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# BASHKIRIA AND THE KHANATE OF KAZAN

## THE PROBLEM OF ADMINISTRATIVE AND POLITICAL RELATIONSHIP

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### Abstract

Military, political and economic dependence of Bashkiria from the Khanate of Kazan in the XV<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the XVI<sup>th</sup> centuries seems so obvious that most of the historical maps of the north-western districts of Bashkortostan are included in the territorial boundaries of the Khanate of Kazan. Thus, the territory of this state artificially increased to the Ural Mountains in the east. However, upon careful consideration of the few (and mostly - indirect) sources, reflecting the history of Bashkir-Kazan relationship, it turns out that in the context of administrative relationship Bashkiria has never been the part of the Khanate of Kazan.

*Keywords:* Nogai Horde, Bashkirs, Khanate of Sibir, shezhere, tribute

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### 1. Introduction

The problem of the territorial, administrative and political relationship of the Bashkirs and Bashkortostan with the Kazan Khanate in the XV<sup>th</sup> and first half of the XVI<sup>th</sup> centuries still does not appear definitively solved. Moreover, there is a well-known paradox in its description by modern historians (this, of course, is about the historians of the previous century and the beginning of this century). On one hand, in the writings of researchers is contained the main the idea that a large part of the territory of modern Bashkortostan previously was a part of the Khanate of Kazan. Due to that fact, the relationship of the Bashkirs and Kazan khans were built on the principle of citizenship-suzerainty. However, the main source for this statement is the message of Kidras Mullakaev, the sergeant major of Nogai road (died in 1789) [1]. On the other hand, the Bashkirs themselves in their own traditions and legends did not reflect the fact of ‘Kazan citizenship’ and generally any fact of their relationship with the Kazan. Tales of Sura-Batyr providing assistance to the Russian army in the capture of Kazan and of Usergan Umet-Batyr heading Bashkir armies to fight with the Kazan khans are the exceptions [2]. And also the *shezhere* (genealogic tree) of Min Bashkir,

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which is mentioning the “three great khans” that were forced to pay *yasak* (tribute in furs) to him [3]. And finally, in his famous book ‘The Origin of the Bashkir people’ R.G. Kuzeev gives information about the Yurmat Bashkirs (*yurmi*), who were the subjects of the Kazan Khan, and were shooting arrows to Nogais over the Ik river [4].

This information is actually the most comprehensive data on the nature of relationship of the Bashkirs and Bashkiria with the Khanate of Kazan in the XV<sup>th</sup> and first half of the XVI<sup>th</sup> century. This means that the specified period is a ‘dark age’ in the history of the peoples from the South Urals, mainly due to the reason that the researchers almost do not have a documentary (written) or real (archaeological) material relating to that time. Turning to the archaeological materials on the XV<sup>th</sup>-XVI<sup>th</sup> centuries, it must be emphasized that their accumulation has its own difficulties, both objective and subjective. The first ones include introduction of Islam to the Bashkir environment, and thus the eradication of paganism in the funeral rite and levelling of any archaeological indications for social or ethnic identity of the buried. Therefore, the excavations of the medieval necropolis in terms of ethno-cultural history are not promising. And excavations of settlements and fortresses of that time period are not promising as well since in their places there are villages and towns that have destroyed the last vestiges of antiquity.

## 2. Method

The lack of written sources is explained by historically complicated but obvious reasons: the state, which contained the territory of modern Bashkortostan and the tribes that inhabited it, in their structure and nature were of a fairly loose ethno-political education with rather amorphous boundaries. Within these boundaries the territory of modern Bashkortostan has always been a periphery, and its population was the object of exploitation and a source of tribute - *yasak*. Therefore, in the archives, even if there had been any in the medieval Kazan or Isker - the capital of the Siberian Khanate, we would have hardly found any details of the peoples and nations of the region, is just of the size of *yasak* imposed on them. Moreover, the circumstances when Kazan, and Isker with all their administrative buildings were captured by the ‘White Tsar’ do not leave the opportunity to expect that any written documents were saved (unless, of course, they were not set in stone) [5]. Therefore, researchers referring to the ‘dark age’ in the history of the Southern Urals, have to operate only with indirect information, mainly from the epic legends of the Bashkirs, their *shezhere* (genealogies) - copies from the XVIII<sup>th</sup>-XIX<sup>th</sup> centuries [4, 6], oral or announcements from the XVIII<sup>th</sup>-XX<sup>th</sup> centuries, even made with reference to some historical and literary monuments (as in the case of P.I. Rychkov who recorded in 1734 the story of Kidras Mullakaev, the sergeant major of Nogai road, who had read it in certain manuscripts written in the Old Turkic language and lost during one of the uprisings of the XVIII<sup>th</sup> century). Therefore, to light the history of Bashkir-Kazan administrative and political relations from the XV<sup>th</sup>

