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The Export of Russian Cotton Fabrics and the Commercial Network of Asian Merchants in the First Half of the 19th Century. Part 2

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Abstract

The paper is devoted to the study of how commercial networks of Bukharan and Chinese merchants were used for the export of Russian cotton fabrics in the first half of the 19th century. Bukharan merchants dominated the central core of Silk Road trade in Central Asia, and developed the trade with not only Russia, but also Eurasian countries including China and India. Shanxi merchants built close relations with the Chinese government and established the commercial and financial system in their own country. Asian trade was carried out in harmony with natural environments. Many regions in Eurasia belonged to the steppes, and this ecological system was suitable for livestock farming including camels, horses and mules, used as a means of transportation. However this trade system of one year cycles could not adapt to the subsequent periods of innovation when the steam engine and fossil fuels were introduced in the field of production, and when mass production was realized.

Keywords

Russia, 19th century, cotton industry, Asian merchants, commercial network

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Экспорт российских хлопчатобумажных тканей и коммерческая сеть азиатских торговцев в первой половине XIX века Статья 2

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Аннотация

Статья посвящена изучению места и роли торговцев из Бухары и из Китая (провинция Шаньси) в системе экспорта продукции хлопчатобумажной промышленности России в первой половине XIX в. Проживавшие

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на территории Бухары торговцы представляли целый ряд среднеазиатских народностей, не составляя единой нации. Россия установила с Бухарой торговые связи уже в XVI в., а после присоединения Сибири бухарские торговцы часто были задействованы в составе российских дипломатических миссий, направлявшихся в азиатские страны. Действовавший в России на протяжении XVIII в. запрет для иностранцев на торговые операции внутри страны не распространялся на бухарцев. В первой половине XIX в. бухарские караваны доставляли в Россию хлопок-сырец и вывозили в Среднюю Азию российскую хлопчатобумажную продукцию. Активная русско-китайская торговля началась после подписания между двумя государствами Кяхтинского договора в 1727 г. Через пограничную Кяхту в течение всего XVIII в. Россия экспортировала в Китай пушнину и импортировала ремень и шелк. На рубеже XVIII–XIX вв. заметную долю в структуре импорта стал составлять китайский чай. Сибирские купцы осуществляли большую часть торговых операций с российской стороны, торговцы из провинции Шаньси – с китайской. В первой половине XIX в. начался значительный экспорт продукции хлопчатобумажной промышленности России в Китай, причем его осуществляли также русские купцы из европейской части страны. Эти меры были направлены на сокращение отрицательного для России значения торгового баланса с Китаем из-за непрерывного нарастания объемов импорта чая. Однако уже с середины XIX в. с развитием новых способов массового производства товаров прежние формы транспортировки (караванная торговля с использованием верблюдов, лошадей, мулов) стали уступать место механическим средствам на основе парового двигателя или органического топлива. Система торговли, основанная на годовом природно-климатическом цикле, уже не могла отвечать интересам России, и механизмы экспорта российских товаров, в том числе хлопчатобумажной продукции, перестали базироваться на коммерческих сетях азиатских торговцев и используемых ими маршрутах.

Ключевые слова

Россия, XIX век, хлопчатобумажная промышленность, азиатские торговцы, коммерческая сеть

The first part of this paper focused on the topic of Russian cotton fabric exports to Asia and the trade routes between Europe, the Russian empire and Asian countries used by Armenian merchants. This second part will aim to focus on studying the role of Bukharan and Chinese merchants.

Bukhara was located in the nexus point of the Central Asian trade route and was an important point in Eurasian transportation. Therefore, Bukharan merchants engaged in international commerce having been based in Bukhara for a long time [Potanin, 1868. P. 3]. As Bukhara was located on a border line between great countries and was also in the central core of the steppe in Central Asia, nomads frequently moved within the region of Central Asia and built various dynasties. The Bukhara khanate was a country which succeeded the genealogy of the Mongolian Empire, including Shaybanid, Janid and Mangu dynasties [Sugiyama, Kitagawa, 1997. P. 434]. Initially the capital of the Bukhara khanate was Samarkand, however it was later transferred to Bukhara.

Many nations, including Uzbek, Tajiks, Uyghurs, Kazakh and Karakalpaks lived together in the khanate. There was no national division in this state, therefore its people simply identified themselves as “the Bukharans”. However it would seem that the Uzbek people occupied the larger share in the proportion of nations. As several nations identified themselves as “Bukharan merchants” just like “the Bukharans”, the Bukharan merchants did not correspond to the one nation. It is probable that they formulated a common ethnic group, based on religion and ethnicity. According to Russian historical materials, the exact nationality of Bukharan merchants is not clear, but it is definite that they were made up of two kinds of merchants – of Bukharan and Russian nationality. As many Bukharan merchants lived in foreign countries and engaged in trade, the term “Bukharan merchants” did not necessarily mean that they settled down in the Bukharan country [Potanin, 1868. P. 48]. No matter the nationality of Bukharan merchants, they undoubtedly contributed to the trade between Russia and Bukhara. Therefore, rather than focus on issues of nationality, it will be logical to next examine the trade from the viewpoint of Bukharan merchants.

