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THE REIGN AND REFORMS OF AMIR SHAHMURAD

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Abstract
This article analyzes the state administration, domestic and foreign policy, and reforms implemented by Amir Shahmurad, who ruled the Bukhara Emirate in the late eighteenth century. The study examines the measures undertaken during his reign to centralize state administration, improve the taxation and financial systems, regulate the judicial and legal system, reform monetary circulation, develop education and religious scholarship, and support irrigation and agriculture. Particular attention is also paid to Shahmurad's military and political relations with Iran and Afghanistan and his policies toward Khorasan, Balkh, and the Chahar Vilayat provinces. The article comparatively examines information contained in the works of Mirza Sami, Mirza Salimbek, Ahmad Donish, Abdurauf Fitrat, Khumuli, Miriy, and several foreign scholars. The study demonstrates that Amir Shahmurad's policies aimed at strengthening central authority, consolidating legal order, and ensuring socio-economic stability played an important role in the development of the Bukhara Emirate. At the same time, the negative aspects of his military campaigns and policies related to slavery are also acknowledged. Therefore, the article emphasizes the need to assess Amir Shahmurad's rule not from a one-sided perspective, but through a critical and comparative examination of historical sources.

Keywords
Amir Shahmurad, Bukhara Emirate, Manghit dynasty, state administration, reforms, taxation system, judicial and legal system, monetary reform, education, Khorasan, Balkh, Chahar Vilayat, Iran, Afghanistan, Islamic law.

INTRODUCTION. In the second half of the eighteenth century, the Bukhara Khanate experienced complex political, socio-economic, and administrative processes. As the authority of the Ashtarkhanid dynasty weakened, the position of the central government declined, while the political influence of regional rulers and tribal leaders increased. Under these circumstances, the rise of the Manghit dynasty to power under the leadership of Muhammad Rahim Biy marked a new stage in the political development of the

Bukhara state. Subsequently, his successors implemented a number of political measures aimed at strengthening central authority and improving the system of state administration.

From this perspective, the reign of Amir Shahmurad (1785–1800) occupies a particularly important place in the political and social development of the Bukhara state at the end of the eighteenth century. He carried out a series of reforms aimed at strengthening centralization in state administration, regulating the financial and taxation systems, improving the judicial and legal system, stabilizing monetary circulation, developing education and religious scholarship, and improving agriculture and irrigation systems. For this reason, Amir Shahmurad is referred to in historical literature by the title "Amir-i Ma'sum" ("the Infallible Amir") and is often characterized as a just and reform-oriented ruler.

Another important aspect of Amir Shahmurad's activities was his foreign policy. During his reign, the Bukhara state entered into complex political and military relations with Iran and Afghanistan. In particular, political developments in Khorasan, Balkh, and the Chahar Vilayat ("Four Provinces") were directly connected with the territorial interests of the Bukhara state. The restoration of territories such as Andkhuy, Shibergan, Sar-e Pol, and Aqcha to the Bukhara Emirate is regarded as one of the significant achievements of Amir Shahmurad's foreign policy. However, the impact of these military campaigns on the lives of the population, regional political relations, and the development of the institution of slavery also requires careful and critical examination.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY. Sources produced within the local historiographical tradition are of considerable scholarly importance for studying the reign of Amir Shahmurad, his system of state administration, political activities, and reforms. These sources provide direct or indirect information about the political, socio-economic, military, and religious-legal processes that took place during the reign of Amir Shahmurad. At the same time, factors such as the period in which these sources were produced, the authors' political views, and their connections with the ruler's court require these sources to be subjected to critical analysis.

Mirza Salimbek's Kashkuli Salimi is also an important source for studying Amir Shahmurad's foreign policy and military activities. The work provides information on relations between Bukhara and Afghanistan, military operations in the regions of Balkh and Aqcha, and the conflicts with Timur Shah Durrani. These accounts are particularly valuable for analyzing Amir Shahmurad's policy toward Khorasan and determining the territorial and political consequences of his military campaigns.

