and the social rules of craft communities. Her account of professional treatises, patrons of the craft, and workshop hierarchy demonstrates that learning was embedded in moral discipline and collective legitimacy, not limited to technical instruction [4, p. 320]. Historical-ethnographic evidence from the Fergana Valley also records the transition from apprentice to khalfa and master, the blessing of the teacher, and the role of communal recognition. Shamsiddinov's earlier study systematised these ceremonies and terms, including oq fotiha, bag'ishlov oshi, kamarbasta, and kalontar [5, pp. 116–121]. The present article uses that evidence as historical background but shifts the analysis from ritual description to the current transmission of technological knowledge.

Recent publications on Fergana pottery describe transformations associated with individual workshops, tourism, market adaptation, and cultural heritage policy [8, pp. 609–616; 9, pp. 243–247]. However, three gaps remain. First, visible stylistic continuity is often treated as proof of technological continuity. Second, apprenticeship is frequently celebrated without evaluating duration, content, or the apprentice's path to independent practice. Third, policy discussions rarely distinguish between documentation, education, market support, and the protection of local material resources. The present study addresses these gaps through a process-centred model.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research applies historical-ethnographic, comparative, and process-analysis methods. The source base includes published descriptions of Central Asian and Fergana pottery, the author's earlier work on apprenticeship ceremonies, UNESCO heritage principles, national policy documents, and materials concerning contemporary craft education. The historical method was used to compare guild-regulated apprenticeship with family and private-workshop models. Comparative analysis distinguished stable principles from changeable tools, materials, and market forms.

For analytical purposes, the production process was divided into four knowledge domains: (1) selection, cleaning, mixing, and ageing of clay; (2) wheel preparation and vessel forming; (3) engobe, pigment, glaze, kiln loading, and firing; and (4) drawing, motif selection, composition, and product evaluation. Each domain was assessed according to five criteria: degree of embodiment, dependence on local resources, time required to learn, ease of documentation, and vulnerability to substitution.

The study does not claim that every current workshop follows one uniform system. Rishtan, Gurumsaray, Kokand, Namangan, Andijan, Chust, and Kuva have different levels of continuity and documentation. Accordingly, conclusions are framed as regional tendencies rather than universal statements about every artisan. Oral traditions are treated as evidence of professional identity and social memory, while chronological claims are based on published research and official documents.

RESULTS. Transformation of the master–apprentice institution.

Historically, apprenticeship joined technical training with social incorporation. A child entered the master's household and workshop, first performing auxiliary tasks and gradually observing clay preparation, wheel work, decoration, firing, and trade. Training could last many years. The master was responsible not only for occupational competence but also for discipline, etiquette, trustworthiness, and the apprentice's reputation. Independent status required the master's consent and, in some settings, communal recognition through a blessing or initiation meal [4, p. 320; 5, pp. 116–121].

The modern workshop is more flexible. Apprentices may be relatives, paid assistants, college students, short-term trainees, or young artisans seeking a specific technique. This openness expands access, but it also fragments the curriculum. A short course can demonstrate vessel forming or painting while excluding seasonal clay preparation, glaze chemistry, kiln construction, sales, and repair of failed products. The result may be partial competence without the integrated judgement formerly developed through prolonged workshop participation.

Family transmission remains especially important because it offers continuous access to tools, recipes, customers, and professional networks. Yet family continuity alone cannot guarantee safeguarding. Young people may prefer occupations with predictable income, and a successful workshop may assign repetitive production tasks without teaching the complete cycle. The decisive indicator is therefore not the presence of a potter's child in the workshop but whether the learner moves through increasingly responsible stages and gains the right to make independent technical decisions.

Vulnerable domains of technological knowledge.

Clay preparation is the first vulnerable domain. Knowledge of extraction sites, seasonal moisture, impurities, mixing proportions, ageing, and the relation between clay body and vessel size is highly local. Commercial clay may save time and improve regularity, but dependence on standardised material weakens knowledge of local raw resources. If extraction sites are closed, polluted, or undocumented, later revival becomes difficult even when old vessels and tools survive.

Wheel-forming remains visually central to pottery and is comparatively easy to demonstrate, but advanced competence is still embodied. Wall thickness, balance, drying rate, joining, and correction of deformation are learned through repetition. Tourism-oriented demonstrations can unintentionally reduce wheel work to spectacle: the rapid making of a small vessel is visible, while preparation, controlled drying, trimming, and quality assessment remain hidden. Apprentices trained mainly for demonstrations may acquire speed without the full production sequence.

Ornamental knowledge appears more secure because motifs are visible, photographed, and easily copied. Nevertheless, copying a motif is not equivalent to mastering composition. The artisan must understand the relation between vessel shape, central field, border, rhythm, empty space, colour hierarchy, and the intended use of the object. Market pressure encourages motifs that are immediately recognisable or

quickly executed. Symbolic names and local interpretations may disappear even while the motif remains visually present.

