

HISTORY OF THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE BUKHARA EMIRATE AND IRAN

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Annotation: From the period of the Samanid rule, Iranian and Arab Shiite communities began migrating to the Bukhara oasis. This process was prompted by the intensifying power struggles in the center of the Arab Caliphate and its surrounding regions, as well as the persecution of Caliph Ali and his followers. As a result, seeking political refuge, Shiite communities crossed the Amu Darya and reached the Bukhara oasis. During this period, they even laid claims to local power. However, from the 9th century until the early 20th century, no state led by a Shiite community was established in the Bukhara oasis. Nevertheless, during the reigns of the Samanid and Manghit dynasties, representatives of Shiite movements of Iranian origin rose to the rank of viziers and attempted to take control of the government. In both cases, their rule ended in tragedy. This study explores the relations with Iran and the process of formation of the Iranian community in Bukhara during the reigns of the Manghit dynasty's amirs: Amir Shohmurod, Amir Haydar, and Amir Nasrullo. The first political and military base of the Iranians in Bukhara emerged after the invasion of Bukhara by Nadir Shah Afshar. Subsequently, the nature of Iranian migration to the city of Bukhara and its surroundings changed. Beginning with the reign of Amir Shohmurod, large-scale campaigns were conducted in the province of Khorasan. Amir Shohmurod, loyal to Sunni Islam and considering himself its protector, persecuted the rulers of Khorasan who adhered to Shiism. During his numerous campaigns, he resettled various ethnic groups under the general label of "Iranians." As a result, large Iranian quarters began to form within the Bukhara Emirate.

His successors — Amir Haydar and Amir Nasrullo — continued the campaigns in Khorasan, forcibly relocating many people to the outskirts of Samarkand and Bukhara. Another portion of the Iranian population appeared in Bukhara as a result of being captured by Turkmens and sold into slavery at Central Asian markets. Naturally, starting from the second half of the 19th century, they began to be emancipated by order of the emir. Consequently, residential areas for Iranians such as the Afshor Mahalla, Tor-Tor Mahalla, Mahallayi Eroniyon, Zirabad, Ushot, and Ironshoh emerged in Bukhara. They were permitted to build mosques and husayniyyas and to freely hold various religious and national ceremonies. In these areas, they primarily engaged in crafts such as copperworking, weaving, and trade. Some also enlisted in the military.

A significant role in the modernization of the emirate's military forces was played by Abdusamad Tabrizi, an Iranian by origin. With his Iranian soldiers, he introduced modern artillery, weaponry, and uniforms for the armed forces. These topics are examined in detail in the present study.

Keywords: Amir Shahmurad, Amir Haydar, Amir Nasrullah, Abbas Quli, Tabrizi, Merv, Husayn Khan

Introduction

The period and number of Iranians arriving in the Bukhara Emirate varied over the years. This was primarily influenced by the nature of relations between the two sides and the policies of the rulers. The process developed according to different trends. During the reigns of the early emirs

– Shahmurad, Haidar, and Nasrullah – Iranians were resettled in Bukhara as a result of military invasions. Under Emir Muzaffar and Emir Abdulahad, they became an active part of society and held governmental positions.

In particular, the formation of the Iranian community in Bukhara was based on several factors:

- they arrived as merchants and settled;
- they were brought as captives;
- they were purchased as slaves;
- they remained as victors;
- they came due to unrest and in search of work.

T. Fayziyev, in his research, provides a detailed analysis of the importation of Iranian slaves into Bukhara. In particular, in the 15th century, during the Timurid period and under Abdullah Khan II, a fatwa issued by Mulla Shamsiddin – along with subsequent fatwas related to the enslavement and sale of Iranian Shiites – is confirmed by various sources [1].

Main Findings

As mentioned above, the survival of some Iranians in Bukhara is connected to the invasions of Nadir Shah into the Bukhara Khanate. Initially, in July 1737, Nadir Shah's son, Reza Qoli, disobeyed his father's orders and launched an attack on the territory of Mawarannahr (Transoxania), reaching as far as Karshi. However, after suffering heavy losses, he was ordered by his father to retreat to Balkh [2,3]. In the following periods, this city became one of the main trade centers for Iranians.

