

Relations of The Bukhara And Khiva Khanates with Russia In the First Half of The Nineteenth Century (Based on The Works of A. R. Muhammadjanov)

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Received: 28 August 2026; **Accepted:** 25 September 2026; **Published:** 16 October 2026

Abstract: This article examines A. R. Muhammadjanov and T. Ne'matov's 1957 book, *Some Sources on the History of Relations between Bukhara and Khiva and Russia*, as a work of historical source criticism. It explores the evidence presented on trade, diplomacy, caravan security, scientific expeditions and British activity in Central Asia during the 1820s-1850s. The book's key contribution lies in its comparative use of travelogues, diplomatic accounts, memoirs, official documents and local historical narratives. The article assesses the source base and analytical methods, discusses the historical meaning of trade statistics, and considers the geopolitical context of the mid-nineteenth century. It also critically addresses the interpretive framework and terminology characteristic of Soviet-era historiography and suggests ways to use the volume in contemporary research.

Keywords: Emirate of Bukhara, Khanate of Khiva, Russian Empire, nineteenth century, diplomatic missions, trade, caravan routes, source criticism, Muhammadjanov, Ne'matov, Anglo-Russian rivalry.

Introduction: The first half of the nineteenth century was a period in the history of relations between the Central Asian khanates and the Russian Empire when commercial interests, diplomatic contacts, border security, and strategic rivalry became intertwined. The Emirate of Bukhara and the Khanate of Khiva did not conduct relations with Russia under identical conditions: geographical routes, domestic political circumstances, trade routes, relations with neighboring powers, and diplomatic experience influenced the decisions of each polity. Consequently, interpreting these relations solely in terms of military confrontations or subsequent political subordination risks overlooking their economic and diplomatic dimensions.

The work published in 1957 by A. R. Muhammadjanov and T. Ne'matov through the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the Uzbek SSR was intended precisely to bring together these layers of source material. Its Uzbek title is *Some Sources on the History of Relations between Bukhara and Khiva and Russia*. It draws on published travel accounts,

diplomatic mission reports, official correspondence, and local historical writings relating to the 1820s–1850s. In the introduction, the authors define their principal objective not as presenting a continuous narrative of events but as identifying and interpreting sources that illuminate the history of these relations and demonstrating their scholarly value (Muhammadjanov and Ne'matov, 1957, pp. 7–10).

The relevance of this article lies in the fact that the book serves two purposes for present-day researchers: first, it provides guidance on the range and content of nineteenth-century primary sources; second, it makes it possible to examine the methodology, terminology, and political interpretations characteristic of historiography in the 1950s. Bringing the work into contemporary scholarly discussion must therefore involve more than repeating its information: it also requires attention to the positions of the source authors, the circumstances in which their texts were written, and the interests reflected in them.

RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this article is to analyze the principal sources

and historical evidence in the work of Muhammadjanov and Ne'matov and identify its scholarly potential and limitations for explaining the relations of Bukhara and Khiva with Russia in the first half of the nineteenth century. This aim entails the following objectives: to examine the structure of the book and its source base; to relate statistical information on trade to historical developments; to consider diplomatic missions in terms of interests and negotiations; to analyze assessments of military-political tensions involving Khiva and the activities of British representatives; and to establish the work's significance for present-day source studies.

The study is organized around three questions. First, how were the commercial and diplomatic relations described in the book interconnected? Second, how does comparing Russian travel accounts and official reports with the works of local historians help clarify historical events? Third, what methodological precautions are necessary when using this 1957 publication in contemporary international scholarship?

Methodology. The article employs source criticism, the historical-comparative method, contextual reading, and historiographical critique. Its main empirical source is the 1957 book by A. R. Muhammadjanov and T. Ne'matov. The analysis relies on information presented in the book and the authors' commentary; facts mentioned there but not independently verified are not represented as having been confirmed by separate archival evidence or contemporary studies.

The sources are examined in four groups. The first comprises travel accounts and memoirs by participants in diplomatic missions, including G. Meyendorff, E. Eversmann, Budrin, N. Muravyev, N. Ignatyev, and others. The second consists of observations by specialists writing on trade, geology, mineral resources, mints, and crafts, including materials by K. Butenev. The third includes official letters, decrees, treaties, and diplomatic correspondence. The fourth encompasses accounts by local historians, notably Muhammad Yusuf Bayoniy and other manuscript authors. The book's authors present these layers as mutually complementary sources (Muhammadjanov and Ne'matov, 1957, pp. 8–10, 160–170).

