



HISTORY OF MUHAMMAD SHAYBANI KHAN'S ACTIVITIES.

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Abstract: This article analyzes the political and military activities of Muhammad Shaybani Khan. As the founder of the Shaybanid dynasty, Shaybani Khan emerged as a major political and military figure in Central Asia during the 16th century. In his efforts to establish his rule over Transoxiana and Khorasan, he conducted large-scale military campaigns and took advantage of the political crisis of the Timurid state to establish his own empire.

The article examines Muhammad Shaybani Khan's military strategies, methods of state governance, military operations against the Timurids and other rival powers, and his role in the unification of Transoxiana.

Keywords: Muhammad Shaybani Khan, Shaybanids, Transoxiana, Khorasan, Timurids, political activity, military campaigns, state governance, historical legacy.

Muhammad Shaybani Khan was a prominent political figure and military commander in the history of Central Asia, playing a significant role in establishing his authority over Transoxiana and Khorasan during the 15th and 16th centuries. To understand his political and military activities, it is essential to examine his relations with the Golden Horde, the Timurids, and neighboring states.

One of the key factors contributing to the weakening and eventual fragmentation of the once-powerful Golden Horde was the devastating blow inflicted by Amir Timur. In the late 14th and early 15th centuries, Amir Timur exploited internal conflicts within the Golden Horde and launched a series of successive military campaigns against it. These campaigns led to the complete destabilization of the Golden Horde, resulting in the emergence of several smaller khanates in its place. The Kazan and Astrakhan Khanates were established in the middle and lower Volga regions, while the Crimean Khanate came under Ottoman rule in the Crimean Peninsula.

These geopolitical shifts played a crucial role in shaping the historical conditions that allowed Muhammad Shaybani Khan to rise to power. The disintegration of the Golden Horde facilitated the emergence of new political forces in the region, among which the Shaybanids played a dominant role. Muhammad Shaybani Khan, as a descendant of Genghis Khan, capitalized on the decline of the Timurids and the fragmentation of their empire, ultimately consolidating his power in Central Asia.

The disintegration of the Golden Horde led to significant geopolitical changes in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. This process played a crucial role in shaping Muhammad Shaybani Khan's future political career. The weakening of the Golden Horde provided the foundation for the emergence of the Shaybanid dynasty.

In the 1420s, amidst the conflicts between nomadic tribes in the Dasht-i Qipchaq, the Shaybanids, led by Abulkhayr Khan, rose to prominence. Abulkhayr Khan was elected as the khan in 1428 and ruled for forty years (1428–1468). During his reign, he conquered key cities such as Sighnaq, Aq Qorgon, Arquq, and Uzgen along the lower course of the Syr Darya. From these strategic territories, he maintained a continuous threat against Transoxiana.



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The system of enthroning khans in this state was based on the governance traditions established by Genghis Khan (1206–1227) and Amir Timur (1370–1405). However, the Shaybanids introduced certain modifications in line with the steppe customs. Unlike the Timurids, the Shaybanid sultans exclusively entrusted the administration of conquered lands to members of their own dynasty. At the head of the state stood the khan, who was elected by the tribal and clan leaders. However, his powers were partially restricted in governance.

Decisions on matters of war and peace, the appointment of tutors (ataliq or atka) for princes, and other critical state affairs were made collectively by tribal chiefs, religious leaders, sultans, and princes (military leaders of Genghisid descent). This indicates that consultative assemblies played a significant role in the governance of the Shaybanid state. Additionally, the state administration adhered strictly to Islamic sharia law as well as the ancient tura and yasaq laws. According to historical sources, Muhammad Shaybani Khan's father, Shohbudogh Sultan, passed away when Shaybani Khan was still a child. As a result, he was raised by his mother and grandfather, Abulkhayr Khan. Following Abulkhayr Khan's death in 874 AH / 1468–69, his son, Shaykh Haidar Khan, ascended to power. However, he lacked authority and respect among the tribal nobility. This led to a rebellion by several Uzbek nomadic sultans, including Oybak Khan, Janibek Khan, Bureke Sultan, and Manghit amirs Abbosbek, Mussabek, and Yamg'urchibek. As a result, Shaykh Haidar was killed, and his relatives and followers were either slain or forced to scatter across different regions of the Dasht-i Qipchaq.

