



# BUKHARA IV. KHANATE OF BUKHARA AND KHORASAN

---

## BUKHARA

### iv. The Khanate of Bukhara and Khorasan

The first distinctive political separation of Transoxania from Persia took place in 873/1469 when the Timurid empire was finally divided into two independent states, Transoxania and Khorasan, ruled by the descendants of Abū Sa'd and 'Omar Shaikh, respectively. But it was only with the Sunnite Uzbek conquest of Central Asia and the unification of all of Persia under Shi'ite Safavid rule by Shah Esmā'īl I (r. 907-30/1501-24) that the Khanate of Bukhara and Khorasan became politically foreign to each other. From the very beginning, the central problem in political relations between the Safavid state and the Shaibanids of Transoxania was the control of Khorasan. This problem often dominated the relations between the Khanate of Bukhara and Persia also later, almost until the 13th/19th century.

The Shaibanids had gained hold of Khorasan during 911-14/1506-08, only to lose it gradually during 916-19/1510-13 to Shah Esmā'īl (*Ḥabīb al-sīar*, Tehran, IV, pp. 506-14; Ḥasan Rūmlū, ed. Navā'ī, II, pp. 156-61), and for the following twenty-five years the Uzbeks repeatedly tried to recover this loss. The leading figure in these attempts was 'Obayd-Allāh Khan, who resided in Bukhara, first as the ruler of the Bukhara appanage, and then as the supreme khan of the



Uzbeks (see iii, above). The Uzbeks led by ‘Obayd-Allāh Khan invaded Khorasan five times (930-31/1524-25, 933-35/1526-28, 935-37/1529-31, 938-40/1532-33, 941-44/1535-38; Eskandar Beg, pp. 50-66; tr. Savory, I, pp. 84-109) and were sometimes able to occupy the entire province up to Astarābād in the west (see Dickson, pp. 101-08, with further refs. to sources). Herat was captured by ‘Obayd-Allāh Khan twice, in 936/1529 and 942/1536. But the only decisive battle, which took place at Kosrowjerd near Jām (10 Moḥarram 935/24 September 1528), was won by the Qezelbāš under Shah Ṭahmāsb (Eskandar Beg, pp. 52-57; tr. Savory, I, pp. 87-93), and after that the Uzbeks had to retreat before Ṭahmāsb every time he came with the royal army to liberate the province (for a detailed analysis of these wars see Dickson, with references to the sources). The only major city of Khorasan that the Uzbeks were able to retain was Balk, which had been ruled by Bābor’s governor Moḥammad Zamān Mīrzā and was captured in 932/1526 by Kesken-Qarā-Soltān (second son of the Shaibanid Jānībeg-Soltān; Ḥasan Rūmlū, ed. Navā’ī, II, p. 257; Akhmedov, p. 79); since then the province of Balk was an important area of Uzbek settlement and a springboard for further Uzbek invasions and raids on Khorasan.

The next fifty years were a relatively peaceful period in the relations between the Shaibanids and Safavids, mainly because of the internal troubles in Transoxania, where a unified Shaibanid khanate continued to exist in name only. The peace was interrupted only twice: in 957/1550, by an unsuccessful attempt of the new Shaibanid supreme khan Nowrūz Aḥmad (Barāq Khan), to conquer Herat (see Ḥasan Rūmlū, ed. Navā’ī, II, pp. 443-45), and in 974/1567 by an equally unsuccessful raid on Khorasan by ‘Abd-Allāh-Soltān (future khan: *ibid.*, pp. 552-53). After ‘Abd-Allāh Khan II (q.v.) effectively unified the state he immediately renewed the campaigns in Khorasan. In 997/1589 his army conquered Herat, and the Qezelbāš, as well as many civilians there, were slaughtered (Eskandar Beg, I, pp. 386-89; tr. Savory, II, pp. 557-59). The next year ‘Abd-al-Mo’men, son of ‘Abd-Allāh Khan, who held Balk as his appanage, took advantage of the fact that Shah ‘Abbās had to face the Ottoman offensive in the west and conquered a great portion of Khorasan. Mašhad was captured after a four-months siege and sacked for three days. The Uzbeks slaughtered a great number of the city inhabitants and plundered the shrine of Imam ‘Alī al-Rezā (Eskandar Beg, I, pp. 411-14, tr. Savory, II, pp. 589-90). According to some accounts, ‘Abd-al-Mo’men even ordered the remains of Shah Ṭahmāsb, who had been buried near the shrine, to be exhumed and burnt and the ashes dispersed in the wind. (This story is told in *Tadkera-ye moqīm-kānī*, tr.