The second time Nadir Shah crossed the Amu Darya was on September 6, 1740 (الثانيه جمادى ١١٥٣), when he met with Hakimbiy-Ataliq and convinced him of his good intentions toward Abulfayz Khan. On November 11 of the same year, Nadir Shah approached Bukhara via Karakul. According to the agreement in the Chor-Bakr area, the eastern side of the Amu Darya remained under the control of Abulfayz Khan. However, 20,000 Turkmens and Uzbeks [4,5] were forced to enlist in Nadir Shah's army [6]. One of Abulfayz Khan's daughters was given to Nadir Shah's harem, and another to Alikuli Mirza. They agreed that the Amu Darya would be the boundary between them. At that time, Nadir Shah, eager for various riches, sent his troops led by Lutfali Khan to Samarkand. They took the jade tombstone of Amir Timur and the iron gates of his mausoleum to Mashhad [7]. Later, due to unrest in the administration of Bukhara, Nadir Shah sent troops there several times. After Nadir Shah's death in Iran, part of his army (Afshars, Qajars, Kurds, etc.) remained in Bukhara and settled in the Afshar quarter in the southeastern part of the city [8]. Muhammad Rahim Khan, who seized power in Bukhara, continued Nadir Shah's style of rule [9]. He replaced the emirs of various provinces and beyliks. During this period, he appointed the first Iranian servant to the position of Kushbegi.

During the reign of Emir Shahmurad Jannatmakon (1785–1800), the event in Merv is mentioned in nearly all contemporary sources on relations with Iran. Even in John Malcolm's work on the history of Iran from this period (published in London in 1815), 19 pages are devoted to the activities of the emir [10]. The author notes that these events were known to several people of his time, particularly to Bayram Ali Khan (whose father was from the Qajar family and mother from the Salur Turkmen tribe) and his son Haji Muhammad Husayn Khan.

In the year 1200 AH (1785 AD), Emir Shahmurad captured Merv-Shahidjon (Shah Jahan – “Royal World”). Mirzo Sodiq Munshi describes this event with the phrase: “انداخت دار پای به و گرفت غلام سر” (*sar g‘ulom griftu bepoyi dor andox*t – “took the head of the slave and threw it at the foot of the gallows” – U.R.). From this chronogram, the year 1785 is deduced [11].

In this battle, the emir destroyed the Murghab dam, and Merv was flooded. The ruler of the region, Bayramali Khan, executed Azdinlu Qajar and appointed his own son, Haji Khan, in his place. Later, he brought him to Bukhara along with others. In a letter sent by Emir Haydar to Kushbegi Muhammad Hakimbiy, it is written: “We made the wife and children of Husayn Khan

slaves and concubines according to the narration of the scholars...1217,” and refers to their sale [12]. This means that Haji Khan and his family, who had been brought during the reign of Emir Shahmurad, were still in slavery during the rule of Haydar Khan in 1802.

Later, their status improved, and Haji Khan studied in Bukhara under Domla Mirak A’lam [13]. He continued his studies afterward. Haji Khan was sent back to Tehran only during the reign of Amir Husayn. The Shah welcomed him warmly and granted him waqf (pious endowment) properties in Tehran. There, he built a madrasa. Today, a major waqf foundation in Iran is still known as "Khāni Merv" [14]. After the capture of Merv, 5,000 people were brought to Bukhara as captives. Another source reports that in this battle, the emir mobilized a 30,000-strong army from Merv and the Qizilbash [15], appointing his brother Umarbiy as governor and founding a city called Islamabad below Merv [16].

At the same time, the Iranians of Zirabad were resettled – this took place precisely during this period. The novel *"The Slaves"* also gives several examples of Iranian slaves from Zirabad [17]. Occupied with the wars in the Caucasus, Agha Mohammad Khan Qajar sent a letter to Shahmurad in which, referring to former state borders, he requested that the Amu Darya be maintained as the boundary between them [18]. However, during his reign, Emir Shahmurad launched several more campaigns against Iran.

