



The Economic, Social, And Spiritual Impact Of Samarkand Markets And Caravanserais On The Lifestyle Of The Population

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ABSTRACT

The article presents, in historical sequence, the processes of the economic, social, and spiritual influence of Samarkand markets and caravanserais on the lifestyle of the population. Various factors influencing this process are analyzed.

KEYWORDS: Samarkand markets, caravanserais, lifestyle of the population, economic, social, spiritual influence.

INTRODUCTION

Samarkand markets have always played an important role in ensuring the lifestyle and well-being of the city's population. As important institutions of trade exchange, handicraft production, and the urban economic system, Samarkand markets have continuously influenced the economic, social, and spiritual life of the population. Samarkand developed as one of the important centers of the Great Silk Road trade system, and its markets played an important role not only in local economic life but also in the development of trade relations throughout the region. Agricultural products, handicraft goods, and industrial products brought from other regions were traded through the markets, thereby ensuring the stable functioning of the urban economic system. Therefore, the study of Samarkand markets is of great importance for understanding the formation of the city's economic life, trade system, and social relations, as well as for studying the factors influencing the lifestyle of the population.

"The cities of Central Asia have been described at different periods of their history as major centers of production, trade, and the development of science. In particular, Samarkand was one of the largest cities not only in Central Asia but throughout the East. It arose in the center of a vast cultural region between Central Asia's largest rivers, the Oxus and Jaxartes—the Amu Darya and Syr Darya—on the banks of the Zarafshan, known as the 'gold-scattering river,' and at the junction of the most important trade routes of Eurasia".

In human life, lifestyle is a concept expressing the everyday life of an individual, social group, ethnic group, nation, or people, and is reflected in people's way of life, work, health, and even behavior. Samarkand markets influenced the lifestyle of the population, and from ancient times the people of this region were taught calculation and trade from a young age. Traveling to other countries with trade caravans contributed to the formation of geographical knowledge and the broadening of the worldview of the local population. The development of trade and handicrafts influenced the psychology of the population engaged in these activities, while relations of production, exchange, distribution, and consumption were carried out according to the laws of the market economy.

Samarkand markets were important not only as spaces of economic exchange but also as central places of urban social life and as important institutions of information exchange and labor migration processes. Through the markets, economic integration between rural and urban economies was formed, the circulation of commercial capital was ensured, and a significant influence was exerted on the demographic and social composition of the city.

"There were three main markets in the city of Samarkand: Siyob Market, Shohruhiy Market, and Chorsu. The largest market in the Bukhara Emirate was also located in Samarkand. Siyob Market mainly sold agricultural products, wine, grapes, and similar goods. Shohruhiy traded in blacksmithing, coppersmithing, and handicraft products. Wholesale goods were traded in Chorsu. In addition, there were many rows of shops in front of Registan, where jewelry, weapons-related goods, books, and other types of products were sold. Trade was conducted not only in markets but also in permanent shops. Accordingly, there were 100 attar and coarse cotton cloth shops, 280 shops selling vessels made to order, 57 shops selling copper vessels and goods, 130 meat shops, 15 shops selling twisted silk and various fabrics, 30 dye shops, 24 salt shops, 34 shops selling padded turbans and belts, 37 clothing shops, 29 shops selling chintz and lining fabrics, 29 shops selling horse equipment, 50 soap shops, 11 lime and alabaster shops, 13 shops selling men's and women's footwear, 8 shops selling hoes, 15 shops selling cast-iron goods, 10 various mixed-goods shops, and 712 shops selling wine and other intoxicating beverages. There were a total of 2,114 shops in the city. Wholesale and retail trade was carried out in them".

According to researcher O.A. Sukhareva, "Samarkand markets also had a number of common features with the market system of the city of Kokand. During the period of the Kokand Khanate, the city was one of the important trade centers of Central Asia, where a central market and adjacent streets of craftsmen were also formed. Agricultural products of the Fergana Valley, especially silk and cotton products, were traded through the Kokand markets".

The market systems of Central Asian cities were also similar in terms of their role in social life. In Samarkand, Bukhara, Tashkent, and Kokand, markets functioned not only as centers of economic activity but also as the main spaces of urban public life.

In market areas, merchants, artisans, farmers, and caravan traders met and carried out not only commercial transactions but also discussed political and social issues. Therefore, markets served as important spaces for the formation of urban public opinion. Samarkand markets possessed the general economic characteristics typical of the traditional market systems of Central Asian cities. However, their geographical location, close connection with the agriculture of the oasis, and integration into the trade system of the Russian Empire led to the formation of the Samarkand market system as a distinctive economic model. Thus, Samarkand markets were among the important economic centers within the system of traditional trade institutions of Central Asian cities.