Semenov, pp. 62-68, which gives also the text of a long letter by ‘Abd-al-Mo’men to the Ottoman sultan Morād III, describing this event; Eskandar Beg, I, pp. 526-28, tr. Savory, II, pp. 702-07, also mentions this account, but seems to give preference to a different story, according to which the remains of Shah Ṭahmāsb were saved from desecration.) During the several subsequent years all of Khorasan was captured by the Uzbeks, who also raided other regions as far as Yazd and Kāšān (Eskandar Beg, I, pp. 525-26, 532-33, tr. Savory, II, pp. 701-02, 711-12). Attempts at pushing them out of Khorasan remained inconclusive until the death of ‘Abd-Allāh Khan in 1006/1598 and ‘Abd-al-Mo’men Khan in 1007/1598. In 1006-07/1598 Shah ‘Abbās reconquered Khorasan (Eskandar Beg, I, pp. 564-73; tr. Savory, II, pp. 748-60). The shah’s attempt to capture Balk (1010-11/1602), however, ended in failure (Eskandar Beg, II, pp. 619-628, tr. Savory, II, pp. 809-19).

The Shaibanids exchanged letters with the Ottoman sultans, some of which have been preserved in *Monša’āt al-salāṭīn* by Ferīdūn Beg (comp. 982/1574-75), but the assumption often made that there existed an active alliance against the Safavids has yet to be confirmed. It seems that the diplomatic correspondence between these two Sunnite powers contained mutual encouragements to fight the common enemy but made no effort to effectively coordinate their efforts (cf. Dickson, pp. 255-59).

During the Janid rule in Bukhara (see iii, above) hostilities alternated with periods of peaceful and sometimes even friendly relations. A reconciliation between Walī-Moḥammad Khan (1014-20/1605-11) and Shah ‘Abbās I took place in 1018/1609 (Eskandar Beg, II, pp. 815-16, tr. Savory, II, p. 1020), and after Walī-Moḥammad Khan’s flight from Bukhara in 1020/1611, Shah ‘Abbās received him in very friendly terms and tried to help him to regain his throne (Eskandar Beg, II, pp. 832-42, tr. Savory, II, pp. 1037-48). However, after the accession of Emāmqolī Khan (1020-51/1611-42) Uzbek raids on Khorasan, both from Bukhara and Balk, were renewed. Eskandar Beg (II, pp. 884, 893-94, 927-28, 961-62, tr. Savory, II, pp. 1100, 1109-10, 1145-46, 1183) mentions raids that occurred in 1223/1614, 1024/1615, 1027/1617, and 1030/1620-21. Embassies from Nāder-Moḥammad Khan (Emāmqolī’s brother, ruler of Balk) arrived in Persia in 1030/1620-21 (Eskandar Beg, II, pp. 962-64, 983, tr. Savory, II, pp. 1185-86, 1204-05), and negotiations resulted in a decade of peaceful relations (see Eskandar Beg, *D`āyl*, p. 25), but after the death of Shah ‘Abbās, in the 1040s/1630s ‘Abd-al-‘Azīz-Solṭān (whom the Safavid historians call khan although he did not bear this title at that time), son of Nāder-Moḥammad



Khan, conducted several large-scale raids on Khorasan (see Rettelbach, pp. 96, 107, 117, 118-20, 158, 164, 174; Eskandar Beg, *D`ayl*, pp. 102, 104; Moḥammad-Yūsof, pp. 150-52, 205-06); in the words of Moḥammad-Yūsof (p. 150), ‘Abd-al-‘Azīz Khan would go on raid against Khorasan more often than he would go to the bath. However, later, when he became khan in Bukhara (1055-91/1645-80), he apparently maintained good relations with Persia: regular exchange of embassies between him and Shah ‘Abbās II (1052-77/1642-66) is mentioned by Waḥīd Qazvīnī (pp. 148, 161, 209, 229, 263, 318).

