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FOOD TRADE IN THE EARLY YEARS OF SOVIET UZBEKISTAN: THE CASE OF MEAT PRODUCTS

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Abstract: This article examines the development of meat procurement and trade in Uzbekistan during the early years of Soviet rule, focusing on the organizational and economic activities of Uzbekbirlashuv, Uzmyasotorg, Kazmyaso, and Soyuzmyaso between 1926 and 1928. Based on historical archival documents, the study investigates the establishment of meat supply networks, livestock procurement, financial arrangements, and institutional cooperation. Particular attention is given to the operational difficulties of Uzmyasotorg, including inadequate planning, financial instability, supply shortages, poor product quality, and ineffective coordination between trading organizations. The article also explores the circumstances surrounding the liquidation of Uzmyasotorg in 1928 and the subsequent transfer of its responsibilities to other economic institutions. Using historical-chronological, comparative-historical, and source-critical methods, the research highlights the transformation of meat trade management and the development of state and cooperative distribution mechanisms in Soviet Uzbekistan.

Keywords: Uzbekistan, Soviet period, meat trade, Uzbekbirlashuv, Uzmyasotorg, Kazmyaso, Soyuzmyaso, livestock procurement, state trade, consumer cooperatives, financial management, distribution, archival documents, 1926–1928.

Introduction

Agriculture and animal husbandry have historically played an important role in the economic development of Uzbekistan. Favorable natural and climatic conditions supported the cultivation of agricultural products and livestock breeding, contributing to domestic consumption and regional trade. Meat and meat products were particularly significant in meeting the nutritional needs of the population.

During the early Soviet period, the organization of food procurement and distribution underwent substantial institutional changes. The Soviet authorities attempted to establish centralized mechanisms for purchasing livestock, processing meat, and supplying urban consumers. However, the development of these mechanisms was accompanied by financial, administrative, and logistical difficulties.

In the Soviet Union, shortages of livestock and meat-processing infrastructure became increasingly serious during the late 1920s and early 1930s. During the first half of the 1929–1930 economic year, declining livestock numbers contributed to shortages of raw materials. Some procurement organizations failed to fulfill centrally established targets. For example, the Syzran branch of Soyuzmyaso reportedly fulfilled only 32.3% of its assigned supply quota [1].

By 1932, six sausage factories belonging to the Middle Volga Meat Trust were operating at less than half their production capacity. These difficulties encouraged Soviet authorities to modernize the meat-processing industry. Under the leadership of A. I. Mikoyan, plans were developed for large industrial meat-processing enterprises, including facilities in Moscow and Semipalatinsk. American technological experience was also considered in the design of modern production equipment [2].

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In Uzbekistan, the development of meat trade was closely connected with the activities of consumer cooperatives and specialized trading organizations. Uzbekbirlashuv, established by 1925, became an important institution in food procurement and distribution. Uzmyasotorg, operating during the second half of the 1920s, was responsible for livestock purchasing and organizing the sale of meat products. Its procurement activities extended beyond Central Asia to China and Afghanistan [3].

Despite these initiatives, the organization of meat trade remained problematic. Financial limitations, insufficient infrastructure, delayed reporting, and weak coordination between institutions negatively affected supply operations.

Therefore, examining the activities of Uzbekbirlashuv, Uzmyasotorg, Soyuzmyaso, and Kazmyaso provides an opportunity to understand the institutional development of the meat trade system in Uzbekistan during 1926–1928.

Research Methodology

The research is based primarily on historical documents preserved in the National Archive of Uzbekistan, particularly Fond 217, Inventory 1, Files 110, 117, 146, and 154.

These archival materials include official reports, meeting protocols, financial agreements, procurement plans, and administrative decisions involving Uzbekbirlashuv, Uzmyasotorg, Kazmyasoprodukt, Uzselsoyuz, and Soyuzmyaso.

Three principal research methods were employed.

The historical-chronological method was used to examine the development of meat procurement and distribution between 1926 and 1928, identifying important institutional changes and administrative decisions.

The comparative-historical method enabled the comparison of officially approved procurement and trade plans with the actual performance of trading organizations.

