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MUHAMMAD RAHIMBIY AS THE FOUNDER OF THE EMIRATE OF BUKHARA

Abstract. *Muhammad Rahimbiy (1713–1758) was the founder and first ruler of the Manghit dynasty, marking the establishment of the Emirate of Bukhara. He ascended to power in 1756, becoming the first emir of Bukhara; as he was not a descendant of Genghis Khan, he could not assume the title of khan. Muhammad Rahimbiy played a crucial role in consolidating Uzbek tribes, ending internal strife, and strengthening central authority. His reign laid the foundation for the new dynasty and significantly influenced the political and economic development of the region. He also focused on restoring key cities, such as Samarkand, and revitalizing their economic life, which became central to the emirate's prosperity.*

Keywords: *Nadir Shah, Rizaquli Khan, Uzbeks, Hakim-atalyk, Manghit, Abulfayz Khan, Ashtarkhanids, Hakimbiy, Rakhimkuli, Abdulmuminkhan.*

INTRODUCTION

In 1736–1737, the son of the Iranian ruler Nadir Shah (1688–1747), Rizaquli Khan (1719–1740), having subjugated the Uzbeks of Balkh, crossed to the right bank of the Amu Darya with an army of 12,000. Rizaquli Khan besieged the city of Karshi, which was located in the territory of the Bukhara Khanate. The ruler of Karshi, Hakimbiy, was aided by the ruler of Khazar Babakhan, the Khan of Bukhara Abulfayz Khan himself, along with the ruler of Samarkand, Adinakulibiy, and the leader of the seven tribes of Miyankal Uzbeks, Gaybulabiy. Although the Bukharan troops outnumbered the Qizilbash (Sami, 1962:132; Tokhtiev, 2012:124–129), this did not save the situation. The Iranian troops were well armed and had European-style artillery. The arrival of the

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Khorezm Khan Ilbars to the aid of the Bukharans ultimately forced Rizaquli Khan to make peace with the Bukharans and return to Balkh (Kermanegi, n.d.:30–31; Kügelgen, 2004:79–82, 269–271).

Having entrusted the reins of power to Hakim-atalyk Manghit (d. 1743), Abulfayz Khan himself indulged in pleasures. Hakim-atalyk was dissatisfied with the Khan's behaviour and constantly feared that Abulfayz Khan would deal with him. He therefore perceived Nadir Shah's campaign as salvation and wrote him a letter expressing his submission and obedience. Hakimbiy Atalyk considered Nadir Shah's invasion «a blessing.» He sent his son Muhammad Rahimbiy (atalyk of the Ashtarkhanids 1743–1753; khan of Transoxiana 1753–1758) with expensive gifts and tributes to meet the shah and invited him to Bukhara. Rahimbiy was warmly received by Nadir Shah and retained at the shah's headquarters. The atalyk's next step in strengthening his political position was a personal meeting with Nadir Shah. On Abulfayz Khan's orders, Hakimbiy, along with dignitaries and representatives of the Juybar sheikhs, arrived at Nadir Shah's headquarters in Chardzhou bearing lavish gifts. In his letter, the khan expressed goodwill toward the conqueror. After an honourable reception, in a private conversation, Hakimbiy informed Nadir Shah of the instability of the khan's power and of his readiness to serve the shah (Jurabayev, 2014:103; Tokhtiev, 2022).

Meanwhile, Nadir Shah moved from Chardzhou to Karakul, and from there to Bukhara. Nadir Shah presented the atalyk with a charter granting him extensive powers. Hakimbiy returned to Bukhara as Nadir Shah's representative. He chose the Miri Arab madrasa as his residence and announced to the population that they could turn to him for security matters. A de facto dual power had been established in Bukhara. Muhammad Hakimbiy was now called *emiri kabir* (great emir) (Lyutsh, 1912:49–51; Sami, 1962:44–46). The entire population appealed to the emir. Under the pretext of convening a meeting, Abulfayz Khan wanted to deal with Hakimbiy, but, having guessed the khan's intentions, the atalyk did not appear. When the khan himself appeared before him in Miri Arab, the atalyk ordered fire on the khan's retinue. Abulfayz Khan returned to the palace, confused.

MAIN PART

When Nadir Shah set up camp near Bukhara in the Chahar-Bakr region, on the advice of Hakim Atalyk, Abulfayz accompanied him to meet the conqueror and offered

his submission. Abulfayz Khan presented Nadir Shah with expensive gifts. Nadir Shah declared him his vassal, recognized his title of khan, and entrusted him with the governance of Turkestan. Nadir Shah not only received Abulfayz Khan well but even became related to him. As a contribution, Nadir Shah recruited 12,000 Bukharan warriors into his army including, at Abulfayz's request, rebellious emirs and their tribes. Rakhimkuli, a Kalmyk, was appointed commander of this army and sent with it to Mashhad (Bartold, 1927:69–107; Tokhtiev, 2022).

