

Florio Beneveni's Visit to the Khanate of Bukhara and Khiva

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Abstract: *This article describes the arrival of the ambassadors led by Florio Beneveni to the Khanate of Bukhara and Khiva, the information they gathered about the social and political situation of the Khanate.*

Keywords: *Florio Beneveni, Peter I Abulfayzkhan, Shergazikhan.*

Peter I was on good terms with Russia's possible good relations with Bukhara. For this, in his reply letter to Abulfaiz Khan, he expressed his satisfaction with the establishment of mutual trade relations and announced that from now on Bukhara merchants will not be charged taxes and fees. The request of the Khan of Bukhara to release a prisoner in Russia was also answered: two people from Bukhara who "committed a very dangerous crime and deserved the death penalty" were sentenced to life imprisonment, and others were released¹. Peter I paid special attention to Abulfaiz Khan's request to send a "man of understanding" to Bukhara as an ambassador. Because Khan Abulfayz's request to Peter I to send his ambassador fully corresponded to the interests of the Russian government in Bukhara.

The hesitation of the embassy team led by Florio Beneveni, who was preparing to go to Bukhara, was the answer to Abulfayzkhan's request. F. Beneveni, who was in a high position under the Russian Tsar Peter I, was originally from Italy, and he was a man "well-versed in Persian and Turkish languages, and had enough experience to fulfill the mission entrusted to him". Since Peter I personally and his closest assistants: chancellor G. Golovkin and his deputy P. Shafirov were engaged in sending F. Beneveni as the chief ambassador, Khan of Bukhara Abulfayzkhan looked at this visit with great experience. The goals and tasks of Florio Beneveni's embassy were clearly stated in the document signed on July 13, 1718. In this instruction consisting of seven articles, F. Beneveni was instructed during his trip not to expose the Bukharans to economic and geographical trauma, to collect information about the large and small rivers flowing into the Caspian and the existing ships, cities and fortifications. Among these tasks, it was determined that he would be welcomed in Bukhara with the same level of hospitality as the Iranian ambassadors. In addition, F. Beneveni collects complete information about the total number of fortresses and troops of the Bukhara Khanate, the structure and condition of its army, the method, Bukhara's relations with Iran, Khiva and Turkey, and the relationship between the Bukhara state and Russia. It is necessary to gather information about the gold reserves in the rivers of Central Asia, along with the existing opportunities in the development of the middle trade. It was especially appreciated that F. Beneveni Khan was invited by the Russian Guard to guard him and that the Khonkuli gunner was pleased to make this work easier.

¹ Яковлев П. Русский капрал Топчи баши Бухарского хана. Отеч. Зап. ч. II, СПб, 1822, стр. 366-370.

Russian Tsar Peter I sent F. Beneveni and wanted to have a sufficient idea of the economic, military, civil and diplomatic situation of the khanate. Because the danger for Russia was expected by the powerful Ottoman Turkish state, and it was taken into account that Turkey's further strengthening at the expense of Iran and its penetration into Central Asia would put Russia in a difficult situation. Russia's attempt to have a "friendly" relationship with Bukhara was also connected with the break in relations with Khiva. On the other hand, the instructions given to F. Beneveni were very similar to the tasks of A. Volinsky, who was sent to Iran some time ago. By sending his ambassadors to Bukhara and Iran, Peter I turned his attention to the East and tried to break the influence of Turkey there. Thus, having received the necessary instructions, F. Beneveni arrived in Ashtarkhan on November 13, 1718 and met the Khonkuli gunner who was going to Bukhara.

On November 6, 1721, F. Beneveni and his companions arrived in Bukhara². The arrival of Russian ambassadors to Bukhara was not liked by some local nobles, who were afraid that the increase of Russian influence would undermine their position.

At that time, internecine wars were raging in the Bukhara Khanate, and the country's administrative system was much weakened. Officials were divided into two opposing groups due to the efforts made to fight for the highest position in the Khanate - the father's position. For example, when the Russian ambassadors arrived in Bukhara, one month later, Father Farhadbi was killed and Muhammad Hakimbi took his place.

Most of the Bukhara officials were in favor of closer relations with Iran than with Russia. Therefore, they tried to get the Khan to receive the Iranian ambassador who arrived later in Bukhara before F. Beneveni. However, Abulfayzkhan, who realized that Iran cannot match Russia in terms of international influence, accepted F. Beneveni first. The Khan treated the Russian state with more respect than before, and the arrogant F. Beneveni, who abused it, entered the holy city as a horseman, not a tramp, as if he did not know about this trick.

