

Correspondence and Writing Materials of the Uzbek Khanates

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Abstract: This article examines the rules of documentation and letter writing, as well as the materials used for this purpose, in the Bukhara, Khiva, and Kokand Khanates from the mid-18th to the late 19th century. The information presented is based on letters found in the I-125 fund, 2nd inventory list of the National Archives of Uzbekistan.

Introduction: When referring to the correspondence of the Khanates period, we consider various letters in the form of announcements and appeals, reports from the "Palace Chancellery" (Saroy devonxonasi), and accounts of historical events related to the relations between the Bukhara, Khiva, and Kokand Khanates found in historical works. These serve as primary sources and hold significant scientific importance.

A specialized field of epistolography dedicated to the study of letters has emerged. Research in this area, in turn, helps to find solutions to issues related to relationships between individuals and historical events.

Method: According to the rules of diplomatic document research, the analyzed letters are studied using external (paleographic) and internal (diplomatic) methods [30]. This article provides information on the external characteristics of the documents.

External characteristics of the sources: These include the type of paper, its size, the script (type of writing) and language, the ink, the seal, and even information about the calligrapher or secretary. This information allows researchers to determine the reasons for writing the document, who wrote and sent it, where it was received, and its date.

Paper used for writing letters: In the Middle Ages, letters were written on handmade paper. Before writing letters, paper and ink were prepared. High-quality paper was used for writing official letters. The introduction and spread of paper in Turkestan dates back to ancient times [28]. By the Middle Ages, the highest quality paper produced in Turkestan reached Syria, Egypt, Persia, and even Europe.

Cities like Bukhara, Samarkand, Kokand, and Tashkent had paper production centers, with Samarkand paper being world-renowned for its thinness and durability [1, 34-35]. Old rags, cotton fabrics, flax, hemp, and other plants were used in its production. The ingredients were thoroughly crushed, mixed into a pulp, and then separated into fibers. After that, it was washed with water, and the paper mixture (pulp) was poured into special containers. Another center of paper production was the city of Bukhara and its surrounding areas. The paper produced there was of high quality and served as the primary material for books and official documents. This paper was distinguished from others by its durability and ability to absorb ink well.

From the 18th century onwards, Kokand paper began to spread widely in the Turkestan Khanates and adjacent territories due to its affordability and quality. This paper quickly replaced Samarkand paper and penetrated neighboring regions. The highest quality papers were produced in the villages of Chorku and Qogazgar, near the Moyi Mubarak gate of Kokand. This type of paper, with its smoothness and good ink absorption, is a prime example of the papermaking technology of its time [29]. Sources confirm that Kokand paper was described as "qog'ozi pokiza," meaning "pure paper" [23]. Most of the letters examined were written on this paper.

In the Bukhara Emirate, 13 types of paper were used for writing, and the most common type was called "chinori" because it resembled the color of the plane tree [20, 111]. Also, "ishtarxoniy" paper was widely used in the Emirate. Paper played an important role in foreign trade, with smooth white paper being brought from Kokand and silk paper called "abreshim" imported from China. In some cases, certain types of paper were also produced in Bukhara itself.

The letters preserved in archival documents differ in paper types and sizes. The thickness of the paper, when felt by hand, ranged from medium thickness to thin. The quality of paper used for letters exchanged between rulers was thicker (yellowish) and larger in size, with a width of 20-24 cm and a length of 22-40 cm [21]. The

paper used for letters sent to officials varied, and these types of letters mainly consist of reports sent by trusted representatives of the Khanate to the Khan, Mehtar, Kushbegi, and Divanbegi.

The expansion of foreign trade and production led to an increase in the variety of paper types in the Turkestan Khanates. As a result, Russian factory-made paper began to be used in practice in the Khanates.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the increasing influx of factory-made paper from the Russian Empire into the Turkestan Khanates dealt a blow to the craft of paper production. The reforms carried out by representatives of the Russian Empire in all spheres directly affected documentation practices as well. The spread of factory-made paper increased in the social life of the Khanates [7]. The large-scale production of national paper in the Khanate and the import of paper from foreign countries led to an increase in the variety and consumption of the product. By the end of the century, most of the correspondence written in the Khanate territories was written on paper produced within the empire.

