



SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE IN BUKHARA DURING THE REIGN OF AMIR OLIM KHAN

Rustamov Xoshimjon

OSIYO INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Master's Student of Group MM 2-T-25

Annotation: This article discusses the role of the Emirate of Bukhara in Central Asia, its system of government, social and cultural conditions, the main occupations of its population, taxation system, cultural development, educational system, the accession of Amir Sayyid Olim Khan to the throne, the reforms he implemented, and the significance of those reforms.

Keywords: Amir, Sayyid Olim Khan, amlok, mulki khos, waqf property, kharaj, ushr, mulki hurri kholis, daru bast, animal husbandry, karakul breeding, silk, wool, cotton, carpet, mosque, madrasa, decree, reform, manifesto, Russia, people's revolution, school.

The reign of Amir Sayyid Olim Khan, a representative of the Manghit dynasty of Bukhara, witnessed significant transformations in the socio-economic and cultural life of the country. Before ascending the throne of Bukhara, Amir Said Olim To'ra governed Qarshi for twelve years. During this period, he initiated several reforms and improvements.


In his work *The History of the Sufferings of the People of Bukhara*, Amir Said Olim To'ra wrote about his rule in Qarshi as follows:

“The period of my rule in the province of Nasaf lasted twelve years. Throughout this time, my government always sought to support the poor and protect the oppressed from tyrants while establishing justice. Thus, I made the people of the province satisfied and content with my rule. Near this province flowed a turbulent river called Qashqa. Poor widows and destitute people suffered great difficulties crossing it. For the peace and convenience of the population, I ordered the construction of a bridge made of stone and iron across the river and named it after myself. I hoped that the poor and needy would be freed from the hardship of crossing the water and live peacefully. In addition, I built several madrasas and places of worship and accomplished many beneficial works.”¹¹²

The bridge built across the river was 122 meters long, 8.2 meters wide, and 5.35 meters high from the riverbed. Four arches serving as guardhouses were also constructed on the bridge.

Thus, Amir Sayyid Olim Khan began governing the Emirate of Bukhara. Having spent some time in St. Petersburg and becoming acquainted with Russian and European culture, the public and intellectuals hoped that he would introduce reforms in the country. Indeed, upon ascending the throne, Olim Khan initiated a number of reforms.

¹¹²Амир Саййид Олимхон. Бухоро халкиниг хасрати тарихи. Т.: Фан. 1991. Б.4.



On December 29, 1910, during a gathering at the Ark fortress, Minister Nizomiddin Urganji read aloud the Amir's first decree. The decree primarily focused on reforms in taxation and military affairs, as well as measures against bribery and extortion.

The decree consisted of four main provisions, which Abdurauf Fitrat described in his work *The Reign of Amir Olim Khan*:

1. Prohibition of gifts and tributes to the royal court;
2. Introduction of the farsakh (distance-tax) levy;
3. Reduction of land tax by one-tenth;
4. Increase in military salaries.¹¹³

In addition, in March 1911 Amir Olim Khan issued a decree entitled *On the Elimination of Excessively Extravagant Weddings*. According to the newspaper *Turkestanskiye Vedomosti* (April 28, 1911, Issue No. 92):

“Anyone serving dishes other than pilaf at wedding ceremonies shall receive seventy-five lashes. Traditional horse games and races organized during circumcision and marriage ceremonies shall be abolished. Violators shall face severe punishment. Furthermore, the custom of presenting robes to guests in addition to hospitality shall be prohibited. The excessive bride-price imposed on ordinary people shall be reduced.”

In the same year, Amir Olim Khan also initiated educational reforms. According to the newspaper *Tarjimon* (March 18, 1911, Issue No. 12), his decree stated:

“Students in madrasas shall no longer study various commentaries (Hashiyas). Tafsir and Hadith shall be taught as official subjects. Schools shall be built in different regions of the country using funds collected from waqf properties, and teachers shall be appointed. School teachers must be learned, possess beautiful handwriting and recitation skills, and shall receive an annual salary of 120 tangas from the state treasury in addition to waqf funds. No fees shall be collected from children for education. An inspector shall be appointed for each school, and he shall inspect the institution monthly and report directly to the Amir.”


Sayyid Olim Khan sought to eliminate corruption and fundamentally reform the educational system. Although many studies portray the last ruler of Bukhara negatively, he contributed to maintaining public order, promoting enlightenment, and improving urban development.

The Amir also paid special attention to the education of his own children. He invited two teachers, Khoja Rahmatullah and his brother Khoja Karomatullah, from Muradabad in British India to teach them English and Urdu. He consistently supported the advancement of knowledge and learning.