and first half of the XVI<sup>th</sup> century there is need to rely on sources containing indirect information, to some extent reflecting the history of the neighbouring states of Bashkortostan and Siberian Khanate, and Great Nogai Horde (or Manghit Yurt).

### **3. Bashkirs and the state - the heirs of the Golden Horde**

At the end of 1410s in the east of the ‘left wing’ of the Ulus of Jochi, Khoji Muhammad - Khan of the Shibanids - settled in the Tyumen Yurt. He was initially supported by the sons of the Emir Idegey, who had helped him to establish his authority over the main part of the former Kok-Horde [7]. It is also important that in 1420 or 1421 he was proclaimed Khan Siberia [8, 9].

We must assume that the power of Khoji Muhammad extended not only to the nomads of the eastern Desht, but also to the semi-nomadic population of the South-Western Siberia and adjacent territories, including Bashkir tribes who inhabited the land on the Asian side of the Urals since ancient times: saliut, tersyak, tabin, synryan, katai. However, there is a reason to believe that the political influence of the Siberian Khanate on the Trans-Ural Bashkirs and the part of tribes inhabiting the European side of the Ural Mountains (according to M.G. Safargaliyev [8], the Shibanids could also rule the region of Bashkiria, located in the upper Ufa river - Karaidel), was insignificant and possibly fragmentary up to the middle of the XVI<sup>th</sup> century [4, p. 484]. Basically it could be expressed in the participation of the trans-Ural Bashkirs in the wars on the side of this or that leader, although mandatory as vassals, counting on some profit but targeting on protection of the ancestral lands.

At the same time Khoji Muhammad though he considered himself a ‘Khan Desht-i-Qipchaq’ and claimed the heritage of the the Golden Horde, was actually the ruler of the new state, known to historians as “the state of nomadic Uzbeks” [7]. Without attempting to capture the Volga region, he ruled East Desht, where his interests soon intersected with the interests of Borak, the son of Kuyruchuk Khan, - who was fighting for the throne in Sarai with Tukatimurid Ulugh-Muhammad during the 1420’s. On the side of the latter were some Bashkir tribes - burzyan, kupsak, usergen, tamiyan [6, p. 75].

According to shezhere, one of the legendary Bashkir local rulers (*byi*) Kusem (Kusem Khan) did not allow troops of Borak to move north of the river Samara, and even made with him a kind of a peace agreement [6, p. 80, 199].

The format and scope of this article does not imply a detailed coverage of military conflicts between Juchids in the first half of the XV<sup>th</sup> century. They were carried out with varying degrees of success for each of the warring descendants of Jochi home. Where the Bashkirs (at least, members of the nobility) were directly involved in, often supporting the warring parties, thereby giving rise to confrontation among the Bashkir society. Such a development suggests that in 1420’s-1430’s Bashkir tribes were split into several parts.

In fact, at that time, in the Southern Urals a new political configuration lined up, which lasted until Bashkiria's voluntary entry into Russia. Assisting (or being forced to assist) Ulugh Muhammed, Borak, Khoji-Muhammad, and then their heirs, Bashkir tribes predetermined their fate by the middle of the XV<sup>th</sup> century, being first under the influence, and then under the authority of the states formed on the place of the Golden Horde. Relationship of Bashkirs with these states were not the same as in the period of prosperity of the Golden Horde when they were built on the principles of imperial federalism, according to which they were the subject of the seignior-vassal relationship, i.e. they had to pay *yasak* and to participate in the military actions of the Golden Horde khans, especially under the auspice of their overlords, which provided, as we have emphasized above, their relatively safe and peaceful existence within a single state in the XIII<sup>th</sup>-XIV<sup>th</sup> centuries. From now on, "the relationship of the Bashkirs with these states has built on the principle of domination and subordination" [10].

