

Customs System of the Amudarya Division at the End of the 19th - Beginning of the 20th Century

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ABSTRACT

In this article, based on an in-depth analysis of diverse historical sources, examines the development of internal trade relations in the lower reaches of the Amu Darya in the late 19th – early 20th centuries, highlighting its complex and contradictory aspects. The article provides a detailed overview of the river crossings on the Amu Darya – both trading and cargo points – their leasing, pricing policy, impact on the local population, and the negative consequences of this system for livestock farming. The article criticizes the fact that the obligatory passage through authorized crossings forced the population to cover long distances; the author also condemns the artificial overpricing and poor quality of services.

The article uses archival sources, including documents from the Central Archive of the Republic of Uzbekistan, customs reports, statistics and periodicals. The results of the study may be of interest to specialists in the history, economy and customs policy of the region.

KEYWORDS: *Amu Darya Division, customs system, Russian Empire, trade, customs duties, crossings across the Amu Darya, economy, history of the region.*

The development of internal trade relations in the lower reaches of the Amu Darya in the late 19th – early 20th centuries was a particularly complex and contradictory process. On the one hand, with the strengthening of the influence of the Russian Empire during this period, elements of capitalist relations began to penetrate into the region. This, in turn, gave impetus to the opening of new markets for local producers and an increase in trade volumes. However, this process also had a number of critical aspects. First of all, the fact that the main directions of internal trade relations were determined mainly from the center and the interests of the local population were not fully taken into account. For example, trade policy related to the introduction of cotton monoculture worsened the economic situation of local farmers, depriving them of the opportunity to acquire products necessary for their own needs.

The requirement to conduct trade only through authorized crossings on the Amu Darya and the restriction of trading operations in other sections of the river forced the population to travel long distances. In 1876, there were 6 crossings (Khazarasp,

Khanka, Urgench, Gurlan, Kipchak, Khodjeyli), but after the leasing arrangements of 1877–1878, 7 crossings operated on the Amu Darya (Khazarasp, Khanka, Karabag, Urgench, Gurlan, Kipchak, Khodjeyli). In this situation, the local population was compelled to choose longer routes to reach the authorized locations.

The leasing of crossings across the Amu Darya from February 1, 1876 had a number of negative consequences for livestock farming. Firstly, the transfer of crossings to private hands led to an artificial increase in prices. Tenants, seeking to make more profit, demanded higher prices than established, which increased the costs of farmers and merchants selling livestock.

Secondly, disorder and lack of supervision at the crossings created favorable conditions for illegal transportation and theft of livestock. Tenants' concern only for their own income led to a weakening of control and, as a result, to an increase in crimes related to livestock farming.

How to cite this paper: Gulimbetov Aryslanbay Utebaevich "Customs System of the Amudarya Division at the End of the 19th - Beginning of the 20th Century" Published in International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development (ijtsrd), ISSN: 2456-6470, Volume-9 | Issue-5, October 2025, pp.137-141, URL: www.ijtsrd.com/papers/ijtsrd97436.pdf



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Thirdly, poor service at crossings, in particular, a shortage of reliable boats and workers, made it difficult to transport livestock across the river. This increased the risk of injury, illness, and even death of animals. All these conditions hindered the development of livestock farming and undermined economic stability in the region.

Since February 1, 1876, livestock was transported through six crossings on the Amu Darya River, namely: 1. Khazarasp, 2. Khanka, 3. Urgench, 4. Gurlan, 5. Kipchak and 6. Khodjeyli. A fee was set for transporting it to the other bank: an unloaded camel cost 10 kopecks, a horse - 10 kopecks, an unloaded horse-drawn cart - 20 kopecks, a loaded horse-drawn cart - 40 kopecks, a sheep - 2 ½ kopecks, a donkey - 5 kopecks, cattle - 5 kopecks, firewood - 5 kopecks [1, 17].