Source-critical analysis was applied to assess archival reports, financial documents, and institutional correspondence. Particular attention was given to inconsistencies between planned indicators and reported economic outcomes.

Together, these methods provided a basis for evaluating the organizational, financial, and administrative factors influencing meat trade in early Soviet Uzbekistan.

Research Results

The archival evidence indicates that consumer cooperative organizations played an increasingly important role in the development of food distribution networks in Uzbekistan during the second half of the 1920s.

On June 7, 1927, a meeting of the Trade and Cooperative Department of the State Planning Commission of the Uzbek SSR was held in Samarkand. Representatives of governmental institutions, banking organizations, and meat-trading enterprises discussed the financing and expansion of cooperative meat retail outlets.

The meeting recognized the necessity of developing meat trade through consumer cooperatives while maintaining financial self-sufficiency.

Approximately 70,000 rubles were planned for equipping meat retail outlets. The proposed financing mechanism involved a three-year loan guaranteed by Uzbekbirlashuv. However, the representative of the Municipal Bank expressed concerns regarding the bank's lending limitations [4].

The meeting also considered the modernization of sausage production facilities, emphasizing the need for further examination of equipment requirements.

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These decisions demonstrate that the Soviet authorities sought to expand meat retail infrastructure through cooperation between governmental institutions, commercial organizations, and financial establishments.

A particularly important meeting took place on June 26, 1928, under the chairmanship of Fayzulla Khodjaev. The discussion focused on the financial difficulties of Uzmyasotorg and its relations with Soyuzmyaso and Kazmyasoprodukt.

The participants recognized the necessity of restoring normal commercial relations between the organizations and strengthening Uzmyasotorg's financial position.

One important decision concerned an advance payment of 300,000 rubles. The repayment period was proposed to be extended by 15 days, allowing the funds to remain available for livestock procurement [5].

The meeting also required the settlement of disputed financial accounts between Uzmyasotorg and Kazmyasoprodukt by July 1, 1928. Unresolved disagreements were to be addressed through arbitration.

Another major issue concerned livestock procurement at the Karkara Fair.

According to the agreement, Soyuzmyaso, acting through its Kazakh administrative structures, was responsible for purchasing livestock intended for Uzmyasotorg. Representatives of Uzmyasotorg were authorized to participate directly in the procurement process.

Purchased livestock was to be transferred at its original purchase price, together with the actual expenses associated with procurement and transportation.

The agreement also provided for cooperation with Chinese merchants and the use of finished goods in commercial transactions at the fair [5].

These arrangements illustrate the complexity of interregional economic relations and the dependence of Uzbekistan's meat supply system on livestock procurement beyond the republic.

Nevertheless, financial assistance and organizational agreements failed to resolve all the difficulties affecting Uzmyasotorg.

Following its liquidation in 1928, responsibility for certain meat procurement and distribution operations was transferred to Uzbekbirlashuv.

A specialized Meat Department was established within the cooperative structure to coordinate livestock procurement, meat distribution, and supplies to consumer networks and military institutions.

A preliminary agreement with Myasoprodukt provided for an advance payment of 500,000 rubles, financed through an increase in the organization's credit line with the State Bank [7].

These developments marked an important institutional reorganization of meat trade management in Uzbekistan.

Analysis and Discussion

The activities of Uzmyasotorg demonstrate the difficulties associated with establishing a centralized meat procurement and distribution system during the early Soviet period.

One of the most significant problems was the discrepancy between planned trade indicators and actual economic performance.

Archival documents indicate that the fulfillment of the trade plan for agricultural commodities was officially recorded at 42.9%. However, the actual turnover was believed to be higher because reports from local trading units were submitted late [10].

This situation demonstrates the limitations of administrative accounting and the difficulty of obtaining reliable information from decentralized commercial networks.

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Delayed reporting prevented central institutions from accurately assessing procurement volumes, sales, and financial performance.

Another major challenge was the inadequate supply of meat products.

During the first quarter of the reporting period, consumer cooperative units, excluding the Bukhara Union for which information was unavailable, received and sold meat products worth approximately 120,000 rubles under the agreement between Uzbekbirlashuv and Uzmyasotorg [8].

