

The Role of Cities in Socio-Political, Economic-Cultural, And International Relations During the Period of The Uzbek Khanates

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Abstract: This article examines the role of Central Asian cities during the rule of the Uzbek khanates in socio-political, economic-cultural, and international diplomatic relations.

Keywords: Cities, craftsmanship, Shaybanids, Ashtarkhanids, Manghits, Mings, Kungrats, mint, weapon production, pottery, textile production, trade routes, theatrical art, puppet shows, tightrope walking, diplomatic relations.

Introduction: Throughout all periods, cities have always played a very important role in the socio-political and economic-cultural life of a country. This is because cities served as the foundation of state power, centers of trade and craftsmanship, hubs of culture and science, and as unique institutions for conducting international relations.

Just like major centers such as Samarkand, Bukhara, Urgench, Khiva, Tashkent, and Kokand, the social structure of the population was also reflected in other cities. In these cities, residential houses and хозяйственные buildings were densely constructed. The wealthier population mainly lived in the central areas. Further away, around small markets, were located the homes of petty traders and craftsmen.

The majority of the urban population consisted of artisans, servants, and laborers. In the 16th century, society was divided into social groups such as craftsmen, artisans, masters, elders, guild leaders, and apprentices.[1]

In the khanates of Central Asia, not only the rural population but also the ordinary working people living in cities were in poor conditions. Nevertheless, cities played a significant role in social life. Various socially important institutions functioned in cities, including markets, water reservoirs (sardobas), bathhouses, teahouses, educational centers, caravanserais, and

craft workshops.

In Bukhara, the Shaybanids, Ashtarkhanids, and Manghits ruled successively; in Khiva, the Shaybanids and Kungrats; and in Kokand, the Ming dynasty. Over time, cities became more crowded, and their populations increased. By the 19th century, the population reached about 60,000 in Bukhara, 50,000 in Samarkand, 80,000 in Kokand, and 60,000 in Tashkent.[2]

In all three khanates, the highest state institutions were located in the capital cities of Bukhara, Khiva, and Kokand. These cities housed the ruler's residence and administrative offices where officials of various ranks carried out their duties. The Bukhara Khanate was initially divided into 40, later 27 beklik (administrative units), while the Khiva and Kokand Khanates each consisted of 15 provinces.

Central cities also had important facilities such as mints, оружейные workshops, and prisons. Ambassadors from various countries were received there and granted audiences by rulers and officials.

The most significant role of cities during this period was their function as economic centers. In this regard, two sectors were particularly important: craftsmanship and trade.

In the 16th–19th centuries, various crafts existed in the

cities of Central Asia. Some developed further, while others experienced periods of decline. Craftsmen living in cities contributed significantly to the economic development through their labor. Based on local needs and traditions, they created unique products. According to documents from the Qazi Kalon of Samarkand, there were 61 types of crafts in Samarkand in the 16th century.[3] Historian R.G. Muqminova, based on manuscripts and scholarly sources, proved that more than 130 types of crafts existed in Bukhara and Samarkand during the same period.

The leading branch of urban craftsmanship was textile production. Alongside weavers producing various fabrics, there were tailors, carpenters, bakers, confectioners, cooks, and artisans producing everything from household items to luxury goods and military weapons.

Historical sources of the Khiva Khanate mention 27 types of crafts, although in reality, there were many more.

According to documents of the Kokand Khanate, there were numerous crafts, including coppersmiths, jewelers, woodcarvers, potters, papermakers, weavers, skullcap makers, embroiderers, bridge builders, blacksmiths, bakers, cart makers, velvet weavers, dyers, pharmacists, tanners, gunsmiths, spear makers, lattice makers, silk processors, furriers, farriers, cloak makers, seamstresses, printers, scribes, and many others.

In the cities of Kokand, Margilan, and Namangan, cotton and silk fabrics such as atlas, shoyi, beqasam, adras, chit, and bo'z were produced.[4]

In the Shaybanid and Ashtarkhanid states, textile production was one of the leading branches of handicraft industry. Small-scale producers engaged in fabric production constituted a large part of the craftsmen in Samarkand and Bukhara. Various textiles were also produced in other cities of Central Asia. For example, a distinctive high-quality fabric known as "Bukhara olacha" was widely famous. It was very fine and soft, woven from thin, multicolored threads. This fabric was produced not only by craftsmen from Bukhara but also by artisans from Karshi, Samarkand, and Shahrisabz.