#### 4. Bashkirs and the Khanate of Kazan

In the middle of the XV<sup>th</sup> century, the Southern Urals were divided between Kazan and Siberian khanates. Bashkir tribes that inhabited the territory of present north-eastern Tatarstan and north-western Bashkortostan recognized or were forced to recognize the authority of the first rulers of Kazan – Ulugh-Muhammad and his son Mahmud Khan, who proclaimed the sovereignty of the Khanate of Kazan, separated from other areas of the completely divided Ulus of Jochi at the turn of 1445-1446 years. A little earlier in the east, Siberian khans from the times of Khoji-Muhammad (1420-1421), had the authority over the Trans-Ural Bashkirs, and this, in turn, later played a role in mass promoting of the Manghit allied to Shibanids allies to the South Urals.

Kazan khans being the direct descendants of Genghis Khan, a priori considered the Bashkirs as vassals. First of all, in terms of the collection of numerous species of *yasak* or strengthening Khan's army by Bashkir cavalry.

Apparently, numerous *yasak* and the 'tribute in blood' (the need to participate in the wars of Kazan khans) forced Ural Bashkir to revolt. For example, Bashkir legends 'Ek-Mergen' and 'Umet-batyr' indicate the hostile relations of the Bashkirs with the Khanate of Kazan [2; 10, p. 220].

When comparing these legendary, texts two phases in the relationship Bashkirs with Kazan are revealed. Firstly, both heroes - Ek-Mergen and Umbet-batyr, came into armed struggle with Kazan Khan (in particular Khan), whose legitimacy was unshakable according to his origin, but Bashkir leaders allowed themselves to doubt it and then were defeated. But if Ek-Mergen was captured, then Umbet-batyr apparently withdrew from the steppe areas floodplain of Samara available for Tatar troops, to the east in the primeval forests in the Urals. Secondly, suddenly Khan has pardoned Ek-Mergen and let him go home. And Umbet-batyr, in the end of his life, returned to home on the river Samara. Thus, despite the folk component of these sources (it is very important that they overlap) the moments of subordination of north-western Bashkir authorities to

Kazan Khanate become obvious. It happened, most likely in the 1450-1460's, at the time of its formation, when, despite many other more important factors in the foreign policy of Kazan and in its relations with Russia and with Great Horde, the heirs of Ulugh Muhammad found time and effort to make the Bashkirs their allies.

M.G. Safargaliev linked the process of the final submission of the Bashkir tribes with the reign of Halil (1461-1467), when the Kazan Tatars took several trips to the east and north-east against the Udmurts and the Bashkirs [8, p. 505-506]. However, according to the research of R.G. Kuzeev "Bashkir territory that was under permanent or long-term protectorate of Kazan khans was ... small. As per historical and ethnographic data, it was limited by the middle and lower reaches of the Ik river, Menzeli Valley, the lower reaches of river Belaya and the surrounding areas on the left bank of the Kama. There is no evidence which would show the dominance of Kazan khans in a larger area. Constantly engaged in active politics in the West and the struggle with Russia, which the very existence of the Khanate of Kazan depended on, it did not seek and was not able to extend its dominion far to the east. Only occasionally, depending on the nature of the relationship and rivalry with the Nogai khans, Kazan rulers reminded of his strength, sending to deep Bashkiria their military units..." [4, p. 482-483].

The conclusions of R.G. Kuzeev are confirmed by the studies of modern Tatar historians R.F. Gallyamov and G.I. Aminova dedicated to administrative division of the Kazan Khanate in the XV<sup>th</sup>-XVI<sup>th</sup> centuries. As per their historical maps, the largest concentration of population in the state was observed between the rivers Volga, Kama and Vyatka, and a few settlements of Nogai daruga were located far to the west of the river Ik (river, where the Bashkirs were shooting arrows to Noghais) [11].