The historical and socio-political views of Ahmad Donish also occupy an important place in the study of Amir Shahmurad's activities. His works contain observations concerning the state administration of the Manghit rulers, their moral and ethical qualities, and their attitude toward science and education. In particular, information about Shahmurad's commitment to justice, his attention to religious scholarship, and his personal involvement in state administration contributes to the reconstruction of his political profile.

Abdurauf Fitrat's The Reign of Amir Olim Khan also contains some information concerning Amir Shahmurad. However, since the work was written much later than Shahmurad's reign, in the twentieth century, and considering the methodological influence of Soviet historiography, the information presented in it should be approached

critically. When compared with other historical sources, some of Fitrat's statements appear one-sided or debatable. Therefore, the work is more appropriately used not as an independent source of evidence, but as a significant source for understanding the historiography and historical interpretations of Amir Shahmurad.

The present study is based on a comprehensive analysis of the political, legal, socio-economic, and military processes that took place during the reign of Amir Shahmurad. The study employs the principles of historicism, objectivity, systematic analysis, comparative historical analysis, and source criticism.

In addition, the study employs historical-comparative, retrospective, and analytical methods**.** These methods make it possible to examine the relationship between Amir Shahmurad's reign and the preceding and subsequent periods, assess the long-term consequences of his reforms, and determine his role in the political development of the Bukhara Emirate.

These methodological approaches make it possible to avoid a one-sided assessment of Amir Shahmurad's activities, identify contradictions and discrepancies among historical sources, and provide a comprehensive assessment of his role in the system of state administration.

Results and Discussion. During the early years of Amir Shahmurad's reign, he made several military campaigns as part of his ghaza (religious warfare), advancing as far as Tehran, where Shiite communities were subjected to killing and plunder. During this period, the territories on the left bank of the Amu Darya were recovered from the Iranian ruler Nader Shah and brought under the authority of the Bukhara Emirate. In 1788, the famous Chahar Vilayat ("Four Provinces") of the Bukhara Emirate—Andkhuy, Shibergan, Sar-e Pol, and Aqcha—were recovered.

In his famous work Tarikh-i Salatin-i Manghitiya, Mirza Sami expresses a positive assessment of Amir Shahmurad's accession to the throne and notes that new administrative and political arrangements were introduced during his reign [1]. These accounts allow us to evaluate the reign of Amir Shahmurad relatively positively and demonstrate that, compared with some other periods of Manghit rule, the state experienced considerable stability and development in both domestic and foreign affairs.

Some of Amir Shahmurad's reforms are described in Majma al-Arqam ("Collection of Numbers and Figures"), written in 1789 by Mirza Badi Devon at Shahmurad's request [2]. According to this work, Shahmurad undertook measures aimed at centralizing the state, registering land, regulating taxation and tax collection, and restoring irrigation facilities and urban infrastructure. His financial, judicial, military, and administrative reforms were also intended to regulate state service and bureaucratic administration. These reforms contributed to strengthening the central authority and reducing the tax burden, thereby increasing the population's trust in the ruler.

One of Amir Shahmurad's earliest reforms was tax reform. He ascended to the throne at a time when popular dissatisfaction with excessive taxation had intensified. Consequently, his first major reform was directed toward the tax system. He granted the inhabitants of the entire city of Bukhara a tarkhan charter, abolishing taxes and levies introduced by previous rulers that were considered inconsistent with Islamic law, including yarg'u, boj, tarx, tushmol, and yasaq. This measure relieved the population from

excessive taxation and enabled peasants to retain a larger share of their agricultural production.

Another major reform undertaken by Amir Shahmurad concerned the judicial system [3]. Under the new arrangements, all sections of the population, including slaves, were allowed to submit complaints to a qadi (Islamic judge). Even the master of a slave could be held accountable and punished. This provision had a positive influence not only on the judicial system of the Bukhara Emirate but also, more broadly, on the development of judicial practices in Turkestan.