Later, during military campaigns against Iran, as G. Burnashev writes, in early 1795, an army of 15,000–16,000 warriors was led by Emir Shahmurad’s son, Haydar Khan. The Bukhara army would make a terrifying noise during battle. Soldiers who demonstrated bravery and agility in combat were rewarded with ranks and salaries. The defeated and their possessions were considered the property of the ruler.

In this campaign, during the conquest of four Persian cities, he pardoned two cities that accepted the Sunni madhhab of Islam, which was followed by the people of Bukhara. The two cities that did not submit to the laws of the victors and offered strong resistance, causing significant losses to the army, were ruthlessly destroyed. The rest of the population was taken captive and sold in Bukhara [19]. In this war, 18,000 people were brought to Bukhara as prisoners.

Bejijon fought up to the gates of Mashhad in 1794–1795 (1209 AH) [20]. On his return, he also resettled the inhabitants of lands not connected to Mashhad to Bukhara [21]. He sent a letter to the ruler Shahrukh Mirza and the nobility of Khorasan, urging them to convert to Sunnism, warning that otherwise he would launch a new campaign.

According to some sources, even Amir Shahmurad, after this event, conducted campaigns into Khorasan every year until the end of his life. At that time, his army numbered 60,000 men, but he would go to Khorasan with only 30,000 warriors [22]. Uzbek khans carried out several campaigns into Khorasan, but never destroyed this sacred city [23].

Later, his descendants also continued their campaigns into Khorasan. In particular, Emir Sayyid Haydar launched another attack on Merv in the year 1221 AH (1806–1807 AD). At that time, his commander Niyazbek Parvanachi destroyed Sultanband and resettled two hundred families in Bukhara [24].

Emir Haydar carried out another campaign into Khorasan in 1810 and relocated 40,000 Persians from Merv to Bukhara. These settlers were Turks who had earlier been relocated by Nadir Shah from Azerbaijan and Karabakh [25]. Therefore, their language was one of the dialects of the Turkic language [26].

O. Olufsen noted that during the reign of Emir Haydar, around 40,000 Persian families lived in the cities of Bukhara and Samarkand within the Bukhara Emirate. Although they followed the Sunni madhhab, it was also claimed that, deep down, they remained Shiites [27].

The 1813 campaign ended in failure. Emir Shahmurad’s younger son, Din Nasirbek, had been appointed governor of Merv during his father’s reign. However, he later refused to submit to Emir Haydar. For three to four years, Emir Haydar launched raids on Merv twice a year. Battles took place between them, and Din Nasirbek eventually moved to Mashhad with his family (two

wives, three young children, and fifty *mahrams* – *retainers*). During this campaign, the emir also relocated part of Merv's population to Bukhara [28].

However, it was not only the Bukhara Emirate or the Turkmens that contributed to the strained relations between the two countries — hostility toward the Bukhara Emirate could also be seen in the relations between Iran and Russia. For example, in 1817 (1232 AH), a Russian envoy who arrived at the court of the Persian Shah raised the issue of whether these territories (such as Khiva and Bukhara) should fall under Iranian or Russian control, since Russian caravans were being attacked and looted there [29].

At the beginning of the 19th century, the majority of the population in Bukhara were Persians, most of whom were slaves. A small number of them had been brought for sale, but the majority were relocated from Merv during the reign of Emir Sayyid. In order to protect the state, he resettled 4,000 families from Merv near himself, in the vicinity of Samarkand. They often recalled the era of Nadir Shah and believed that it would return. The emirs and officials of Bukhara placed great trust in them. Among the 500-strong army of the Bukhara Emirate, 450 were Persian soldiers. A. Vambéry also mentions in his work several high-ranking military officials of Iranian origin, including Muhammad Hasan Khan, Zayn al-Biy, Mahdi-Biy, and Lashkar-Biy [30]. The *dastarkhanchi* was also a freed resident of Merv [31].