As Bukhara was a city-state of international commerce, many foreign merchants, including Armenians, Jews and Tajiks, visited Bukhara and participated in Central Asian trade (Kommercheskaya gazeta. 1840. Mar. 16. No. 33. P. 130). Trade in Bukhara was wide open for foreign merchants, however there were differences in tariffs for each religion. At the time, people believed that religion was closely connected to commerce as it played a key function of guaranteeing trust during commercial transactions. While today many countries in Central Asia have begun to associate with Islam, in those days, Bukhara already regarded Islam as their national religion. While trade among merchants who belonged to the same religion was equally treated, trade with merchants of other religions came with conditions. In Bukhara, a certain degree of separation existed between Islamic merchants and merchants of other religions. While the Bukhara khanate applied a preferential policy of almost no extra tariffs for Islamic merchants, they levied a 20 % tariff off Christian merchants and a 10 % tariff off Hindu merchants [Burnes, 1973. P. 441].

When examining the economic relations between Russia and Bukhara, the annexation of Astrakhan by Russia was a turning point. Having annexed Astrakhan in 1556, European Russia commenced serious trade with Bukhara [Stephan, 2002. P. 78]. As Central Asia was connected with Persia through Astrakhan through a land route even before the 16th century, Astrakhan was a strategic point for Russia to carry out trade with Asian regions. The Osman Empire had been Russia's key trade partner for a long time, however the annexation of Astrakhan enabled Russia to start serious trade relations with Persia and Central Asia. In the second half of the 16th century Astrakhan became the base of Russian trade, commonly visited by foreign merchants from Persia, Central Asia and India with the goal of further promotion of trade between Russia and Asia [Ibid. P. 84].

After the second half of the 16th century, Siberia was governed by the Sibir khanate, and the Bukhara khanate carried out trade with this country [Ziyaev, 1983. P. 16]. The Bukharan merchants undertook the role of distribution between the Sibir khanate and Bukhara, and their trade prospered as a result. In the last quarter of the 16th century Russia dispatched an expedition to Siberia which was successful in its mission to destroy the Sibir khanate and annex Siberia. Even after this annexation, the distribution network which the Bukharan merchants established during the period of the Sibir khanate continued to function. Some of these merchants settled down near Siberia's then-capital Tobolsk and supported Russian foreign trade and policy [Ibid. P. 26]. However they did not only settle in Tobolsk, but also other Siberian towns including Tomsk and Tara. In 1645, the Russian government officially announced their support of commercial activities in Siberia [Burton, 1997. P. 269]. As Russia started sending diplomatic missions to China after the 17th century, Bukharan merchants were regularly included in the missions. In those days, the trade between Russia and China was carried out through Irtysh. In 1655, the Bukharan merchants living in Tobolsk carried out the trade with China on this route [Ibid. P. 287].

In regard to the communication lines between Central Asia (Bukhara) and Russia [Ziyaev, 1983. P. 3], there were three trade routes connecting Russia and Bukhara between the 16th – 19th centuries (Fig. 6). The first route spanned through west Siberia (Bukhara – Tobolsk), the second through the Volga river (Bukhara – Caspian Sea – Astrakhan – Nizhny Novgorod Fair) and the third was through Ural (Bukhara – Orenburg – Kazan). Historically the first route through west Siberia was the oldest of the three, and was the main route between Central Asia and Siberia as it connected Bukhara with Tobolsk which had been the capital of Siberia since the period of the Sibir khanate. Since the 16th century, the route through the Volga river became the main route between European Russia and Bukhara. In the 19th century, when demand for raw cotton from Central Asia in Russia increased, the route through Ural became an important route for the transportation of cotton (Kommercheskaya gazeta. 1831. Oct. 31. No. 87. P. 646).



Fig. 6. The trade route of Bukharan merchants.
 The map created by Anastasiya L. Nesterkina
 (Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of SB RAS), based on the author's data

The means of transportation for Bukharan merchants were animal power including camel, horse and mule (Ibid. 1836. Aug. 19. No. 99. P. 392). While horse and mule were used as the transportation of comparatively short distance, camel was utilized for long distance routes. When Bukharan merchants carried out distant trade with foreign countries, they organized caravans and transported commodities by camel. Usually the Kirgiz people prepared the camels, but their services were not only limited to the supply of camels (Ibid. 1840. Mar. 16. No. 33. P. 130, 131). In those days, when caravans traveled over 20 kilometers, nomads who moved through the steppe would often seize and plunder the commodities being transported. The Kirgiz people were however also nomads and knew the caravan route very well as their relatives lived on the Central Asian steppe. If the captain of the caravans was a Kirgiz, the possibility of them being plundered drastically decreased, and the caravans traveled more safely through the Central Asian steppe. When Bukharan merchants organized the trade caravans, they would usually nominate a Kirgiz to captain the mission (Ibid. 1841. Mar. 22. No. 35. P. 138).