However, these figures did not fully represent actual operations because reporting delays continued to affect statistical records.

Uzmyasotorg also failed to fulfill its contractual obligations concerning both the quantity and quality of supplied meat.

Archival materials suggest that its deliveries accounted for only approximately 25–30% of the total meat operations conducted through the lower-level cooperative network. The remaining demand was satisfied through independent procurement by local organizations.

The inadequate quality of supplied meat was associated with shortages of animal feed, insufficient fodder procurement, and the organization's limited operational experience.

These circumstances reduced the effectiveness of centralized procurement and forced local cooperatives to rely on alternative supply arrangements.

Financial instability constituted another important factor.

The need to extend repayment deadlines, provide additional credit, and resolve disputed accounts indicates that Uzmyasotorg experienced considerable difficulties in maintaining stable commercial operations.

The financial agreements concluded with Soyuzmyaso and Kazmyasoprodukt were intended to improve livestock procurement and restore organizational stability. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of these arrangements depended on the coordination of several institutions with different administrative responsibilities.

The organization of procurement at the Karkara Fair further illustrates these interdependencies.

Soyuzmyaso was assigned responsibility for purchasing livestock, while Uzmyasotorg participated through authorized representatives. Such arrangements were intended to reduce administrative uncertainty and improve accountability.

However, the reliance on multiple institutions also complicated financial settlements, transportation, and the fulfillment of contractual obligations.

Archival documents additionally reveal administrative shortcomings within Uzmyasotorg's Tashkent office.

The office was criticized for delays in submitting operational information, insufficient attention to assigned responsibilities, and repeated failures to implement instructions issued by the governing bodies of Uzbekbirlashuv [7].

These deficiencies weakened organizational coordination and contributed to the broader crisis.

The development of consumer cooperative retail networks nevertheless produced certain positive results.

During the period under examination, the number of meat shops, vegetable outlets, bakeries, bread retail facilities, and flour distribution points increased. This expansion reflected efforts to improve urban food supplies and strengthen the role of cooperative trade [8].

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The experience of Uzbekbirlashuv demonstrates that consumer cooperatives could perform an important role in food distribution, particularly when specialized procurement organizations were unable to fulfill their responsibilities.

The liquidation of Uzmyasotorg should therefore be understood within the broader context of institutional restructuring rather than as an isolated administrative event.

Its financial difficulties, inadequate procurement performance, poor reporting practices, and limited coordination with other organizations created conditions in which the redistribution of responsibilities became necessary.

The subsequent establishment of a specialized meat subdivision within Uzbekbirlashuv represented an attempt to improve management and consolidate procurement and distribution operations.

From a historical perspective, these developments illustrate the tension between centralized economic planning and the practical requirements of local food markets.

Although the Soviet authorities sought to establish a coordinated meat supply system, the effectiveness of their policies depended on financing, infrastructure, organizational experience, and cooperation between republican and all-Union institutions.

The archival evidence demonstrates that these conditions were not consistently achieved during 1926–1928.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates that the formation of the meat trade system in Uzbekistan during 1926–1928 was closely connected with the activities of Uzbekbirlashuv, Uzmyasotorg, Soyuzmyaso, Kazmyaso, and other state and cooperative organizations.

Archival materials reveal significant efforts to develop livestock procurement, expand retail networks, improve financial arrangements, and establish cooperation between republican and all-Union institutions.

However, Uzmyasotorg experienced serious organizational and economic difficulties, including inadequate planning, financial instability, insufficient livestock procurement, poor product quality, and delays in administrative reporting.

Despite attempts to stabilize the organization through additional financing and interinstitutional agreements, these problems contributed to its liquidation in 1928.

The transfer of its responsibilities to Uzbekbirlashuv reflected a broader restructuring of the meat procurement and distribution system.

The findings highlight the importance of institutional coordination, reliable financial management, adequate infrastructure, and effective administrative oversight in the development of food trade.

Overall, the experience of meat trade in early Soviet Uzbekistan provides valuable historical evidence concerning the formation of state-controlled and cooperative economic mechanisms during the transition toward a centrally planned economy.

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