

# Iranian And Central Asian Written Sources Regarding the Military Campaigns of The Afsharids Into the Territory of The Bukhara Khanate Between 1738 And 1740

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**Abstract:** This article analyzes the valuable information contained in the main written sources and historical treatises of Iran and Central Asia about the military campaigns of the Afsharids in the mid- XVIII th century in order to subjugate the Bukhara and Khiva khanates, as well as the unsuccessful campaign of Nadirshah's son Rezakulikhan in Karshi.

**Keywords:** Afshars, Nadir Shah, Rizaquli Mirza, Tahmasphon Jaloir, artillery, Murghab River, soldier.

**Introduction:** According to the Iranian historian Nikzod Kelorazi Mir Nuruddin, under such circumstances, Nadir Shah sent a special letter to Tahmasphon Jaloir with the following content: "According to my order, after the conquest of Balkh, you should have stayed there with Rizaquli Mirza. You did not listen to me, and instead, you led my son, who was much younger than you, astray (you could even say, "led him astray" in this context, but this is what the sentence means), and you occupied yourself with the conquest of Maverounnahr. By doing this, you are endangering the lives of both my soldiers and my son" [2]. These letters were sent at a time when Nadir Shah, after capturing Kandahar, was planning to march on India. He assumed that if Rizaquli Mirza and Tahmasp Jaloir were defeated at Movarounran, then he would not be able to fulfill his dream of conquering India. Muhammad Qasim Marvi's treatise "Nami-yi Alamara-yi Nadiriy" records that Nadir Shah warned Tahmasp Jaloir: if he does not return to Balkh, he will be beheaded [1].

There are different opinions in the sources about Nadir Shah's order to return the troops from Karshi to Balkh. [3]. Thus, Mirza Mehdi Khan Astarabadi in his work "Jahonkushoi Nadiriy" believes that the reason for the recall of the Qizilbash troops was the death of the

famous commanders - Baba Khan Choshlu and Aziz Qulibek Dadkh. Mirza Shamsi Bukharai, on the other hand, believes that the reason for the withdrawal of troops was Nadir Shah's inability to wage war on two fronts. Nadir Shah sent a message to Abulfayz Khan, considering him the ruler of a powerful and independent state.

## METHODOLOGY

This research employs historical-comparative, systemic-structural, critical-analytical, and source studies methods. When studying sources, their objectives, the authors' worldviews, and the socio-political conditions of the period are taken into account. Within the scope of the article, existing scientific literature, monographs, and articles are also studied and summarized.

## RESULTS

The reason Nader Shah did not want to conflict with Abulfayz Khan Ashtarkhani was that the Khan of Bukhara had maintained neutrality during Nader Shah's campaigns in Herat and Kandahar; that is, he had not interfered in Afsharid affairs and had not supported his opponents. As Muhammad Kazim Marvi notes, upon receiving a letter from Nader Shah at the beginning of the second siege of Karshi, Reza-qoli and Tahmasp

Jalayir were forced to return to Balkh. Sources state that Reza-qoli's march toward Karshi took place without his father's knowledge. However, Muhammad Kazim Marvi writes the opposite. In this regard, he cites the statements of Tahmasp Jalayir. Tahmasp responds to Nader Shah's words as follows: "You ordered us to capture Balkh, the 'Mother of Cities' (Umm al-Bilad), cross to the other side of the Amu Darya, and seize the lands of Kungrad, Karshi, and Shelduk. We acted according to your command. If you had not recalled us, we would have conquered the entire Transoxiana" [1].

Upon returning to Balkh, Reza-qoli learned that Yusuf Khan, the ruler of Kunduz, had refused to submit to the Qizilbash. Yusuf Khan had even granted asylum to the former ruler of Balkh, Said Khan. Consequently, Reza-qoli marched on Kunduz. Yusuf Khan was forced to flee, and he and his associates sought refuge in Badakhshan. Reza-qoli's forces pursued them and reached Kulob (a region located two or three days' journey from Badakhshan) when they received a second letter from Nader Shah, in which the Shah ordered them to halt the campaign and return to Balkh.

Nader Shah himself had long been developing a plan to conquer the Central Asian khanates, primarily Bukhara and Khiva. However, the conditions between 1736 and 1739 did not allow for its implementation. He chose Merv as a springboard for military campaigns into Transoxiana, as the route to the borders of the Central Asian khanates began there. Merv served as the key to achieving this goal—the march of Nader Shah's troops toward Bukhara and Khiva. It was for this very reason that this oasis was one of the first territories conquered by the Afsharids.