The principal methodological rule is not to separate a source's content from its author's standpoint. A report written by a member of a diplomatic mission may preserve firsthand observations about routes, court ceremonies, commerce, or negotiations, but it may also serve the strategic objectives of the government that dispatched the mission. Likewise, a local historian's account may be shaped by political authority, court traditions, or retrospective interpretations of events.

Differences between two sources should therefore not automatically be treated as evidence that one is mistaken; instead, they should be investigated as possible indications that an event was viewed from different social and political perspectives.

Results. The book consists of two major authorial sections: A. R. Muhammadjanov examines sources on Bukhara–Russia relations, while T. Ne'matov considers materials on Khiva–Russia relations. Although its main chronological scope is the 1820s–1850s, the authors also refer to evidence from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to explain the origins of commercial relations. This structure allows the experiences of Bukhara and Khiva to be studied separately while also enabling comparison within the broader framework of their relations with Russia.

In the introduction, the authors regard travel accounts and memoirs as “first-rate” sources because many were written by people who participated in diplomatic or trade missions and personally visited the region. At the same time, they emphasize the need to scrutinize certain information and conclusions in these works: many travel writers represented the tsarist administration, and their texts reflected the prevailing views of their time (Muhammadjanov and Ne'matov, 1957, pp. 8–10). This is one of the book's strengths, demonstrating that a source's firsthand character should not be equated with impartiality.

The authors do not confine themselves to published Russian and other European-language texts; they also draw on local manuscripts and official documents. This approach is particularly important because many historical texts in Central Asia circulated in manuscript form until the second half of the nineteenth century. Accounts by local authors can supplement the observations of outsiders, clarify particular details, or challenge their interpretations. In this respect, the book functions not merely as a narrative of events but also as a scholarly guide to locating and classifying sources.

The work interprets trade relations as an important driving force behind diplomatic contacts. Muhammadjanov emphasizes the particular importance of the Orenburg route in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Orenburg became a center of exchange between Russian and Central Asian merchants. Because opportunities to trade at fairs in Russia's interior remained restricted for a long time, merchants arriving from the region frequently conducted their business in Orenburg (Muhammadjanov and Ne'matov, 1957, pp. 11–13).

According to figures reproduced in the book, goods worth 3,680,900 rubles were exported from Russia to

Bukhara between 1787 and 1796, while goods worth 4,150,900 rubles were transported from Bukhara to Russia. By 1801, the value of goods exported from Bukhara to Russia had reached 732,200 rubles, while imports from Russia to Bukhara amounted to 547,000 rubles (*ibid.*, pp. 11–12). These figures indicate growth in bilateral trade, but they should be interpreted not as modern statistical data but as historical indicators recorded in contemporary accounts and subsequently reproduced in the book.

The composition of exports reveals the uneven structure of economic relations. Bukhara exported yarn, cotton, raw hides, karakul pelts, silk, and dried fruits to Russia, while Russia supplied metals, iron, copper, steel, cast iron, precious metals, broadcloth, and other manufactured goods. The author notes that spun cotton yarn accounted for a particularly large share of goods exported from Bukhara in 1801. Russian supplies of metal products met needs associated with Bukharan handicrafts, agricultural implements, weapons production, and coin minting (*ibid.*, pp. 12–13).

By the 1830s–1850s, according to the book's author, exports of finished textiles from Russia to Central Asia and imports of raw cotton from Central Asia had both increased. This shift is explained by the development of Russian industry, particularly the textile sector. Commercial relations thus increasingly evolved from simple exchange into a system linked to industrial demand for raw materials and markets. This conclusion should be understood as the historical interpretation offered in the book; contemporary research would benefit from testing it against customs records, price trends, and regional production data.

The growth of trade made the security of caravan routes a central issue in interstate negotiations. The book describes caravan raids, unstable routes, and interruptions in trade caused by political conditions. In 1803, Russia attempted to send a commercial caravan to Bukhara under armed military escort, but the caravan was attacked en route, some members of the mission were taken captive, and the expedition failed to achieve its objective (Muhammadjanov and Ne'matov, 1957, pp. 14–15).

This episode is significant in two respects. First, it shows that the Russian government was prepared to use military means to protect commercial interests. Second, caravan security also mattered to local rulers: Bukharan merchants suffered losses from raids, while the emirate had an interest in maintaining trade relations. Diplomatic rapprochement should therefore not be regarded solely as an initiative of one side; the need for stable trade brought the interests of different

parties closer together on particular issues.