Bukharan merchants' caravans utilized camels as a means of transportation. A large-scale caravan would utilize around 5,000 camels (Ibid. 1826. Sept. 8. No. 71. P. 2). As the moving distance of caravans depended on the speed of the camels, the caravans moved at a land speed of around 3.5 km/hour [Burnes, 1973. P. 148]. Assuming that camels will travel for 15 hours a day, the moving distance of the caravans was around 52.5 km/day. If we take this calculation into account, it would have taken them 32 days to travel from Bukhara to Orenburg as the city nearest to the Russian border. It would have also taken 32 days to travel from Bukhara to Astrakhan as the final point of the Volga river, 10 days from Bukhara to Tashkent as the capital of present-day Uzbekistan, 40 days from Bukhara to Tobolsk as the then-capital of Siberia, and 44 days from Bukhara to Kazan as the middle city along the Volga river. Even though these were a standard average, caravans by camels would often be delayed due to climate conditions (Kommercheskaya gazeta. 1832. Oct. 1. No. 79. P. 611).

Bukharan merchants promoted the trade between Russia and Central Asia, as the Russian government permitted preferential means to them. In the 18th century, Russia prohibited foreign merchants from trading in domestic markets based on principle, but exceptionally permitted Bukharan merchants to trade in St. Petersburg, Moscow, the Nizhny Novgorod Fair and Russian border towns. Therefore, Bukharan merchants could enter Russia freely, and carry out their trade in border towns like Orenburg and fairs such as the Nizhny Novgorod Fair (Ibid. 1825. Aug. 12. No. 64. P. 4). Some Bukharan merchants traveled to and stayed in other Russian commercial cities too including Astrakhan, Arkhangelsk and Tobolsk [Potanin, 1868. P. 3]. In the 1760s, the Russian government gave Bukharan merchants special permission to participate in trade at the Irtysh and Irbit fairs of Siberia [Ziyaev, 1983. P. 3]. The Russian government also allowed Bukharan merchants the preferential tariff (1/20) in order to promote the development in Siberia and attract Bukharan merchants to the region [Ibid. P. 28].

As a result of developing trade routes, the 18th century marked a time for a large range of commodities being traded between Russia and Central Asia [Solovyev, Boldyreva, 1987. P. 4, 77]. In the first half of the 18th century, Russia's main exports were leather, fur, woolen fabrics, flax and hemp cloth and metal products to Central Asia. The exported leather consisted of Russian and white leather, and the fur consisted of otter and stoat. The metal products consisted of copper pots, washbowls, hatchets and scythes. On the other hand, Russia imported not only cotton fabrics, leather and fur, but also Chinese commodities including rhubarb and tea from Central Asia. In the second half of the 18th century, the structure of trade between Russia and Central Asia somewhat changed. As Russia added arms, namely guns, to existing commodities being exported to Central Asia, Russia started to import dried fruits, gold and silver alongside previous commodities from Central Asia. This resulted in favorable financial gains for Russia as the gold and silver imports especially were met with high demand.

In the first half of the 19th century, the pattern of trade between Russia and Central Asia changed dramatically. Up until that time, while Russia mainly exported fur to Central Asia, it conversely imported cotton fabrics from Central Asia – a pattern of trade typical for that time. However after early industrialization proceeded in Russia and realized mass production in the first half of the 19th century, the pattern of trade between Russia and Central Asia was transformed. As Russia exported cotton fabrics to Central Asia, it would conversely import cotton and dyestuffs from Central Asia. Russian fur was previously the source of income for the Russian government, the export of which had since decreased and was overtaken by the increased export of Russian cotton fabrics. As the export of Russian cotton fabrics did not yield as high returns as the export of fur, when Russia increasingly imported cotton and dyestuff from Central Asia [Shiotani, 1998. P. 41], the Russian trade balance for Central Asia changed from profit to deficit.

The import spread of cotton and dyestuff from Central Asia was closely connected to the cotton industry development in Russia [Shiotani, 2018. P. 51. Fig. 1], as cotton was a necessary material of the industry. In the first half of the 19th century, the share of American cotton in total imports of cotton was 80 % in Russia, and 20 % in Central Asia. However, as the cotton industry in Russia developed, not only the import of American cotton, but also the import of Central Asian cotton increased as the demand for cotton yarn spun from Central Asian cotton also increased in the Russian household industry. When Russian cotton fabrics were supplied to domestic markets, printed cotton occupied a large share in the overall trade of Russian cotton fabrics [Shiotani, 2018. P. 53. Fig. 2]. As the nature of printed cotton was colorful, its production required dyestuff. In the first half of the 19th century when natural dyestuff was mainstream, cochineal and madder from Central Asia were very important materials for the Russian printing business. At that time, the export of cotton and dyestuff from Central Asia to Russia continued to increase [Shiotani, 2009. P. 81].

