

Diplomatic Relations with the Baburian Empire During the Reign of Bukhara Khan Abdulazizkhan

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Abstract: This study examines the diplomatic interactions between Abdulaziz Khan, the designated figure of the Ashtarkhanid lineage, who assumed leadership subsequent to Nadr Muhammad Khan in the Bukhara Khanate, and Aurangzeb, the sovereign of the Baburi realm, utilizing primary sources and scholarly works.

Key words: political correspondence, diplomatic mission, Ashtarkhanids, Baburids, Safavids.

Introduction. The Ashtarkhanid dynasty, governing the Bukhara Khanate, engaged in active diplomatic interactions with numerous nations. Specifically, the Ashtarkhanids maintained political ties with the Baburi Empire, which held sway over India in the early 17th century. Abdulaziz Khan, the Ashtarkhani ruler of the Bukhara Khanate, initiated diplomatic relationships with the rulers of the Baburi dynasty.

Literature review. The historical documentation of the political relations between the Ashtarkhanid dynasty and the Baburi state can be explored through various sources such as “Matlab-ut Talibin” by Muhammad Talib, “History of Muqimkhani” by Muhammad Yusuf Munshi, and correspondences archived at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Additionally, scholars like N.K. Sinha and A.Ch. Banerddji (1954), N. Nizomiddinov (1966), A. Burton (1997), M. Khairullaryev (2003), and numerous others have conducted specialized research concerning the history of foreign relations between Bukhara and India.

Research Methodology. This article employed historical, systematic, objective, comparative analysis, and statistical methods to scrutinize the mutual political relations between Ashtarkhani Abdulaziz Khan and the Baburid rulers who governed the Bukhara Khanate.

Analysis and results. The reign of Ashtarkhani ruler Nadr Muhammad (1642–1645) in the Bukhara Khanate was short-lived. During a hunting trip to Karshi, several officials proclaimed his eldest son, Abdulaziz Khan, as Khan in Khojand. Recognizing the situation, Nadr Muhammad Khan fled to Balkh instead of returning to Bukhara. His sons defied his commands, leading Nadr Muhammad Khan to seek assistance from Babur ruler Shah Jahan. In response, Shah Jahan dispatched an army under Sultan Murad Bakhshi to Gur to retaliate against Nadr Muhammad Khan's assaults on Kabul and to annex Balkh. Subsequently, Babur's forces seized control of Balkh, prompting Nadr Muhammad Khan to seek refuge in Iran. The Safavid Abbas II of Iran (1642–1667) welcomed Nadr Muhammad Khan, urging him to invade Bukhara with the promise

of substantial military support. Nevertheless, Nadr Mohammad declined the proposal, opting not to collaborate with Iranian troops in capturing Bukhara. Nadr Muhammad Khan resided in Iran for two and a half years, while Balkh remained under Indian authority. In 1645, Shah Jahan summoned Prince Murad from Balkh and entrusted the governance of Balkh to his younger son, Aurangzeb[5.54].

Bukhara Khan Ashtarkhani Abdulaziz Khan amassed a substantial army and embarked on a campaign to liberate Balkh from Baburids dominance. Khiva Khan Abulgazi and Kazakh Khan Yangir joined forces to aid Abdulaziz Khan. Additionally, the Khorezms dispatched a three-thousand-strong army, resulting in a four-month conflict that compelled Indian forces to retreat. Following the Baburids withdrawal from Balkh, Abdulaziz Khan appointed his brother, Subkhan Quli Khan, as the Governor of Balkh. Prior to the departure of Indian troops from Balkh, Babur Shah Jahan summoned Nadr Muhammad Khan to Balkh, expressing his preference to transfer the governorship to him.

Subkhanquli Khan emerged victorious over his father, who subsequently retreated to Balkh, while Nadr Muhammad Khan abandoned his aspirations for governorship and embarked on a journey to Makkah[5.55]. According to Sinha and Banerjee, the hindrances encountered by the Indian army in advancing towards Balkh can be attributed to Babur's princely offspring, who were inclined towards opulence and were disinclined to reside in distant territories, as well as their discord with the indigenous populace. Despite Shah Jahan's lavish expenditure of 40 million rupees in the campaign for Balkh, no discernible advantages were realized[2.246].