The book gives particular attention to the Gaverdovsky mission of 1803, the diplomatic mission sent under A. F. Negri in 1820, and subsequent embassies. The accounts of Meyendorff, Eversmann, and Budrin provide information on Bukharan territory, roads, population, economy, and court reception ceremonies. Alongside geographical observations and ethnographic details, their writings are important for studying diplomatic protocol and commercial terms. It should nevertheless be remembered that the envoys described what they observed in ways connected to the interests of their governments.

In relations with Bukhara, the Orenburg trading system, the exchange of raw materials and manufactured goods, and the regularity of diplomatic missions are particularly prominent. In relations with Khiva, however, questions concerning captives, routes around the Caspian Sea, the Amu Darya, and border security played an important role alongside trade. Thus, although treating the two khanates within a single "Central Asian" model helps identify broader processes, their internal differences must also be analyzed (Yuldashevich, A. U., Akhmatkulovich, A. A., & Ugli, R. I. K., 2024, pp. 16–21).

Because the work was published in 1957, its scholarly style reflects the influence of contemporary historiography. In the introduction, the authors stress the need to interpret sources according to Marxist-Leninist methodology. The book explains Russia's economic interests, the colonial objectives of British activity, and the socioeconomic structure of the Central Asian khanates through class-based and political categories. This does not negate the book's scholarly value, but it requires distinguishing some of its final judgments from the historical facts reported by the sources themselves.

Present-day researchers can use the factual information in the book—including mission dates, lists of authors, traded commodities, demands recorded in documents, and descriptions of sources—as a working basis for verification. However, hierarchical assessments such as "advanced" and "backward," or statements that attribute a state's policy to predetermined intentions, require independent justification in modern analysis. The decisions of the khanates must be explained not only by pressure from external powers but also by domestic political interests, sources of revenue, local elites, and the needs of merchants.

The first limitation of this article is that its principal source is restricted to the 1957 book. Although the book identifies numerous primary sources, the article

has not comprehensively verified them against archival copies or modern scholarly editions. Accordingly, some figures and events presented here should be understood as the account given by the book's authors. A second limitation is the need to recheck certain bibliographic entries, transliterations, and statistical units in the older publication against current standards. A third limitation is the possibility that Russian-language sources were more widely published, while the range of local manuscripts used remained limited (Abdumatov, A. A., 2024, pp. 426–431).

Promising directions for future research include comparing diplomatic correspondence held in Russian, Uzbek, and British archives; studying manuscript copies of Bayoniy and other local authors using modern textual-critical methods; recalculating trade indicators from customs reports; and reconstructing caravan routes using historical maps and geographic information systems. The roles of merchants, interpreters, caravan leaders, and local intermediaries also merit separate study. Such an approach would help explain interstate relations as a broader socioeconomic process rather than merely as a history of rulers and envoys.

CONCLUSION

A. R. Muhammadjanov and T. Ne'matov's *Some Sources on the History of Relations between Bukhara and Khiva and Russia* is an important contribution to source studies concerning Central Asian–Russian relations in the first half of the nineteenth century. Its principal contribution is to examine travel accounts, diplomatic reports, official documents, and works by local historians relating to commercial and diplomatic relations within a common framework and to interpret their contents.

The analysis leads to several conclusions. First, the expansion of trade, the exchange of raw materials and manufactured goods, the Orenburg route, and caravan security played important roles in relations between Bukhara and Russia. Second, diplomatic missions not only discussed trade conditions but also gathered geographical, political, and economic information. Third, in relations with Khiva, commercial questions were closely linked to captives, border security, military campaigns, and the activities of British representatives. Fourth, comparing Russian travel accounts and official reports with local historical works reduces the risk of one-sided interpretations of events.

Fifth, the 1957 book should be used critically in contemporary research. Its catalogue of sources and factual observations are highly valuable, but Soviet-era ideological terminology and certain generalized judgments require independent verification.

Combining the information it contains with present-day archival documentation, new publications, and comparative historiography makes it possible to explain nineteenth-century Central Asia's external relations as a more complex process involving multiple perspectives.

Overall, the relations of the Bukhara and Khiva khanates with Russia constituted a historical arena in which commercial interests, diplomatic negotiations, security concerns, and great-power rivalry intersected. The work of Muhammadjanov and Ne'matov identifies essential directions for source-based investigation of these processes; its continuing scholarly importance lies in encouraging comparison of sources, identification of authorial positions, and verification of historical conclusions.

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