In all military conflicts between the Uzbeks and the Safavids after the death of Shah Esmā‘īl I, during the 10th/16th and the 11th/17th centuries, the Safavids were clearly on the defensive, only trying to repel the Uzbek raids on Khorasan; the Safavids never attempted, in turn, to invade Transoxania. On the other hand, with the exception of the campaigns of ‘Obayd-Allāh Khan and ‘Abd-Allāh Khan, the Uzbeks did not try to occupy any part of Khorasan permanently (beside the province of Balk), and their campaigns were only marauding raids, even though sometimes on a rather large scale (the figures “20,000” and “30,000” soldiers often given in such Persian sources as Eskandar Beg, II, p. 927; tr. Savory, II, p. 1145; Moḥammad-Yūsof, pp. 150-51, 205; Rettelbach, p. 119, for the Uzbek raiding parties should perhaps not always be taken literally). The first and only conquest of Bukhara (as well as of K̄vārazm) undertaken by a Persian ruler was that of Nāder Shah in 1153/1740 (see iii, above). The conquest, however, did not result in the establishment of any effective Persian rule, and the vassal relations of Bukhara to Persia came to an end with the death of Nāder Shah. The third ruler of the Maṅgīt dynasty, Mīr Ma‘šūm Shah Morād (see iii, above), renewed the raids against Khorasan. He defeated Bayrām-‘Alī Khan ‘Ezz-al-Dīnlū Qājār, the independent Qajar ruler of Marv, and annexed the oasis of Marv to the Khanate of Bukhara, having first devastated it (‘Abd-al-Karīm Boḳārī, text, pp. 58-63; tr. pp. 131-44; Hedāyat, IX, p. 402). It is told that he hoped to be able to conquer Mašhad and to divide the treasures of the shrine of Imam ‘Alī al-Rezā among his troops (Bartol’d, p. 281), but he never came close to it. In the 13th/19th century the Khanate of Bukhara maintained peaceful relations with Khorasan—both on account of its relative weakness and because it ceased to be its immediate neighbor, being cut off by the territory of independent Turkmen tribes in the west and Afghanistan in the south.

It is often assumed that the nature of relations between the khans of Bukhara and the Persian court since the beginning of the 10th/16th century was



determined by the “sectarian rift” between the two after Shi‘ism became the state religion under Shah Esmā‘īl. This is, however, an oversimplification. The religious hostility was, indeed, sometimes rather intense. Šaybānī (Šaybak) Khan and his successors, almost all of whom were followers of Naqšbandī shaikhs of Transoxania, saw and portrayed themselves as the defenders of the orthodox Sunnite Islam from the Shi‘ite Qezelbāš threat, and it is possible that the *koṭba* read in the cities of Khorasan conquered by Šaybānī Khan, in which he was proclaimed *emām-e zamān wa kalīfat al-Raḥmān* (first in Herat, see *Ḥabīb al-sīar*, Tehran, IV, p. 379; cf. Semenov, 1954, pp. 67-70), symbolized his claim to the status of caliph as a head of all Muslims. The slaughter of the entire Sunnite population of the city of Qaršī by order of Najm-e Tānī Amir Yār-Aḥmad Ešfahānī in 918/1512 must have created a general hatred towards the Shi‘ites (*Ḥabīb al-sīar*, Tehran, IV, pp. 526-30; Ḥasan Rūmlū, ed. Navā‘ī, II, pp. 170-72), and stories of atrocities against the Sunnites committed by the Qezelbāš in Persia and especially Khorasan during the conquests of Shah Esmā‘īl I were brought to Transoxania by numerous refugees who flocked to the Shaibanid territory during the first two decades of the 10th/16th century. Many of these refugees, especially such influential religious figures as the author Fażl-Allāh b. Rūzbehān Konjī Ešfahānī, actively agitated for a Sunnite “reconquista” (see Fażl-Allāh, introd., pp. 25, 28-29). Similarly, stories of plunder and acts of violence against the Shi‘ites committed by the Uzbeks in Khorasan increased the hostility toward them among the local population. Still, all this did not necessarily affect the actual policy of both sides towards each other, which had to be determined by more practical considerations, and very often the sectarian hatred was used only as a poorly disguised pretext for plunder and settling personal relations (cf. Dickson, pp. 42-43, 185-86, where the fact is noted that in the Qezelbāš-Uzbek political relations “Realpolitik” usually prevailed over the ideology). As mentioned above, periods of peaceful relations were probably not less common phenomenon than wars and raids, they simply were not paid as much attention by the contemporary chroniclers.