## **5. Bashkirs and Nogais (Manghit Yurt)**

Final forming of the Manghit Yurt as a powerful structure capable to declare itself a hegemon of the Steppe, and its transformation into Nogai Horde was in the 40s of the XV<sup>th</sup> century. Initially, in the times of the son of Idegey - Nuratdin (which had never been a 'prince' of the Nogai Horde, but remains in the genealogy of its rulers as murza) were strengthened their ancestral lands of Manghits at Yaik and Emba. Then, during the times of the sons of Nuratdin - Vokkas and Abbas and the son of Vokkas - Musa which were proclaimed 'Nogai princes', the Nogai Horde acquired the status of an independent steppe power that could dictate its terms to the neighbours [8, p. 481; 12]. Apparently, it was the moment when Bashkir tribes were considered by the Nogai rulers as an object of subordination, moreover the geopolitical situation emerging in the last quarter of the XV<sup>th</sup> century in the Desht-i-Quipchaq, and their struggle in the south-east and south with the khans of nomadic Uzbeks and Kazakhs, and in the west with the Great Horde and Crimea allowed Nogai to expand the limits of the yurt in northern direction. Manghit emirs also sought to acquire strong allies

(including the Bashkirs) to oppose Giray and Uzbeks – Shibanids [13]. This suggests that the Nogais came in Bashkiria from the east, after making an alliance with the Siberian Shibanid Khan Ibaka. “It is the Khan that helped leaders of the Manghit Yurt bey Musa and his younger brothers, mirza Yamgurchi, defend their encampments in Yaik steppes from the Great Horde and the Kazakhs. This is the period when the first documentary mention of the presence of the Nogai in Bashkiria” - Missive letter of Nogai mirza Yamgurchi to Ivan III dated August 26, 1489 [13, p. 108].

Starting an active penetration to the Southern Urals, the Nogais came into inevitable conflict for the possession of this territory with their natural enemy - the Kazan Khanate. Peak of confrontation between the parties was the period of XV<sup>th</sup>-XVI<sup>th</sup> centuries, when many Siberian rulers allied to Nogai tried to take Kazan. Continuously, for several years, from 1496 to 1499, ‘shiban princes’ Mamuk and ‘Mamuk’s brother Agalak’ tried to take Kazan. Actually the Nogais lead by Musa and Yamgurchi in July-August 1500 were fighting three weeks for Kazan with the defending Tatars and their Russian allies [14].

The Siberian and the Nogai hordes passed to Kazan through the lands of the Bashkirs, most of which already were subject to new owners and had to pay the ‘tribute in blood’ as per the laws of the Golden Horde, participating in the campaigns of their sovereigns (and this is likely was true if one takes into account that Yamgurchi at that time was the governor - nuradin in Bashkiria). Kazan khans, involved in endless struggle for the throne, were still trying to fight for Bashkiria, regularly sending troops to the South Urals, and “some of them have achieved in the central region of Bashkortostan the area of Ufa, where the local Nogai ruler residence was” [4, p. 483]. However they couldn’t force the Nogais out of the territory of Bashkiria, and in the beginning of the XVI<sup>th</sup> century, they extended their power almost in all modern Bashkortostan, except the north-east, which was still in the responsibility of the Siberian Khanate, and a small area in the north-west, that belonged to the Kazan. The entire central Bashkiria, the boundary on the river Ik [4], and all the lands to the south, inhabited by the Bashkirs, fell under the power of the ‘Princes of the Nogai’ - rulers of the Nogai Horde and their governors (nuradins) in the Southern Urals.

## **6. Discussion and conclusions**

Information from the Bashkir historical traditions, genealogies - shezhere and materials on the history of the Nogai Horde allow us to draw some conclusions about the nature of the relationship of Bashkirs with the Kazan Khanate in the XV<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the XVI<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The settlement land of the Ural Bashkirs was not included in the administrative structure of the Khanate of Kazan. Therefore, the maps of its boundaries published in some studies, where the north-western Bashkiria (between the rivers Belaya and Ik) was included in the territory of that state [9, p. 18] does not reflect the reality of the small area of the Khanate exaggerating the territory [15]. It remains unknown on what data is based Helen Faller’s

study, who believes that the territory of the Kazan Khanate was twice the territory of modern Tatarstan [16]. It is appropriate to recall the historical geography of Russia and the Golden Horde in XIII<sup>th</sup>-XIV<sup>th</sup> centuries: Russian princes were vassals of the Golden Horde Khans, but their principalities were not included in the administrative borders of this state.