During the Khanates period, special attention was paid to the decoration of paper. Ornaments, flowers, and symbols were widely used in the decoration of letters. An example of a letter adorned with such decorations can be seen in the letter sent by Sultan Said Khan, the Khan of Kokand, to Sayyid Muhammad Khan, the Khan of Khiva [22].

Writing style (script) and materials of the letters: Paleographic studies are closely helpful in the study of letters and documents. It is known that each historical period had its own unique writing style and script. Correspondence between the Khanates was mainly written in "nastaliq" script and black ink. These script types became widespread in documents after the Timurid period and were easier to write and read compared to other periods. The "khatti muloyi" style, a beautiful and orderly type of script that continued as a tradition, began to be widely used in the period under study [19, 47]. From the 19th century onwards, as the variety of correspondence increased, it is observed that the fast-writing nastaliq script, in both large and small forms, became increasingly popular. The use of this form of writing facilitated documentation in the Khanate and created convenience in the work system.

In the Khanates' period documentation system, special attention was paid to writing instruments. By studying the processes related to clerical activities in this research, the historical process associated with clerical services in the Middle Ages is reconstructed. Various tools were used for handling documents in the palace chancelleries, including reed pens, ink, pen cleaners – "kordi qalam taroshi," "qalamtarosh," "qalamkat" (pen sharpeners made of bone or horn) [14.5]. A thick paper (cardboard) with dark lines called "mistar" was placed under the paper to help ensure straight writing [3, 214-215]. In some literature, this item is also referred to as a "tracing device" [16]. If there was an error in the written text, "abr" (blotter, sponge) was used to erase words [2, 412]. Such technical means ensured that documents were executed to the required standard.

Secretaries and scribes paid special attention to pens and inks. The pens always had to be sharpened. For example, a pen used today would be sharpened again the next day. This was because the moisture in the ink of the pen had to completely disappear. Pens could not be mixed up, and one pen could not be drawn over another. The inkwell was scented with musk and rose water, and the ink had to be fluid, bright, and easy to read [13, 84].

Analysis of the paleographic study of the letters shows that in the Bukhara Emirate, outgoing letters and letters received from other countries were collected in special "jongs" (bundles). Each internal letter bearing the seal of the Kushbegi was ensured prompt delivery to its destination [27]. Furthermore, the Kushbegi service included "shogirpeshas" (apprentices). They rose to the ranks of "chuhraog'asi," "miroxur," and "to'qsabo." This group performed tasks similar to espionage, diplomacy, and private security [12, 25].

Seals: The study of seals as external features of letters requires special attention. A specific branch of history – sigillography – deals with seals affixed to historical documents [6, 208-210]. In terms of its scope, significance, and methodological aspects, this field has emerged from diplomatics – the study of documents – and has been established as a separate specialized branch of science. Seals were made by creating molds with carved symbols and inscriptions on a solid material. In sigillography, special attention is paid to studying the impression or mark of the seal on a document.

Scholars conducting research in the field of sigillography have also developed scientific and methodological recommendations [11]. In particular, A.L. Kun studied several seals of the Khiva khans, analyzing their types, as well as internal and external features [8]. In his research conducted in the last quarter of the 20th century, A.A. Ivanov addressed the importance of working with seals and provided information on Muslim

sigillography [5, 244]. Specialist scholar G. Qurbonov, who directly studied the seals of the Khanates period, focused specifically on the seals of the Bukhara emirs. The scholar emphasized the need to classify and study seals based on their production and structure [9, 10-12]. He analyzed 19 seals of the Bukhara emir Muzaffar, which had three different types and 17 forms with varying appearances [10]. Sh. Ziyodov conducted research on the seals of the Central Asian Khanates and presented the inscriptions and shapes of the seals to the general public through images [4, 176].

