

## WOODWORKING INDUSTRIES IN KHARKIV REGION DURING THE NEP YEARS: A HISTORICAL ASPECT

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### Summary

The article examines the development of woodworking industries in Kharkiv region, the situation of artisans, their income and everyday life. The impact of the new economic policy on production volumes is determined. Cooperage, carpentry, carpentry, and art products were studied. The transformation and development of handicrafts is identified and studied. The tax system that influenced woodworking handicraft production is considered. We made our own expedition to the workshop of a famous master who used the experience of his ancestors in the manufacture of products. The technology of production of wooden products characteristic of Kharkiv region is studied, and the industry concentration is determined. The connection of cooperage with other branches of agriculture is indicated. The authors studied the work of carpenters and described traditional housing of the hata-sena type and the gradual transformation in the Ukrainian village into a hata-sena-hata dwelling. We paid attention to the manufacture of tools (pitchforks, rakes), household items (troughs, mortars, ladles, buckets, etc.). The life of a rural family was directly connected with woodworking crafts, wood products were in demand, so the masters of this business increased significantly during the NEP period. The authors described the range of chiseled products, consisting of bowls, glasses, salt shakers, rolling pins. Birch, maple, hornbeam, and ash were used to make crafts. In the Slobozhansky Museum of local lore, at the exhibition "hall of ethnography", the authors studied wooden products and production technology of the period of the new economic policy in Kharkiv region.

**Keywords:** peasants, coopers, carpenters, raw materials, rural artisans, peasant family.

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### 1. Introduction

A hundred years have passed since the beginning of a new economic policy. During this time, many changes have taken place in the countryside. Turning to the history of NEP, the authors focus on the history of rural crafts, study sources, historiography and highlight less studied pages. Ukrainian farmers with their hard work earned the glory of the European

breadbasket. Our ancestors piously respected and passed down their traditions, culture, and crafts from generation to generation. Critical rethinking of the place and role of woodworking industries in the life of farmers of the NEP period is a significant task of the authors. Despite the fact that some aspects of the problem are reflected in Russian historiography (*Kalinichenko, 1991; Olianych, 2012; Nizova, 2006*), the issue requires a thorough study of the chosen region.

The study of the history of woodworking industries in Kharkiv region is becoming relevant, since at the present stage there is a rethinking of cultural heritage and the past. Our people have always treated embroidery and art products as a shrine. They were passed down from generation to generation, from generation to generation, and kept as relics. This is the wealth of our nation, so preserving and exploring this priceless source is the main task of our time. So, the relevance of the research has scientific and applied significance.

Modern historical science has a number of important principles and methods of cognition. The authors used methodological approaches: system-structural, regional. While working on sources and literature, we used classical methods: deduction, induction, and analysis.

The purpose of the article is to analyze the development of woodworking industries in Kharkiv region, their significance for the peasant family; changes that occurred during the new economic policy.

The chronological boundaries of the article are the beginning of the 1920s – 1930s, that is, from the beginning of a new economic policy to the time of its liquidation.

The source base of the article consists of statistical data, population censuses, archival documents, and periodicals.

## 2. Transformation of woodworking crafts

The main task of the new economic policy was to restore the national economy and further transition to new economic relations. Farmers were engaged in crafts and crafts, especially during the so-called off – season-autumn and winter. Peasant crafts and crafts formed a professional, if they were the main, or additional branch of activity (*Olianych, 2012*).

The Soviet government tried to subdue the private owner by any means necessary. Thus, according to the decree of the Council of people's commissars (SNK) of July 27, 1918, part of the handicraft industry was nationalized. In the early 1920s, there were also changes that significantly affected the artisanal peasants. Let us recall the decree "on industrial cooperation" of November 12, 1921, according to which peasants had the right to form cooperative societies and artels for joint production. This decree also provided for the provision of necessary materials and funds to cooperatives (*Nizova, 2001*). Consequently, the Soviet government has now encouraged and supported artisanal production. Archival data confirm that as of January 1, 1922, the number of rural artisans in Ukraine was 263,681 (*Tsentrалnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv*). Regarding tax policy, in 1925 the laws "on tax benefits for rural artisans and artisans" were adopted. Masters freely engaged in the craft, without hiding their activities, feed their family and save money. Woodworking industry occupied a significant place in agriculture. It was based on carpentry and cooperage production. They made wooden equipment, dishes, furniture, chests, shelves. In total, there were 13,075 Coopers, including 11,172 singles who made various products from wood. Carpenters were engaged in the construction of wooden wheels, and there were more than 9 thousand such craftsmen, that is, one for every sixth village in Ukraine (*Nefedov, 1927*). In Kharkiv region, during the new economic policy, sectoral concentration was gradually formed. Woodworking accounted for 12.4% if we single out the areas where

the woodworking industry developed the most, we should note V.-Burlutsky and Oktyabrsky districts in the Kharkiv region (*Visnyk promkredyt kooperatsii, 1927*). The authors concluded that specialization was influenced by raw materials, i.e. the need for forest materials. Although woodworking was also respected among other districts of Kharkiv region.