Around 1830, Russian cotton fabrics were being exported to Asian markets, including Persia, Central Asia and China [Shiotani, 2018. P. 56. Fig. 4]. In those days, Vladimir was one of three centers of the Russian cotton industry which specialized in cotton fabrics for peasants. Entrepreneurs in Vladimir actively exported cotton fabrics through Bukharan merchants to Central Asia [Baldin, Kokhova, 2004. P. 193]. In fact, these entrepreneurs brought the produced cotton fabrics to the Nizhny Novgorod Fair. There they sold cotton fabrics to Bukharan merchants, including printed cotton and muslin. The Bukharan merchants as traders not only exported Russian cotton fabrics to Central Asia, but also collected feedback about the trends and designs which consumers in Central Asia liked, and conveyed the information to entrepreneurs in Vladimir. Entrepreneurs in Vladimir were then better able to understand the needs of the Central Asian markets, and developed products that would appeal to them based on the feedback from Bukharan merchants. As a result they established a Russian brand in the market of cotton fabrics in Bukhara (*Kommercheskaya gazeta*. 1832. Oct. 1. No. 79. P. 613).

In the 19th century, Bukharan merchants exported raw cotton from Central Asia to Russia and imported cotton fabrics from Russia to Central Asia. The caravans of Bukharan merchants would leave Central Asia for Russia with commodities during the autumn – spring seasons. In summer, it was very difficult for the caravans to go through the Central Asian steppe due to the heat and the outbreak of harmful insects, therefore, the caravans were not in use during this season (*Ibid*. 1840. Mar. 16. No. 33. P. 130, 131). Once the caravans had distributed the raw cotton from Central Asia to Russia, they returned back to Central Asia with cotton fabrics from Russia. The route through the Volga river was the one most often used during trade between Russia and Central Asia however after Russian import of raw cotton increased, the route through Ural (Orenburg) became the main trade route (*Ibid*. 1843. Dec. 23. No. 150. P. 598). As the Volga river would freeze making shipping impossible in winter, the land route through Ural became the alternative winter route. The caravans of Bukharan merchants unloaded commodities in Orenburg and conveyed them to the Russian merchants there.

They would then load Russian goods into the caravans and return back to Central Asia. Raw cotton of Central Asia was mainly transported to the spinning mills in Moscow and Vladimir. Orenburg became the base of trade between Russia and Central Asia after the middle of the 19th century.

The Russian cotton industry depended on the supply of American cotton in the 19th century. When Civil War broke out in America in 1861, Russia could not import American cotton, and faced a cotton supply crisis. Though Russia assumed they would increase the import of raw cotton from Central Asia, the cotton from Central Asia unfortunately did not adapt to the spinning machines being used in Russia. Still, Russia could not ignore Central Asia as a neighboring region where the cultivation of cotton was possible. In the second half of the 19th century, Russia started a trial of transplanting American Upland cotton to Central Asia, which was adaptable to the spinning machines, making Central Asia their base of cotton supply [Ter-Avanesyan, 1956. P. 600]. After the trial was successful in 1883, the transplant of American cotton commenced in Bukhara, Fergana, Samarkand and Sir-daria regions. An increase in cotton production was planned in Central Asia. Up until the Caspian railway was built in 1879¹, the commercial network of Bukharan merchant caravans continued to function in the trade between Russia and Central Asia.

After the Kyakhta treaty between Russia and China was signed in 1727, the trade between Russia and China substantially increased². Since 1728, the city of Kyakhta near the border between Russia and China (present Mongolian territory), became the base of barter trade between the two countries [Silin, 1947. P. 45]. At that time, foreign merchants were prohibited from staying in Russia for a long time. Chinese merchants on the other hand received permission from the government office of Siberia which allowed them to stay in Russia for short times and participate in the trade between Russia and China. As the government office of Siberia controlled the permission conditions for Chinese merchants, it became difficult for Chinese merchants to obtain permission to stay every time. Chinese merchants who engaged in trade in Urga or Kulun (the present capital of Mongolia, Ulaanbaatar) emigrated to the left bank of the Kyakhta river in 1730, and built the Maimachen trade town on Chinese territory as a place to store their stock [Sladkovsky, 1974. P. 149]. In the second half of September, Chinese merchants would usually export Chinese commodities from Shanxi to Maimachen through Urga, and then dispatch them on to Kyakhta, based on market conditions³.