Market adaptation and educational change

Commercialization produces contradictory effects. Tourism, exhibitions, and online trade can make workshop careers economically attractive and finance the revival of difficult techniques. At the same time, pressure for low prices and rapid delivery favours smaller objects, repeated patterns, industrial materials, and division of labour. These changes are not inherently destructive, but risk increases when buyers cannot distinguish a fully local technological process from a product that only imitates its visual style.

National support measures since 1997 have improved the public status and economic environment of artistic crafts [10]. The 2023 decision on safeguarding, scholarly study, and promotion of intangible cultural heritage creates further grounds for documentation and institutional cooperation [11]. The effectiveness of such measures should be evaluated not only by the number of exhibitions or certificates but by the number of active masters, the duration and completion of apprenticeships, the continued use of local terminology and materials, and the transfer of kiln responsibility to a new generation.

DISCUSSION

The findings support an important distinction between product continuity and process continuity. A contemporary plate may reproduce a historic blue-and-turquoise appearance while using a different clay body, industrial glaze, electric firing, and digitally copied composition. Such an object may still possess artistic value, but it does not carry every layer of the older technological system. Conversely, a master may adopt a safer kiln or new marketing channel while preserving local clay judgement, compositional principles, and apprenticeship ethics. Authenticity should therefore be discussed transparently as a set of documented choices rather than as an absolute label.

Ingold's concept of enskilment clarifies why transmission requires time and shared attention [6, p. 416]. The apprentice does not simply receive information; perception is educated through guided action. The master draws attention to differences that a novice cannot initially see or feel. This relationship also explains the cultural importance of terminology. Names for clay states, tools, motifs, defects, and firing conditions organise perception. When vocabulary disappears, the ability to distinguish and communicate fine variations may also weaken.

A four-part safeguarding model follows from the analysis. First, documentation must record processes from raw material to sale, including failed results, oral terminology, and decision points. Second, transmission programmes should fund multi-stage apprenticeships rather than one-time workshops. Third, market mechanisms should use clear descriptions of material, glaze, firing, and place of production. Fourth, museums and universities should act as partners of living workshops by providing archives, laboratory analysis, educational credit, and public interpretation without taking control away from artisan communities.

The study also reveals limits in the available evidence. Published accounts describe famous masters and successful centres more fully than inactive workshops or abandoned technologies. Quantitative information on apprentices, income, training duration, and material substitution remains uneven. Future fieldwork should use workshop diaries, process photography, interviews with masters and former apprentices, material sampling, and comparison across Rishtan, Gurumsaray, Chust, Namangan, Andijan, Kokand, and Kuva. Such research would enable centre-specific recommendations and distinguish temporary market adaptation from irreversible knowledge loss.

CONCLUSION

The master–apprentice system remains the central mechanism through which Fergana Valley pottery can survive as living knowledge. Its form has changed: guild

authority and long household apprenticeship have largely given way to family workshops, flexible employment, educational courses, and project-based training. This transformation has widened access but also made learning shorter and more fragmented. The survival of a workshop name or decorative style is therefore not sufficient evidence that the complete technological tradition is secure.

Four domains require coordinated protection: local clay preparation, advanced wheel-forming, glaze and kiln practice, and ornamental composition. Glaze, firing, terminology, and the sequencing of work are particularly vulnerable because they are tacit, place-dependent, and costly to learn. Safeguarding must prioritise living practice, supervised repetition, and the transfer of responsibility to apprentices. Documentation should include not only exemplary products but also raw materials, tools, gestures, failed batches, corrections, and the social relations of the workshop.

The sustainable future of Fergana pottery depends on balancing tradition and innovation. New tools, markets, and educational institutions can strengthen the craft when artisans retain informed control over technological and artistic decisions. Long-term apprenticeships, transparent market descriptions, protection of material resources, and cooperation among master potters, communities, museums, and universities offer a practical route toward this balance. In this model, heritage is neither a static copy of the past nor an unrestricted commodity; it is a continuously renewed competence carried by people.

REFERENCES

1. Rahimov, M. K. (1961). Rishtonning badiiy kulolchiligi [The Artistic Pottery of Rishtan]. Tashkent.
2. Zhadova, L. A., Derviz, G. G., Mitlyansky, D. Yu., & Zhdanko, I. A. (1974). Sovremennaya keramika narodnykh masterov Sredney Azii [Contemporary Ceramics of Folk Masters of Central Asia]. Moscow: Sovetskiy khudozhnik.

3. Vakturskaya, N. N. (1975). Keramika Sredney Azii [Ceramics of Central Asia]. Moscow.
4. Peshchereva, E. M. (1980). Gorodskoye goncharnoye proizvodstvo Sredney Azii [Urban Pottery Production of Central Asia]. Moscow.
5. Shamsiddinov, B. M. (2025). Rituals and rituals related to ceramics: Teacher–apprentice traditions. Web of Discoveries: Journal of Analysis and Inventions, 3(4), 116–121.
6. Ingold, T. (2000). The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill. London: Routledge.
7. UNESCO. (2003). Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. Paris.
8. Usmonov, A. R. (2025). History of Fergana Valley pottery. The Lingua Spectrum, 2, 609–616.
9. Mo‘ydinova, D. M. (2023). Blue pottery schools formed in the Kokand Khanate. Oriental Art and Culture, 4(6), 243–247.
10. Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PF-1741. (31 March 1997). On measures of state support for the further development of folk artistic crafts and applied art.
11. Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PQ-405. (25 December 2023). On additional measures to develop the safeguarding, scholarly study, and promotion of intangible cultural heritage.
12. Morozova, A. S., Avedova, N. A., & Makhkamova, S. M. (1979). O‘zbekiston xalq san’ati [Folk Art of Uzbekistan]. Tashkent.
13. Mamasoliyeva, Sh. L. (2021). Xalq hunarmandchiligi [Folk Crafts]. Samarkand: SamSU Publishing.
14. Zhadova, L. A. (1987). Narodnoye iskusstvo Uzbekistana [Folk Art of Uzbekistan]. Tashkent.