In addition to the frequent hostilities two problems connected with them plagued the relations between the khans of Bukhara and the Persian court throughout the period under discussion: the Central Asian Muslim’s use of the pilgrimage route to Mecca via the Khorasan road, and the Persian captives in Bukhara. Opening the Khorasan road for the *ḥajj* had a great importance for the people of Bukhara because in its absence the Central Asian pilgrims had to go across the Caspian Sea, over the Caucasus, and via Istanbul, which was far more expensive and often much more hazardous. However, the Khorasan



road was not automatically closed because of the sectarian rift between Transoxania (and *Ḳvārazm*) and Khorasan. At least, several Bukharan and Khwarazmian rulers, actual and deposed, were able to make the pilgrimage through Persian territory, sometimes with a large escort—evidently with the consent of Persian authorities (see *Tadkera-ye moqīm-kānī*, tr. Semenov, p. 101, on the *hajj* of Nāder-Moḥammad Khan in 1061/1650-51; p. 107, on the *hajj* of ‘Abd-al-‘Azīz Khan in 1091/1680; Šēr-Moḥammad Mo’nes, pp. 150-51, on the *hajj* of Yādgār Khan of *Ḳīva*). The arrival in 1007/1598-99 of Mīrzā Beg with his household (*kūč*), an important *naqīb* and a *ḳūāja* of the Naqšbandī order, from Transoxania on the way to Mecca is mentioned by Eskandar Beg (I, p. 547, tr. Savory, II, p. 727). It is well attested that in the 13th/19th century common Central Asian pilgrims could take the Persian route despite its dangers (see Vámbéry, pp. 9-12); this had probably been the case also earlier, at least in times of peace.

The problem of the captives in Central Asia was more difficult. Eskandar Beg (II, pp. 629, tr. Savory, II, pp. 819-20) claims that the Uzbeks adopted their practice of taking Persian civilians into captivity and selling them as slaves in Central Asia and beyond after the invasions of Khorasan by ‘Abd-Allāh Khan and ‘Abd-al-Mo’men Khan. This practice was legally justified by the Sunnite lawyers, who proclaimed that the Shi‘ites were infidels (and Khorasan, accordingly, *dār al-ḥarb*; the terms *kāfer* and *rāfez* were both widely used in the literature as pejorative designations of Shi‘ites). Persian slaves were found in Bukhara in large numbers down to the Russian conquest (and even later), where they were employed mainly as household servants and the khan’s bodyguards (cf. Mannanov, pp. 34-37). No serious attempts to release these captives were made by Persian governments; the only known mission which had this specific purpose—that of Režāqolī Khan in 1267/1851—was sent to *Ḳvārazm* (the main slave market of Central Asia), not to Bukhara (see Ādamīyat, pp. 599-610). All that the Persian authorities could do was to retaliate in kind by capturing and selling Central Asian Sunnites as slaves; however, because the Qezelbāš never raided Transoxania itself, the main victims were the Turkmen living along the Khorasan border (see Eskandar Beg, loc. cit.). On the other hand, the Turkmen, especially since the 12th/18th century, became the main suppliers of Persian slaves to both Bukhara and *Ḳvārazm*, raiding Khorasan constantly.

The frequent hostilities between the khans of Bukhara and the Persian court must have contributed to the gradual economical decline of Khorasan, but it is



difficult to assess how much of the decline that was evident in the 13th/19th century should be attributed to these hostilities and how much to the resurgence of tribalism and the political turmoil of the 12th/18th century in Persia. It is even more difficult to assess the results of the sectarian rift between Bukhara and Khorasan for the economy of Transoxania. Trade between the two countries certainly continued, although probably on a smaller scale and frequently interrupted by wars. The main impediment for trade was not the religious differences, but the insecurity of trade routes.

