THE REVIVAL OF HOME-BASED WORK AND FAMILY FORMS OF PRODUCTION IN KASHKADARYA

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Abstract: The article analyses the revival of home-based work (kasanachilik) and family forms of production in the artistic textile crafts of the Kashkadarya region of Uzbekistan after independence. It traces the historical roots of household-based textile production, its continuity during the Soviet period, and the legal and institutional framework created after 1991, including the establishment of the Hunarmand association, the 2006 presidential decree on home-based work, the Law "On Family Entrepreneurship", the 2017 decree on the support of craftsmen, the "Every Family is an Entrepreneur" programme and the provisions of the Labour Code on home-based workers. The article describes the main organisational models of home-based and family production in the region, identifies existing problems and proposes measures for their solution.

Keywords: Kashkadarya, home-based work, kasanachilik, family entrepreneurship, crafts, embroidery, carpet weaving, women's employment, Hunarmand, mahalla, small business.

Introduction

Home-based work and family production are among the oldest forms of economic organisation in Central Asia. For centuries, textiles in Kashkadarya were made in the household by women who combined production with domestic duties. In the twentieth century this form was partly displaced by cooperatives and factories, but after Uzbekistan gained independence in 1991 it experienced a remarkable revival. Today, home-based work (kasanachilik) is regarded by the state as an important instrument for employment, poverty reduction and the development of small business, especially in rural regions.

Kashkadarya is a large, predominantly agrarian region with a high share of rural population and a strong tradition of women's textile crafts. These features make it a suitable case for studying how state policy and traditional skills interact in the revival of household production. The aim of this article is to analyse the historical preconditions, legal framework, organisational forms and current problems of home-based work and family production in the artistic textiles of Kashkadarya. The study is based on the analysis of legislation, published research on crafts and home-based work, and observation of the practice of craft workshops in Shahrisabz, Kitab and Karshi.

Historical roots of household textile production

Before the twentieth century, most textile products in the oasis were made within the family. Embroidery for the dowry and for the decoration of the home, as well as the weaving of carpets, palas and terma, were carried out by women in their own households. At the same time, a form of commercial home-based work already existed: a pattern-drawer or merchant supplied fabric with drawn designs to several embroiderers, who worked at home and received payment for finished pieces. In this way, the household was both a unit of family life and a unit of production connected to the market.

In the Soviet period, private craft trade was restricted and production was concentrated in artels and state enterprises. However, household production did not disappear. Many enterprises, including the embroidery enterprise in Shahrisabz, gave work to women at home, and families continued to produce

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textiles for their own needs, above all for the dowry. Thus, the skills and social practices on which modern home-based work is based were preserved across generations.

The legal and institutional framework after independence

After 1991, the collapse of the planned economy and the decline of many enterprises left numerous skilled craftswomen without employment. At the same time, the new market conditions allowed private craft activity. In 1997 the Republican Association of Craftsmen "Hunarmand" was established, giving masters an official status, tax benefits, and access to exhibitions, fairs and training. A regional branch of the association operates in Kashkadarya.

An important step was the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PF-3706 of 5 January 2006, which was aimed at stimulating cooperation between industrial enterprises and the development of home-based work. It allowed enterprises to conclude labour contracts with home-based workers, supply them with raw materials and equipment, and receive finished products, while giving the workers a record of employment and social guarantees. Craft and light-industry enterprises in Kashkadarya used this model to involve women from rural districts in embroidery and sewing.

The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Family Entrepreneurship" of 26 April 2012 created a legal form for production organised within a family, with or without the formation of a legal entity, and allowed family members to work together in a common business. The Decree No. PF-5242 of 17 November 2017 on the further development of crafts and comprehensive support for craftsmen strengthened state support: it provided for tax benefits, preferential loans, the allocation of premises, the creation of craft centres and, notably, incentives for masters who train apprentices in the ustoz–shogird tradition. The programme "Every Family is an Entrepreneur", launched by Presidential Resolution No. PQ-3777 of 7 June 2018, extended preferential credit to families starting household businesses, including crafts. Finally, the Labour Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan adopted in 2022 contains special provisions on home-based work, defining the rights and obligations of employers and home-based workers.