In the 18th–19th centuries, not only within the khanates but also in other Asian cities and even in Russia, there was a high demand for fabrics woven by Central Asian weavers.

According to N. Grigorev, who lived in Bukhara in the mid-18th century, the people of Bukhara cultivated silk and cotton; however, there was only one manufactory factory there. In this relatively small factory, kimkhab

and velvet were woven, while other weavers in the city produced scarves, gauze, and other silk fabrics by hand in their homes, as well as engaging in the weaving of coarse cotton cloth (bo'z). N. Grigorev referred to the workshops that wove fabrics for sale to the khan's palace as a "manufactory factory"; in fact, this workshop was of a feudal type.[5]

The calico-printing masters of Samarkand were especially renowned. They produced multicolored patterned chintz; silk fabrics printed with floral designs in seven different colors, including velvet, were widely used among the nobility. The expensive Samarkand velvet was usually dark red in color. This velvet, known as "kermezi," was exported to many regions and countries.

In the 16th–17th centuries, paper production in Samarkand developed significantly. This paper was of high quality and varied depending on the method of production. Later, as in Samarkand, paper was also produced in the Kokand Khanate.

In the cities of the Central Asian khanates, individuals engaged in certain crafts sometimes traveled from house to house or village to village, working based on individual orders from the population. The majority of them were blacksmiths. Among such urban craftsmen who moved around rural areas to meet local needs were also horseshoe makers and farriers.[6]

The production of metal goods occupied an important place in the economy. These items were made from iron, cast iron, copper, brass, and various alloys. In Bukhara and Samarkand, there were market stalls belonging to coppersmiths, sickle makers, knife makers, and similar craftsmen. The rich mineral resources in the mountains around Tashkent served as a raw material base for metal production.

Some craftsmen specialized in weapon production. They produced swords, daggers, battle axes, spears, shields, bows, and arrows. Some of these products were transported from Bukhara and Samarkand to other cities and regions for sale. In the 16th century, firearms and cannons were also used in Central Asia. By the end of the 16th century, more advanced cannons began to be cast. By order of Abdullakhan II, seven cannons were produced. The center of weapon production was initially Samarkand, but later it shifted to Bukhara.

Pottery was also one of the main branches of urban craftsmanship. At times, urban craftsmen would go to villages during the summer and produce necessary goods there to meet local needs.

Due to interactions, many types of crafts spread from one region to another, and the achievements of one

people in craftsmanship were adopted by others. When city populations migrated to other centers for various reasons, they contributed effectively to the socio-economic development of those cities.[7]

Markets sold a wide variety of goods, including cotton fabrics, silk, woolen textiles, ready-made clothing, headwear, metal goods, weapons, jewelry, leather and hide products, various types of footwear, pottery, felt mats, paper and books, dyes, wood, timber, firewood, coal, grain, vegetables, fruits, pears, and more. In the 16th century, Samarkand and Bukhara had specialized markets for locksmiths, weavers, rope sellers, felt sellers, and basket sellers, as well as horse markets, vegetable markets, and book stalls.

In Bukhara, the domed market buildings constructed at crossroads during the reign of Abdullakhan II have been preserved to this day. Skullcap sellers, jewelers, moneychangers (sarraf), and others traded in these shops, which were known as Taqi Zargaron, Taqi Telpakfurushon, and Taqi Sarrofon.[8] Each profession had its own separate market, and they did not mix with one another.

The English traveler Anthony Jenkinson wrote about the importance of trade in Bukhara as follows:

"In the city of Bukhara, merchants from neighboring countries—such as India, Iran, Balkh, Russia, and previously China—gathered there every year..."[9]

Based on historical sources mentioning European ("Frankish") goods, it can be concluded that Europeans also visited the markets of cities such as Samarkand and Bukhara. From Central Asia, various textile products—such as coarse cotton cloth, multicolored zandani fabrics, silk and semi-silk textiles—as well as Samarkand paper, carpets, brass and copper utensils, weapons, horses, and dried fruits were exported abroad.