It was in the field of cultural exchange that relations between the two were most deeply affected by the sectarian antagonism. Anti-Shi'ite propaganda in Bukhara and anti-Sunnite propaganda in Khorasan remained strong. Even though it only seldom directly influenced the "Realpolitik" of the two governments, it had serious consequences on individual and emotional level (cf. Dickson, pp. 147-51, 155-58, 241-42). Exchanges of polemical letters between the theologians of Transoxania and Persia proper, quoted in some historical works (e.g., Eskandar Beg, I, pp. 390-98, tr. Savory, II, pp. 561-75; *Tadkera-ye moqīm-kānī*, tr. Semenov, pp. 206-21), were popular reading to judge from the number of manuscripts of the various *enšā'*-works in which they are preserved. The mutual perception of Central Asian Sunnites and Persian Shi'ites was tinted by such negative literary clichés as "Uzbekān bī-īmān" (the faithless Uzbeks) and "Qezelbāš bad-ma'āš'" (the villainous Qezelbāš). The circulation of literary works of all genres on each side tended to exclude more and more the works written on the other side of the "confrontation line": an examination of the existing catalogs of Persian manuscript collections shows that, whereas before the 10th/16th century works written in Persia proper would also commonly reach Transoxania and vice versa, only few such works would come to Transoxania after that, and even fewer works written in Bukhara (and Central Asia in general) could be found in Persia proper. The question of possible mutual influences in visual arts since the 10th/16th century has not been sufficiently studied, but it seems that they also substantially decreased. It has been suggested that this cultural isolation from Khorasan was detrimental for Central Asia (*The Cambridge History of Islam* I, 1970, p. 468), and it may also be argued that it was not beneficial for Khorasan either (see, further, Bregel, pp. 10-11).



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

---

- F. Ādamīyat, *Amīr(-e) Kabīr o Īrān*, 4th ed., 1354 Š./1975.
- B. A. Akhmedov, *Istoriya Balka (XVI-pervaya polovina XVIII v.)*, Tashkent, 1982.
- V. V. Bartol'd, *Sochineniya* II/1, Moscow, 1963.
- Yu. Bregel, *The Role of Central Asia in the History of the Muslim East*, Afghanistan Council, Occasional Paper (New York) 20, 1980.
- M. Dickson, *Shah Tahmasb and the Uzbeks. The Duel for Khurasan with Ubayd Khan: 930-946/1524-1540*, Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton, 1958.
- Eskandar Beg, *Dāy-e Tārīk-e ālamārā-ye ābbāsī*, ed. A. Sohaylī K̄vansārī, Tehran, 1317 Š./1938, pp. 1-146.
- Faḡl-Allāh b. Rūzbehān, *Mehmān-nāma-ye Bokārā*, ed. R. P. Dzhaliyova, Moscow, 1976.
- Ferīdūn Beg Aḡmad, *Monša'āt al-salāṭīn*, 2nd ed., Istanbul, 1274/1858.
- B. Mannanov, *Iz istorii russko-iranskikh otnoshenii v kontse XIX-nachale XX veka*, Tashkent, 1964. Reżāqolī Khan Hedāyat, *Tārīk-e rawżat al-ṣafā-ye nāşerī*, Qom, 1339 Š./1960.
- G. Rettelbach, *Óulāşat as-siyar. Der Iran unter Schah şafī (1629-1642) nach der Chronik des Muḡammad Ma'şūm b. Óuāg;agī Işfahānī*, Munich, 1978.
- A. A. Semenov, "Sheibani-khan i zavoevanie im imperii timuridov," in *Materialy po istorii tadzhikov i uzbekov Srednei Azii I*, Stalinabad, 1954, pp. 39-83.
- Şēr-Moḡammad Mo'nes, *Ferdaws al-eqbāl*, ed. Yu. Bregel, Leiden, 1988.
- Tadkera-ye moqīm-kānī*, tr. A. A. Semenov, Tashkent, 1956.
- A. Vámbéry, *Travels in Central Asia*, London, 1864.
- Ēmād-al-Dīn Moḡammad-Ṭāher Waḡīd Qazvīnī, *Ābbās-nāma*, ed. E. Dehgān, Arak, 1329 Š./1951.



Moḥammad-Yūsof Wāleh, *Ḳold-e barīn*, pub. in Eskandar Beg, *Dayl*, pp. 146ff.