



Analysis of Reforms In Qarshi City In The Late 13th To Early 14th Centuries

Nasrullayev Nematullo Hikmatullayevich

Docent, International Islamic Academy of Uzbekistan, (DSc), Uzbekistan

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*Correspondence: Nasrullayev Nematullo
Hikmatullayevich

Email: n.nasrullaev@mail.ru

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Abstract: The article discusses the fact the cities of Mavaraunnahr in the late 13th to early 14th centuries were characterized by relentless power struggles among Mongol khans, descendants of Chingiz. This period's socio-cultural condition was marked by the division of the region into small, powerless states and the aspiration of each ruler to subjugate the entire Mavaraunnahr under a single authority. It is analyzed that Kebek Khan (718/1318-726/1326), a skilled politician and adept reformer, played a significant role during this time. He built the city of Qarshi, which later became a major center of the region. Kebek Khan's monetary and administrative reforms had a positive impact on the socio-political life of Mavaraunnahr. Despite the challenges, including invasions and internal power struggles, cities like Qarshi and Nasaf witnessed significant economic, political, and cultural growth. The flourishing of construction, culture, and science, particularly during the reign of Amir Timur and his successors is also described.

Keywords: Mavaraunnahr, Mongol Khans, Kebek Khan, Qarshi, Nasaf, Chagatai Ulus, Monetary Reform, Socio-Cultural Conditions, Amir Timur, Central Asia.

Introduction

The cities of Mavaraunnahr in the late 13th – early 14th centuries found themselves in the midst of relentless struggles by Mongol khans, descendants of Chingiz, to seize power. This period's socio-cultural condition was marked, on one hand, by the division of the region into small, powerless states, and on the other, by each ruler's aspiration to subjugate the entire Mavaraunnahr and unify it under a single authority. One of the khans of Mavaraunnahr, recognized as a skilled politician and adept reformer, was Kebek (718/1318-726/1326) (History of the East, 2022). He had a palace (Qarshi) built for himself two farsakhs (12-14 km) away from the city of Nasaf (Mankovskaya, 1993). Qarshi is one of the ancient cities of Central Asia and the regional center, having been a major “kent” (settlement) even before the Common Era. In distant history, this city was known by the names Balkh, Balq, Bolo, Nashebulo, and by the Middle Ages, it came to be known as Nakhshab (Nasaf) (Nafasov, 1993).

Methodology

Although Kebek Khan did not convert to Islam, he showed respect to the people under his rule and to Muslim scholars. For example, the famous traveler Ibn Battuta recounts the following incident in his travelogue: "A woman complained to Kebek Khan about his governors and said, "I am a poor woman. I used to sell milk to feed my children. This governor took the milk I was going to sell and drank it." The khan said to her, "I will cut this governor in half, and if milk comes out of his belly, that will be sufficient. If not, I will cut you in half as well." The woman then said, "I forgive this governor, I do not demand anything from him." However, Kebek Khan ordered as he said. When the governor was cut in half, milk came out of his belly. Kebek was a shrewd and wise ruler. One day he asked a scholar named Badriddin Maydani, "You said that Allah has mentioned everything in His book, is that correct?" The scholar answered, "Yes." Then Kebek asked, "Then where is my name mentioned?" The scholar replied, "In the phrase "Fi ayyi suratin ma shaa rakkabak" (In whatever form He wills, He puts you together), your name is there." (Qur'an, Surah Infitor, Ayah 8). Kebek was astonished by this quick-witted response and his respect for Muslims increased even more. The Mongol rule in Mavaraunnahr, like in other cities, also affected Nasaf (Nasaf, 1898).

Nasaf also suffered great losses under the rule of the Mongols, but it is recognized as a capital city for the first time in its history during Kebek Khan's reign. Although Nasaf achieved capital status for only a short period, its political, military, and economic significance was considerable. Before the discovery of sea routes, important caravan routes connecting Afghanistan and India with Russia and Europe passed through this region, and the city expanded considerably as a result of its management through the Chagatai Ulus, leading to the growth of economic and cultural relations (Kydyrniyazov, 1989).

After firmly establishing himself on the throne of Mavaraunnahr, Kebek Khan carried out a currency reform. (Rybakov). Because the monetary system of Mavaraunnahr differed from that of neighboring states, serious problems arose in economic relations. To address these issues, Kebek Khan embarked on monetary and administrative-economic reforms. Just like in neighboring Iran, dinars and dirhams were minted. The introduced coin units, known as "kepek," continued to be in circulation during Timur's era (Bartold). This eliminated the confusion in currency circulation and put an end to the illegal actions of local officials and merchants. The state was divided into districts, and gradually, the positions of local governors, maliks, and sadrs were taken over by the leaders of Turkic-Mongol tribes and clans. His reforms played a positive role in the socio-political life of the country.

