

The Role Of The Southern Region Of Central Asia In The Struggle For The Crown And Throne In The Bukhara Khanate – The Case Of Balkh (Second Half Of The 17th Century)

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Abstract: The strategic importance of the southern parts of Central Asia, especially the city of Balkh, in the political history of the Bukhara Khanate in the latter part of the seventeenth century is examined in this article. The paper examines the Ashtarkhanid dynasty's deterioration of central authority, the growth of the appanage system, and the escalation of princely power battles. The study explores Balkh's significance as a major political and military hub, its incorporation into diplomatic ties with the Safavid and Mughal empires, and its role as the primary seat of heirs apparent, drawing on primary historical sources like the writings of Muhammad Yusuf Munshi, Muhammad Amin Bukhari, and Abulg'ozzi Bahodir Khan. The results show that Balkh was an important hub in the khanate's succession system and had a significant impact on the political climate of the time.

Keywords: Balkh; Bukhara Khanate; Ashtarkhanid dynasty; political history; seventeenth century; succession struggle; appanage system; central authority; Nadr Muhammad; Subhonquli Khan; Abdulaziz Khan; Safavid Empire; Mughal Empire.

Introduction: The attainment of state independence at the end of the 20th century was without a doubt the most significant event in the existence of the Uzbek people. Interest in the rich history of our people and the desire to highlight it in accordance with current needs grew even more when the Republic of Uzbekistan attained sovereign independence. With the attention of the Uzbek government and the head of state, studying our history, developing an honest attitude toward it, and preparing the next generation with historical memory became a significant issue. It is especially crucial to research the political events of Uzbekistan's history during the Ashtarkhanid dynasty's rule in the Bukhara Khanate, analyze the legitimate power structure in the processes of throne and crown struggles, and thoroughly consider the strategic role of administrative regions. It is well known that during the 16th and 17th centuries, the Bukhara Khanate, the Safavids of Iran, and the Mughal Empire used the southern parts of Central Asia as a major political arena. The Ashtarkhanid monarchs typically picked the closest individuals, known as crown princes, to lead the

city's administration because of the city of Balkh's particular importance. During the reign of Bukhara Khan Nadr Muhammad, the foundations of statehood began to weaken. He could not repeat the achievements of his brother Imamqulikhan in governing the state. In particular, he divided the territories of the khanate among his sons and grandsons as appanages. Specifically, Abdulaziz received Samarkand, Khusrav Sultan received Badakhshan and Kunduz, Subhonquli Sultan received Balkh, Qutlug' Muhammad Sultan received Hisor, Abdurahmon Sultan received Shibirghan and Andkhoy, his grandson Qosim Sultan received Huzor, his nephews Muhammadyor Sultan received Shahrizabz, and Sufi Sultan received Talikan. This led to the weakening of central authority. The overthrown Khan traveled to Balkh and requested assistance from Shah Jahan, the Mughal emperor. The king then dispatched his sons, Murad Bakhsh and Aurangzeb, to subjugate Balkh. Khusrav Sultan, the son of Nadr Muhammad, was captured and transported to India. After learning of this, Nadr Muhammad was compelled to escape to

the court of Abbas II in Iran via Shibirghan and Merv. He was treated with the utmost regard by Shah Abbas II, the ruler of Iran. The Shah and his nobles reportedly traveled two hours outside the city to welcome the Bukhara khan. They showered him with the utmost honors and returned to the city with a noble horse. The Bukhara khan was honored with lavish festivities and innumerable pyrotechnics when Abbas and Nadr Muhammad arrived in the city. Following two and a half years in Iran, the shah provided Nadr Muhammad Khan with a sizable force and helped him retake Balkh. During his tenure as governor of Balkh, Nadr Muhammad established ties with India. He specifically developed diplomatic ties with Shah Jahan (1627–1658), the Mughal ruler, during this time. He dispatched Vaqqos Hoji as an emissary to India in 1632. In retaliation, the Mughal emperor dispatched an embassy to Nadr Muhammad under the leadership of Tarbiyat Khan. In April of 1613, while his father, Nadr Muhammad, was the governor of Balkh, Abdulaziz ibn Nadr Muhammad was born. Poshsho Oyim, the daughter of Abdurahim Khoja, a member of the Jo'ybor Khodjas, was the mother of Abdulaziz Khan. Abdulaziz started running the province of Khuttalon under his father's watchful eye in 1626. From 1630 until 1642, he oversaw the western districts of Balkh. Following Imamqulikhan's succession to the throne in 1642, Nadr Muhammad appointed his sons appanages and gave them authority over every part of the khanate. Abdulaziz Khan was also given the governorship of Samarkand, one of the khanate's major districts, in these circumstances. Abdulaziz Khan's reign is remembered as a unique time in history, characterized by power struggles among his own brothers as well as attacks against foreign foes. Abdulaziz Khan was not pleased with his younger brother Subhonquli's official coronation as crown prince and his appointment as governor of the region of Balkh, so he sent Qosim Sultan, another younger brother, to challenge Subhonquli for the job. It should be mentioned that Qosim Sultan was a brilliant and poetic ruler who lacked military acumen. Consequently, one of Subhonqulikhan's envoys put him to death. Subhonquli also assassinated another brother, Qutlug' Sultan, during these princely conflicts. Iskandar Khan, Mansur Khan, Ibodullah Khan, Muhammad Siddiq Khan, Abdalqosim Sultan, Ubaydullah Khan, Asadullah Sultan, and Abulfayz Khan were the sons of Subhonqulikhan; they were all buried in Balkh. The first six of these had already passed away while Subhonqulikhan was still alive; their specifics are listed below. Abdulaziz Khan abdicated the throne in 1681. This was due to several factors. First of all, he was worn out by the protracted conflict with the Khiva Khanate, and there were more disgruntled factions. Second, he was often at odds with

