



THE ASHTARKHANIDS IN SAMARKAND

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ABSTRACT

This article examines how the Ashtarkhanid dynasty migrated from the Astrakhan territories to the region of Mawarannahr, the granting of the Miyonkol area of Samarkand to them by the Shaybanids, and the activities they carried out in Mawarannahr, all based on contemporary sources.

KEYWORDS: Ashtarkhan, Yor Muhammad, Miyonkol, Samarkand, Joni Muhammad.

INTRODUCTION

Although the history of the Ashtarkhanid dynasty of the Bukhara Khanate has been studied by scholars both in our country and abroad, its connection with the history of Samarkand remains largely unexplored. According to "Bahr al-Asrar," the Toqay-Temurids [5:60b], "Tarikh-i Muqimkhani" [14:32b], and "Taj al-Tawarikh" [10:72b], the Ashtarkhanids, as well as in "Dastur al-Mulk" where they are referred to as the Joniy dynasty [15:147], in the 13th–14th centuries lived in the western territories alongside their relatives, the Shaybanids [5:8a; 1:81–93].

They lived as nomads only rarely and mainly inhabited the northeastern shores of the Caspian Sea. As the Golden Horde (the Ulus of Jochi) weakened, it fragmented into several small principalities. In the 1430s, the Astrakhan Khanate emerged in the Volga region. "Astrakhan" is the Russian form of "Ashtarkhan," derived from "Hajji Tarkhan." "Tarkhan" was a privileged title among Turkic-speaking peoples, existing since the era of the Khazar Khaganate [8:256–257].

In the mid-15th century, Uz Temur bin Toqay Temur, brother of Abay, established khanate rule in Kazan and Crimea [7:140], while descendants of Abay's relative Muhammad established their rule in Astrakhan on the northwestern coast of the Caspian Sea [9:38–39]. Yor Muhammad Khan's grandfather Javokh and his father Mangishlov lived in Astrakhan. However, they did not rule Astrakhan; rather, Javokh's two brothers, Ahmad and Mahmud, governed Astrakhan [5:35a; 1:81–93].

The exact time of the Ashtarkhanids' arrival in Mawarannahr remains a subject of scholarly debate. According to "Bahr al-Asrar" [5:58a–b], Mangishlov bin Javokh Sultan, Yor Muhammad's father, came to Mawarannahr with his family in 1528, as mentioned in "Imamqulinama" [19b; 5:36b–37a].

This is further supported by the research of Bobur Aminov, who confirmed that a tombstone located in Shammi village of Kattakurgan district, Samarkand region, belongs to Mangishlov, who died in 1528 [4:23–24]. "Bahr al-Asrar" also records that he died in Miyonkol [5:38a]. Upon arriving in Miyonkol, Mangishlov married his daughter, Tursunbegi Khanim, to Iskandar, the father of Abdullakhan [5:38b].

However, according to Mir Muhammad, Yor Muhammad Khan and his family moved to Mawarannahr in 1556, after the Russians conquered Astrakhan [3:111; 12:145b].

Considering that "Silsilat as-Salatin" was written in India in the 18th century, the information from the tombstone confirming their settlement in Samarkand in 1528 gains further credibility. At that time, the ruler of Bukhara, Iskandar Sultan (father of Abdullakhan II), warmly welcomed Yor Muhammad and his family, arranging marriages between his daughters Zuhrobegin and Gulposhsho Begin and Yor Muhammad's son Joni Muhammad.

From the union of Joni Muhammad and Zuhrobegin, three sons were born: Din Muhammad, Boqi Muhammad, and Vali Muhammad. Additionally, Joni Muhammad had another son, Alim Muhammad, and daughters Shoh Muhammad, Muhammad Sultan, Ajab Khanim, and Ammaxonim [5:71b-72a].

In total, he had six sons and two daughters. Ajab Khanim married the Juybari sheikh AbdiKhoja and had a son named Ibadullakhoja. She later married Abdulazizkhan [5:72a]. Joni Muhammad's second daughter, Ammaxonim, first married Tursun Muhammad from the Ashtarkhanid dynasty. After Tursun Muhammad's death, she remarried Khoja ibn Hasan Khoja from the Juybari family.

Meanwhile, Yor Muhammad married Masud Sultan Khanim, the aunt of Abdulmumin. Abdullakhan II married Yor Muhammad's sister, Mirjon Khanim [3:58b]. Clearly, through these marriage alliances, the Ashtarkhanids strengthened their kinship ties with the Shaybanid dynasty. As a result, the Ashtarkhanids gained control over territories including Samarkand, Badakhshan, Turkistan, Margilan, Tashkent, and Ura-Tepa. Even Kazakh sultans pledged allegiance to them.

After the death of the Shaybanid Abdulmumin, when the Kazakh Khan Tawakkal seized Samarkand and other regions of Mawarannahr, the Ashtarkhanid princes Boqi Muhammad and Vali Muhammad went to the aid of the then-ruler of Bukhara, Pir Muhammad II, and defeated the Kazakhs.

Boqi Muhammad killed Abduvosibiy, who had opened the gates of Samarkand to the Kazakhs, expelled the enemy from Samarkand, and wounded the Kazakh Khan Tawakkal.

As a reward for his contribution to this victory, Pir Muhammad II appointed Boqi Muhammad as the governor of Samarkand. Boqi Muhammad governed Samarkand from 1599 to 1600. As governor, he earned the respect and support of the local population through his considerate treatment of the citizens and the public works he undertook. For instance, he distributed war spoils among his soldiers.

He also had a veranda built and a dome erected at the Khodja Ubaydullah Ahrar al-Vali khanqah in Samarkand, where people would gather to perform Friday prayers.

The descendants of Ahrar enjoyed considerable prestige in Samarkand.

For example, during the Kazakh invasion of Samarkand in 1602-1603 [5:72b], Boqi Muhammad Khan accidentally killed the son-in-law of Khodja Ahrar, which strained his relationship with the sheikh. Fearing the deterioration of their relationship, Boqi Muhammad refrained from entering Samarkand.

Nevertheless, by showing special respect to the members of the Ahrar lineage, Boqi Muhammad likely sought to strengthen his own rule.

CONCLUSION

The Ashtarkhanid dynasty initially lived in the northeastern shores of the Caspian Sea, where they established their own state.

After the descendants of Iskandar Sultan seized control of the Bukhara Khanate, they invited their relatives — the Ashtarkhanids — to Mawarannahr in 1528 and granted them lands in the Kattakurgan region of Samarkand.

Later, the support of the people of Samarkand played an important role in the Ashtarkhanids' accession to the throne of Bukhara.

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