The Russian ambassador stayed in Bukhara for more than 3 years and collected valuable information about the internal and external politics, economy, and natural resources of Bukhara and Khiva. It was, of course, very difficult to do all these tasks. Moreover, most of the officials did not have a good attitude towards Beneveni.

Therefore, Beneveni used the help of Ulfat, a lord who was sympathetic to him and could even influence the khan. F. Beneveni wanted to meet with Abulfayzkhan alone and offer Russia's help. But the Russian ambassador could not achieve this intention. While looking at Russia with great hope, Abulfayzkhan always talked with Beneveni in the presence of others. F. Beneveni had realized that from being a diplomat who covered his pixie, Abulfayzkhan had become a puppet khan playing the drums of various noble groups. At the same time, conflicts between the Bukhara and Khiva khans were escalating. Khan of Bukhara, Abulfayz, was aware of the policy of the emir of Khiva, who was dissatisfied with his policy, and planned to encroach on the throne of Bukhara by secretly colluding with Khan of Khiva.

In 1721, a group of Khiva people who were dissatisfied with Shergazi Khan came to Bukhara asking for help, and Abulfayz Khan organized several marches to Urganch. But the Bukharans were defeated every time and retreated. Naturally, these events that took place in the khanate for three years did not go unnoticed by F. Beneveni. When he had the opportunity, he sent a petition about this to Peter I,

² Poslannik Petra I na Vostoke. Posolstvo Florio Beneveni v Persiyu i Buxaru v 1718-1725 godax, M., 1986; Gulamov X. G., Iz istorii diplomaticheskix otnosheniy Rossii s Buxarskim xanstvom XVIII v., T., 1992.

pointed out Khiva Khan Shergazi Khan as the main culprit, and said that the Bukhara Khan would be happy if the Russian troops entered Khiva.

When Shergazi Khan heard from the merchants of Kalmyk and Nagy that Russia was preparing to march to the south, he panicked and sent an ambassador to Bukhara to warn that the crisis that was threatening Khiva might also fall on Bukhara tomorrow, thus eliminating the conflict between them. , offered to fight together against the common enemy. But his ambassadors could not persuade Abulfaiz Khan to their proposals. F. Beneveni, who deeply analyzed the situation in the khanate, concludes that the instability of the Bukhara kingdom and especially the internal conflicts make it easier to conquer it. Another of his secret tasks, he was interested in the country's gold reserves and collected the necessary information.

Peter I understood the essence and importance of the Islamic religion from the story of the Khonkuli gunner, Kanter's "The Book of the System or the State of the Mohammedan Religion"³ and Beneveni's information, and made a secret plan to use it for the interests of the empire. According to this plan, in the Muslim lands of the empire, Islamic scholars should have greater rights and privileges than Christian priests. In the long-term plan of Peter I, strengthening the influence of the Russians in the Kazakh steppe in order to subjugate the Uzbek khanates took a special place.

To sum up, the first serious attempts of Russia to gain its place in Central Asia took place during the reign of Peter I. Some of them, like the Khiva expedition, were a complete failure, while others were more successful. In addition to purely political interests, Peter I, whose plans for the transformation of Russia required large expenses, was interested in the idea of finding gold deposits in Central Asia and opening a trade route through this region to India. What was the reason for Russia's move to Central Asia during the time of Peter I - to find a way to India, to try to find gold in this area (Amu Darya, Kashgaria) was the first and most important dream of the emperor. Because the concept that a real empire cannot live without India was a custom of the kings of that time. It was not for nothing that Peter I proclaimed himself emperor. All the kings tried to conquer that land. We know Alexander the Great, Amir Temur, Napoleon, and Hitler in the last century. These persons are those who have occupied India and want to occupy it.

Asians understand that this is not a trade and diplomatic path, but essentially a military campaign. This caused the defeat of the Russian expedition. When Cherkassky met Peter I, according to his plan, he assigned the task of concluding such an agreement with the local rulers so that it would be possible to find gold, explore the route to India and, if possible, move from the Central. Asia to India. But the rulers of Central Asia understood very well what it was. In essence, it was a colonial campaign. Peter I wanted to know whether it would be possible to sail from the Caspian Sea to Central Asia and then to India. He thought that the way to India would be much easier and cheaper if he moved with ships in the Caspian Sea and went by river or land. During this period, England was busy occupying several ports of India and completely occupying this land, which delayed the actions towards Central Asia and Afghanistan.

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