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THE ROLE OF LOCAL MARKETS IN TRADE RELATIONS BETWEEN CENTRAL ASIA AND RUSSIA

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ANNOTATION: This article analyzes the role of local markets in the trade relations of the Central Asian khanates with the Russian Empire in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It focuses on the structure of local markets in Central Asian cities, methods of product exchange, and the memories of Russian travelers who visited them.
Key words: Central Asia, khanates, cities, markets, trade, Russian Empire, Russians, Jews, Charsu, crafts, production, coins.

It is well known that trade relations have been continuously established on the territory of Uzbekistan since ancient times. The peoples of the region not only maintained internal trade relations among themselves but also conducted trade with the countries of both the East and the West. After the territories of the Central Asian khanates were conquered by the Russian Empire, trade between Russia and Central Asia expanded even further. Goods were brought in large quantities from Russian cities such as Moscow, Irbit, Nizhny Novgorod, Orenburg, and Yaroslavl, as well as from Turkestan cities such as Tashkent, Bukhara, Kokand, Aulie-Ata, and Almaty, and sold in the markets of Samarkand.

Among the goods imported from Russia were textiles (mainly calico), iron, cast iron and products made from them, various dyes, and food items such as sugar and tea, which were popular in the Zarafshan Valley. In turn, products exported from Zarafshan included cotton, silk cocoons, livestock products — which were important raw materials for Russian industry — as well as various handcrafted items produced by local artisans. During the period of Russian imperial rule, Central Asian Jews who lived in the region became particularly active in trade. The imperial government even encouraged their economic activity.

As mentioned above, markets — the places where trade occurred — played an invaluable role in interethnic relations. Historical sources indicate that markets in Central Asian cities emerged as specialized and professional institutions during the 9th–10th centuries and further developed between the late 15th and 16th centuries. During this period, both domestic and foreign trade flourished, a process that was clearly reflected in the urban life of cities such as Samarkand and Bukhara. By the 18th–19th centuries, alongside Samarkand and Bukhara, the roles of Tashkent, Khiva, Kokand, and other Central Asian cities had also grown, with both large and small markets operating in these centers.

Traditionally, one of the defining features of a city was the presence and significance of its markets. The size, wealth, and other characteristics of a market were closely connected to the city's status within the country and its political situation [1, p. 39]. If a country was experiencing economic decline, the condition of its markets deteriorated as well; conversely, when the economy flourished, the markets thrived.

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In terms of their structure, Central Asian markets shared many common features. Typically, they were located in the central parts of cities, at the intersections of major streets or along busy thoroughfares. In large cities, there was usually one main market that reflected the center of commercial production. This central market, often located where main streets crossed, was known as *chorsu* or *chaharsu*. The term *chorsu* originally appeared in the Zoroastrian holy book *Avesta* as *chovrusuq* ("four-sided"), meaning "market." Later, it evolved into *chaharsu* and eventually *chorsu* [2, p. 150].

Chorsus were mainly domed, covered marketplaces, with smaller stalls beneath where specific types of goods were sold. According to 19th-century sources, the Samarkand Chorsu was described as a covered stone (brick) trading complex located at the intersection near Registan, with entrances on all sides. The Shahrisabz and Qarshi Chorsus, on the other hand, were described as "not very large, circular structures covered with a dome" [3, p. 193]. However, the Shahrisabz Chorsu, built between 1598 and 1602, was considered the main trading building of the city. The roads coming from four directions intersected beneath the great central dome of this market complex. Along the trade rows beneath it were square rooms that are still used for commercial purposes today [4, p. 126].

The topographical organization of Eastern markets is also noteworthy. In the central part of a city, there were markets specializing in jewelry, money changing, blacksmithing, clothing, and many other trades, while agricultural and livestock markets were located on the outskirts or outside the city. This pattern could also be observed in the southern and northeastern regions of Uzbekistan. For instance, in the famous markets of Kokand and Qarshi, the main markets were situated in the city centers, whereas livestock markets were located near the city exits.

It should also be noted that livestock markets were often divided according to animal type into "horse markets," "sheep markets," and "cattle markets." Around these, there were separate markets for hay and animal feed. Indeed, cities often had multiple active markets. For example, in 1830, the city of Kokand alone had six markets equipped with special trading rows [5, p. 121]. Most of these markets were built during the reign of Kokand Khan Khudoyorkhan, and many of the shops within them directly belonged to the khan himself [6, p. 190].

