

**RELATIONS BETWEEN THE ASHTARKHANIDS AND
THE OTTOMANS**

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Key words: Uzbek **Abstract:** This article explores the political statehood, Ashtarkhanids, relations established by representatives of the Baqi Muhammad Khan, Ashtarkhanid dynasty with the Ottoman Empire, Vali Muhammad Khan, particularly in the context of their alliance against Imamquli Khan, Nadr the Safavids, efforts to reclaim Iraq and Khorasan, Muhammad Khan, and securing the safety of the Hajj pilgrimage Abdulaziz Khan, route. In addition, the study sheds light on their Subhanquli Khan, economic relations in the sphere of trade, as well Ottomans, political as cultural interactions involving education and relations, cultural scholarly exchange. The findings demonstrate that relations, social these relations were maintained at a highly interactions. favorable and constructive level.

INTRODUCTION

In the history of Uzbek statehood, representatives of the Ashtarkhanid dynasty, who ruled for more than one hundred and fifty years, maintained favorable political, economic, and cultural relations with the Ottomans. Information contained in historical sources vividly illustrates these interactions.

Main Part

Political Relations

Baqi Muhammad Khan, one of the first representatives of the Ashtarkhanid dynasty, sent envoys to the court of the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed III. In his letter he recalled the alliance concluded between the Shaybanid ruler Abdullah Khan and the Ottoman Sultan Murad III and called for a joint struggle against the Safavids who ruled in Iran. He also requested military assistance, including cannons and firearms, in order to reclaim Khurasan.

The envoys were received warmly by the Ottoman Sultan. Although Mehmed III had concluded a treaty with Shah Abbas of Iran under favorable conditions, he nevertheless decided to provide practical assistance. Sultan Mehmed III ordered Davud Beg, the Ottoman governor of Shirvan, to send 200 rifles and three cannons to Baqi Muhammad Khan by sea. Naturally, this action had certain consequences for the Ottoman rulers. According to the memoirs of a Venetian traveler who was present at the Ottoman court, this very issue became one of the causes of the war between the Ottomans and the Safavids in 1603. Despite being aware that such developments might occur, the Ottoman Sultan still responded positively to Baqi Muhammad Khan's request, which demonstrates that the Ottomans saw in the Ashtarkhanids a reliable and strong ally and did not wish to lose them.

Relations between the Ashtarkhanids and the Ottomans remained active in later periods as well. The Ottomans viewed the Ashtarkhanids as a fraternal and trustworthy ally in their struggle against the Safavids and as an important trade partner. For instance, due to internal conflicts in Istanbul, several sultans occupied the throne within a short period: Mustafa I (1617–1618), Osman II (1618–1622), and again Mustafa I (1622–1623). This political instability weakened the administration of the empire. Shah Abbas of Iran took advantage of the situation and attacked Iraq and Baghdad in 1624. Murad IV, who ascended the throne after Mustafa I, began efforts to regain these territories. Like his predecessors, he relied on the Ashtarkhanids and sent envoys to Bukhara twice, in 1624 and 1625.

The second embassy was particularly noteworthy, as it included Ali Muhammad Sultan of Turkestan, who had been captured by the Safavids during the war of 1617. The embassy reached Bukhara in 1627 through Egypt, Mecca, and India. It conveyed the Sultan's request for assistance in capturing Baghdad. However, by that time the Ottomans had already attempted to take Baghdad in 1626 but, after an eight-month siege, failed to capture the fortress and were forced to withdraw. Therefore, the embassy could not fully achieve its intended goal.

In 1638 Murad IV sent another embassy to Bukhara. At that time, as he prepared for another campaign against Baghdad, he regarded Imamquli Khan as a reliable ally and invited him to participate jointly in the campaign. However, the Ottoman–Safavid treaty concluded in Qasr-i Shirin in 1639 prevented the implementation of practical actions within the framework of this alliance.

After Imamquli Khan, Nadr Muhammad Khan ascended the throne. In 1645 a rebellion broke out against him, and the rebels enthroned Abdulaziz Khan. Nadr Muhammad Khan was forced to retreat to Balkh. Realizing that his own forces were insufficient to regain the throne, he asked for assistance from the Mughal ruler Shah Jahan of India. However, under the pretext of providing assistance, Shah Jahan seized Balkh from him. As a result, in 1649 Nadr Muhammad Khan sent envoys led by Abdumannob to the court of the Ottoman Sultan Ibrahim I. Since Ibrahim I had died by that time, the envoys were received by Sultan Mehmed IV, who had succeeded him.

