

## **THE BRANCHES OF THE GREAT SILK ROAD PASSING THROUGH KHOREZM: IN HISTORICAL SOURCES**

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**Annotation:** This article analyzes the caravan routes of the Khorezm oasis from the 14th to the 19th centuries, their geography, representation in historical sources, and their trade-economic and cultural significance. Based on written accounts of travelers and historians, it provides detailed information about Khorezm's international relations during the medieval period, the economic life of its cities, and its trade infrastructure.

**Keywords:** Khorezm, caravan routes, Great Silk Road, Marv–Khorezm–Bukhara route, Urgench, Gurganj, al-Jurjaniya, trade centers, Middle Ages, trade relations, written sources, Ibn Fadlan, Ibn Battuta, al-Umari, economic relations, cultural exchange, Khorezmshahs, ribats, wells, caravanserais, Mawarannahr, Khorasan, historical geography.

**Аннотация:** В данной статье анализируются караванные пути Хорезмского оазиса в XIV–XIX веках, их география, отражение в исторических источниках, а также торгово-экономическое и культурное значение этих маршрутов. На основе письменных свидетельств путешественников и историков подробно рассматриваются международные связи Хорезма в средневековье, экономическая жизнь городов и торговая инфраструктура региона.

**Ключевые слова:** Хорезм, караванные пути, Великий шелковый путь, маршрут Марв–Хорезм–Бухара, Ургенч, Гургандж, аль-Джурджания, торговые центры, Средние века, торговые связи, письменные источники, Ибн Фадлан, Ибн Баттута, аль-Умари, экономические связи, культурный обмен, Хорезмшахи, рабаты, колодцы, караван-сарай, Мавераннахр, Хорасан, историческая география.

### **INTRODUCTION:**

During the Middle Ages, the Khorezm oasis was not only one of the major political and cultural centers of Central Asia, but also a crucial crossroads on international trade routes. Its geographical position — located at the intersection of East and West, North and South — turned it into a significant center of trade and culture along caravan routes. Particularly between the 14th and 19th centuries, the caravan roads passing through the Khorezm oasis played an important role in both internal and external relations. These routes enabled continuous economic and cultural exchanges with Transoxiana, Khorasan, Iran, the Near East, and even the Volga region and European countries. The Marv–Khorezm–Bukhara route, in particular, was considered one of the main branches of the Great Silk Road in the region.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW:**

The issue under consideration is based on a number of studies and sources. The anonymous work *Hudud al-'Alam* provides valuable information about cities in Khorezm and Central Asia, as well as the communication networks between them [1]. In addition, several scholarly studies have addressed this topic and offered significant insights. Among them are the research works of scholars such as M.E. Masson [4], N. Ibrohimov [5], and R. Anyazov [3], whose contributions are noteworthy in this regard.

## METHODOLOGY:

During the research process, scientific methods characteristic of historical studies were applied. Information from various sources was thoroughly analyzed through comparative analysis, allowing for the identification of similarities and differences among them. All events were examined within their chronological context and historical setting, ensuring strict adherence to the principle of historicism. Based on the principle of chronological order, all events were arranged sequentially to determine their interrelations and developmental trends. The method of critical source analysis was employed to assess the reliability of the sources. The study undertook a comprehensive examination of the social, economic, cultural, and political processes of the period in question.

In analyzing historical events, the following methodological approaches were applied: first, comparing information from various sources and assessing their reliability; second, situating events within a specific time frame; and third, evaluating historical figures and events within their historical context. These methods ensured the objectivity and scientific validity of the research.

## DISCUSSION:

Between the 14th and 19th centuries, the caravan routes that played a crucial role in the internal and external relations of the Khorezm oasis primarily extended through the Khorezm, Zarafshan Valley, and Ustrushana regions toward the Shosh Valley, the Fergana Valley, and as far as the Semirechye (Jetysu) region. They also stretched from Khorezm to Marv, Iran, and the Near East, and via the Ustyurt Plateau of Karakalpakstan to the Volga region and Russian territories [3, 24].

The Marv–Khorezm–Bukhara route was one of the major directions of trade in our region. This road crossed the Amul ford on the Amu Darya and connected the capital of the Caliphate, Baghdad, and the cities of Iran with the trade centers of Khorezm and Transoxiana. The route linked major cities of Transoxiana and Khorezm to Marv via Amul and was considered one of the most important regional branches of the Great Silk Road. From Marv, caravans continued through Sarakhs to Herat, and from there passed through Iranian cities such as Mashhad and Nishapur to reach Baghdad. The significance of this trade route that passed through Marv to Khorezm and Bukhara is detailed in the writings of Ibn Fadlan [6, 55–56].