In 1876, the Khazarasp crossing was leased by a resident of the city of Khazarasp, Mullo Avaz Raimberdiev, for 916 rubles 40 kopecks; the Khanka crossing was leased by an Uzbek from Shurahan, Raimbay-mullo Rizuk Berdinov, for 3061 rubles; the Karabag crossing, by the same Berdinov, for 1861 rubles; the Kipchak crossing was leased by an Uzbek from Kipchak, Allabergan Kilichbekov, for 705 rubles; the Urgench crossing was leased by an Uzbek from Tashkent, Abdurazzak Boltaboev, for 3305 rubles; the Gurlan crossing was leased by an Uzbek from Biy-Bazar, Kasymukhammad Isbuldiev, for 1801 rubles; the Khodjeyli crossing - by an Uzbek from Khiva, Mullababo Rakhmatullin, and a nobleman, Seidbattala Diviy, for 1506 rubles. In total, all the crossings generated an income of 13,155 rubles 40 kopecks [2, 26].

After the crossings were leased in 1877-1878, their number increased to seven. The tariffs were slightly changed, and the fee for sheep, goats, and small cattle was reduced to 2 kopecks. The other payments remained unchanged. It should be noted that despite strict oversight to ensure that the fee for the crossings did not exceed the officially established amount, there were cases of injustice on the part of the lessees.

Khodjeyli, located near one of the main river crossings, just above the confluence of the Kokuzyak and Amu Darya rivers, soon became an economic center at the crossroads of land and river trade routes. It was located halfway between the Aral Sea and Khiva, not far from one of the largest pilgrimage sites in Khorezm. Basiner, who visited it in 1842, included Khodjeyli among the 25 cities of Khorezm and noted the presence of artisan and trading quarters, as well as at least 150 shops. At the same time, Khodjeyli brought in significant customs revenues [3, 148].

The main goal of the tsarist government in organizing the crossings was to make a profit by leasing these places to wealthy local residents. Wealthy people who received the crossings for lease, in turn, charged each traveler a fixed fee that covered the expenses paid to the tsarist administration. However, in order to receive their own checkpoint, it was necessary to fulfill certain conditions. In particular, the lessees who won the right to maintain the crossings at auction had to have strong boats and vessels staffed by a sufficient number of workers at their own expense, with at least two such vehicles at each crossing [4, 15].

The development of trade expanded the local market, accelerating the exchange of goods between different regions. With the growth of cotton cultivation, the demand for textile products increased, which stimulated the development of handicrafts and local manufacturing. However, this process was one-sided, serving mainly the interests of the Russian Empire. Local merchants and industrialists were often unable to compete with imperial capital, which limited their economic opportunities.

In 1905, the head of the Amu Darya Division the Khan of Khiva about a statement from the lessee of the Gurlan crossing, Urazbay Madaminov, regarding the establishment of a new crossing called "Kitay" near the area of Kuyonchik. The statement read: "The residents of Kuyonchik are forced to travel long distances to reach the Kitay market. O. Madaminov is prepared to contribute 100 rubles this year for the construction of the crossing. The head of the Amu Darya Division requests the Khan to inform him as soon as possible of the absence of any obstacles to the organization of the new crossing so that it may begin operation immediately" [5, 81].

In addition, the owners of the crossings were not allowed to demand any payment for the goods of merchants arriving from Bukhara by boat and unloading on the right or left bank of the Amu Darya. If merchants wishing to send their goods to Bukhara, Chimbay, Kungrad and Kazali found other boats for loading and unloading, then the owners of the crossings were not to interfere with this [6, 23].

Officials and noble persons were exempt from paying fees for crossing the Amu Darya, regardless of which bank they were crossing from. No one, whether a townsman or a merchant, had the right to cross the river except via crossings leased through public auction, and any violator of this rule was subject to punishment and required to pay the crossing owner double the regular transportation fee [7, 24].

It should be noted that at the crossing over the Amu Darya connecting Khodjeyli with Nukus, boatmen had long been working, passing their craft from father to son. The labor of boatmen transporting heavy loads was especially arduous. Cossack Ivan Letnikov, who was held in captivity in Khiva, recounts that five men took six days to haul a load weighing 400 poods from Kungrad to Khodjeyli [8, 107–111]. The renowned artist N.N.Karazin created a work of art depicting the difficult life of people working on vessels on the Amu Darya River [9, 36].