15. National Commission of the Republic of Uzbekistan for UNESCO. (2017). Intangible Cultural Heritage of Uzbekistan. Tashkent.
16. Gulbaxor, M., & Bahodir, S. (2025). TIL O ‘RGANISHDA CHATGPT, TARJIMA TIZIMLARI VA ULARNING SAMARADORLIGI. TADQIQOTLAR, 76(3), 17-21.
17. Muzaffar, G., & Bahodir, S. (2025). INSON ORGANIZMIDA UCHRAYDIGAN ICHKI KASALIKLAR. TADQIQOTLAR, 76(2), 71-74.
18. Bakhodir, S., & Dilshoda, R. (2025). EASTERN THINKERS OF THE ERA OF THE FIRST RENAISSANCE. Global Science Review, 8(1), 682-687.
19. Zebo, N., & Bahodir, S. (2025). O ‘RTA ASRLARDA ANGLIYA (V-XV ASRLAR). Global Science Review, 11(1), 85-90.
20. Шамсиддинов, Б., & Гуламов, М. (2023). ЛОГИЧЕСКИЕ СООТНОШЕНИЯ ФИЛОСОФИИ С ЛИТЕРАТУРОЙ. Oriental Art and Culture, 4(3), 332-335.
21. Shamsiddinov, B. J., & Jakbaraliyva, Z. (2022). Scientific and Empirical Relations of Philosophy and Literature. Spanish Journal of Innovation and Integrity, 7, 70-73.
22. Abdullaev, U. B., & Shamshiddinov, B. (2024). O ‘RTA ASRLAR YOZMA MANBALARIDAGI ETNIK NOMLAR. Ijtimoiy-gumanitar sohada ilmiy-innovatsion tadqiqotlar, 1(1).
23. Шамсиддинов, Б. Ж., & Жакбаралиева, З. О. (2022). АБУ АЛИ ИБН СИНО ТИББИЙ ТАРБИЯ ХУСУСИДА. Oriental Art and Culture, 3(2), 670-674.
24. Shamsiddinov, B. (2022). The importance of supporting innovative activities of entrepreneurs in uzbekistan. ASIA PACIFIC JOURNAL OF MARKETING & MANAGEMENT REVIEW ISSN: 2319-2836 Impact Factor: 8.071, 11(11), 165-170.
25. Шамсиддинов, Б. Ж. (2023). МАМЛАКАТИМИЗ МИЛЛИЙ

ЮКСАЛИШНИНГ ИЖТИМОИЙФАЛСАФИЙ АСОСЛАРИ. Oriental Art and Culture, 4(5), 345-350.

26. Шамсиддинов, Б. (2020). Тарбия жараёнида шар мутафаккирларининг қ педагогик ва психологик қарашлари. In Актуальные вопросы развития современного общества, экономики и профессионального образования (pp. 268-271). Российский государственный профессионально-педагогический университет.
27. Shamsiddinov, B. B. DINSHUNOSLIKNING BOSHQA FANLAR BILAN ALOQASI.
28. Shamsiddinov, B. B. Ta'lim innovatsiyasi va integratsiyasi.
29. YANGI, V. T. V. M., & YONDASHUVLARI, T. H. OZBEKISTON RESPUBLIKASI OLIY TALIM, FAN VA INNOVATSIYALAR VAZIRLIGI NAMANGAN DAVLAT UNIVERSITETI “ZAMONAVIY JAHON TARIXSHUNOSLIGIDA FARG’ONA.
30. YANGI, V. T. V. M., & YONDASHUVLARI, T. H. OZBEKISTON RESPUBLIKASI OLIY TALIM, FAN VA INNOVATSIYALAR VAZIRLIGI NAMANGAN DAVLAT UNIVERSITETI “ZAMONAVIY JAHON TARIXSHUNOSLIGIDA FARG’ONA.
31. Shamsiddinov, B. B. DINSHUNOSLIKNING BOSHQA FANLAR BILAN ALOQASI.
32. Shamsiddinov, B. B. Ta'lim innovatsiyasi va integratsiyasi.
33. Shamsiddinov, B. M. U. (2026, June). HISTORICAL AND ETHNOGRAPHIC FEATURES OF POTTERY-RELATED RITUALS IN THE FERGANA VALLEY. In *International Conference Platform* (No. 6, pp. 135-143).