During this period, Shaybani Khan and his brother Mahmud Sultan were saved from execution by their guardian, Qorachabek. He took them to Qasim Khan Sultan, the ruler of Astrakhan, who provided them refuge. However, when the other sultans learned of this, they turned their forces against Qasim Khan.

While residing in Bukhara, Shaybani Khan did not forget his ultimate goal of reclaiming his ancestral lands and restoring authority over the Dasht-i Qipchaq. As stated in Tavorix-i guzida-yi Nusratnama, Shaybani Khan "remained in Bukhara for two years, fully regaining his military capabilities before setting out once again to Dasht-i Qipchaq."

In the 1480s, Shaybani Khan launched a campaign to reunify the lands previously consolidated by his grandfather, Abulkhayr Khan, and to reestablish his authority. In the early phase of this struggle, the Timurids provided significant support to Shaybani Khan. Historical sources indicate that Shaybani Khan and his brother received warm hospitality and protection from the rulers and deputies of Mawarannahr, including Muhammad Mazid Tarkhan, the governor of Turkestan and Otrar, as well as Ahmad Mirza, the ruler of Samarkand.

Shaybani Khan also spent some time in Bukhara, where he frequently traveled back and forth to Dasht-i Qipchaq. During his stay in Bukhara, he received an education, developing an appreciation for learning, literature, and poetry. These formative years played a crucial role in shaping Shaybani Khan's future as both a military strategist and a ruler.

After assuming power as the Khan of the nomadic Uzbeks, Muhammad Shaybani Khan quickly demonstrated his abilities as an experienced statesman and military strategist. By the 1490s, he began launching raids into the central regions of Transoxiana, exploiting the increasing internal conflicts and weakening of the Timurid state. At this time, the Timurid empire had effectively fragmented into several semi-independent territories, each governed by local rulers.

The internal instability of the Timurids worsened in 1494, following the death of Sultan Ahmad Mirza, the ruler of Samarkand. The resulting power struggle among Timurid princes led to further political chaos and decentralization. Sensing an opportunity, Shaybani Khan launched

his first major invasion of Transoxiana in 1497, leading a large army against Samarkand. Although he failed to capture the city, he plundered towns and villages along the way, amassing a significant amount of wealth before retreating to Turkestan.

By 1500, Shaybani Khan successfully captured Samarkand, marking the beginning of a new era for the city as a political and economic center under the Shaybanid rule. In 1501, he decisively defeated Babur Mirza in the Battle of Sar-i Pul and went on to conquer Tashkent and Shahrulkha in 1503. His dominance expanded further with the annexation of Fergana in 1504, followed by the conquest of Urgench in 1505 and Balkh in 1506. Finally, in 1507, Shaybani Khan captured Herat, bringing all of Khorasan under his control.

The rapid conquest of Transoxiana and Khorasan by Shaybani Khan and the lack of effective resistance from local rulers can be attributed to several key factors. By the late 15th century, the Timurids were weakened by successive deaths of their rulers, including Umar Shaykh Mirza of Fergana in 1494, Sultan Ahmad Mirza of Samarkand in 1494, and his successor Sultan Mahmud Mirza in 1495. The young Timurid rulers who inherited power lacked military and political experience, struggled to consolidate their authority, and failed to establish strong diplomatic alliances.

Shaybani Khan's successful campaigns and state-building efforts played a crucial role in reshaping the history of Central Asia. His military strategies and governance methods remain subjects of extensive historical research, highlighting his significance as one of the most influential figures of his era.

As a result, they could not resist an experienced, several times older than them (Shaybani Khan was over 50 at that time), well-versed in military affairs, and a strong disciplined commander. The emergence of a similar situation here before Shaybani Khan's campaign in Khorasan (the death of Hussein Baykara in 1506) increased the Uzbeks' chances.

Because a dual power arose in the country, and two sons of Baykara were declared rulers at the same time. Muhammad Shaybani Khan easily defeated each prince separately.

Muhammad Shaybani Khan was a figure who occupied an important place in the history of Transoxiana, and his military and political activities were directly related to the crisis of the Golden Horde, the weakening of the Timurid Empire, and the emergence of new powers in Central Asia. Although he established his own state as the heirs of the Golden Horde, his rule did not last long. Nevertheless, the Shaybanid dynasty continued his political path and became the main rulers of Transoxiana in the following centuries.

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