### 3. Cooperage

This type of woodworking industry is primarily associated with the manufacture of barrels, tubs, barrels, buckets, Bodens. This craft was used for their own needs and to order. For the manufacture of products, coopers used a material that was carefully selected. We took into account the length, height of the future product, and wood of various breeds. For example, oak for wine vessels, Linden was used to make dishes in which milk, butter, and Honey were stored; coniferous branches were taken on hoops. Masters of this craft were respected among the peasants, since the products were used in everyday life. Cooper set up a workshop at home and worked independently, sometimes using the help of his family. Almost every village had such a master, he performed work on the order of the consumer. Cooperage was especially in demand near Sugar Factories in the Kharkiv region, where barrels for sugar production were bought en masse (*State Archives of Kharkiv Region, Found 203*).

To understand the value of wooden products, you need to follow the technology of cooperage. Based on the sources, the wood first had to be dried and prepared for use. This period took from six months to a year. The next stage of work is to use an axe to prick riveting arcs. Cooper had such qualities as experience, talent, and skill. Some masters used metal hoops in their work. When the master folded all the rivets, he moved on to tightening with hoops, and then inserting the bottom. The master checked his work with water. The quality was evaluated by consumers. Such heavy cooper's bread. A folk proverb characterizes the hard and respectable life of peasant coopers: "the sincere work is calloused", "craft is not a yoke, the shoulder will not pull", "the work of the master magnifies".

### 4. Creativity of the master

Of great importance among the woodworking industry is the figure of the master. The woodworking craft has been formed for many centuries. Under the influence of the new economic policy, changes took place in the lives of artisanal peasants. They worked for their own consumption and for the consumer. When receiving orders, the craftsmen formed small groups and completed the order. Everyone had their own tools. In the course of the study, the authors reviewed archival materials, statistics, periodicals, memoirs and came to the conclusion that this craft was often passed down from generation to generation. During their own expeditions, the authors studied the mentality, character, and skills of the masters of Kharkiv region. Among the surveyed craftsmen, the authors are bondar, carpenter Ivan Petrovich Olyanich, who was born in 1914 in the village of Kalinovka, Konstantinovgrad uyezd in Kharkiv region. Because Ivan Petrovich is our own grandfather, we had the opportunity to visit the workshop, follow the manufacturing technology, understand the character of the master and see his working palms. Unfortunately, Ivan Petrovich died in 2000, but the authors recorded testimonies, memories of the pedigree and learned the everyday life of a woodworking master. Ivan Petrovich learned this craft from his father, who worked as a cooper and carpenter

during our study period. The master considered oak wood to be the best material. He carefully followed the manufacturing technology and carefully stored his tools, the machine. He worked on the order of fellow villagers in the village of Sharovka, Bogodukhov district, and for the needs of his family. In his home workshop, Ivan Petrovich made tubs, barrels, chests, and troughs. The technology was preserved by his father, Pyotr Ivanovich, who was engaged in cooperation during the new economic policy. It is important to preserve traditions, culture, and language, so that the younger generation knows their roots, loves Ukraine, and protects our language. So, the example of a master should be considered a lone artisan who tried to replenish the budget of his family with his work. The life of the peasants was not easy, it is good when the family was headed by a real master, tried to earn a penny and even morally support his wife and children. Research on the peasant family, crafts, social behavior, and everyday life has become relevant for Ukrainian researchers (*Marochko, 2010*).

## 5. Carpentry

Small specialization is explained by the development of a variety of products. Carpenters built wooden houses, custom structures they assembled, had their own tools and demonstrated a high level of skill. Traditions, symbols, and customs have been preserved for centuries and embodied in the living space.

Traditional housing of the hut-canopy type gradually turned into a dwelling, which consisted of two parts: hut-canopy-hut (*Zakharchenko, Morozov, 2017*). The main building

materials for walls in the Ukrainian village were: wood, clay, adobe (unburned bricks made of clay and straw) (*Lukashevych, 2004*). So, carpenters in the years of the new economic policy generally built according to the technologies of their parents.

Carpentry was also common in the Kharkiv region and was in demand. The main goal is to provide the population with wood products for household consumption. This is primarily the manufacture of tools (rakes, pitchforks), household items (mortars, troughs, measures, ladles, buckets). This fishery is most widely developed in Kupyansk, Izyum and Sumy districts (*Lapchenko, 2015*). It should be added that there was a constant need for such crafts, so the connection with agriculture was constantly maintained. Working on such products required time, skill, and raw materials. Special raw materials were used for each product. For example, maple, pear, and birch wood was used for manufacturing. The manufacturing technology began with cutting the log into parts corresponding to the length of the product. With the



**Pic. 1. Handmade joinery from Slobozhansky Museum**

help of a knife, a cutter, workpieces were processed. In many villages in the Kharkiv region, they turned to craftsmen, but some were made independently.