In 1743, the Russian Senate officially named Kyakhta a commercial village. Soon after in 1745, the Russian Senate simplified the procedures for Russian people who wished to emigrate to Kyakhta [Kratkii ocherk..., 1896. P. 12], which resulted in numerous Russian merchants from Moscow, Kazan and Siberian towns emigrating there. Even after the commencement of regular trade between Russia and China, caravan trade between Moscow and Beijing still continued until it was finally abolished in 1755, and Kyakhta became the key window for trade between Russia and China. As trade between the two countries developed after the 1760s, trade in Kyfta and Maimachen prospered concurrently. About 200 Chinese households and more than 400 people settled in Maimachen in the 1770s [Silin, 1947. P. 102, 109]. The Chinese living in Maimachen consisted of merchants and those who were engaged in various chores, overall contributing to the development of trade between Russia and China. Chinese merchants in Maimachen were divided into two groups: those who engaged in trade with Russian merchants and those who, instead of trade, specialized in the distribution of commodities between Maimachen and China.

¹ The railway was also called "The Railway of Central Asia".

² Even after the Kyakhta treaty was signed, trade between Russia and China was carried out irregularly. This 1727 treaty mandated that trade between the two countries was to be constant, however in reality it was often stopped and then restarted throughout the 18th century. See: [Morinaga, 2010].

³ Chinese merchants traveling to Kyakhta had to obtain an officially issued certificate from Lifan Yuan which they had to take with them to Kyakhta in order to be granted entry.

Between the 18th and 19th centuries, Russia and China entrusted the Kyakhta trade to the governments and effectively prevented the price of fur from declining as a result of smuggling. The smuggling business of fur from Russia to China however did not stop and proved impossible to wipe out. According to the agreement between Russia and China, only Russian and Chinese merchants could participate in the trade between the two countries. While Kyakhta trade was mainly controlled by Siberian merchants on the Russian side, non-Russian merchants, including Yakuts, Evenks and Buryats also became involved [Ibid. P. 156]. Russian merchants were usually prohibited from conducting trade with non-Russians, however Siberian merchants were an exception and were permitted to trade freely with non-Russian merchants. For example, Yakutsk merchants visited Kyakhta every year. After selling reindeer furs through Siberian merchants to Chinese merchants, the Chinese merchants would export the fur to China [Ibid. P. 168]. Yakutsk merchants also bought Chinese commodities in Kyakhta and transported them back to Yakutsk and Kamchatka.

After 1792, Shanxi merchants established their stores in Maimachen, and actively participated in Kyakhta trade. The influences of Shanxi merchants among Chinese merchants were gradually strengthened [Tarasov, 1858a. P. 17]. After young Shanxi merchants learned Russian during their several years in the apprenticeship system, they would travel to Maimachen and participate in trade. Shanxi merchants built close relations with the Chinese government. While they raised the price of Chinese commodities for the government, using funds on hand, they also controlled the price of Russian commodities to raise returns [Ibid. P. 17]. Russian and Chinese merchants traded in Kyakhta all year, but the amount of trade increased from December to March, reaching its peak in February. On the Chinese side, Shanxi merchants mainly assumed the trade between Russia and China, but Mongolian and Tibet merchants sometimes participated in the caravans of Shanxi merchants in the trade route from Urga to Maimachen [Foust, 1969. P. 212]. After the 19th century, some Shanxi merchants married Buryat and Russian women and settled in Russia, west of the Transbaikalian region [Silin, 1947. P. 117].

When Chinese commodities were exported to Russia, they were supplied through several fairs to Russian consumers. In the second half of the 18th century, the Irbit Fair was the wholesale market in Russia for Chinese commodities. Through this fair, Chinese commodities were transported to European Russia and Ukraine [Ibid. P. 175]. When the structure of markets in Russia was transformed at the end of the 18th century, the function of the Irbit Fair was transferred to the Nizhny Novgorod Fair. Many Chinese commodities were transported through the Nizhny Novgorod Fair before being disseminated across the entire Russian country.

The distribution route from Kyakhta to China is illustrated in the following image (Fig. 7).

The route of commodities from Russia to China went through Kyakhta – Maimachen – Urga – Shanxi – Hankou [Bao, 2005. P. 100]. Commodities from Kyakhta to Hankou were transported by camels. The caravans between Russia and China usually involved 100 camels. Each camel would carry four or five boxes of commodities. As Bactrian camels, which Shanxi merchants used, began to shed fur in late March which would last until June, they became physically weak and could not transport heavy loads during this period [Krit, 1862. P. 4]. Therefore, the transportation of commodities between Russia and China would stop during this time. When Russian commodities were exported to China, the commodities from Moscow were sent to Kyakhta in May and June, and between December and February. The route from Moscow to Kyakhta was mainly utilized by Russia, however other European countries sometimes used this route as well. When Napoleon closed the sea route in the beginning of the 19th century, European countries became unable to carry out trade with China, so they started importing Chinese commodities through the Moscow – Kyakhta route [Sladkovsky, 1974. P. 194].

