



## THE ROLE OF RAILWAYS IN THE INFRASTRUCTURE OF THE TRANSCASPIAN REGION OF THE TURKESTAN GENERAL GOVERNORATE

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### Abstract:

The Turkestan General Governorate, established in 1867, was administratively divided into regions, and each region was administered taking into account its characteristics and location. The Turkestan Governorate, located east of the Caspian Sea, borders Iran and Afghanistan on the north-west Siberian hills and on the south through the Hindukush Mountains. Turkestan is a very fertile field for research in terms of the uniqueness of nature and the culture of its people.

**Keywords:** Turkestan General Governorate, Caspian Sea, borders Iran and Afghanistan, the Hindukush mountains, Siberian hills, Western Turkestan, Transcaspiian region.

### INTRODUCTION

The territory of Turkestan General Governorate stretches 2,500 km from west to east, 4,100 km from north to south, and its total area is 1,926,620 sq. km, which is larger than the combined territory of Germany, Austria, Hungary, France and Italy. [1] The territory of the Caspian region alone is larger than the territory of Germany by 65,000 square kilometers. [2] Russian Turkestan was often referred to as West Turkestan to distinguish it from its geographical continuation, Chinese East Turkestan, and Afghan Turkestan, which extended from the Amudarya south to the Indian River. In this place it is called Turkestan General Governorate. [3]

### MAIN PART

Administratively, the Governor General consists of "provinces" (in Russian "oblasti"): Kaspiyorti, Samarkand, Syrdarya, Fergana and Ettisuv. I.I.Geyer provides information about the population and total land area of the regions of the Turkestan General Governorate. According to him, the total population of Turkestan at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was 5,259,406 people, of which 371,193 people lived in Kaspiyorti region. [4] In the Turkestan Governorate, along with waterways, railways played an important role in the infrastructure of the Caspian region. It is known that railway construction first gained strategic importance in the conquest of the Caspian Sea, and later played an important role in the economic relations between the

metropolis and the colony. The improvement of transport techniques was of primary importance for industrial development. [5]

The trade and industrial society has shown great zeal in finding the most rational projects for the construction of railways in Central Asia. Founded in 1867, this society was concerned with the implementation of any useful proposal for the development of Russian industry and commerce, this society could approach the government circles asking for solutions to various economic problems. The railway, built here by the Russians at great difficulty and expense, opened up a unique infrastructure to foreigners.

Before the construction of the railway, getting to know this country was a big challenge for foreigners. The shape of the Caspian railway depended on the natural structure of the oasis. Initially, the railway runs along the foothills of Kopetdog in the south-eastern direction. Then it turned east to the Marv oasis, northeast to Bukhara, and then east again to Samarkand.

Behind Samarkand, the railway line divides into two: one continues eastward and reaches Andijan and the Chinese border; the second turned to the north-east and reached Tashkent, after which it connected to the European and Siberian lines through Orenburg to the north-west. For decades, the railway was used as a military road, and over time, wagons with certain conditions were established. [6]

In his memoirs, H.Schweinitz focuses on passenger service at the stations of the Caspian railway, and notes that at each station a group of Russian women sold hot



tea, boiled eggs, and fried chicken in a samovar at very low prices. Taking into account that the Kaspiyorti railway consists of 90 stations to Andijan and Tashkent, we can see that these services are planned. Drinking water was supplied to stations where water shortage was observed. Shops selling European goods served passengers in carriages. [7]

It soon proved that the only reliable and safe means of transport was the railway. The convenient railway connection had an immediate effect on the economic life of the population. After the traffic became easier and cheaper, it became easier for the labor force to find a job. The construction of the railway began in 1880 from the settlement of Mikhailovskoe on the shores of the Caspian Sea. In June 1880, the railway started from Mikhailovskoe and in February 1881 it reached Kazanzhik, where the steppe region with fresh wells begins. [8]

By December 1881, the railway line reaches Akhcha-Guyim. In the battles for Koktepa (January 12-May 1881), the wounded, food, and weapons were sent by rail. In 1881, the railway reached Kyzylarvot. After that, a break in construction was announced until 1885. After that, it was planned to continue the construction work towards Marvga. At the same time, a railway line was laid from Mikhailovskoe to Uzun-Adana, and in May 1881, the construction work was started.

The extension of the Kaspiyorti railway is planned for the construction of a 521 km long line with 21 stations from Samarkand through Jizzakh to Khojand, Kokan, Andijan. Total 26 mln. ruble works had to be done. [9] 3.5-4.5 km of rails are laid per day. In March and November, the work was completely stopped. In the heat of the summer, Annenkov gave the workers a break. A hastily built wooden bridge over the Amudarya between Chorjuy and Samarkand served for 14 years. In 1901, it was replaced by a 1,800-meter iron bridge. In 1888-1898, no major constructions were carried out on the railway. Only the head of the line was transferred from Uzun-Adana to Krasnovodsk.