For the rulers of the Nogai Horde Bashkiria was interesting as a source of raw materials - the most important source of furs, honey, wax, leather, etc. Moreover, 'populous and rich Bashkiria' was a supplier not only of material but also of human resources, so necessary in the struggle for power and expansion.

During all the ruling period of the Nogai Horde, Bashkiria had a special status of the province, with a fixed territory, administrative centres, and specific supreme governors [17].

The proximity of the economic life of the Bashkirs and the Nogais (nomads), stronger and longer, compared to those with the Tatars, the contacts between them, contributed to a more clear 'Nogai trace' in the culture and historical ethnography of the Bashkirs. For example, among the southern Bashkirs were formed and have spread such intergeneric ethnonyms as a Nogai-Yurmaty, Nogai-Quipchaq, Nogai-Burzyan, Nogai, Nogayly. The Bashkirs from the clan of Mins, have seven intergeneric formations called 'the Nogays' and 'the Nogayly'.

Thus, the analysis of available sources gives grounds to assert that Bashkiria and the Bashkirs never constituted the administrative province of the Khanate of Kazan that was a small country, simply by virtue of its small area and small population being not capable to control the entire territory of the settlement of the Bashkirs during the XV<sup>th</sup>-XVI<sup>th</sup> centuries. In this regard, much greater success was achieved by the Nogai Horde with the administrative and political traditions of the Golden Horde. If Kazan khans only periodically sent to the Bashkirs their collectors of yasak, the Nogai khans ruled Bashkiria through their governors-nuradins. During the period from the end of the XV<sup>th</sup> until the beginning of the XVII<sup>th</sup> century Bashkiria was officially ruled (or since the 1550s, in response to an increasing presence of Russian in the region, more nominally) by ten rulers:

1. Yamgurchi (late 1480s – turn of the XV<sup>th</sup>-XVI<sup>th</sup> centuries);
2. Alchagir (the beginning of the XVI<sup>th</sup> century);
3. Mamai (first quarter of the XVI<sup>th</sup> century, from 1536 was the nuradin);
4. Hakk-Nazar (about 1522-1538, from 1538 - the Kazakh Khan);
5. Ismail (1538 - about 1545, from 1545 was the nuradin);
6. Ahmed Giray (1546 - about 1558);
7. Dinbay (1558-1578, from 1578 was the nuradin);
8. Said Ahmed (1578 - about 1584, since 1584 was the nuradin);
9. Kanai (end of XVI<sup>th</sup>-early XVII<sup>th</sup> century, from 1623 Byi);
10. Kara Kel-Muhammed (the beginning of the XVII<sup>th</sup> century - 1623, from 1623 was the nuradin).

Five of the nine known governors were subsequently moved to the position of nuradin. However, Yamgurchi and Alchagir lived before the establishment of nuradins in the Nogai Horde and Hakk-Nazar (Ak-Nazar) was the only one Genghiseed from the list (Tukatimurid in dynastic hierarchy of Juchids) immediately after the governorship in Bashkiria was declared Kazakh Khan and ruled for forty years. It is obvious that the future 'career' of the Nogai governors in the South Urals indicates the high status of this position (which, in turn, shows the high status of the region) and we can make a reasonable assumption that Bashkiria acted then as a testing ground for the governors involved in management training here and the acquisition of administrative skills [13, p. 120; 17, p. 210], which itself is a unique phenomenon unparalleled in the history of the Desht-i-Quipchaq.

However, the dominance of the Nogays over Bashkiria had not only a military and political character. More numerous than the Bashkirs, the Nogays considered Bashkiria to be their own ulus (territory inhabited by local people). While Kazan khans confined themselves sending military units to impose a tribute in furs on the Bashkirs, the Nogays invaded Bashkiria with all their people and grazed their cattle there [18]. The relations between the two nations, who had been in close contact with each other for a century, could not fail to affect the shape of the ethnographic culture of the Bashkirs. But in what ways it happened, if any at all remains, is still an open question.

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