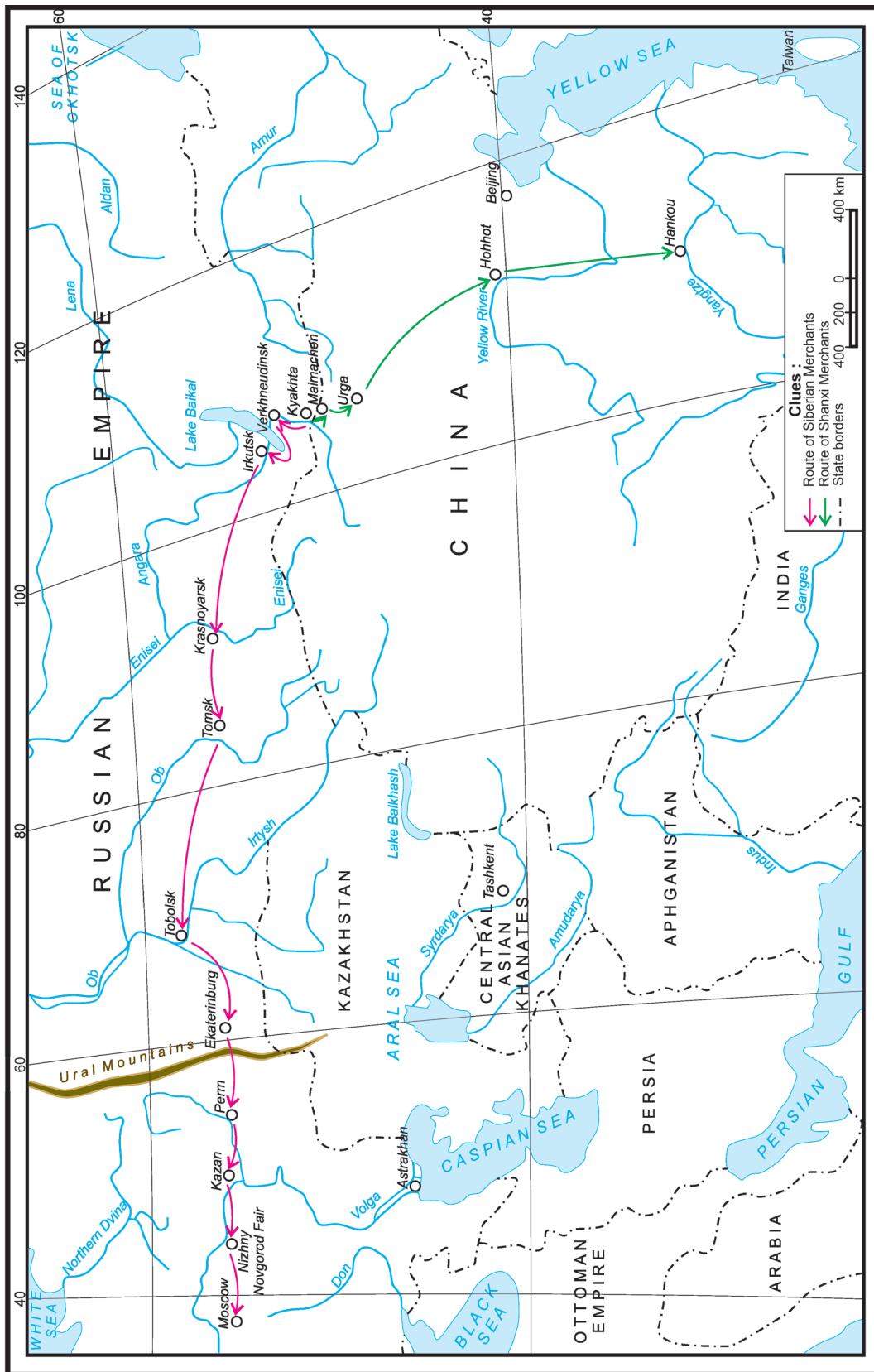


Fig. 7. The trade route of Siberian and Shanxi merchants.
The map created by Anastasiya L. Nesterkina (Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of SB RAS), based on the author's data

When Shanxi merchants exported commodities from China to Russia, they would first send them from Hankou to Shanxi. After that, they would be transported by camel to a rural warehouse in Urga. Shanxi merchants would transport the commodities from Urga to Maimachen from September to June, and then supply them from Maimachen to Kyakhta based on the situations of trade between Russia and China [Ibid. P. 3]. Chinese commodities were usually sent from Kyakhta to Moscow in February, March, April, June, October and November [Ibid. P. 20]. In May, the road conditions were highly unfavorable for distribution, and distribution would stop completely during the period from July to September, due to the Nizhny Novgorod Fair. Distribution would also stop in December due to the trade of tea in Kazan, and in January because of the Irbit Fair. There were two routes – a summer and winter one, between Irkutsk and Moscow. The summer route was Irkutsk – Perm – Nizhny Novgorod – Moscow and the winter route was Irkutsk – Kazan – Moscow [Ibid. P. 14].