The division of both banks of the Amu Darya between the Khiva Khanate and the Russian Empire in 1873 had a negative impact on the activities of merchants on both sides of the river. In particular, difficulties arose in paying customs duties, in legally protecting their rights in the event of disputes, and in ensuring fair judicial proceedings for offenders. The following archival document confirms this situation: "Letter from the head of the Amu Darya Division to the Khan of Khiva dated June 4, 1904: according to the statement of the residents of the village of Chimbay, mulla Khakim-Niyaz and Polvoniyoz Nafasov, in their tea shop in Kunya-Urgench, customs officer Khakimboy, under the pretext of the tea's quality, entered into a quarrel with them, which escalated into a fight. As a result, the complainant was beaten and arrested for three hours, and the tea was confiscated. When the tea was returned, 35 pounds were missing, and during the altercation, 19 gold coins were stolen from the shop. After verifying the circumstances of the case, the head of the Amu Darya Division requested an order from the Khan to satisfy the complainant's demands" [10, 10].

Another example is the 1906 appeal by the head of the Amu Darya Division to the Khan of Khiva regarding the complaint of Tileumukhammad Khodja-Navruzboev from the Biy-Bazar volost. The complaint stated that the Khivan officials Shokhudjek and Isjonbek had collected zakat from him at the rate of 10 kopecks for each of his 200 sheep, whereas in fact the rate should have been 2 kopecks per sheep. The head of the Amu Darya Division asked the Khan to look into the matter and issue instructions to satisfy the complainant's request [11, 7].

From Bukhara caravans carrying English goods, which arrived and passed through the Shurakhan volost in April 1881, where 8 camels were loaded with as much as is usually carried by 18 camels, with goods weighing 123 poods and 20 pounds, valued at 6514 rubles, 162 rubles 85 kopecks of zakat were collected. In June of the same year, another 8 camels were loaded with as much as is usually carried by 40 camels; the cargo (600 pieces - the specific type of

goods not indicated) weighed 219 poods 20 pounds, valued at 11245 rubles. From this amount, 281 rubles 13 kopecks were collected [12, 6].

This information provides insight not only into the tax system and trade relations of that period but also sheds light on the socio-economic life of the region. The fact that the Shurakhan site was an important strategic point along the trade route, and that Bukhara caravans regularly passed through it, attests to its significant role in the development of trade in this region.

According to the records of the Trade and Industry Department on actual revenue receipts, for the period from 1875 to 1882 the amounts of duties paid into the treasury from the Amu Darya Division were specified. Thus, the income from duties for commercial rights was as follows: in 1877 – 21 rubles 60 kopecks, in 1878 – 3816 rubles 10 kopecks, in 1879 – 3419 rubles 50 kopecks, in 1880 – 3302 rubles 73 kopecks, and in 1881 – 8424 rubles 5 kopecks [13, 33–34].

Therefore, in 1877–1881, trade license duties in the Amu Darya Division brought significant revenue to the state treasury. The revenue dynamics during this period reveal an interesting trend: after a relatively low figure in 1877, the following years saw a sharp increase in receipts. While in 1878 the amount of duties paid was 3816 rubles 10 kopecks, by 1881 this figure had reached 8424 rubles 5 kopecks. This indicates a notable expansion of trade activity and economic growth in the region.

According to the forecasts of the Organizational Commission, approved by the head of the Turkestan region, in the report on income for 1883, coming from the Amu Darya Division and subject to inclusion in the budget of the military-people's administration of the Turkestan governor-generalship, based on the letter of the chancery of the governor-general No. 1907 of March 7, 1881, these fees are indicated as follows: Taxes collected as a state tax from landowners of the Shurakhan district make up 25% of the amount of 34335 rubles 54 kopecks - that is, 8583 rubles 88 kopecks. From the Chimbay district - 17350 kubitkas, from each at 1 ruble 25 kopecks - a total of 21677 rubles 50 kopecks. From the crossings of the Amu Darya and its delta, according to the average three-year calculation - 13000 rubles [14, 4].

