

**TRADE AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS BETWEEN RUSSIA AND THE  
KOKAND KHANATE (SECOND HALF OF THE 18TH CENTURY FIRST HALF  
OF THE 19TH CENTURY)****Alisher Beknazarovich Nurmuminov****Samarkand branch of the University of Economics****and Pedagogy, 2nd-year Master's student****+998 99 705 42 77**

**Abstract:** This article analyzes the evolution of trade and economic relations between the Russian Empire and the Kokand Khanate from the mid-18th century to the mid-19th century. During this period, the Kokand Khanate emerged as a significant political and economic power in Central Asia, particularly within the Fergana Valley. The research explores the dynamics of commodity exchange, the role of merchant classes, and the strategic importance of trade routes connecting Russia with Western China through Kokand. The study highlights how economic interests-driven by Russia's industrial revolution and its need for raw cotton-laid the groundwork for deeper diplomatic and eventually political involvement in the region.

**Keywords:** Kokand Khanate, Russian empire, trade relations, Central Asia, Silk Road, raw cotton, merchants, Fergana valley, economic history, 19th century.

**Introduction**

The 18th and 19th centuries marked a transformative era in Central Asian history. As the Russian Empire expanded its borders toward the East and South, the Central Asian khanates became focal points of Russian commercial interest. Among these, the Kokand Khanate held a unique position due to its fertile lands, booming silk and cotton production, and its geographic role as a gateway to Eastern Turkestan. This article examines the transition from sporadic diplomatic gifts to a systematic, large-scale economic partnership that characterized the relationship between Russia and Kokand prior to the Russian military conquests of the 1860s.

"A defining feature of this period was the transformation of the traditional Silk Road routes into modernized industrial supply chains. During the second half of the 18th century, the Kokand Khanate, under the Ming dynasty, underwent a process of political centralization which stabilized the Fergana Valley. This internal stability coincided with the Russian Empire's "Great Shift" towards the East, driven by Peter the Great's earlier visions and Catherine the Great's commercial expansionism.

Furthermore, the introduction of the Orenburg and Siberian Customs Lines created a new legal and administrative framework that regularized trade. Unlike previous centuries where exchange was sporadic and informal, the late 18th century saw the emergence of formal trade decrees and the establishment of "trading outposts" specifically for Central Asian merchants. This era also marked the beginning of a strategic competition; as the Russian textile industry faced the cotton hunger caused by the rising costs of American and Egyptian cotton, the Kokand Khanate was increasingly viewed not just as a neighbor, but as a vital raw material appendage' that could ensure Russia's economic independence from Western markets."

## Main Body

### The Genesis of Contact (Late 18th Century)

In the second half of the 18th century, relations were primarily exploratory. Russia established the “Siberian Line” of fortresses, which served as early trading posts. The Kokand rulers, seeking to consolidate their power against neighboring Bukhara and the Qing Dynasty, viewed Russia as a potential source of firearms, metals, and industrial goods. Early missions, such as those by Russian envoys and the responses from Kokandian rulers like Narbutabiy, focused on securing the safety of merchant caravans.

The formalization of relations between the Russian Empire and the Kokand Khanate in the late 18th century was rooted in the internal consolidation of the Kokand state under the Ming dynasty. During the reign of Irdana-bi (1751 1770) and especially Narbutabiy (1770 1798), the Khanate transformed from a collection of fragmented principalities into a centralized power in the Fergana Valley. This internal stability allowed Kokand to look northward for new economic partners.

For the Russian Empire, the mid-18th century was characterized by the strengthening of the Siberian and Orenburg Frontier Lines. The construction of fortresses such as Petropavlovsk (1752), Semipalatinsk, and Troitsk served as the primary contact zones. Initially, the Russian government viewed Kokand through the lens of its relations with the Qing Dynasty of China. St. Petersburg sought to use Kokandian merchants as intermediaries to bypass the strict trade restrictions imposed by the Chinese at Yakhta.

### Commodity Structure and the Industrial Factor

By the early 19th century, the nature of trade shifted from luxury items to industrial raw materials.

**Russian Exports to Kokand:** Primarily consisted of ferrous and non-ferrous metals (iron, copper, steel), manufactured cloth (broadcloth), mirrors, glassware, and sugar.

**Kokand Exports to Russia:** The most critical commodity was raw cotton and cotton yarn. As the Russian textile industry grew in Moscow and Vladimir, the demand for cheap Central Asian cotton skyrocketed. Other exports included silk, dried fruits, madder, and livestock.

### The Role of the Merchant Class

Trade was not conducted by state officials but by specialized merchant groups. Tatar merchants from Russia and “Bukharan” traders played a pivotal role. Kokandian merchants were granted specific privileges in Russian border towns like Orenburg and Troitsk. These intermediaries were essential for navigating the complex linguistic, cultural, and logistical barriers of the time.

The merchants from the Kokand Khanate, often referred to in Russian documents as “Bukharans” or “Tashkentliks,” were equally vital. They were renowned for their organizational skills in managing the caravan system.

**Caravan Logistics:** A single trade caravan could consist of hundreds of camels carrying thousands of poods of goods. These merchants bore the immense risks of crossing the Kazakh steppes, where they faced threats from nomadic raids and extreme weather.

**The “Gostinyi Dvor” System:** In Russian border towns like Orenburg, Troitsk, and Petropavlovsk, the Russian government established specialized trading courts for Kokandian traders. Here, they were granted tax exemptions and temporary residency, fostering a sense of economic security that encouraged repeat investments.

### Strategic Transit and Competition

The Kokand Khanate controlled the routes leading to Kashgar and Yarkand. For Russia, Kokand was the “key” to the Chinese markets. Economic relations were often influenced by the “Great Game” context, as Russia sought to outcompete British manufactured goods entering Central Asia from India. By the 1830s and 1840s, Russian goods had successfully dominated the Kokand market due to shorter logistics and favorable customs duties negotiated through diplomatic channels.

The economic engagement between Russia and the Kokand Khanate transcended mere bilateral trade; it was deeply intertwined with broader geopolitical ambitions and burgeoning international competition. The strategic location of the Kokand Khanate-bridging the Eurasian steppe, the Central Asian oases, and the expansive markets of the Qing Empire-made it a critical node in the evolving global trade network of the 18th and 19th centuries.

For the Russian Empire, the Kokand Khanate was not just a market for its manufactured goods or a source of raw materials but also a crucial transit corridor. The routes that passed through the Fergana Valley led directly to the major trading cities of Kashgar, Yarkand, and Urumqi in Eastern Turkestan. By the late 18th and early 19th centuries, Russian industrialists and merchants were eager to access the vast consumer base of Qing China. However, direct overland trade routes were often subject to the strict regulations and high tariffs imposed by the Chinese authorities.

### Conclusion

The trade and economic relations between Russia and the Kokand Khanate in the XVIII XIX centuries were characterized by mutual dependency. For the Kokand Khanate, trade with Russia provided essential industrial materials and a steady market for its agricultural output. For Russia, the Khanate was a vital supplier of raw materials for its burgeoning textile industry and a strategic corridor to the East. However, this economic integration also served as a precursor to political domination; the detailed knowledge of routes, resources, and internal weaknesses gained through trade eventually facilitated the Russian Empire’s military expansion into the region in the mid-19th century.

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