According to custom, rulers would send envoys to various states upon ascending the throne. When Emir Nasrullah came to power, he sent Qobilbek Karluq to Iran. However, the Shah of Iran, Muhammad Shah (1834–1848), expressed his disapproval of the slave trade involving Iranians in Bukhara and did not accept the envoy. Another envoy, Boltaqulbek, who was sent to Istanbul, passed through Iran and appeared before the Shah. When the Shah showed him the same displeasure as before, the envoy explained that these actions were carried out by the Turkmens between the two states, and that the Bukharans, out of mercy, bought them at a good price and then granted them freedom. The Shah was pleased with this response [32].

From the time Emir Nasrullah ascended the throne, the involvement of freed Iranian slaves in state administration began to increase. One of them was Ayazbiy, who rose to the position of artilleryman.

At the same time, during the reign of Emir Nasrullah, significant changes took place in the structure of the Bukhara army. This process was led by an Iranian, Abdussamad Tabrizi. Abdussamad Khan had initially served in the Persian army. He was arrested on charges of murder. He then escaped from prison to India, where he served a relative of Fath Ali Shah who was under British protection. Plotting with other servants, he killed his master. Afterward, he was arrested and sentenced to hanging by the Supreme Court. However, he once again managed to escape, this time to Kabul, to the court of the Afghan Emir Dost Muhammad Khan.

By nature, rude and quarrelsome, Abdussamad fell into conflict with the Emir's son, Muhammad Akbar, and in 1838 arrived in Bukhara to Emir Nasrullah [33]. Various sources mention that his close ties with the British caused controversy [34]. For this reason, Emir Nasrullah eventually had him executed.

In 1844, Muhammad Shah Qajar sent Abbas Quli Khan with 45 servants, 23 horses, 14 mules, and 29 camels to Emir Nasrullah Khan, together with Bukhara's envoy to Iran, Sayyid Khalil Khoja. The envoy continues to describe the Iranians he encountered in Bukhara:

When he arrived in Bukhara, Husayn Khan, an Iranian, was serving as *biy* in Karakul (a military post in this context – U.R.). It was one of the significant positions in the Emirate. Forty years earlier, during a diplomatic mission, 16-year-old Husayn Khan from the Göklen tribe had been captured by Turkmens and taken toward Urgench. He was later sold to various people and eventually brought to the palace during the reign of Emir Haydar. He rose to this post during the reign of Nasrullah Khan, secretly preserving his Shi'a faith. At that time, his relations with the Emir were good, and he governed Karakul. The meeting with him took place secretly, in the evening.

The embassy had several aims: Muhammad Shah wished to establish friendly relations between the two states; to obtain an order from the Emir for the release of Iranians held in slavery and to

prohibit the practice; and to encourage the Emir to develop warm relations with the British government, considering the risky political climate of the time. These goals were partially achieved. In particular, over 1,000 Iranian slaves were repatriated by the Emir's order, and he also saved Joseph Wolff from execution. According to the envoy, no other ambassador had ever succeeded in such a mission.

In his travel report, the envoy mentions that Muhammad Shah also granted the wishes of the Emir through Sayyid Khalil Khoja. During the trip, various local beks presented Sayyid Khalil Khoja with turquoise stones, a cashmere scarf, a light *yaqtak*, and gold coins.

When studying the history of Bukhara-Iran relations, it is particularly important to note that this embassy's records were based on gradual and personal observations. However, the envoy also shows occasional signs of making concessions in favor of his own country.

During Emir Nasrullah Khan's war with Kokand, the Khivan Khan Allah Quli Khan launched a campaign against Merv and relocated 40,000 families to Khorezm. In other words, the inhabitants of this city were constantly subjected to invasions and forced resettlements by both states. In Merv, political control alternated between Bukhara, Khiva, and Iran.

In Abbas Quli Khan's travel notes, there is a unique piece of information not found in other sources: Emir Nasrullah allegedly killed his brother, Husayn Khan (who was staying in his house at the time the envoy was in Bukhara), under suspicion of being a Shi'a. Of course, this information is not confirmed by other sources. However, it is significant that the Iranian envoy mentioned this aspect.

