



THE CITIES OF UZBEKISTAN ALONG THE GREAT SILK ROAD DURING THE TIMURID ERA AND THEIR ROLE IN CULTURAL COOPERATION

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Introduction. The great state founded by Amir Temur (late 14th – early 15th century) is considered one of the most magnificent periods in the history of Central Asia, particularly in the history of the Great Silk Road. Restoring the trade relations that had declined as a result of the Mongol invasion and subsequent political fragmentation was Amir Temur’s strategic goal. As a ruler of vast power, he deeply understood the benefits of trade and set himself the ambition of “dominating the trade routes of the world”. This strategy transformed Movarounnahr from a mere transit region into a center striving for global economic leadership.

This thesis is devoted to analyzing the role of the Timurid state policy in reviving the Silk Road, as well as how the cities of Movarounnahr — including Samarkand, Bukhara, Shahrisabz, and Tashkent — served as a “strong bridge” in the economic and cultural integration between East and West, drawing on scholarly sources such as Nizam al-Din Shami, Sharaf al-Din Ali Yazdi, and modern monographs by Timurid historians.

In reviving the Silk Road, Amir Temur gave top priority to security. He restored and protected the international route connecting East and West, ensuring its prosperity. The peace of trade roads and the safe movement of caravans were kept under his constant personal supervision.

This political and military guarantee was of decisive importance for Central Asia. After the disintegration that followed the Mongol era, security — the most crucial factor for long-distance trade — had fallen into crisis. The roads under Temur’s strong control became a reliable and cost-effective choice for Western merchants. This, in turn, redirected trade flows toward Movarounnahr, enabling the state to create a solid bridge that connected Europe and Asia through economic and cultural relations.

During Amir Temur’s reign, the cities of Movarounnahr flourished as the main hubs of international trade. Ancient cities such as Samarkand, Kesh (Shahrisabz), Bukhara, Termez, Tashkent, and Merv became centers of commerce, economy, and culture on the scale of the Near and Middle East. Samarkand’s significance lay not only in its geographic position but also in its centralized





system of production clusters. During his campaigns, Amir Temur brought many scholars, men of virtue, craftsmen, artisans, and architects to Movarounnahr, resettling them in different cities; they were always honored with the patronage of the Sahibqiran.

Other cities of Movarounnahr were also essential parts of the global trade network. Cities such as Bukhara, Shahrissabz, and Tashkent rapidly developed as centers of trade and craftsmanship. Shahrissabz, as the birthplace of Amir Temur, received his special attention, with monumental constructions (such as the Aq-Saray Palace) erected there. This demonstrates that the central authority invested not only in Samarkand but also in the entire south-central Movarounnahr corridor, supporting several key trade hubs.

In the south, the city of Termez served as an important transit point. Located along one of the main trade routes crossing the Amu Darya, Termez connected the Timurid state with India and southern Khorasan, playing a strategic role in maintaining and strengthening the southern trade networks.

The Sahibqiran's military successes also created favorable conditions for the development of trade relations. For example, after the victory over the Ottoman Sultan Bayezid I, France, England, Genoa, and Byzantium offered Temur free relations and exchanges of goods.[1] These connections were not merely a gesture of respect but stemmed from the fact that, for Europe, Movarounnahr represented a strategic trading partner that provided an opportunity to bypass the Ottoman Empire. Through these relations, Temur sought to demonstrate the glory of his state to Europe and to strengthen its economic power. Diplomatic relations also established the necessary legitimacy for protecting trade caravans across international borders.

Although existing scholarly sources provide only limited information about the caravanserai system, trade laws, and the tamgha (trade tax) policy of the Timurid era, records of Amir Temur's construction of hundreds of madrasas, mosques, khanaqahs, bridges, and canals confirm the state's broader attention to investing in trade infrastructure.

Conclusion. The Timurid era was a period of active stability along the Movarounnahr section of the Great Silk Road. By restoring and safeguarding this route, Amir Temur integrated his state into global economic processes and enhanced its power. This success was the result of a synthesis of military strength, investment in security, and active diplomatic relations.

During this period, Uzbek cities such as Samarkand, Bukhara, Shahrissabz, and Tashkent were not merely transit points but served as centers of





international economic, cultural, and scholarly dialogue. Policies aimed at increasing the productive potential of these cities transformed Movarounnahr into not just a passageway for the West, but a reliable source and partner in high-value goods.

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