As in other regions of Central Asia, the markets in the studied areas were also known by different names, often reflecting the names of the cities or villages where they were located. At the same time, markets were also named according to the days of the week on which they were held — for example, *"Thursday Market"* (*Payshanba Bozor*), *"Friday Market"* (*Juma Bozor*), and so on.

At the beginning of the 20th century, there were two main markets in the city of Khujand. They were named according to the day they operated: one was called *"Thursday Market"* (*Payshanba Bozor*) and the other *"Wednesday Market"* (*Chorshanba Bozor*). The *Thursday Market* was located in the eastern part of the city center, while the *Wednesday Market* was in the southeast. In their structure and appearance, both markets closely resembled those of Bukhara, Kokand, and Samarkand — they had rows of shops, trading stalls, caravanserais, and open trading squares.

As mentioned earlier, several markets could function simultaneously within a single locality. These markets were also named according to the types of goods traded there — for example, *"Livestock Market"* (*Mol Bozor*), *"Grain Market"* (*Don Bozor*), and *"Firewood Market"* (*O'tin Bozor*). In some cases, if a market was located in an area densely populated by a

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particular ethnic community, it was named after that group — for example, *"Uzbek Market"*, *"Tajik Market"*, or *"Arab Market."*

By the late 19th century, as cities grew in importance as centers of external and transit trade, markets in major cities began to attract merchants from various countries. Traders from Iran, China, Balkh, Russia, Afghanistan, and India regularly visited the region's large cities. In turn, Uzbek, Tajik, Kyrgyz, and Uyghur merchants of the region also traveled to distant lands to trade.

Historical sources indicate that during the 19th century, Indian goods such as *"haidar silk,"* various types of *shawls, indigo dye,* spices like *pepper, cinnamon,* and *ginger root,* as well as food items like *sugar* and *rock candy,* were imported to cities such as Kokand, Termez, and Karshi. From Peshawar came *lungis*, *rice*, and *leather-made scales,* while from China came *tea* (both black and green varieties), *porcelain items*, and other goods [7, p. 47]. Among these products, *indigo dye* — used in handicrafts — was imported in particularly large quantities. The Russian historian P.M. Demidov wrote that "the caravanserais of Karshi, Bukhara, and Khiva were filled with such goods" [8, p. 58].

The increasing number of caravanserais — where foreign merchants could stay, store their goods, and even live — reflected the growing importance of cities as major trade centers and contributed to the rapid development of interethnic commercial relations. At that time, caravanserais in cities like Kokand, Khujand, Osh, Karshi, Termez, Shahrisabz, and others were often named after the nationalities of the traders who used them — for example, *"Russian Caravanserai," "Indian Caravanserai,"* or *"Hindu Caravanserai."* In some cities, certain caravanserais even belonged to Jewish merchants. For instance, one of the three caravanserais in Karshi was owned by Jews. Russian authors of the 19th century wrote:

"There are three caravanserais in the city, but only two serve visiting caravans; the third has been purchased and occupied by Jews." [9, p. 85].

Caravanserais were not only places for merchants to rest and store their goods; they also sometimes housed craftsmen who specialized in producing certain goods. According to I.V. Vetkeevich, in the 1830s, Russian Tatars lived in the *Nogai Caravanserai* of Bukhara and spent much of their time "working in the open air making shoes" [10, p. 102]. Similarly, in the *Filkhana Caravanserai*, Tatar craftsmen who made traditional shoes (*kavush*) lived and worked [11, p. 53].

Teahouses (*choyxonas*) located in cities and markets also served as unique public spaces for interethnic interaction. In such places, people not only ate and rested but also negotiated trade deals between different ethnic communities. Moreover, teahouses functioned as inns where travelers — especially traders who brought goods from distant places — could spend the night. The system of markets, shops, and caravanserais facilitated both internal and external trade as well as the sale of goods produced by local artisans and imported from abroad. The interconnection between handicrafts and trade contributed to the development of commerce, the social stratification of urban residents, and the involvement of representatives from various social spheres in trade.

It is worth noting that in Central Asian cities, alongside government officials, artisans, merchants, and intellectuals, there also lived large landowners — a feature distinguishing the historical development of Central Asian cities from those of Western Europe [12, p. 130].

Thus, as the materials above show, by the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Central Asian khanates maintained active trade relations both among themselves and with neighboring

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countries. Markets served not only as places for the exchange of goods but also as spaces for intercultural and interethnic communication — zones of cultural exchange where merchants brought not only their goods but also the culture of their homelands, helping to bring different civilizations closer together.

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