It should be mentioned that carpenters in villages were often engaged in artistic wood processing. Carvings were used to decorate homes, shutters, porches, and the like. Sources confirm that the Left-Bank Ukraine was characterized by the use of light wood colors. They used primarily oak, maple, and linden wood. The life of a peasant family was filled with constant work. The family helped the master to do the work and make a profit. The difference between a carpenter and a carpenter is related to the processing of wood. A carpenter is characterized by rougher work with wood. The carpenter works on wood, but uses more complex technologies, his work is accurate and has artistic functions. Of course, both works have their own specifics.

Carpentry products were in demand, so the number of masters of this business increased significantly during the study period. Carpenters in the village made various crafts, sometimes items of transport. In 1921, the First All-Ukrainian Art and Industrial Exhibition was held in Kharkiv (*State Archives of Kharkiv Region, Found 92*), in which woodworking masters actively took part. Craftsmen had the opportunity to demonstrate their products and view other products.

With the advent of electricity in the villages, craftsmen began to use a lathe. The range of chiseled products consisted of bowls, glasses, salt shakers, rolling pins, etc. The Masters used wood for the manufacture, which was turned. Probably used birch, maple, hornbeam, ash. In the Slobozhansky Museum of local lore at the exhibition "hall of ethnography" there are wooden products of the studied period (*Slobozhansky Museum; see pic. 1*).

## 6. Taxes

The peasant family in the years of the new economic policy, first of all, had to take care of material goods. In the Kharkiv region, crafts were part of the household work of the peasantry. The peasants had the right to freely sell the surplus of the farm. The NEP policy provided for the free development of the peasant economy, private trade, and the restoration of the domestic market after the turbulent events. Craftsmen made their products to order, sometimes selling them at rural fairs. Thanks to favorable economic conditions, the peasants expanded production. The peasant reacted to various forms of selling products that were profitable for him, which gave money immediately (*Olianych, 2012: 233*). The study of private crafts would be incomplete without considering the Soviet tax system.

The formation of the Soviet system of taxation of the rural population took place in the conditions of NEP, but did not always correspond to its basic principles. The food tax, which is considered the business card of NEP, only formally had the signs of a tax, and functionally it almost did not differ from the food tax. The share of the single agricultural tax in Ukraine was 6-7% of the conditional net income of the peasant economy. The total tax (direct and indirect penalties) amounted to 37% of the income of the peasant household, and this is very significant, so each type of tax complicated the economic state of the farm. In 1928-1929. the state returned to the principle of surplus development to the principle of surplus development using punitive and repressive methods of collecting in-kind and monetary duties of peasants, which turned out to be incompatible with free enterprise (*Olianych, 2012: 129*). Consequently, the tax system influenced the development of Agriculture and the standard of living of peasants in Ukraine during the new economic policy.

## 7. Trading

NEP revived the life of peasants and the function of money. One of NEP's contemporaries, Z. Mindlin, argued that the essence of NEP was that the market became an organizational form between the public and private sectors, and the products that were subject to exchange became a commodity (*Mindlin, 1925*). The main source of income of the peasant family was its own agricultural production, and non – agricultural earnings were additional.

There was a market trade, a fair trade, where masters had the opportunity not only to earn a penny, but also to communicate with competitors, exchange experience. It should be noted that the good reputation of the master, their decency, friendly attitude to consumers, product quality have always been the key to the success of the master.

As the researchers note, the first years of NEP (1921-1923) were the most favorable period in the development of private trade (*Volosnyk, 2014*).

To understand the purchasing power of money in the period under study, we will give prices for some food products. So, the prices of state trade were as follows: one kilogram of rye bread – 15 kopecks, wheat-25 kopecks., macaroni – 2 rubles. 50 kopecks, granulated sugar-90 kopecks., a liter of milk – 90 kopecks, cottage cheese – 2 rubles (*Kalinichenko, Olianych, Puhach, 1999*).

So, when determining the price of wooden products, raw materials, work, and the purchasing power of money were taken into account. Among the Masters of the woodworking industry, it was the Coopers who received the highest earnings (*Statystyka Ukrainy, 1931*). The products were in demand, simple and necessary. The demand increased especially when vegetables were harvested for the winter, barrels, tubs and other products were actively bought. Thus, in the Kharkiv region there was a brisk trade in woodworking products.

## 8. Conclusions

Woodworking industries occupied a significant place among others in agriculture during the period of the new economic policy. Farmers were engaged in fishing during the off-season. The production of household items for their own needs also belonged to artisanal and industrial entrepreneurship. The woodworking industry included carpentry, Cooperage production, as well as the production of dishes, furniture, chests, spoons, etc.made of wood. Artisanal and industrial entrepreneurship of the peasants had original forms of development. Such crafts were carried out by peasants who supplemented the budget and provided themselves with what was necessary for their own consumption. There were also professional artisans and artisans who were constantly engaged in this type of activity. The new economic policy contributed to the revival and development of woodworking production. The authors hope that the research topic is relevant and some aspects of it require new research.

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