After ascending the throne, Amir Sayyid Olim Khan continued implementing reforms and initiated numerous cultural construction projects, including mosques, madrasas, and bridges. He himself stated:

“After ascending the throne, I ordered that my people be exempted from paying taxes for one year. This greatly pleased the poor and common people. A year later, I sought to establish

¹¹³Абдурауф Фитрат. Амир Олимхоннинг ҳукмронлик даври. Т.: 1992. Б.17.



justice and benevolence, introducing order and improvement throughout the Emirate. I devoted myself to the construction of great works, including madrasas and places of worship, and encouraged the teaching of various sciences. Near the Ark of Noble Bukhara, in a place called Baloi Havz, I built a mosque for worship in my own name.”

He further wrote:

“Near the Bukhara Minaret, within the marketplace, I established a madrasa called Dar al-Ulum (House of Knowledge) and appointed teachers of various sciences. I assigned an inspector and provided students with food, clothing, and salaries. I paid great attention to the improvement of roads and markets. Within three years, Bukhara became considerably more prosperous, adorned with order and beauty.”

Amir Olim Khan viewed educational developments arriving from advanced countries in Europe and Asia positively and did not oppose the teaching of secular sciences.

Educational reform was one of the most important aspects of his policy. In March 1911 he issued a decree on education that included the following provisions:

- The removal of unnecessary scholastic commentaries from madrasa curricula -and the inclusion of Tafsir and Hadith as official subjects;
- Construction of schools in various parts of the city using waqf revenues and state funds;
- Appointment of qualified teachers;
- Provision of annual salaries amounting to 120 rubles;
- Free education for children;
- Appointment of inspectors to supervise schools and report regularly to the Amir.¹¹⁴

During his reign, a number of reforms were also planned under the influence of the Young Bukharans. These included reducing local taxes by ten percent, increasing military salaries, providing pensions to retired soldiers, regulating court fees charged by judges, reducing municipal administrative expenses, and expanding charitable activities.¹¹⁵

However, it should be noted that many of the proposed reforms were not fully compatible with the traditional monarchical system and certain interpretations of Islamic law. Consequently, political tensions intensified, and opposition from various groups increased.


At the same time, Sayyid Olim Khan paid significant attention to economic administration and achieved several successes in this field. During his reign, a Muftis' Office was established under the authority of the Chief Judge (Qozikalon), consisting of twelve representatives from different districts and provinces. It was headed by the Grand Mufti (A'lam). Each year, at the beginning of Navruz, judges gathered in Bukhara for a three-day seminar attended by the Qozikalon, A'lam, twelve muftis, and the Amir himself.¹¹⁶

Beginning in 1895, the Russian Empire increasingly transformed the Emirate of Bukhara into a market for Russian industrial products and a supplier of raw materials for Russian

¹¹⁴ Жамолова Д. // Ўзбекистон тарихи, №2. 2017. Б. 12.

¹¹⁵ Becker Russia's Protectorates in Central Asia: Bukhara and Khiva, 1865–1924, London, 2004 -153-bet

¹¹⁶ M. Louw Moral Exemplars and Ordinary Ethics. Constructing the Uzbek State, 2017. 147-bet



industry. The inclusion of Bukhara within the Russian customs zone led to the dominance of Russian goods in local markets. New customs offices were established in Karki, Kalif, Kushka, G‘uzor, Pattakesar, Hisor, and Ayvaj.

As a result of Russian colonial policy, the government of Bukhara gradually lost responsibility for protecting its own borders. Russian troops stationed in the Emirate not only guarded Russia’s southern frontier but also controlled the borders of Bukhara. Consequently, by the beginning of the twentieth century, the Emirate had lost much of its political, economic, military, and foreign-policy independence.

Within a short period, essential industrial goods such as iron, copper, brass, tin, cast-iron utensils, paper, lead, dyes, silk, candles, porcelain products, and many other commodities were imported from Russia.¹¹⁷ Russian merchants gradually displaced their foreign competitors, including traders from Western Europe, Afghanistan, and India.

In conclusion, the rivalry between Russia and Britain for economic dominance in Bukhara intensified significantly. Russia ultimately gained superiority, securing control over the internal markets of Bukhara. Russian goods achieved a virtual monopoly, making Russia the dominant economic force within the Emirate

¹¹⁷ ЎзРМДА. И-1- жамғарма, 27-рўйхат, 1503-иш, 4–5-бетлар.