According to Muhammad Kazim Marvi, Nader Shah appointed Baba Alibek Afshor's son Kalbali Khan as the ruler of Merv, and Shahqulibek was awarded the title of eshik agaboshi. Nader Shah ordered the relocation of 3,000 peasant families from different regions of Khorasan to the Merv region. They were allocated land for food and were ordered to restore the destroyed gardens and develop settlements. In addition, he ordered all Merv residents living in different regions to return. The Merv military personnel serving in Azerbaijan also had to return to their homeland.

After thorough preparation, Nader Shah set off for Bukhara. Lockhart Lawrence reveals the reasons for Nader Shah's campaign in Central Asia: first, the lack of political unity in Central Asia, second, Nader Shah's desire to expand his power over the local khanates, third, to ensure security on the northern borders of Khorasan, which were constantly attacked by Uzbek and Turkmen tribes, and fourth, to prevent the strengthening of Russian influence, especially in Khiva.

[4]. According to Muhammad Kazim Marvi, before the start of the campaign, Nader Shah asked the ruler of Merv, Kalbali Khan, to take measures to provide his army with troops, food, and weapons, as well as to produce artillery shells during the campaign against Transoxiana.

Nader Shah's campaign into Transoxiana (Turan) was carried out in 1740, following his conquest of India, Sindh, and Balochistan. While Nader Shah was in Herat, he entrusted two military commanders from Merv, who had about five hundred men under their command, with the task of guarding the banks of the Murghab River from Band-i Sultan, near Merv. According to Nader Shah's instructions, they were to remain there until his troops arrived, ensuring an unobstructed crossing of the Kurmach River. To carry out the campaign into Transoxiana, Nader Shah initially stationed himself in Balkh; in other words, this city was chosen as a bridgehead (springboard). Written sources provide varying information regarding the size of Nader Shah's army, citing figures ranging from fifty thousand to one hundred and fifty thousand men. The account in the "Nomi-yi Alamara-yi Nadiri" states that "the head of the Iranian army was in Charjui, while its rear was in Balkh" [1].

## DISCUSSION

The Iranian historian Nikzoda Kelorazi Mir Nuroddin reports that before invading Transoxiana, Nader Shah ordered the construction of pontoon bridges at the crossroads of Termez and Kelif, and the mobilization of troops in the districts subordinate to Balkh [2]. Thus, 1,100 ships (small vessels) built by Indian carpenters were launched into the waters of the Jayhun (Amu Darya). Each of these ships could carry a weight of up to a thousand man. These ships were loaded with artillery units, wheat, and materials for crossing to the other side of the river. The Qizilbash troops reached the Kelif crossing on August 10, 1740. The ships also arrived in this area. On August 20, 1740, Nader Shah's army was stationed in the Kerki area, which was chosen as his headquarters. According to Muhammad Wafa Karminagi, at the beginning of September 1740, Nader Shah crossed to the other (left) bank of the Amu Darya via Charjui with the intention of conquering Bukhara and then Khorezm [5].

At that time, Abdulfayz Khan was given to pleasure and had placed the reins of power in the hands of Hakim Khan Ataliq Manghit. As noted in the book \*Tarixi Rahimkhani\*, Hakim Khan was dissatisfied with the Khan's behavior, had a long-standing hostility with him, and feared Abdulfayz. Nader Shah's campaign was welcomed by him as salvation. Writing a letter to Nader Shah, Hakim Khan expressed humility and obedience.

He considered Nader Shah's invasion of Bukhara "fateful". As Mirza Abdal Azim Sami noted, Hakim Khan Ataliq sent his son, Rahimbi, to Nader Shah with gifts and invited him to Bukhara. In this regard, it is mentioned in Muhammad Wafa Karminagi's "Tuhfat-al-Khani" that Muhammad Rahimbi came to Nader Shah accompanied by the rulers of Karshi and Hissar and other officials, and they were received with honor. The delegation from Bukhara also included Rahimbi's mother, who advised him to serve the Shah. Rahimbi was received warmly, and they departed for the Shah's camp.