Kebek Khan had a palace built for himself in the city of Qarshi, which is why the city got its name. Qarshi city maintained its status as the capital from the time of Kebek Khan (718/1318) until the rule of Amir Qazaghan (747/1346) (Bosworth, 1994).

In the meantime, the throne of Mavaraunnahr was also ruled by Mongol khans, including Tarmashirin and Qazan Khan. Tarmashirin, the brother of Kebek Khan, ruled Mavaraunnahr for 8-9 years (726/1326). Sources mention that Tarmashirin was the first among the Mongol khans to convert to Islam, taking the title Alauddin (Bosworth). Tarmashirin was also a just ruler in his own right.

He continued his activities in the palace built by Kebek Khan. However, his governance system did not sit well with the Mongol officials, leading to various discontent. As a result, he was assassinated in a conspiracy, becoming its victim. This plot was led by his cousin Buzan (735/1334). After coming to power, Buzan moved the capital from Qarshi to the Ili Valley (currently in the territory of China). His rule did not last long. Soon, bloody struggles for power also erupted in the Ili Valley, and Buzan was killed. By the 1340s, the Chagatai Ulus was engulfed in power struggles among relatives. During this period, Buzan, Jenkshi (734/1334), Esun Temur (739/1338), Ali Sultan, and Muhammad Polat Sultans nominally held the throne[11]. Apart from them, the rule of Mavaraunnahr was also under the last Chingizid, Khalil Khan[12]. During this time, the throne of Mavaraunnahr was also briefly ruled by Qazan Khan and his brother Khalil Khan (1335-1340). This period brought relatively stable political conditions to Mavaraunnahr. Qazan Khan followed Kebek Khan's approach and chose the city of Qarshi as his capital, just like Kebek Khan. Qazan Khan built a palace for himself two stages away from Qarshi, which he named Zanjirsaroy. In Zanjirsaroy, his daughter Saroymulk Khanim (the future wife of Amir Timur) was born in 845/1441. During Qazan Khan's reign, Zanjirsaroy became the main city of the Chagatai Ulus. The Zanjirsaroy is also mentioned several times in Sharafuddin Ali Yazdi's "Zafarnama." Later, in 789/1387, during Amir Timur's campaigns, Tokhtamysh Khan treacherously invaded Mavaraunnahr and set fire to Zanjirsaroy. During the invasion, Zanjirsaroy was reduced to ruins and was never rebuilt (Yazdi, 1994).

Thus, from the beginning of the 14th century until the execution of Amir Qozoghon in 1358, Mavaraunnahr was ruled by four major rulers. Kebek ruled from 1318-1326, his brother Tarmashirin from 1326-1335, and Qazan Khan from 1335-1346. Although Amir Qozoghon was not a just ruler, he significantly strengthened his power and posed a threat to Khorasan. During his twelve-year reign, he also elevated his son Abdullah, Danishmandshakhon, and Bayanqulikhan to the throne in his name.

He ruled the throne until 759/1358, when he was treacherously killed by his son-in-law, Tughluk Timur, during a hunting expedition. After his death, the country was divided into smaller parts. For example, Khoja Barlos raised the flag of independence in Shahrisabz, Boyazid Jalair declared himself khan in Khujand, and Amir Husayn declared himself khan in Balkh. Although these khans sat on the throne, they remained legally and formally subordinate to the Chagatai khans. Tughluk Timur did not miss the opportunity and led his army into Mavaraunnahr (Bartold).

He tried to restore the unity and influence of the Chagatai Ulus, but the emergence of Amir Timur on the political stage thwarted Tughluk Timur Khan's plans. Although Qarshi was the capital city of the last Chagatai khans in Mavaraunnahr, it continued to be significant during Amir Timur's era.

The late 13th century and the 1350-60s in the 14th century were characterized by Mavaraunnahr's fragmentation into small hostile territories and the increasing efforts of the Mongol khan to conquer all of Mavaraunnahr. Finally, Amir Timur from the Barlos amirs emerged from the Qashqa Oasis. With Amir Timur's entry into the political arena of Mavaraunnahr, the rule of the descendants of Chingiz came to an end. The last descendants

of Chingiz Khan in Mavaraunnahr experienced internal division, and the political situation worsened. Amid these conditions, Amir Timur's reign began, during which he quickly established a strong state (Mukhamedov et al, 2023).