his younger brother. In 1651, his brother Subhonqulikhan was appointed governor of Balkh and engaged in a struggle with Abdulaziz Khan for the khanate's crown. Abdulg'afforkhoja, the tutor of Abdulaziz Khan, mediated the conclusion of a peace treaty between them in 1658. Subhonqulikhan acknowledged his older brother's power in accordance with this arrangement. In exchange, he was proclaimed crown prince and his rule over Balkh was authorized; nonetheless, Abdulaziz Khan was included on the currency and the khutbah. Subhonquli, Nadr Muhammad Khan's son, was first named governor of Soli Saroy when he took the khanate throne. But he quickly had second thoughts and named him governor of Balkh in 1642. Once again, Subhonquli's tenure as Balkh's governor was short-lived. Nadr Muhammad Khan gave his son the governorship of the Kaxmer area after dismissing him from the Balkh governorship. Nadr Muhammad traveled to Balkh in an attempt to maintain control of the throne after a plot resulted in Abdulaziz Khan taking over the khanate. But there were restrictions attached to the assistance that the Mughals were asked to provide. Following the 1651 invasion on Balkh by the brothers Abdulaziz Khan and Subhonquli Khan, Nadr Muhammad Khan was compelled to cede control of the city to his son Subhonquli and go for the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca. Numerous scholars have concluded that Nadr Muhammad Khan's departure from the throne was voluntary in light of this circumstance. It is well known that Subhonquli Khan attempted to build cordial ties with Abulg'ozzi Bahodir Khan, the Khwarazm Khan, when he was still in power in Balkh before taking the throne. In his quest to take over the throne of Bukhara, he intended to win Abulg'ozzi's support. He also sent an emissary to Abulg'ozzi Khan to ask for help in taking Bukhara, according to the book Shajarai Turk: Subhonquli Khan, the Khan of Balkh, abruptly sent an emissary with the following message: "My brother Abdulaziz Khan plans to kill me and seize Balkh as well." My only guardians are you, my brother and father. Other than you, I have nowhere to go. He will come capture Balkh as well and murder me even if I am innocent if you do not turn against him and attack Bukhara. But Subhonquli Khan was wed to Sharif Muhammad Sultan's daughter, who was the brother of Abulg'ozzi Khan. As a result, he became the son-in-law of Jannat Makon, also known as "the one whose abode is paradise," Abulg'ozzi Khan. Subhonquli Khan most likely said these things for this reason. The aforementioned sentence makes it clear that Subhonquli Khan married Abulg'ozzi Khan, strengthening the ties of their political collaboration. Between 1651 to 1681, Subhonquli ruled over Balkh and Badakhshan until Abdulaziz Khan gave him the crown. Despite his efforts to bring the khanate

together, Subhonquli Khan was always plagued by the Balkh war. Consequently, a number of his sons fell prey to fratricide. He later fought Mahmudbiy, the newly appointed governor of Balkh, in a number of brutal battles. Subhonquli Khan had to make concessions to Mahmudbiy after these internal conflicts, and he sent his grandson, Muhammad Muqim Khan, to Balkh as his deputy. After taking the khanate's throne in 1681, Subhonquli Khan had to put a stop to the nation's internal strife while also choosing a successor. Abulfayz Khan, Siddiq Muhammad Sultan, Ubaydulla Sultan, Iskandar Khan, Abulmansur Sultan, and Ibodulla Sultan were among his sons. The crown prince was supposed to be the governor of the province of Balkh, according to khanate tradition. Iskandar Khan, who crossed the Amu Darya to the south and started running the province of Balkh, was the first to get this title. But his reign was short-lived. The explanation was that Iskandar Khan died in 1683 after his meal was tainted by Mavzun Suray, a loyal associate of his brother Abulmansur Sultan. Iskandar Khan was only twenty-eight years old at the time. Following that, Abulmansur Sultan started to consider becoming the governor of Balkh. However, Iskandar Khan's younger brother, Ibodulla Sultan, was appointed Balkh deputy by his father, Subhonquli Khan, who was aware of his schemes and saw that he was unable to hold the throne. The Balkh people, however, disobeyed him. Ibodulla Sultan was succeeded as governor by his brother Abulmansur, who controlled the province for only four months. The explanation was that Abulmansur plotted against Ibodulla out of dread of his potential claim to the throne, which led to the death of yet another brother. Thus, via a series of intrigues, Abulmansur Sultan was able to eliminate his brothers, who were capable and politically adept, one by one in his quest for the throne. Another of Subhonquli Khan's sons started to make an appearance on the political scene around this time. The prince in question was Siddiq Muhammad, who joined the fight for his destiny and first engaged his brother in intellectual conflict before publicly vying for the throne. At first, Siddiq Muhammad rallied the Beks against his brother Abulmansur's stance, and as a consequence, a gang of conspirators was created with the intention of toppling Abulmansur. A bunch of conspirators assassinated Abulmansur while he was traveling to see his aunt, Shamsiya Bonu Khanim. Abulmansur was just twenty-two years old at the time. As a result, it became evident that Siddiq Muhammad would now be in charge of Balkh, and that is exactly what occurred. He started to control Balkh on his own in 1683. Nevertheless, since Siddiq Muhammad was very ambitious and sometimes disobeyed his father, the approach he adopted in Balkh quickly infuriated Subhonquli Khan. Subhonquli Khan