Regarding commodities being traded between Russia and China, in the 18th century, the main Russian commodity for China was fur [Tarasov, 1858b. P. 99]. A severely cold winter climate in the northern part of China meant that its people needed fur to survive the winter. The fur market was formulated in the northern part of China, and the demand for Russian fur was stabilized. Originally, Russia captured the animals for fur in Siberia in such excessive numbers that their population drastically decreased in the second half of the 18th century. When a Russian-American company based in Irkutsk dispatched an expedition to the North Pacific Ocean, including Kuril islands, Kamchatka peninsula and Aleut islands, the mission was successful in finding alternative hunting regions. Sables and beavers captured for their fur in the Northern Pacific began to be exported as luxurious commodities from Russia to China, and the Russian-American company became known as a key contributor to the development of trade between Russia and China ⁴.

In terms of exports from China to Russia, in the second half of the 18th century, Chinese representative exports were rhubarb, cotton fabrics and silk [Silin, 1947. P. 137, 150]. Rhubarb collected in the mountains of Mongolia and Tibet was precious and used as effective medicine in Russia in those days. Rhubarb was not only sold in Russia, but also exported through St. Petersburg to Europe. Another export – Chinese cotton fabrics were also highly necessary commodities for people living in Siberia (Kommercheskaya gazeta. 1843. Mar. 25. No. 36. P. 143). As the long-distance transportation of clothing from European Russia to Siberia was difficult at that time, it was Chinese cotton fabrics that were most commonly used in everyday clothes in Siberia. The trade between Russia and China was basically barter trade. Chinese cotton fabrics (*kitaika*) were representative commodities exchanged in the Kyakhta market and were also standard for barter trade in Kyakhta [Silin, 1947. P. 137]. Whenever a deficit occurred for either country during the course of a barter trade, silver would be used to make up the difference – a solution that was more frequently used by Russia. [Attman, 1981. P. 202].

When the custom of tea drinking spread in Russia at the end of the 18th century, the demand for tea drastically increased. At the end of the 17th century, European merchants exported Chinese tea to Russia through Arkhangelsk which marked the beginning of Russian tea drinking customs [Silin, 1947. P. 145]. Later, the tea trade route changed from going through Europe to Asia, at which point Kyakhta became a window for Chinese tea imports. Although the import of Chinese tea for Europe was transported from Guangzhou by sea route, it was also sometimes transported through Russia by land route [Kratkii ocherk..., 1896. P. 44]. From the second half of the 18th century, Shanxi merchants exported tea collected in Fujian (China) to Russia. After that, they established a trading company for the wholesale of tea in China, and bought tea from productive regions (Fujian and Zhejiang), almost monopolizing the export of tea for Russia. Before Chinese tea was exported to Russia, the tea would be processed and packaged for transportation by camels in a factory in Hankou [Bao, 2005. P. 99].

⁴ The following literature contains more in-depth information: [Morinaga, 2008].

The processed tea would then be exported to Russia, and would sometimes also be sold in Mongolia (Chinese territory at that time) on its way to Russia.

Russia previously exported materials to China and imported manufactured commodities, including cotton fabrics from China. Once Russia became industrialized in the first half of the 19th century, the nature of trade between Russia and China transformed where Russia now imported materials from China and exported the manufactured commodities. The Russian protective tariff policy symbolically showed the transformation of this new trade structure. In 1822 Russia introduced the protective tariff and prohibited the import of tea from countries other than China, in order to increase the import of tea through Kyakhta [Tarasov, 1858b. P. 106]. On the other hand Russia raised the tariff for European manufactured goods and controlled the imports of European products in order to foster its domestic industry. After the 1820s, this protective tariff policy contributed to the rapid development of exports of manufactured goods from Russia to China [Korsak, 1857. P. 140]. As the demand for Chinese tea grew rapidly in Russia, the export of manufactured goods (cotton and woolen fabrics) from Russia to China also increased [Ostroukhov, 1939. P. 211, 218].

In the first half of the 1820s, Russian cotton fabrics were being exported to China through Kyakhta. Russian entrepreneurs did not merely export cotton fabrics produced in Russia, but tried to research Chinese demands and trends in order to develop products appropriate to this market. They gradually lowered the price of products, and promoted Russian cotton fabric exports through Kyakhta. The export of Russian cotton fabrics to China was successful [Korsak, 1857. P. 200], however not all Russian products spread to all Chinese regions. It is important to note that the main place of Russian product consumption was limited to mainland China. As China had an extensive territory, each region had different natural environments. The export of Russian cotton fabrics was especially successful to mainland China, as they were suitable for their everyday culture. These Russian cotton fabrics, particularly printed cotton and nankeen were welcomed by Chinese consumers [Zhurnal..., 1830. No. 7. P. 97].