Result and Discussion

During the era of Amir Timur, although Qarshi witnessed political struggles, efforts were also initiated to construct buildings and beautify the surroundings in the region. During the reign of Timur and his descendants, significant economic, political, cultural, and educational changes began to occur in Nasaf and its surroundings. The period of Timur and his successors' rule saw Central Asia become a major cultural center with expanding multifaceted connections. Later, these positive developments were recognized as the second "Eastern Renaissance" in history. In the early years of his pursuit of power, Sharafuddin Ali Yazdi details in his work the bravery shown by Amir Timur in capturing the city of Qarshi (Zafarnama).

Ethnographic information about the era is thoroughly covered by the Spanish ambassador Ruy González de Clavijo, Russian chronicles, Nizomiddin Shomiy (d. 814/1412), Abdurazzoq Samarqandi (d. 886/1482), Zahirdin Muhammad Babur, and other historians. By the second half of the 14th century and into the 15th century, construction, culture, and science began to flourish again in Mavaraunnahr and Khorasan.

Samarkand, not only the capital of Amir Timur's empire, but also the cultural center of Central Asia and the Near Eastern countries, saw numerous scholars, famous figures from various parts of the world, and craftsmen working in its palace and settling in the city and its surrounding regions (Dusmurodov, 1996).

Large construction projects were initiated in the cities. For example, structures like the "Kok Saroy," "Bibikhonim Madrasa," "Shahi Zinda" (Living King Mausoleum), "Ulughbek Madrasa," "Gur-e Amir" (Amir Timur's Mausoleum), "Ishratkhona," "Bagh-i Chinar" (Chinar Garden), "Bagh-i Shamal" (Breezy Garden), "Bagh-i Dilkusho" (Heart-Delighting Garden), and "Bagh-i Behisht" (Paradise Garden) were built. Besides Samarkand, large-scale projects were also carried out in neighboring regions. For example, irrigation structures and gardening developed widely in the cities of Kesh, Nasaf, and Ahsikent. Wide roads, bridges, caravanserais, markets, and trade stalls were built around the city, with bridges over the Zarafshan, Amu Darya, and Syr Darya rivers, and canals were dug. The construction of madrasas, mosques, khanqahs, schools, and shrines was also numerous. This is extensively covered by Arab historians such as Ibn Khaldun and Ibn Arabshah (Arabshah, 1974), Sharafuddin Ali Yazdi, traveler and ambassador Clavijo, Persian historian Nizomiddin Shomiy, and others mention this in their works (Pugachenkova et al, 1965).

Istakhri also commented on the gardens of the region, emphasizing their abundance (Ustrushana, 1957). Historical sources provide more comprehensive information about the gardens from the late 14th to the 15th century compared to other periods (Alimov, 1984). It should be noted that these constructions represent the unique cultural history of the Central Asian peoples, including the Uzbeks. Although these monuments were built by the skilled

craftsmen, decorators, and other artists of that era, they have been preserved in history associated with the names of Timur and the Timurids. The roots of this construction actually go back to ancient times. They embody the collective achievements of the hard work and experiences of the common people. These art samples, with their grandeur, finely decorated domes, minarets, high portals, and inscriptions, showcased their beauty to the world at that time. Nowadays, their names are preserved only in people's memories and historical sources related to our land.

The activities, spirituality, and intellectual virtues of Amir Timur were also recognized by European scholars. For instance, the French historian Alphonse de Lamartine wrote about him: "Amir Timur was not only a scholar in religion, medicine, history, law, and astronomy but also a ruler who masterfully knew the three languages widely used in Central Asia—Turkish, Persian, and Arabic—and had an excellent command of writing skills" (Khodoyqulov, 1995).

Conclusion

In summary, the late 13th and early 14th centuries in Transoxiana were marked by the continuous struggles of Mongol khans, descendants of Genghis Khan, to gain power. During this period, social and cultural conditions were characterized by fragmentation into small, weak states, while each major ruler aspired to subdue the entire Transoxiana and unite it under a single authority. The subsequent resurgence after the Mongol era began with the emergence of Amir Timur (d. 1405), who liberated Karshi from the Mongols and gradually fostered the city's development.

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- In more detail: في اي صورة ما شاء ركبك ("He created you in whatever form He willed") (Qur'an, Surah Infitor, Ayah 8) divides the word "Rakkabak" into two, reading "Rok" and "Kabak," from which the word "Kebek" derives from the second part.
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