

SAMARKAND PAPER

According to historical data, production of paper in Samarkand started since Chinese prisoners betrayed the secret of paper making in order to save their lives, namely from the second half of the eighth century. In the ninth century it became a separate branch of city craftsmanship. From the eighth until the nineteenth centuries, for more than thousand years Samarkand paper was famous in Middle Asia and Near East and in many cities of Europe. Samarkand craftsmen, who had raised their work to the artistic level in the past, have created the thinnest, smoothest and most ink resistant paper types in the world.

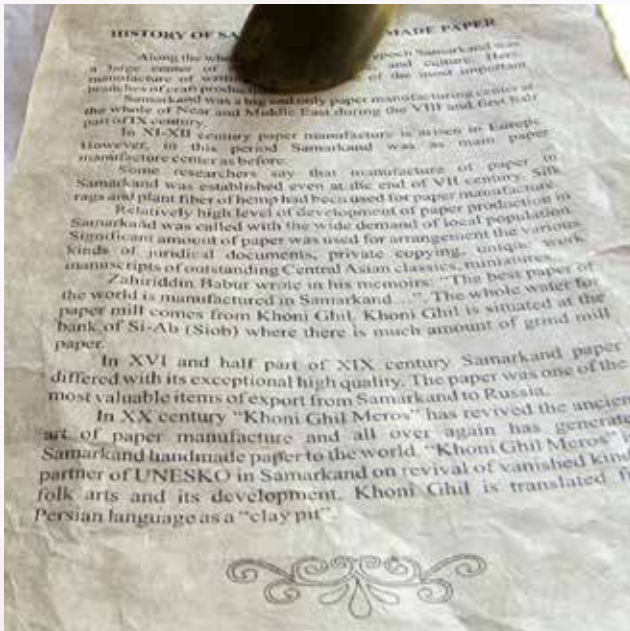
In this kind of papers, as raw material cotton, silk and mulberry tree barks are

used. In order to squeeze the raw material using water mills was developed in makhallas near Siyab River. During the governance of Amir Temur paper production was spread to other regions and was realized in Kokand, Bukhara and Tashkent. Later on as the result of discovery of cheaper and industrialized methods of paper production, Samarkand paper stopped to be produced. At the end of the 20th century, a craftsman from Samarkand — Zarif Mukhtorov learned paper production from historical sources and mounted this work in his house and since 2002 he has been manufacturing Samarkand paper in traditional method.

Paper preparation process involves several steps and all the work is done in a tradi-







tional way. Firstly, Balkh mulberry branches are cut and soaked in water for several days. Then the bark is separated and the brown coarse portion of the top of the bark is cleaned with a knife. The soft portion of the crust is boiled in the pot for 5–6 hours and then sterilized in wooden stacks form 7–8 hours until it is split into small fibers by special bars. In order to use these timbers water mills are used.

Melted raw material is put into a big dish and mixed with Siyab water and passed through rectangular sieves. Wet

sheets are stacked on the board for 8–10 hours and dropped onto it and dried in a smooth place. On the last stage every sheet of paper is placed on a separate silky marble, nailed with a shell or anchorage.

Solidity of Samarkand paper allows sewing a wide variety of items, even outerwear. It does not lose its properties even after washing it several times.