After Rakhimkuli's death, Rahimbiy was appointed commander. Hakimbiy died in 1743. Rahimbiy's authority and influence increased particularly after the suppression of the Chinese-Kipchak rebellion led by Ibadullah-biy of Katta-Kurgan in 1743–1744. As the source notes: «Thus, fear of Rahimbiy settled in the hearts of the people» (Sami, 1962:121; Kermanegi, n.d.:44–46).

In 1747, Rahimbiy plotted and assassinated Abulfayz in the Miri Arab madrasa. To appease the emirs and residents of Bukhara, he enthroned Abulfayz Khan's son, nine-year-old Abdulmumin Khan, proclaiming himself the khan's viceroy and confidant, effectively seizing power for himself. The Qizilbash army, dissatisfied with Rahimbiy's treachery, laid siege to Bukhara in protest. News then arrived of Nadir Shah's assassination by his nephew Alikulikhan (1719–1749). Taking advantage of this, Rahimbiy bestowed rewards and gifts upon the Qizilbash, convincing them to return to their homeland, as news of Nadir Shah's death had sparked an uprising against the Qizilbash. The Qizilbash, agreeing with Rahimbiy, left Bukhara and returned to their homeland (Istoriya narodov Uzbekistana, 1947:121; Sami, 1962:44–46).

Without accepting the title of khan himself, Rahimbiy placed Abulfayz Khan's young son Abdulmumin Khan (1747–1751) on the khan's throne. After this, Rahimbiy began to decisively strengthen state authority. In the first stage of the struggle for the centralization of power, he expanded his circle of supporters through bribery, gifts, and peace negotiations. He himself noted: «With pleasantness of manners, wisdom, and mercy, he subdued all the emirs and tribal elders and raised the banner of autocracy and sovereignty.» Rahimbiy's next step was to strengthen the foundations of the legitimacy of his power. To this end, he married his daughter to Abdulmumin Khan. Rahimbiy apparently feared strong opposition from the emirs, since the rise of one of them almost always led to unrest. Each time the influence of one of the emirs grew, there was a danger of limiting the freedom of the remaining emirs; uniting, they would overthrow and

harshly punish the offending emir. The khan was powerless to prevent these internecine conflicts among the emirs; he was merely a puppet in their constant struggle for influence and power. But the entire struggle was waged in the khan's name and under the pretext of eliminating his enemies. Therefore, while the khan lived, Rahimbiy's power was in danger emirs could, under the pretext of Rahimbiy's trampling on the khan's authority, rebel against him. Moreover, only by destroying even the nominal authority of the khan could he fully ensure the legitimacy of his rule. This is why, in the present author's view, he assassinated Abdulmumin Khan in 1751. But only in 1753 did Muhammad Rahimbiy, having secured the consent of the nobility and clergy, ascend the Bukhara throne with the title of emir (Istoriya narodov Uzbekistana, 1947:121).

DISCUSSION

To ensure the legitimacy of his power, Rahimbiy appointed emirs to high positions and bestowed numerous gifts upon them. In each region, he appointed new governors khakims from among his supporters and confidants. Rahim Khan took decisive measures to strengthen state authority in the regions.

In 1756–1757, he conducted two campaigns in Hissar. During the conquest of Hissar, Rahim Khan resettled some of the hostile Uzbek tribes to Bukhara and other central cities, thus ensuring the final subjugation of the region. After the cessation of hostilities, Muhammad Rahim ordered the settlers to return to their original locations; as a result, 20,000 families were resettled. This measure demonstrated Muhammad Rahim's desire to restore normal life in the khanate's main cities. However, his subsequent actions showed that he dealt harshly with the rebellious population of Hissar. The remaining residents were required to contribute 4,000 men to the khan's troops, pay a contribution of 20,000 gold coins, and supply 3,000 horses and 500 camels. Before leaving Hissar, Muhammad Rahim ordered the execution of all captured prisoners, and a *kalla minora* («minaret of heads») was erected near Denau using the heads of those executed. These measures were most likely intended to intimidate other centrifugal forces and demonstrated Muhammad Rahim's adherence to a hardline political line.

CONCLUSION

Muhammad Rahim's service at Nadir Shah's court, where he became familiar with advanced military technology, troop organization, and government, played a significant role in his political success. Iranians wielded considerable influence in Rahim Khan's

government, directly assisting Muhammad Rahimbiy the de facto founder of the Manghit dynasty in seizing and maintaining power (Ivanov, 1958). This circumstance also indicated that Rahim Khan was seeking new social and ethnic support for his policy of state centralization. His service at Nadir Shah's court convinced Rahim Khan of the need to involve representatives of Iranian peoples in government. An important factor was also the support of that segment of the population whose interests were undermined by incessant feudal wars, including the merchant and artisan population, mostly Tajiks. The clergy formed an important social support network. In 1756, at the initiative of the clergy, Muhammad Rahim, having married Abulfayz Khan's daughter, assumed the title of khan. In addition to representatives of influential Uzbek tribes, the clergy also participated in the ceremony of raising the khan on a piece of white felt. During his reign, the position of chief Bukhara qadi assumed great importance, receiving requests and complaints from all clergy and reporting them directly to the khan (Akhmedov, 1985).

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