I. Nizomiddinov posits that the departure of Indian troops from Balkh was influenced by domestic turmoil within India during the 17th century. Concurrently, the rivalry among Shah Jahan's sons and their respective factions intensified. Furthermore, the inhabitants of Rojava ardently fought for their autonomy. Amidst the tension between the Baburis and the Ashtarkhanis, relations between Bukhara and Iran experienced amelioration[5.55].

Nadr Muhammad, en route to Mecca, met his demise in 1651 in Simnan, Iran. Subsequently, Abdulaziz Khan and Subkhanquli declared a period of mourning in Bukhara and Balkh. Shortly thereafter, a discord surfaced between the siblings, prompting Abdulaziz Khan to dispatch a substantial military contingent led by Muhammad Sultan to wrest the governorship of Balkh from Subkhanquli Khan. However, Muhammad Sultan's campaign to seize Balkh proved unsuccessful, compelling Abdulaziz Khan to acknowledge Subkhanquli as the rightful governor.

A manuscript housing a collection of 102 distinct letters housed within the manuscript repository of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan encompasses a missive scribed by Abdulaziz Khan to Shah Jahan[3.57]. According to the missive's contents, Subkhanquli Khan was accused by Abdulaziz Khan of intercepting the envoys dispatched to India and appropriating the gifts they bore. The missive also underscored the imperative of fortifying the diplomatic ties between the nations.

I. Nizomiddinov contends that the missive was penned around 1653–1655, a few years subsequent to Subkhanquli's investiture as the governor of Balkh. This epoch was marked by escalating internal conflicts in India, culminating in a power struggle between the aging Shah Jahan and his son Aurangzeb[6]. Consequently, Shah Jahan's inability to dispatch an emissary to Bukhara was attributed to the prevailing circumstances. Aurangzeb ascended to the Babur Empire's throne in 1658, subjugating Shah Jahan under his regime, leading to the latter's demise in 1666. During Aurangzeb's reign, amicable relations were fostered with the Bukhara Khanate. The genesis of this camaraderie can be traced back to a congratulatory missive extended by

Bukhara Khan Ashtarkhani Abdulaziz Khan on the occasion of Babur ruler Aurangzeb's ascension to the throne.

Three letters from Abdulaziz to Aurangzeb appear in the manuscript "Letter, Munshaat and Manshurot" housed at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan[7.113]. I. Nizomiddinov extensively analyzed this letter and the accompanying embassy in his scholarly investigation.

Khan of Bukhara Abdulaziz Khan dispatched the letter alongside the ambassador Khoja Ahmed al-Husaini Naqshbandi. Within the letter, Aurangzeb's character is exalted, emphasizing the invaluable nature of collaboration in fostering friendship. Furthermore, the conclusion expressed hope for more frequent arrivals of ambassadors and letters from India[5.57].

Francois Berny, a medical professional who journeyed through India during that period and served in the royal court, recounted the rituals observed by ambassadors paying respects to Aurangzeb. The ambassadors saluted Aurangzeb thrice from a distance, followed by a customary gesture of touching the ground. Although the king could have personally received the letters from the ambassadors, he opted not to. Instead, Aurangzeb's amir acknowledged the message, which was then presented to the king. After a meticulous perusal, Aurangzeb commanded the bestowal of gifts upon the ambassadors, including a velvet nimcha, a turban, and a silk flower-embroidered scarf. The envoys brought various offerings such as blue stone boxes, a long-wool camel, exquisite horses, and an assortment of fresh and dried fruits from Bukhara[8.129].

Aurangzeb inquired about scientific advancements in Samarkand, particularly the status of the Ulugbek observatory and the cultivation of exotic fruits. Prior to the ambassadors' departure to their homelands, Aurangzeb assembled all the amirs, presenting each with two sidras and dispatching eight thousand rupees to their designated location. Subsequently, the ambassadors sent gifts to the Bukhara Khan, including kimhobs, fine textiles, silk fabrics embellished with gold and silver, carpets, and daggers adorned with precious gems[8.129-130].