In response to the envoy's arguments concerning the Iranian slaves — such as their release and the reminder that they are fellow Muslims — the Emir replied: "These customs are ancient and were not invented by us." He added that the issue was complex and should be resolved by the scholars of both countries. However, the matter of trading Shi'as as captives had already been addressed by scholars during the Shaybanid era. During the reign of Nadir Shah, large gatherings of *ulama* were also held on this issue, but they ended without any result. The Emir assured the envoy that if relations between the two countries improved in the future, the matter would also be resolved positively, and he stated that he would already begin issuing certain propagandistic decrees.

After several meetings, the Emir agreed to the envoy's request to release Iranian slaves. During the final meeting (which, according to the envoy, was held in secret with the Emir), the Emir promised to escort the envoy with three to four hundred Iranians present in Bukhara and to exempt approximately one thousand Iranian slaves—who had been purchased for thirty thousand gold coins—from military service, allowing them to return with the envoy. Thanks to the envoy's diplomatic skill, the Emir even stated that "if anyone is inclined to leave, no one should prevent him, and the envoy may take him along," and a decree was issued to this effect [38]. As a result, over one thousand slaves were gathered. Among them, 150 had already managed to purchase their own freedom. Additionally, the envoy personally bought and emancipated 26 slaves (five of whom were descendants of *sayyids*) at his own expense.

When the envoy returned to Iran, the Emir sent his own representative, Mirakhur Subhankuli Bek, as an emissary. The fact that the delegation traveled with a large caravan through the Turkmen steppes to reach Mashhad suggests that the influence of the Emir of Bukhara extended even into those regions.

At that time, the Emirate maintained a force of 20,000 warriors, though only 1,000 soldiers and 200 artillerymen under the command of Abdusamad Tabrizi received salaries from the state treasury. Special barracks (*sarbazkhana*) and housing were constructed for the soldiers between the Uglon and Tallipoch gates [39].

Another system established in the Emirate in connection with Iranian slaves was that every captive transported across the Amu Darya had to pay five *tilla*. Escaped slaves were marked with seals on their wrists or thighs and returned to their owners [40]. As a result, even freed individuals were required to obtain this amount. Many sent letters back to their homeland

requesting financial help [41]. These frontier revenues were granted as *suyurghal* (tax exemption or land grant) to Abdusamad Tabrizi and supplemented soldiers' wages. During the Emir's visit to Shahrisabz, after *udaychi* (military exercises), he traveled accompanied by his personal mounted guard, composed of hundreds of young Iranian slave boys [42].

Conclusion

Shi'ism was widely spread among Iranians—starting from the Samanid period, Shi'a communities began to form in Bukhara. They had come to this part of the Islamic East seeking refuge from the oppression of the Umayyads. In subsequent centuries, they also established various political entities. During the Safavid era, after Shi'ism became the state religion in Iran, the Shaybanids launched military campaigns against them. This period saw policies of suppression and fragmentation of the Shi'a population, marked by severe persecution.

Under the Manghit dynasty, the dominant policy in Bukhara involved the forced relocation and enslavement of Iranians. It was during this period that the community of modern Bukharan and Samarqandi Iranians took shape.

Relations between the Emirate of Bukhara and Iran during the Manghit period were characterized primarily by military campaigns launched by Bukhara. As a result of the conquest of Merv and the activities of Turkmen groups referred to as *tulpa* ("bands"), Iranian villages emerged in the cities of Bukhara and Samarkand and in the surrounding territories of the Emirate. Within society, Iranians were primarily engaged in crafts and military service.

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5. mlqm, jān, tarikh Haml īrān, volume: 2, page: 607, afswn, Trān - Tīrān, 1380 h.sh. In the work the number is given as 10,000.
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7. Later, Nadir Shah regretted his actions and sent them back to Samarkand.
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10. The information was very detailed, covering everything from the emir's clothing to his conversations. For example, the author writes: "The name of this extraordinary man was Ameer Maassoom (Emir Ma'sum), his title was Shah Moorad, which means 'the desired king,' but his well-known and celebrated name was Beggee Jan (Begijon). His compatriots also delighted in uttering this name. I, too, preferred it over the other names in my work," writes John Malcolm.
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