In some documents, the seal of the ruler receiving the letter is found alongside the seal of the sender [26]. Analysis of the seals on the letters shows that the seals of the khans of the Mangit, Ming, and Qungirot dynasties differed from each other in size and shape. The seals of the Bukhara emirs were round and oval, the seals of the Khiva khans were round and star-shaped, and the seals of the Kokand khans were mostly almond-shaped and jug-shaped [25].

Seals of this type may have been specific to correspondence sent to foreign heads of state. This is because it is known that in the correspondence of the Khanates with other states, particularly the Khiva Khanate's correspondence with the Salur tribes in Afghanistan, star-shaped seals were used, and the seals affixed to the letters of the Bukhara emirs to the Russian Emperor and agencies were round [24].

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, almond-shaped, pointed almond-shaped, and jug-shaped seals with nastaliq script were widespread among the rulers of Bukhara, Khiva, and Kokand. It was from this period that the seals of the rulers of the Turkestan Khanates began to differ sharply from the seals of the rulers of neighboring states, and forms characteristic of the region emerged [17, 56]. Furthermore, scholar G. Qurbonov, who expanded upon the study of these seals, provided information about the differences and characteristics of nearly 40 seals of the Bukhara emir Muzaffar dating from 1277/1860-1861 [15, 43-45]. These seals were divided into three groups according to the function and content of the documents: 1) with text written around the edge, 2) anonymous, and 3) with the phrase "Amir Muzaffar sayyid." It was determined that the seals presented in this study belong to types 2 and 3 according to the above classification. In addition, the types of seals used in the chancellery are listed, such as "muhri oliy," "muhri kalon," "muhri yuzuki," "muhri parvona," and "muhri angushtari." Based on these names and shapes, it is possible to understand the function and purpose of each seal.

Some of the seals on the letters in the I-125 collection, 2nd inventory list, at the National Archives of Uzbekistan were examined. Among them, it is possible to identify the seals of rulers and officials, including 15 seal impressions of the Bukhara emirs Nasrullah (1826-1860), such as "امير نصرالله سيد" – (Amir Nasrullah Sayyid), "عدل امير نصرالله سيد" – (Adl (i) Amir Nasrullah Sayyid), "امير نصرالله بن امير حيدر" – (Amir Nasrullah ibn Amir Haydar), "ال حكم با عدل" – (Al hukmi bil adl), and 9 seal impressions of Amir Muzaffar (1860-1885), "سيد" – (Sayyid Amir Muzaffar). Almost all of them are round, indicating that this shape was prevalent in the Bukhara Emirate [9, 10-12]. The letters also contain seals of the Khiva khan Sayyid Muhammad Khan (1856-1865), such as "سيد محمد بن محمد رحيم خان غازي" – (Sayyid Muhammad Khan bin Muhammad Rahim Khan Ghazi) and "ال ملك الله" – (Al mulkillah). Furthermore, among the letters, seal impressions of the Kokand khans Khudayar Khan (1844-1875 with interruptions) "خدایارخان بن شیر محمد علی خان" – (Khudayar Khan bin Sher Muhammad Ali Khan) and Sultan Said Khan (1863-1866) "محمد سلطان سيد بهادرخان" – (Muhammad Sultan Sayyid Bahadur Khan) were identified.

Conclusion: Each item used in writing letters played an important role. The use of each item reflects the culture and technological development of the historical period's clerical work. By the late Middle Ages, the use of "simple" and "ordinary" methods in the application of paper, ink, and decorations indicates that by this time, the state documentation work had increased in speed, and the types and number of documents had increased.

The gradual changes in the appearance and shape of letter seals over time indicate that by this period, seals were affixed according to the type of document. It should be noted that in international correspondence, round seals were used in the Bukhara Emirate, star-shaped round seals in the Khiva Khanate, and jug-shaped and pointed almond-shaped seals in the Kokand Khanate. This classification demonstrates the importance of seals during the Khanates period and their use within various spheres.

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