

**XVI–XIX CENTURIES URBAN BAZAARS OF CENTRAL ASIA:
CENTERS OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL LIFE**

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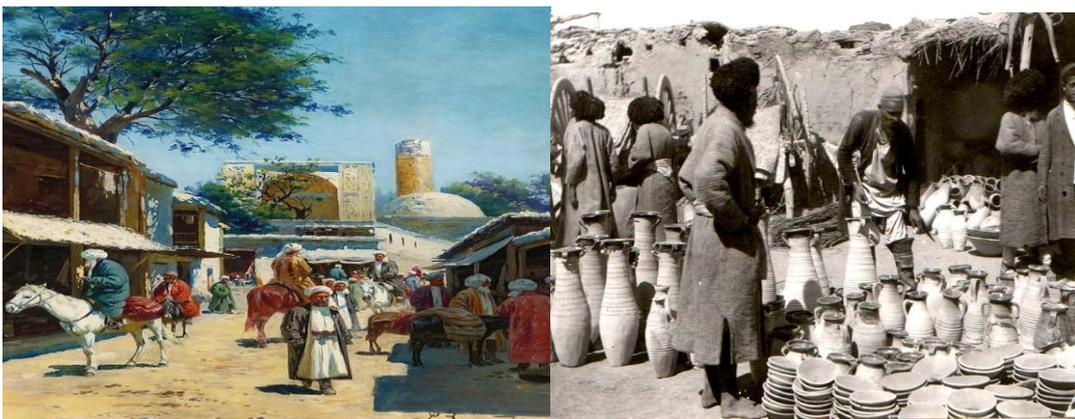
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Abstract. This article analyzes the urban bazaars of Central Asia in the 16th–19th centuries as centers of economic, social, and cultural life. During this period, the political structures of the Bukhara, Khiva, and Kokand khanates used urban markets as an important instrument in shaping their economic systems. The bazaars contributed not only to the development of domestic trade but also to the establishment of foreign trade relations. Through these markets, local handicraft products, foodstuffs, livestock, silk and atlas fabrics, carpets, and jewelry were sold in internal markets, while trade relations were conducted with Russia, Iran, India, and China. Bazaars were an integral part of urban infrastructure and were organized through various rows of shops (rastalars), trading domes (tims), caravanserais, and covered market structures. Trade processes were supervised by muhtasibs (market inspectors), and systems were developed to stabilize prices and ensure quality control. Urban bazaars also played a significant social and cultural role. Public gatherings were held there, announcements were made, craft guilds operated, and festivals and ceremonies were organized. Bazaars functioned not only as economic centers but also as hubs of cultural exchange, information dissemination, and social interaction. Through caravan routes, merchants arrived from distant regions, contributing to urban economies and the development of handicrafts. The article systematically examines the role of urban bazaars in the political and economic system, internal and external trade relations, craft centers, monetary circulation, and the social and cultural significance of markets. It also explores the processes of economic and cultural integration formed through urban bazaars during this period. The study contributes to a deeper understanding of the economic history of Central Asian cities and provides a scholarly basis for researching the region's trade and craft systems.

Keywords: Central Asia, urban bazaars, caravan routes, handicrafts, trade relations, khanate period, domestic trade, foreign trade, economic life, cultural exchange.

Introduction. The 16th–19th centuries represent a significant period in the history of Central Asia in terms of political, economic, and cultural developments. After the decline of the Timurid state, independent khanates—Bukhara, Khiva, and Kokand—emerged in the region. Cities became centers of economic life, and bazaars in their central parts served as essential elements of urban infrastructure. Bazaars not

only contributed to the growth of domestic trade but also played a crucial role in strengthening foreign trade relations through international caravan routes. Historically located at the crossroads of the Great Silk Road, Central Asia acted as a mediator between East and West. In the 16th–19th centuries, this tradition continued, and cities such as Bukhara, Khiva, Kokand, Samarkand, and Tashkent became centers of trade, craftsmanship, and economic activity. Urban bazaars also held great social and cultural importance. They were venues for public meetings, announcements, festivals, and ceremonies. Craft guilds and merchant associations operated in the markets, ensuring urban stability and economic regulation. Moreover, bazaars played an important role in monetary circulation, price stabilization, and taxation systems, becoming an inseparable part of the economic structure of both cities and khanates.



Urban Bazaars of Central Asia.

Main Part. In the 16th–19th centuries, urban bazaars of Central Asia were the main centers of domestic and foreign trade. Each major city had a central market square where food products, livestock, handicrafts, and imported goods were sold. Markets were usually located in the central part of the city, near mosques and madrasahs. Handicrafts occupied an important place in the bazaars. Jewelry, pottery, weaving, blacksmithing, and coppersmithing products were in high demand both internally and externally. For example, Bukhara was famous for its silk fabrics and jewelry, Khiva for carpets and woodcarving, and Kokand for atlas and adras fabric production. Foreign trade relations were well developed. Trade was conducted with Russia, Iran, India, and China. Through caravan routes, cotton, silk, spices, precious stones, and metal goods were imported, while local products were exported to other regions. Caravanserais served as temporary accommodations for merchants. Besides being economic centers, bazaars were integral to social life. Public gatherings were held there, announcements were made, and celebrations and ceremonies were organized. Professional guilds of craftsmen also operated in the markets. Monetary circulation played an important role in trade processes. Each khanate minted its own coins. The state regulated prices and quality control, which ensured the stable

functioning of the trade system. Thus, in the 16th–19th centuries, Central Asian urban bazaars developed as key elements of economic growth, craft development, and international trade relations.

Conclusion. In the 16th–19th centuries, urban bazaars of Central Asia served as centers of economic and social life. They played a vital role in developing domestic and foreign trade, supporting handicrafts, and shaping urban infrastructure. Through bazaars, economic cooperation and cultural exchange between different peoples were carried out. The growth of trade contributed to urban development, public prosperity, and the advancement of handicrafts. Therefore, urban bazaars of Central Asia in the 16th–19th centuries can be recognized as historical institutions that played a significant role not only in economic life but also in the social and cultural structure of society.

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