The role of markets in the urban economy was manifested primarily in their function as centers of commodity exchange. Farmers from the villages of the Samarkand oasis sold grain, fruits and vegetables, grapes, raw silk, and livestock products in the city markets. This process created stable economic relations between agricultural production and the urban consumer market. Thus, markets functioned as an important institution of economic integration between rural and urban economies.



Markets also played an important role in the development of handicraft production in the urban economy. In Samarkand, such handicraft sectors as blacksmithing, coppersmithing, pottery, jewelry-making, silk production, and weaving were well developed, and their products were mainly sold at market stalls .

Many artisans' workshops were located close to market areas, which led to the integrated development of production and trade processes. As a result, markets became an important factor in ensuring the economic stability of handicraft production. Another important function of markets in the urban economy was their role as a source of financial revenue. Rental fees collected from trade stalls, trade taxes, and other charges constituted an important part of the city administration's budget . Local administrative authorities supervised market activities and established rules regulating trade procedures. This led to the formation of markets as important institutions of the urban economic system not only economically but also administratively.

The impact of markets on the lifestyle of the urban population was also significant. First of all, markets served as the main places for meeting the population's everyday consumer needs. Most food products, clothing, household goods, and other essential commodities were supplied to the population through market . Therefore, markets were an integral part of the daily economic activity of the urban population.

Markets also functioned as centers of urban social life. In these areas, representatives of different social groups—merchants, artisans, farmers, and caravan traders arriving from other regions—met and developed economic and social relations. Teahouses, mosques, and caravanserais located around the markets served as important social spaces for the urban population . As a result, market areas became centers of urban social life. Markets also had a significant influence on the formation of the urban space. Economic infrastructure developed around trading stalls, artisans' streets, caravanserais, and warehouses. This process led to the formation of economic centers in Samarkand and caused trade activity to occupy a dominant position in the territorial structure of the city.

Samarkand markets functioned as a key institutional pillar of the urban economic system. They played an important role in organizing trade exchange, developing handicraft production, supporting the city's financial system, and shaping the lifestyle of the population. In particular, in the economic life of Samarkand, markets such as Registan, Chorsu, Siyob, and other trading points served not only as spaces for commodity exchange but also as institutionalized places of price formation. Prices were generally formed not in the form of fixed "listed prices," but under the combined influence of market supply and demand, seasonality, logistics costs, the state of monetary circulation, and administrative regulation .

The construction of the railway and the establishment of a regular transportation system were among the important economic factors that had a significant impact on the price conditions of Samarkand markets. The introduction of railway transport connected the price system of Samarkand markets not only with local production but also with broader regional and external economic processes . The circulation of various currencies in Samarkand, the issue of "exchange rates" in certain areas, and the widespread use of credit and debt practices in large-scale trade had a direct impact on prices. Studies based on archival sources note that not only commodity prices but also currency exchange rates were formed in the markets . In Samarkand markets, prices were determined not only by "product shortages" but also by monetary and credit

conditions. Analyses of the economic life of Samarkand in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also note the existence of credit relations in market trade. During that period, trade in Samarkand markets was often conducted on credit: small traders obtained goods from large merchants and made payment after selling them. Merchants often pooled their capital to conduct trading activities or carried out commercial transactions by lending money to one another. Statistical materials describing the economic life of Turkestan also indicate that the advance payment system was widely used in the trade of agricultural products. These sources note that merchants provided money to farmers before the harvest ripened and thereby obtained the right to purchase the future crop. This system was especially widespread in the trade of cotton and other agricultural products. Along with providing financial support to producers, it enabled merchants to purchase products in advance. According to traveler D.N. Logofet, who described the trade system of the cities of Turkestan, many commercial transactions in Turkestan cities were carried out through mutual credit relations between merchants. This indicates that the credit system was an important mechanism ensuring the circulation of commercial capital in the market economy.

In the economic life of Samarkand, markets developed as central institutions of the urban economic system. They functioned not only as trading spaces where commodity exchange took place but also as important centers of employment where representatives of various professions and crafts were concentrated. The development of economic activities related to trade, handicrafts, transport, and services around the markets played an important role in providing employment for the urban population. Researchers note that there were about 40 types of professions associated with different areas of economic activity in Samarkand markets, clearly demonstrating the diversified structure of the urban economy. At the same time, Samarkand markets were an important factor influencing the improvement of the population's standard of living, employment, and material well-being. Farmers and artisans brought their products to the markets and sold them there. Merchants conducted trade and economic relations with foreign countries. The expansion of markets and the increase in the variety of goods had a positive impact on the living standards of the population. The involvement of Central Asia in global trade and economic relations led to an increase in the range of goods sold in Samarkand markets, the large-scale entry of foreign products into the domestic market, and changes in the lifestyle of the population.

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