The Bukhara ambassadors sojourned in Delhi for a span of four months, yet some perished during the return journey due to extreme heat. As documented in "Mirotul Olam", these envoys were granted two audiences by the Indian monarch in the fourth year of Aurangzeb's reign, on the dates of four Rabi-us-Sani (November 27, 1661) and Rajab 24 (March 14, 1662). The Indian ambassadors were furnished with monetary funds and commodities valued at approximately one lakh and twenty thousand rupees. At the onset of the fifth year of Aurangzeb's rule, the envoys were permitted to depart; however, the head of the delegation, Khwaja Ahmad al-Husaini, passed away in Lahore[5.59].

Munshi Muhammad Kozim made references to various individuals in the diplomatic context within his publication "Alamgirnama". Specific names such as Jawhar Khan, Khushhol Khan, Mirzabek Mirshakar, Latifbek, Mirakhur, among others, were cited. Each individual was bestowed with one thousand rupees and valuable garments[5.60].

During the sixth year of Aurangzeb's rule (1664), Kuchakbek, acting as the ambassador for Ashtar Khan Abdulaziz Khan, delivered horses and hunting animals to the Babur ruler. In return, Aurangzeb honored Kuchakbek with a ceremonial robe and two thousand rupees. The ruler expressed fondness for the hunting birds among the gifts, prompting Babur to correspond with Aurangzeb Abdulaziz Khan, requesting further birds and animals for hunting. The exchange of such gifts was described by Aurangzeb as emblematic of friendship[9.60].

In July 1665, Aurangzeb dispatched an envoy led by Mustafakhan Khofi to Bukhara. This delegation carried a letter intended for Abdulaziz Khan, along with a gift valued at 150,000 rupees.

While the exact purpose of Mustafakhon Khofi's mission and his return from Bukhara remain unclear, Abdulaziz Khan's letter to Aurangzeb sheds light on some details. The missive extolled Aurangzeb's character, emphasized the need to reinforce their bond, and proposed a joint military action against the Shiites in Iraq and Khurasan. It is intriguing, however, that Mustafakhon Khofi did not express a definitive stance on this matter. The letter also hinted at forthcoming ambassadors, Tahir Khan and Obid Khan, who were to be dispatched to India soon[10.60].

On May 11, 1669, envoys led by Rustambi arrived in India from Bukhara. Rustambi Abdulaziz Khan brought numerous gifts alongside the correspondence. Aurangzeb warmly welcomed Rustambi at court, where the Indian monarch's envoy was bestowed with an honorary robe, an embellished bracelet, a dagger, thirty thousand rupees in currency during the initial reception. Subsequently, during the second reception on September 7, 1669, another robe, a precious sword, a shield, and an elephant were presented. Additionally, 30,000 rupees in cash were allocated, and 16,000 rupees were given to Rustambi's companion. As per I. Nizamiddinov, the correspondence from Abdulaziz Khan to Aurangzeb was conveyed by Rustambi[5.61].

In May 1670, following Rustambi's embassy, Yakkatoz Khan departed from India. The envoys carried 100 royal horses, an elephant valued at 4,000 rupees, a gem-adorned jamdar weapon, a sword, a bracelet, and various other gifts to the Khan of Bukhara[5.61].

Munshi Muhammad Kozim, in his literary work "Alamgirnama", recounted the visit of an ambassador named Muhammad Sharif from Bukhara to India in 1681. This envoy was graciously received by the Indian ruler and was presented with 25 thousand rupees, an honorary cloak, a horse equipped with a golden saddle and harness[5.61].

Conclusion and Recommendations. In brief, the diplomatic relations with India experienced tension during the initial years of Abdulaziz Khan's rule. A primary contributing factor to this was the Indian military's occupation of Balkh. Consequently, Abdulaziz Khan endeavored to establish a coalition with Iran to confront the Babur Empire. However, following the loss of Balkh to the Ashtarkhanids, the relationship between Bukhara and India saw improvement.

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