Regarding the stopping points along the Great Silk Road, especially on the Bukhara–Khorezm and Bukhara–Turkmenistan routes, we can note the traces of this famous path across the desert regions of modern Uzbekistan. On contemporary maps, the route from Bukhara branches in two directions:

- First: Bukhara–Qorakul–Alat through Qashqadarya (Guzar) and onward into Turkmenistan;
- Second: From Bukhara across the Kyzylkum Desert through Turtkul, Khiva, present-day Khojayli, then across the Ustyurt Desert following the lower Volga towards Europe [3, 29].

Ibn Arabshah (1389–1450), in his work *Aja'ib al-Maqdur fi Nawa'ib al-Taymur* (*The Miraculous Destiny in the Misfortunes of Timur*), also describes Khorezm: "Their capital is the city of Jurjan... It is a gathering place of eloquent speakers; scholars dismount there, the wise and the poets find refuge, dignified and renowned people frequently visit. This is the narrow wellspring of the Mu'tazilites... Its delights are boundless, and its goodness is abundant..." [5, 29].

The contemporary of Ibn Battuta, al-Umari, in his *Kitab Masalik al-Absar wa Mamalik al-Amsar*, provides detailed descriptions of Khorezm, enumerating all types of grain crops and goods

produced there. He also comments on the monetary system, pricing, and the city of Urgench, and provides detailed observations on the character and behavior of its people: "Here, wheat, barley, rice, and other grains grow... various fruits... the best varieties are from Bukhara and Samarkand, though those from Khorezm are tastier and of higher quality..." [2, 47].

Al-Umari shares warm impressions about the people of Khorezm, praising their hospitality. He particularly notes the abundance of inns and caravanserais and their convenience for travelers. He also speaks positively about a madrasa he visited, describing it not only as a place to stay but also as a conducive environment for learning.

While al-Umari's descriptions of the markets in Urgench are relatively dry and pragmatic in comparison to Ibn Battuta's vivid narratives, he does provide essential information: "Apart from the capital Urgench — which is sometimes itself referred to as Khorezm — prices are generally low throughout the region. The price of grain ranges from high to moderate, though it is rarely low. Meat, however, is extremely cheap..." [2, 68].

According to written sources, there were two cities in the Khorezm region known by the name Gurganj (Urgench). These cities were located approximately three farsakhs apart. One served as the capital of the Khwarazmshah state, while the other was recognized as a major trade center, known as Gurganj or al-Jurjaniyya. This commercial city held strategic importance as a gateway to Turkestan [1, 122].

During the developed Middle Ages, the caravan roads connecting the major economic and cultural center of Khorasan — the city of Marv — with the cities of Khorezm played a significant role in the region's communication and transportation network. Analysis of historical sources reveals that the Marv–Urgench route of this period consisted of two main branches. The first route connected Marv to the middle course of the Amu Darya and passed through the following stations and wells: Shavval, Pashan, Khurmuzfarra, Abdanganj, Rabat-i Serob, Rabat-i Suran, Chah-i Khak, Chah-i Sahib, Chah-i Harun, Rabat-i Nushagard, and Sangrabat (Tashrabat). From there, the route continued along the left bank of the Amu Darya to Tohiriya Rabat, Dargon, Jigarband, Sadvar, and eventually Hazorasp. The second route crossed sandy areas and included stops at Suran Rabat, Tarkhan, Yaniker, Abdanganj, Khurmuzfarra, Durnali, and Shavval [4, 57–67].

## RESULTS:

Based on the historical sources and evidence presented above, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- During the 14th to 19th centuries, the Khorezm oasis was one of the key trade centers of the region, actively participating in both internal and external commercial relations.
- Through the Marv–Khorezm–Bukhara caravan route, Khorezm maintained connections with Iran, the Arab Caliphate, and other states of the Near East, playing a significant role in the economic development of the region.
- The city of Urgench and its surroundings emerged as a major commercial hub and gained international recognition. The cost of goods there was relatively low, and the infrastructure was convenient for travelers.
- Historical sources emphasize the hospitality of the Khorezm population, their respect for knowledge, and their advanced level of cultural development.
- The caravan routes and rabats connecting Khorezm with other regions created favorable conditions for the exchange of trade, knowledge, and culture.

## CONCLUSION:

Between the 14th and 19th centuries, the Khorezm oasis played a crucial role in regional trade, culture, and scholarly exchange due to its geographical location, economic potential, and historical conditions. The Marv–Khorezm–Bukhara route, one of the important branches of the Great Silk Road, turned Khorezm into a cultural and economic bridge between Eastern and Western civilizations.

During this period, the city of Urgench was recognized not only as a commercial center but also as a hub of science, literature, and social life. The evidence found in written historical sources once again confirms the unparalleled significance of caravan routes in the historical development of Khorezm.

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