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SOCIO-CULTURAL PROCESSES AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS IN THE BUKHARA EMIRATE IN THE LATE NINETEENTH AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURIES

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Abstract. This article analyzes the socio-cultural processes that took place in the Bukhara Emirate during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including the lifestyle of the population, the system of education and enlightenment, the activities of religious institutions, literature, art, and the main directions of cultural development. Furthermore, the study examines the traditional values, spiritual environment, and peculiarities of social relations within the Emirate based on historical sources. The research demonstrates that the socio-cultural life of the Bukhara Emirate played a significant role in the development of the region and that the transformations of this period had a considerable impact on subsequent historical processes.

Keywords: Bukhara Emirate, socio-cultural processes, spiritual life, educational system, madrasa, maktabkhana, Islamic culture, enlightenment, literature, art, traditions, customs, Jadidism, cultural heritage, late nineteenth century, early twentieth century.

The Bukhara Emirate was one of the distinctive political, social, and cultural centers of Central Asia, whose historical development passed through various stages over the centuries. This article examines the socio-cultural life of the Bukhara Emirate, its social structure, science, religious beliefs, educational system, and developments in the fields of art and culture. During the Emirate period, the city of Bukhara was recognized not only as a political center but also as one of the major centers of Islamic scholarship and culture. Numerous madrasas, libraries, mosques, and pilgrimage sites operated within the city. Traditional values, religious customs, and social relations developed in a unique manner among different social strata.

Particularly, religious scholars (*ulama*) and members of the nobility played an important role in the socio-cultural life of society. Through this article, the rich cultural heritage of the Bukhara Emirate and its place in the social life of its time are comprehensively examined and analyzed from the perspective of modern historiography [1, p. 108].

The Bukhara Emirate (1756–1920) occupies a special place in the history of Central Asia due to its social and cultural life. During this period, Bukhara functioned not only as a center of political authority but also as one of the leading centers of Islamic scholarship, culture, art, and religious life. The social structure of the Emirate was strictly stratified, and society was mainly divided into three major groups: the ruling elite (the Emir and his entourage), the religious class (ulama, sheikhs, and imams), and the common people (peasants, artisans, and merchants) [2, p. 162].

The religious class played an important role in all spheres of social life. Religious scholars exerted considerable influence not only in religious affairs but also in political and social decision-making. For instance, the Mufti of Bukhara or the Chief Qadi occupied a prominent position in the Emir's court, and emirs often sought their advice in governing state affairs. In addition to religious sciences, subjects such as logic, philosophy, medicine, mathematics, and other secular disciplines were taught in Bukhara's madrasas. This created favorable conditions for the development of scholarship and learning [3, p. 76].

Among the khanates of Central Asia, the Bukhara Emirate occupied a special position as a state controlling extensive territories. According to historical sources, significant territorial changes

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occurred in the mid-eighteenth century. During this period, the rulers of Bukhara managed to retain control over the city of Bukhara and its surrounding districts, including Vobkent, Gijduvan, Karakul, the Kashkadarya oasis, and Miyonkol. Although Khojand, Tashkent, Hisar, and at times G‘uzor, Shahrisabz, Nurota, as well as Balkh, Andkhoy, Maymana, Badakhshan, and Shibirghan on the right bank of the Amu Darya formally recognized Bukhara’s authority, they often ceased to obey the central government [4, pp. 77–79].

The principal cause of political fragmentation was the internal conflicts of the late Ashtarkhanid period and the increasing influence of separatist forces.

The famous madrasas of Bukhara, such as Mir Arab, Kalyan, Modari Khan, and Abdullakhan Madrasas, served as important educational and scholarly centers of their time. Students from various regions studied there and later engaged in religious and academic activities in their native lands. Through libraries and written sources, scientific and cultural heritage was transmitted from generation to generation. This intellectual environment played a significant role in shaping Uzbek literature, historiography, and religious thought.

Architecture also flourished as an integral component of cultural life. Mosques, madrasas, caravanserais, bathhouses, and other structures defined the urban landscape and aesthetic appearance of Bukhara. Buildings decorated with domes and glazed ceramic tiles represent outstanding examples of the architectural achievements of the period.

Craftsmanship and trade occupied an important place in the social life of the Emirate. Numerous workshops specializing in carpet weaving, jewelry making, and pottery production operated within the city. Trade relations were primarily conducted through the routes of the Silk Road, transforming Bukhara into an international commercial center. Commercial contacts were maintained with Iran, India, Russia, China, and other countries.

Customs and ceremonies constituted significant social institutions among the population. Weddings, circumcision ceremonies, Navruz celebrations, and other festivities were conducted on a grand scale. Such events served as important mechanisms for strengthening social solidarity and communal cohesion [5, p. 97].

It can be concluded that the socio-cultural life of the Bukhara Emirate reached a high level of development for its time. The Emirate left a profound mark on history not only as a religious and political center but also as a center of science, art, and culture. This heritage continues to retain its significance today.

Calligraphy and miniature painting were highly developed in Bukhara. Artists were mainly engaged in the ornamental decoration of manuscripts and increasingly focused on embellishing religious texts. Many distinguished masters of the period left valuable artistic legacies.

For example, Mir Ma’sum Olamiyon, who worked during the reign of Emir Haydar, illustrated *Akhlaqi Muhsiniy* and the poetic works of Saadi. During the reign of Emir Nasrullah, Mirzo Sodiq Jondoriy produced decorative panels for manuscripts and created illustrations depicting scenes of daily life for the works of Saadi and Hafiz.

The prominent scholar, philosopher, and poet Ahmad Donish (1827–1897) worked as a calligrapher and painter in the royal library of Bukhara for approximately twenty years. In addition to astronomy, medicine, mathematics, architecture, and music, he mastered calligraphy, painting, and the art of coloring manuscripts. Likewise, Mir Ma’sum Olamiyon enriched literary works such as *Akhlaqi Muhsiniy* and Saadi’s poetry with artistic illustrations.

Conclusion. In conclusion, the Bukhara Emirate was one of the most important political and cultural entities formed in Central Asia. Its socio-cultural life was distinguished by its complexity, strict social order, and rich spiritual heritage. Society was divided into distinct social strata, each

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possessing specific functions and status. Nevertheless, this stratification contributed to social stability and balance.

As in other regions of Central Asia, agrarian relations and land ownership formed the foundation of economic life in the Bukhara Emirate. Historical sources indicate the existence of four principal categories of land ownership: state lands (*mulki sultani*), private lands (*mulk*), lands belonging to religious institutions (*waqf*), and communal village lands. In addition to terms such as *amlok lands*, *amloki sultani*, and *royal lands*, sources also mention *mulki khirojiy* and *khiroj lands*.

The religious elite—comprising scholars, judges, and sheikhs—enjoyed considerable prestige and played a decisive role in shaping education, scholarship, and moral values. Through Bukhara's renowned madrasas and libraries, knowledge flourished, contributing not only to religious learning but also to the development of secular sciences. The study of disciplines such as logic, medicine, and philosophy demonstrates the existence of a vibrant intellectual environment within the Emirate.

Other spheres of culture, including architecture, craftsmanship, trade, and traditional ceremonies, also occupied an important place in social life. The city of Bukhara, with its historical monuments, markets, and cultural traditions, was renowned not only throughout the region but across the Islamic world.

Therefore, the socio-cultural life of the Bukhara Emirate represents one of the finest examples of its era, and this heritage continues to serve as an important source for understanding the historical identity of the Uzbek people. This historical experience remains relevant even in the present day.

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