The data presented in this report, on the one hand, reflect the tax policy of that time, and on the other hand, can serve as an indicator of the economic condition of the local population. Taxes levied on landowners and fees collected from kubitkas illustrate the heavy economic burden of that period. Revenues

from crossings over the Amu Darya and its delta, in turn, demonstrate the region's significance as a transit hub.

It should be noted that Article 5 of the Gendimian Treaty, concluded in 1873, was devoted to issues of trade, navigation, the rights of the Russian bourgeoisie, and the privileges granted to them. According to this article, the right to navigate the Amu Darya was granted exclusively to Russian vessels, while vessels of Khiva could travel on the river only with the permission of the Tsarist government.

Also, in accordance with Articles 8, 9, and 11 of the Gendimian Treaty, Russian merchants were granted the right to free trade. They were exempt from paying the 5% zakat, from customs duties on goods transported through Khiva, as well as from other fees. In addition, they were given the right to have their own representatives in all the towns of the khanate. Russian caravans were ensured the possibility of free movement across the territory of the khanate [15, 39].

Archival documents also confirm the implementation of these provisions. For example, in a letter from the head of the Amu Darya Division to the Khan of Khiva dated 1904, the following is stated: the agent of the Eastern Transport Society, a merchant of the 2nd Petro-Alexandrovsk Guild from Petro-Alexandrovsk, Makarov, having approached me with an apology, reported that in the city of Urgench he had sold 100 boxes of green tea belonging to him, of which 30 boxes were sold to Abdulla Ishchonov and 70 boxes to Maksum Tojiniyozov. At the same time, he believed that, as a Russian merchant, he should not be subject to any fees imposed by the Khivan authorities. Meanwhile, the Khivan customs office collected 90 rubles in zakat from Abdulla Ishchonov for the purchased tea, and 210 rubles from Maksum Tozhiniyozov. Since levying zakat on Khivan subjects who buy goods from Russian merchants is, in effect, equivalent to levying zakat on the Russian merchants themselves, I request, Your Excellency, in accordance with Clause 9 of the peace treaty, to return the unlawfully collected money to the said Khivan subjects. I would also add that Makarov possesses both a trade certificate and a license to engage in trade, and therefore the Khivan authorities have no right to collect any fees from him [16, 8].

Thus, the Gendimian Treaty not only regulated trade relations between Khiva and Russia, but also had a significant impact on the redistribution of spheres of political influence in the region.

It should be emphasized that the influence and direct participation of all-Russian capital in Karakalpakstan

became one of the defining features of the emerging capitalist relations in the region. The development and exploitation of the territory had a significant impact on creating direct conditions for the broad expansion of entrepreneurial activity. Karakalpakstan also attracted settlers with substantial capital from the economically more developed and densely populated provinces of Russia. Among them were individuals with organizational experience and certain technical knowledge. They brought with them advanced methods of farming, adapted to the agrarian-rural material type of economy, and all of this accelerated the industrial development of the lower reaches of the Amu Darya.

In conclusion, it should be noted that in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the development of internal trade relations in the lower reaches of the Amu Darya was a complex and contradictory process. Although, under the influence of the Russian Empire, the penetration of capitalist relations stimulated the growth of trade, this process ran counter to the interests of the local population. Restrictions and the lease system for ferries across the Amu Darya worsened the economic situation of local peasants and herders.

Nevertheless, the development of trade expanded the local market and contributed to the growth of crafts and production. Such trade centers as Khodjeyli acquired economic significance. Despite the fact that the aim of the tsarist government in leasing the crossings was to make a profit, this process created additional difficulties for the local population.

The complexity of the situation was reflected in the problems of protecting traders' rights, disputes over customs duties, and unjust court rulings. Archival documents vividly demonstrate the contradictory nature of the socio-economic relations of that period. The development of internal trade relations in the lower reaches of the Amu Darya left a profound mark on the economic and social life of the region.

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