When Nader Shah crossed to the left bank of the Amu Darya, Abulfayz Khan was in Karshi. Terrified, he sent Hakim Khan Ataliq himself to Nader Shah's headquarters with the intention of receiving the Shah as an honored guest. Hakim Khan arrived at this meeting with rich gifts, accompanied by high-ranking dignitaries and representatives of the Juybar sheikhs. Nader Shah received them appropriately. Analyzing this event, the Uzbek historian M.A. Abduraimov concluded that this meeting played a positive role in strengthening Hakim Khan's political position. In this regard, the Iranian researcher Rizoifar Maryam Ismoil notes that while meeting with the Shah, Hakim Khan Ataliq openly told him about the country's internal decline, the unstable political situation, the discontent of the population, and so on, expressing his readiness to act with loyalty and serve the Shah.

Another Iranian historian, Kuzonlu Jamil, notes on this matter that after Hakim Khan delivered Abulfayz Khan's messages, he invited Nader Shah to Karakul, where a meeting and negotiations were planned. The Shah also expressed a desire to receive Abulfayz Khan at his headquarters and conduct negotiations. At this meeting, Nader Shah granted Hakim Khan broad powers. The King of Iran presented a letter to Hakim Khan and sent him back to Bukhara as his representative. Upon returning to Bukhara, the envoys reported the results to the Khan of Bukhara. However, as written in historical sources, after meeting with Nader Shah and returning to Bukhara, Hakimbi Ataliq did not wish to meet with Abulfayz Khan.

He chose the Mir-i Arab Madrasah as his headquarters and settled there. He then gathered his followers and held a meeting, instructing them to spread the message in public places—such as markets, mosques, and neighborhoods—that henceforth, people should address all their problems to Hakimbi Oталиq. Upon learning of this, the people of Bukhara began to flock to the Mir-i Arab Madrasah in increasing numbers. Consequently, Hakimbi Oталиq's influence among the people began to grow. However, the palace courtiers did not like this. They interpreted Hakimbi's actions as

treason against the government and a sign of disrespect toward the public.

In this tense situation, Abulfayz Khan, at the demand of his courtiers, held a meeting in the Ark (citadel) to decide on matters of defending the city against the threat of an invasion by the Qizilbash. Hakimbi Oталиq was also invited to this meeting; however, he refused to attend. Following this, Abulfayz Khan and his entourage devised a plan to go to the Mir-i Arab Madrasah to discuss the emerging issues, with the intention of surrounding and executing Hakimbi once they met. But Hakimbi, having learned of the true intentions of the Khan and his inner circle, resisted. As the Khan marched toward Hakimbi Oталиq, shots were fired at him from the Mir-i Arab Madrasah. Abulfayz Khan was forced to return to the Ark and surrendered to Nadir Shah.

Abulfayz Khan decided to meet Nadir Shah face-to-face, accompanied by his supporters from among the influential officials. The Khan's retinue went to Nadir Shah's camp via the Namozgoh gate. Hakimbi Oталиq followed them with a group of armed men. According to the Iranian historian Ahmad Panah Simnani, Abulfayz Khan arrived before Nadir Shah with gifts such as the "Four Mirrors of Amir Temur Gurkani" and the "Gold of the Late Genghis Khan". The meeting of the three leaders (Abulfayz Khan, Hakimbi Oталиq, and Nadir Shah) took place near Bukhara, in the city of Chahor-Bakr on the banks of the Zarafshan River [6]. During the gathering, Hakimbi displayed all outward appearances of humility, and the Khan also showed courtesy and mercy toward the Oталиq. The main result of that meeting was that Nadir Shah ordered his name to be mentioned in Friday sermons in Bukhara and to be minted on coins. Abulfayz Khan remained a vassal of the Iranian Shah. But, in fact, all power passed to the Hakimbiy fatherland. In addition, 10 thousand Bukhara soldiers (soldiers) led by Rahimbiy (son of the Hakimbiy fatherland) went to serve in the army of Nadir Shah.

## **CONCLUSION**

Thus, the main result of the Afshars' military campaigns in the territory of the Bukhara Khanate was as follows: firstly, the ruler of the Ashtar Khans, Abulfayz Khan, became a vassal of Nadir Shah; secondly, the lands on the right bank of the Amu Darya were left under the control of Abulfayz Khan, the lands of the Bukhara Khanate on the left bank of the Amu Darya (Chordzhu, lands south and north of the river, as well as Balkh) passed to Iran; thirdly, Nader Shah married one of Abulfayz Khan's daughters, strengthening family ties with the Ashtar Khans, and Nader's nephew Aliquli Mirza also married another daughter of Abulfayz Khan; fourthly, Nader Shah's conquest of Bukhara put an end

to the rule of the Ashtar Khans (Janis).

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