In return, Turkestan cities received fine luxury goods, carpets, gold and silver jewelry. From Astrakhan came fur coats made of sable and squirrel, as well as bows, horses, and camels. Foreign merchants mainly brought goods for wholesale to local traders, thereby expanding the scope of Central Asian merchants' activities.

The Kokand Khanate was located at the crossroads of trade routes, and its territory was favorable for conducting trade relations with neighboring Bukhara, the Khiva Khanate, Kyrgyz and Kazakh nomads, Russia, and China. Through these regions, Kokand merchants also conducted transit trade with Afghanistan, Iran, Arab countries, Turkey, and India.[10]

Among the cities of the khanates, Tashkent held special importance. Through Tashkent, merchants could reach neighboring степные regions, Siberia, major trade and

economic centers of Russia, China, and beyond. Merchants from these regions, in turn, could travel through Tashkent to the cities of the Kokand, Bukhara, and Khiva khanates. The 19th-century author V.V. Velyaminov-Zernov wrote: "Kokand could not compete with Tashkent at all. The reason is simple: major trade routes converged not in the capital, but in Tashkent." [11]

At that time, cities were not only economic centers but also important hubs of science and culture. Primary schools and higher educational institutions (madrasas) were highly developed in cities. For example, students came to Bukhara not only from Central Asia but also from the Volga region, Northwestern India, Afghanistan, and other countries to study.

In the 19th century, there were 103 madrasas in Bukhara, 22 in Khiva, and 15 in Kokand.[12] At that time, cities also had many congregational mosques where, after Friday prayers, scholars held discussions on the Qur'an and Sharia.

In cities, especially during holidays, various entertainment events were organized, including different performances and askiya (wit-based verbal contests). Markets were not only places of trade but also centers where people received news and information about world events. In theatrical art, performance forms such as clowning, comic acting, tightrope walking, and puppet shows were widespread.

For example, in various cities of the Bukhara Emirate during the 18th–19th centuries, performers such as Sayfulla Maskhara, Zokir Maskhara, and Ergash Maskhara skillfully staged plays like "The Chief (Rais)," "The Death of a Usurer," and "The Teacher from Kuhistan." [13] As is well known, the status of any state is also determined by how many and which countries it establishes relations with.

During the rule of the Uzbek khanates, international trade and diplomatic relations did not cease. Major central cities naturally played a significant role in these interactions.

Central Asia maintained trade and diplomatic relations with Afghanistan, Iran, India, China, Turkey, and Russia.

In the second half of the 16th century, Bukhara's foreign diplomatic relations with neighboring countries became more active. Abdullakhan II attempted to form an alliance with the Ottoman Sultan Murad II against Shah Abbas of Iran. He sent envoys to India three times, and in turn, Emperor Akbar also dispatched ambassadors to Bukhara.

Sources mention embassies from India that arrived at the court of Imamqulikhan in Bukhara, as well as return embassies sent to India, including one in 1684. There

are also references to embassies arriving from Khotan, Kashgar, and Crimea. Relations between Central Asia and Russia intensified in the second half of the 16th century. In 1558–1559, the English representative of the “Moscow Trading Company,” Anthony Jenkinson, and in 1620–1622, the Russian envoy Ivan Khokhlov visited Khiva, Bukhara, and Samarkand mainly to study the region and gather intelligence.[14]

In the 16th–17th centuries, Russian envoys visited the Bukhara and Khiva khanates 12 times. Between 1583 and 1600, Bukhara sent embassies to Moscow five times, and Khiva twice. Relations between Bukhara, Khiva, and Kokand with foreign states continued in the 18th–19th centuries as well.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it can be said that cities were the centers where the socio-political, economic, and cultural life of the Uzbek khanates in Central Asia developed and where international relations were established. Cities were the unique product of the labor and creativity of the settled indigenous population that had lived in this region since ancient times, as well as a reflection of its cultural development.

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