After the 1830s, the Russian cotton fabric types changed. Interest shifted from the previous printed cotton and nankeen to cotton velvet - a newly added item to the list of Russian cotton fabric exports. After a sudden growth in its demand, cotton velvet became a representative export product. It was different from other cotton fabrics however as it was mainly produced in Moscow [Tarasov, 1858b. P. 105]. Entrepreneurs in Moscow engaged in the development of cotton velvet in the first half of the 1820s and began to export it to China after 1827. As companies in Moscow at first lacked technique to print the cotton velvet, they depended on the technique known only in St. Petersburg at the time. Moscow entrepreneurs however gradually learned the much-needed technique, and expanded their factories to produce it themselves. After the 1840s, this fabric type occupied the largest share among Russian commodities exported to China through Kyakhta (Kommercheskaya gazeta. 1836. Oct. 27. No. 129. P. 506). Similar to cotton fabrics, Russian entrepreneurs responded to the request of Shanxi merchants, and developed woolen fabrics customized to the Chinese market. These Russian woolen fabrics sold extremely well in the Chinese market [Zhurnal..., 1859. Pt. 2. No. 6. P. 3].

In the first half of the 19th century, the amount of tea consumed continued to increase in Russia, and so the Russian trade deficit to China extended [Tarasov, 1858b. P. 102]. Russia however increased the export of its manufactured goods to China, and tried to extinguish the trade deficit. After the Tianjin treaty between Russia and China was signed in 1858, the port of Guangzhou was now open to Russia. Soon after, the trade sea route to export Chinese tea from Guangzhou to the Odessa port was also opened. There were now two trade routes for transportation of Chinese tea to Russia – a land and sea route [Silin, 1947. P. 196]. According to the land trade agreement between Russia and China, which was signed in 1862, the Chinese government permitted preferential treatment to Russian merchants in China regarding trade between the two countries. Russian merchants established their settlement

in Zhangjiakou and entered the Chinese domestic distribution network [Bao, 2005. P. 225]. Russian merchants would travel from Zhangjiakou to Tianjin and Hanko. They would directly buy Chinese commodities in those cities and export them by land or sea from Tianjin to Russia [Ibid.]. Russian merchants caused Shanxi merchants great losses, however Shanxi merchants still controlled the export of brick tea ⁵ to Russia, and continued to control the trade between Russia and China through the western door (“Killing Tiger’s Den”) [Liu, Feng, 2009] ⁶. Shanxi merchants built close relations with the Chinese government and established the commercial and financial system for the whole country. It is no exaggeration to say that Shanxi merchants controlled the Chinese economy [Liu et al., 2007].

As examined, Asian trade was carried out to be in harmony with natural environments. Many regions in Eurasia belonged to the steppes, and this ecological system was suitable for livestock farming, including camel, horse and mule [Mackinder, 1919. P. 71–114]. Asian merchants who engaged in Russian trade with Asia used camel and mule as a means of transportation. They organized caravans and participated in the distribution of commodities. As the circulation of commodities usually required one year ⁷, the clearance in distant trade was conducted in one year cycles. As the commodities were transported to be timed to avoid the camel molting period, the one year trade system cycle was designed in adjustment with the characteristics of the natural environment and the animals involved. This trade system that had been formed over a long period of time had a specific rationality to it. However this system of one year cycles could not adapt to the subsequent periods of innovation when the steam engine and fossil fuels were introduced in the field of production, and when mass production was realized.

Once the steam engine and the use of fossil fuels was introduced in the second half of the 19th century, the form of distribution subsequently changed, in line with the forms of production.

When the steam engine and fossil fuels were introduced in the cotton industry field, and when mass production of cheap cotton fabrics was realized, Russia used the commercial network of Asian merchants in the neighboring sphere of commerce to promote the export of cotton fabrics to Asia. In the second half of the 19th century, when the steam engine and fossil fuels were introduced in the field of distribution, it would be rational to suppose that competition arose between the new distribution network of Russian merchants and the traditional distribution network of Asian merchants. When we assess this entire period, the export mechanism of Russian cotton fabrics, which Asian merchants formulated, was technically in its transitional form, which appeared at a time when Russian society rejected its conditions to depend on the natural environment.

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⁵ In those days, tea was divided into “leaf tea” and “brick tea” in the trade between Russia and China. “Leaf tea” was mainly drunk as black tea. “Brick tea” was mixed with milk and salt, and was drunk by nomads. Even today, Mongolian descendants drink “brick tea” in Russia.

⁶ After the Siberian railroad was established at the end of the 19th century, the importance of trade declined in Kyakhta, but the trade between Russia and China continued in Kyakhta until the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1912.

⁷ The distribution period of commodities from producers to consumers.

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