According to Turkestani custom, the embassy presented Nadr Muhammad Khan's letter along with valuable gifts: five precious bowls, a sword and dagger adorned with precious stones, a gold-patterned cloth twenty-seven cubits long, ten swift horses, and saddles and harnesses decorated with gold. The envoys were received with great respect by Mehmed IV. Within only fourteen days a reply letter was prepared and sent back to Nadr Muhammad Khan. Moreover, Mehmed IV also sent letters to Abdulaziz Khan, Shah Jahan, and Shah Abbas II urging them to cease hostilities and affirming that Nadr Muhammad Khan was the legitimate ruler who should return to his throne.

Although the Ottoman Sultan did not participate directly in military actions during this process, by sending letters to Abdulaziz Khan, Shah Jahan, and Abbas II he attempted to demonstrate his support and morally assist his close ally.

Abdulaziz Khan also sought to maintain friendly relations with the Ottomans. He sent envoys twice, in 1673 and 1675.

Unlike Abdulaziz Khan, relations intensified during the reign of Subhanquli Khan. He sent envoys led by Hasan Ali Beg to the court of Sultan Suleiman II. Through this embassy he proposed strengthening friendly relations and jointly combating the Safavids ruling in Iran. However, since Suleiman II had died and Sultan Ahmed II had ascended the throne, the envoys were received by the latter. The Ottoman Sultan also sought to maintain good relations and responded positively to the proposals contained in the letter. In return he sent an embassy led by Mustafa Chavush.

The embassy of Mustafa Chavush arrived in Bukhara accompanied by Hasan Ali Beg and was received with great honor. At that time envoys from Muhammad Amin, the ruler of Kashgar, were also present. Both embassies were received on the same day and at the same time. Before the ruler's throne, the Ottoman envoys led by Mustafa Chavush were seated in the foremost place designated for ambassadors, while the Kashgar embassy took the next place. During the audience, the letter and gifts sent by Sultan Ahmed II—Arabian horses, colorful fabrics, and precious stones—were presented to Subhanquli Khan. By the Khan's order, valuable gifts were presented to the envoy, and he was dressed in a brocade robe.

In his letter, Sultan Ahmed II (1691–1695) stated that his main objective had been campaigns against the Frankish kings and the Safavids; he mentioned that he had defeated the Frankish kings several times and that the Safavids would be next. He praised Subhanquli Khan as the ruler of a land renowned for its scholars and invited him to undertake joint action against the Safavids in order to reclaim Iraq and Khurasan.

Subhanquli Khan accepted the proposal positively. However, since a peace agreement had already been concluded with Iran at that time, no practical action was taken. Therefore, when Mustafa Chavush returned after staying in Bukhara for a year, he was accompanied by the envoy Muminbiy Yabu, and the situation was explained in the letter.

In later years Subhanquli Khan sent another embassy led by Kichik Khoja Ali to the court of Sultan Ahmed III. In his letter he emphasized several victories he had achieved, particularly over the Kalmyks. Indeed, at that time Subhanquli Khan had suppressed internal rebellions and achieved several external successes.

After Subhanquli Khan's death, Ubaydullah Khan ascended the throne in Bukhara. At that time Muqim Sultan, who governed the Balkh region, refused to recognize him as ruler. As a result, war broke out between the two. Both sides attempted to obtain support from external forces. For instance, Muqim Sultan sent envoys led by Abdulbaqi Beg to Istanbul and requested practical assistance from the Ottoman Sultan against Ubaydullah Khan. However, the Ottoman Sultan did not intervene in the conflict between the two brothers. In the letter given to the envoy, he emphasized that Muqim Sultan's request was not appropriate, that conflict with Ubaydullah Khan could weaken the state, and that reconciliation would be preferable.

In subsequent years Ubaydullah Khan continued to regard the Ottomans as a close ally and sought to maintain good relations with them. For example, in 1707 he sent envoys led by Khoja Muhammad Amin to the court of Sultan Ahmed III (1703–1730), mentioning in his letter the successes achieved against the Kazakhs. Another embassy was sent in 1709, bringing gifts produced in Turkestan for the Ottoman Sultan (see Appendix 1).

In summary, almost all representatives of the Ashtarkhanid dynasty regarded the Ottomans as their closest ally. Through frequent exchanges of embassies they sought to establish strong friendly relations. Both sides aimed primarily at ensuring the security of their borders and citizens, forming alliances against the Safavid state ruling

in Iran, reclaiming territories such as Khurasan and Iraq, and securing the safety of the pilgrimage routes. They undertook practical actions within this alliance and achieved certain successes.