asked his son Siddiq Muhammad for military support when Khiva Khan Anush Khan (1663–1686) launched an offensive against Movarounnahr, but he declined. Furthermore, Subhonquli Khan was very troubled when Siddiq Muhammad despatched an embassy to India without his father's consent. Furthermore, he pushed a number of powerful amirs and khanate intellectuals and conducted politics in Balkh as he saw fit. The author of *Muhit at-Tavorikh* claims that Hasan Khoja, one of the most revered sheikhs, was insulted by Siddiq Muhammad Sultan, who then drove him out of Balkh. Subhonquli Khan marched toward Balkh in the fall of 1685 to constrain his son after seeing that the situation was becoming more problematic. Once within the city, he apprehended Siddiq Muhammad and his followers, who were all executed for their crimes. Muhammad Yusuf Munshi, a Balkh historian, claims that Subhonquli Khan ordered his son Siddiq Muhammad to be imprisoned. Three months later, Siddiq Muhammad died at the age of twenty-one from malaria. Subhonquli Khan, however, condemned his son and the other conspirators to death, according to the Bukhara historian Muhammad Amin Bukhari (1700). After losing four sons in quick succession, Subhonquli Khan took note of the situation and named his closest aides to be Balkh's deputy governor. Biy Ataliq, a court official who served as a father figure and was in charge of raising princes, first held this position. Following his passing in 1687, Balkh's deputy was Mahmudbiy Ataliq, who would go on to become Muqim Khan's guardian. Although Muqim Khan, the son of Subhonquli Khan's late son Iskandar Khan, was officially awarded Balkh, Mahmudbiy, his guardian, really handled the administration. Later, upon Subhonquli Khan's passing, Muqim Khan proclaimed his independence and refused to acknowledge the power of his uncle, Ubaydulla Khan (1702–1711), who had succeeded to the throne of Bukhara. From 1702 to 1707, he was the ruler of the Khanate of Balkh. Muqim Khan seized Qobadiyan in 1703 and Termiz in 1704 to the Balkh region with the help of Mahmudbiy Ataliq. Balkh's independence, however, was short-lived. The murder of Muqim Khan in March 1707 was the consequence of a plot by the palace beks led by Mahmudbiy, his guardian. Following that, on May 27, 1707, Ubaydulla Khan attacked Balkh and conquered the city. Odilbiy Ming, who had been Ataliq before, was given charge of running the city when Balkh, the khanate's second administrative hub, was taken. Political considerations also played a role in this choice, since any prince who succeeded to the Balkh throne would then be eligible to seize the Bukhara Khanate's throne as well. Thus, Odilbiy Ming, one of Ubaydulla Khan's close associates, was named governor in lieu of a prince. Sultans Ubaydulla and Asadulla were still young men at the time of

Subhonqulikhan's death. In keeping with his older brothers, Ubaydulla Sultan also claimed Balkh and, thus, the role of heir presumptive. However, Asadulla Sultan fell prey to a plot orchestrated by Javshan Qalmoq, one of the top emirs. Given her considerable power in state administration, it is quite probable that Ubaydulla Khan's adored wife, Bibi Poshsho, was involved in his younger brother's removal from succession. Abdulla Sultan, also known as Abulg'ozzi in certain accounts, was the son of Ubaydulla Khan and this lady. In summary, historically, Balkh was a crucial strategic location between Iran and Transoxia. The city's political transformations and concentration of power were crucial to preserving the khanate's crown. Balkh was made even more significant politically and militarily by its position as the heir-apparent city. As a political hub, Balkh was involved in the khanate's power conflicts. Balkh's status as the heir-apparent city is confirmed by the disputes between Vali Muhammad Khan and Imamqulikhan as well as its ties to Iran. Several diplomatic and political choices taken at Balkh solidified the city's standing as a crucial hub of succession.

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