In 1898, the additional lines of the railway, Tashkent (332 km), Andijan (306 km) and Marv-Kushka (293 km) were completed. The richest and densely populated regions of Turkestan, such as Samarkand, Khavos, Tashkent, Fergana, are connected by railway, the Murgob line (Marv-Kushka) has a relatively small population, but has gained great strategic importance. The last stop is Kushka on the Afghan border, very close to Herat, which is considered the key to India. If the British railway was brought to Kandahar and Herat, the Murgob line would be of great importance in economic relations. [10]

The railway was primarily used for military purposes. The railway was intended to bring supplies and soldiers as close as possible to the battlefield (Koktep). After the fortress was captured, the railway was laid only up to Kyzil-Arvat (217 km). When the danger of conflict with England increased, the construction of the railway was stopped for a certain period and revived again in 1885. From May 2 to November 29, 1885, a 205 km long railway was laid from Kyzylarvot to Ashgabat, on July 2, 1886 to Marv, and on December 1, 1886 to Khordju on the Amudarya River. From July 15 to August 15, the construction work will be suspended due to the high temperature. 763 km from Kyzil-Arvat to Chorjoi in a year and a half. the railway was built. Until the spring of 1887, a break in construction work was announced. On May 27, 1888, Annenkov completed the construction of a 4.5 km long wooden bridge over the Amudarya in 4 months at a cost of 250,000 rubles and arrived in Samarkand.

In the implementation of these works, two Caspian railway battalions of 1000 people each will be formed from all over Russia. The detachment of sappers carried out remote work. [11]

The railway is 1.5 km per day with great speed through Ashgabat, Marv and Chorjui (755v.). completed. During this time, the starting point of the railway (from Mikhailovskoe) was also moved to a better harbor (Uzun-Adana). In 1888, the railway line was extended to Samarkand (350 km). The railway line from Uzun-Adana to Samarkand was completed by the Ministry of Defense under the leadership of General Annenkov. [12]

The railway crossed the Karakum desert consisting of barren deserts and waterless steppes. [13]

During this period, not only the profitability of the railway was questioned, but many people considered its construction as a foolish idea. Ferdinand de Lesseps (1805-1894), the builder of the Suez Canal, and Chernyaev, the governor-general of Turkestan, were among them. They also agreed that the construction should be stopped. [14]

Despite the great difficulties, the railway was completed in a relatively short time and became the cheapest railway in Russia. F.Makhachek said that the total length of the railway was 2560 km. 32,000 rubles per kilometer were spent on its construction. [15]

The areas where the railway was laid consisted of waterless steppes and sand deserts. Climate conditions and lack of labor were added to these. [16]

The workforce is imported from Russia and Iran. 400 Russian and 18,000 Persian workers were attached to the construction of the railway. [17]



Russian workers suffered especially much in the unaccustomed climate. Construction up to Chorjuy was carried out without sufficient skills. Nowhere in the world was a railway laid in a sandy desert, and it was being built in a conquered and uninhabited territory. The sources also contain some information about the medical service organized during the construction of the railway.

M.Albrecht notes that there is a sanitary team in the building, which consists of 3 doctors, 2 pharmacists, 8 assistants, 10 medical students, 10 paramedics and 27 nurses. In the matter of railway fuel, a German researcher pointed out that oil was considered a convenient fuel (with less work) than coal for trains. [18]

In addition, the author informed that trains from Uzun-Adana to Samarkand were provided with oil brought from Baku by the Armenian commercial company called "Ander Caspian" [19] and that 3,401,505 pounds of oil were brought from Baku to Central Asia through Uzun-Adana. [20]

It is known that the construction of the Caspian Railway (ZVJD) was of great strategic importance for the Russian Empire, but it cannot be denied that certain amenities were also created for local citizens:

"Hajj pilgrims traveled to Uzun-Adana on the Kaspiyorti railway, from there by steamer to Baku, from Baku on the Kavkazorti railway to Botumi, sailed across the Black Sea on Austrian or Russian steamers to Istanbul, and from there on steamers to Jeddah, and returned the same way if they did not die of cholera in Mecca". [21]

O.Heifelder stated that the Caspian railway was completed in 1.5 years and only 16 million rubles were spent. [22]

The information provided by the researcher Bernhard Stern about the Caspian railway is important in the study of the history of the region. He noted that with the construction of the Caspian railway, commercial goods from India and Afghanistan, Bukhara and Khiva to Nizhny-Novgorod and Moscow, the Neva, the Black Sea and from there to Western Europe were ensured at high speed. With the construction of the railway in the places where no one had ever set foot before, the mass activity of artisans and workers, merchants and soldiers began. The researcher writes that trees were planted, soil was fixed, houses, churches and barracks, pharmacies and factories, workshops and shops were built. [23]

B.Shtern divides railway stations into four groups. The stations of the first group included the cities of Marv, Charjui, Bukhara and Samarkand. The total number of stations is 59, of which 15 are main stations.

At the main stations, there are cafeterias, guest houses (they replaced hotels in Central Asia), telegraph, houses of the station chief and railway employees, and workers' barracks. Far from the station were reservoirs for water and oil, small workshops and buildings for the locomotive. The grasses of the early stages were replaced by Astrakhan houses. [24]

Later, buildings were built of raw bricks mixed with straw or adobe bricks. In German sources, it is noted that the prices in railway station kitchens are very cheap compared to Europe. [25]

F.Makhachek wrote about the railway and recognized that Ashgabat has become an important point of the international transit trade route. [26]

According to him, this area has a very convenient road (comfortable Verkehrsstrasse), and the East-West Amudarya waves are now easier to meet by rail than in the old days when they flowed into the Caspian Sea. A German researcher believes that the shortest route to India, which the peoples of the sunset countries have been looking for for thousands of years, has been found, and the problem that great men of all time and space have tried in vain to solve has found its solution.

### **CONCLUSION**

Thus, the Caspian railway was considered a powerful structure both from the military and commercial point of view, as well as from the scientific-geographical and cultural-historical points of view. The Turkmen steppes, bordered by Iran in the south, Amudarya in the north, and the Caspian Sea in the west, were once considered an insurmountable chasm between Europe and Asia, but now they have become a region that connects the two parts of the world.

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