Economic Relations

Stable political relations between the Ashtarkhanids and the Ottomans had a positive impact on economic processes, particularly trade. Analysis of sources and documents related to relations between the two dynasties shows that merchants from Turkestan exported to Istanbul and other Ottoman cities products such as Badakhshan rubies, silk and silk fabrics, colored and uncolored cotton cloth, brocade fabrics, woolen textiles, various types of finished scarves (including brocade and incense-scented varieties), sheepskins, ceramic vessels, cotton, carpets, Samarkand paper, bows, and knives.

Some of these goods were purchased for consumption in Ottoman cities, while others were re-exported from Istanbul to European markets. For example, in 1667 the Russian Tsar Alexei granted the Armenian Company a monopoly on importing silk into Moscow. As a result, Turkestani merchants ceased selling silk in Moscow and instead began exporting it to Turkey and from there to Germany.

Turkestani merchants also acted as intermediaries, purchasing goods such as porcelain and dyes from regions like China and India and selling them in Turkey.

Cultural Relations

During the Shaybanid and Ashtarkhanid periods, the land of Turkestan—especially cities such as Bukhara and Samarkand—was widely recognized throughout the world, particularly in the Islamic world, as a center of learning and scholarship. People from Ottoman territories, including major cities such as Istanbul, came to Bukhara and Samarkand to pursue education. Some of them remained there after completing their studies, while others returned to their homeland.

For instance, during the reign of the Shaybanid ruler Abdullah Khan, envoys from the Ottoman Sultan arrived at his court. Among them was Zulmati Rumi, who engaged in scholarly discussions with Turkestani scholars. He both studied and taught there. At one gathering he composed a qasida praising Abdullah Khan, and in return the ruler awarded him a large sum of money.

Similarly, during the Ashtarkhanid period, a letter written by Bukhara scholars to the Ottoman Sultan reported that Ismail Afandi from Istanbul had come to Bukhara in search of knowledge. He mastered various sciences, particularly religious studies, passed all examinations with distinction, received authorization (irshad), and taught in a school. However, due to homesickness he requested permission to return to his homeland. The scholars asked the Sultan to grant him a position appropriate to his level of knowledge. Such evidence indicates that all opportunities were open in Turkestan for those who came from Turkey in search of knowledge and that the rulers and scholars of the region supported them in many ways.

Many individuals who studied in Bukhara and Samarkand remained there and pursued scholarly activities. Examples include Mawlana Qasim Rumi and Mawlana Mustafa Rumi. These scholars transmitted the knowledge they acquired to subsequent generations, thereby contributing to the emergence of prominent intellectuals. For example, Mawlana Mustafa Rumi taught hadith sciences in Bukhara, and figures such as Darvish Muhammad Kosoni and Mawlana Ayni studied under him. Likewise, Mawlana Qasim Rumi taught for many years at the Amir Shahmalik madrasa in Samarkand and trained numerous students. One of them was Murtibi Samarqandi, author of works such as *Tazkirat al-shu'ara* and *Nuskhayi Zeboyi Jahongiriy*, who received his first lessons in literary theory from Mawlana Qasim Rumi.

Just as the rulers of Turkestan respected Ottoman scholars, the Ottoman sultans also showed special respect to scholars and Sufi leaders from this region. For example, Sultan Murad III sent letters and gifts through the envoy Bayaloxon to Tajiddin Hasan Khoja, who lived in the village of Joybor near Bukhara. There were also close relations

among representatives of Sufi orders in the two regions. For instance, Abdurahman Rumi maintained correspondence with Tajiddin Hasan Khoja regarding Sufi teachings. In addition, many people from Turkestan traveled to Turkey in pursuit of knowledge. One such individual was the master calligrapher of the nasta'liq script, Haji Mirza Rajab. After studying for a long time in Bukhara and Samarkand, he performed the pilgrimage to Mecca. During these years he also visited Egypt and Turkey, where he continued his studies and even sponsored the construction of tekkes at his own expense.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, the political relations conducted by representatives of the Ashtarkhanid dynasty with the Ottomans were primarily aimed at cooperating against the Safavids, reclaiming Iraq and Khurasan, and ensuring the security of pilgrimage routes. Economic relations focused on the further development of trade, while cultural relations were reflected in educational exchanges and scholarly cooperation. Analysis of the available sources demonstrates that relations between the two states were maintained at a very high level.

However, many documents illuminating the relations between these two dynasties have still not been fully introduced into scholarly circulation. It is therefore necessary to make effective use of these materials in future research.

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