Organisational forms of home-based and family production

In the artistic textiles of Kashkadarya, several forms of household production can be distinguished. The first is the individual master who works at home with her daughters, daughters-in-law and other relatives. Such masters usually design the patterns, choose the colours and materials, and sell finished items directly to customers, at bazaars, at tourist sites or through social networks.

The second form is the family enterprise registered under the 2012 law or as an individual entrepreneur. It may employ relatives and neighbours, has a workshop at home or in a rented room, and often combines production, training of apprentices and sales. Workshops of this type in the old city of Shahrisabz and near its historic monuments serve both as production sites and as places where tourists can observe the process of embroidery.

The third form is the network of home-based workers organised around a workshop, a craft centre or an enterprise. The workshop prepares fabric with drawn patterns and threads, distributes them among women in surrounding villages, and collects the finished embroidery, paying by the piece. This model, which in many respects continues the historical practice of the pattern-drawer, allows one workshop to involve dozens of women and to fulfil large orders, while the women work at home without abandoning their family responsibilities.

Finally, the mahalla plays an important supporting role. Mahalla institutions help to identify women who need employment, connect them with workshops and enterprises, and support participation

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in state programmes. Since 2021, the system of targeted support for women through the mahalla has also been used to finance small household businesses, including sewing and embroidery.

The practice of home-based production in the region

The practice of craft workshops in Shahrisabz, Kitab and Karshi shows that the revival of home-based work has taken place in close connection with the traditional organisation of craft production. A typical workshop is led by an experienced master, often a woman who learned embroidery from her mother or grandmother and worked at the former embroidery enterprise in the Soviet period. She draws the patterns herself or works with a pattern-drawer, selects fabrics and threads, controls the quality of work and maintains contacts with customers. The actual embroidery is carried out by apprentices in the workshop and by home-based workers in the city and surrounding villages.

Several features of this practice deserve attention. First, the relations between the master and home-based workers are based not only on payment but also on kinship, neighbourhood and personal trust, which reduces the need for formal contracts but also makes the work less protected. Second, the division of labour within the network allows women with different levels of skill to participate: beginners fill in simple areas, while experienced embroiderers work on complex details. Third, the workshop serves as a school: girls who start as home-based workers gradually master the full cycle of production and some later open their own workshops, reproducing the ustoz–shogird chain.

Home-based production has also become more diverse in terms of products. Alongside traditional suzani and bed covers, masters produce wall panels, cushion covers, bags, purses, elements of clothing, table textiles and small souvenirs. Families engaged in carpet weaving and terma have adapted their products to modern interiors by reducing sizes and introducing new colour combinations. Social networks and messengers have become important channels of sales, allowing even women in remote villages to find customers in other regions of the country and abroad.

At the same time, the growing demand for quick and cheap products has encouraged some producers to use machine embroidery and printed imitations. This creates competition for hand-made textiles and makes it necessary to inform buyers about the value of authentic hand work and to support those families who preserve traditional techniques.

Problems and prospects

Despite clear achievements, home-based and family production in the region faces several problems. Incomes of home-based workers are often low and depend on irregular orders. A considerable part of the work remains informal, which deprives workers of social protection and pension rights. Access to high-quality materials, especially natural dyes and silk threads, is limited, and many producers lack training in design, pricing and marketing. The concentration of demand on souvenirs leads to simplification of patterns and a loss of artistic quality.

To address these problems, it is advisable to simplify the registration of home-based workers and family enterprises; to develop cooperatives that would jointly purchase materials and sell products; to organise courses in design, digital marketing and business skills at craft centres; to create a regional brand and certification for authentic Kashkadarya textiles; and to connect home-based producers with tourism routes and online trade platforms. International standards, such as the ILO Home Work Convention No. 177 (1996), can serve as a reference for improving the protection of home-based workers.

Conclusion

The revival of home-based work and family production in the artistic textiles of Kashkadarya is rooted in long historical traditions of household craft and in the skills preserved during the Soviet period. Since independence, a consistent legal and institutional framework, from the Hunarmand association and

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the 2006 decree to the Law on Family Entrepreneurship, the 2017 decree on crafts and the new Labour Code, has turned these traditions into a recognised form of employment and small business. The household has once again become a basic unit of artistic textile production. Its further development depends on formalising and protecting the work of home-based workers, raising their professional and business skills, and strengthening the link between authentic craft production and the market.

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