At the same time, a supreme judicial chamber consisting of forty a‘lam (legal scholars) was established. Its members based their decisions on a collection of Islamic legal principles compiled by Amir Shahmurad himself. When hearing cases and resolving petitions and complaints, they referred to this collection. Amir Shahmurad personally presided over the supreme court, which may therefore be regarded as the Amir’s High Court. The personal presence of plaintiffs during judicial proceedings was also made obligatory. The appointment of qadis in districts and larger villages was another important innovation introduced by Shahmurad.

Amir Shahmurad understood that, within an Islamic state, the judicial system constituted one of the principal foundations of state authority. He therefore sought to improve the judicial system in accordance with Sharia principles. A new judicial hierarchy emerged in the Bukhara Emirate, consisting of qadis of settlements, districts, and provinces, as well as the chief qadi and the a‘lam court, with the Amir himself serving as the highest judicial authority. In this sense, the courts could be viewed as the “conscience of the state.” The search for and publication of the legal collection compiled by Amir Shahmurad remains an important task for contemporary researchers.

Beginning in 1785, Shahmurad introduced new silver and gold coinage. The silver coin was made entirely of silver and weighed approximately 0.7 mithqal (3.36 grams). He also minted high-quality gold coins intended for major commercial transactions. These coins differed from those of previous rulers in their value, quality, and appearance.

At the same time, Shahmurad introduced a form of free coin minting. At state mints, individuals were permitted to bring their own silver and gold and have coins of standardized weight and value minted from their personal savings. In return, a certain service fee was paid to the state. This policy contributed to strengthening the state treasury and establishing a more standardized monetary system throughout the country. It also created conditions for improving the quality and stability of monetary circulation.

Another important area of Amir Shahmurad’s reforms was education. During his reign, more than 3,000 students reportedly studied in the madrasas of Bukhara [4]. Such developments in the educational system may also be regarded as evidence of relative political and social stability during his reign.

According to the historian Mirza Sadiq Jondori, Amir Shahmurad annually conducted campaigns against the Iranian Safavids and sought to drive them out of Khorasan, advancing as far as Mashhad and Tehran. He reportedly conducted more than twenty military campaigns against the Safavids. He also fought the Durrani ruler Timur Shah ibn Ahmad Durrani over Balkh, one of the strategically important cities of Khorasan [5].

Balkh had initially been part of the Bukhara Khanate. Later, the territory was conquered by the Iranian ruler Nader Shah Afshar (1736–1747). In 1752, it was captured by the

Afghan ruler Timur Shah ibn Ahmad. According to historical sources, the Chahar Vilayat, or “Four Provinces”—Andkhuy, Shibergan, Sar-e Pol, and Aqcha—were predominantly inhabited by Uzbeks and Tajiks. Consequently, the populations of Balkh and Aqcha rebelled against Afghan rule and requested military assistance from Amir Shahmurad in 1788.

Between 1789 and 1792, Uzbek and Afghan forces fought in the regions of Kalif and Aqcha, and Shahmurad’s forces achieved military superiority. A peace agreement was subsequently concluded between the two states, after which Balkh, Maymana, and Andkhuy were returned to the Bukhara Emirate. A large part of Badakhshan, however, came under the control of the Durrani dynasty [6]. Through these campaigns, Shahmurad strengthened Bukhara’s control over strategically important territories in Khorasan.

In 1788, Amir Shahmurad fully conquered the territories of Chahar Vilayat, which remained part of the emirate until the middle of the nineteenth century. Shahmurad also repeatedly fought the Kokand Khanate over the territories of Khojand and Ura-Tyube.

Mirza Salimbek, in his Kashkuli Salimi, provides an account of Shahmurad’s campaigns against Afghanistan. He writes that Timur Shah Afghan arrived in Balkh with a large army and besieged the city. Amir Shahmurad marched against him with an army of approximately twenty thousand soldiers. After crossing the river in the Kalif region, Shahmurad blocked the Afghan forces in Aqcha and fought a major battle. After defeating the Afghan commanders, Timur Shah agreed to a truce and returned to Kabul.

Based on this source, it can be argued that Amir Shahmurad challenged Iranian and Afghan influence in Khorasan and sought to liberate the Uzbek and Tajik populations of the region from foreign domination.

Abdurauf Fitrat also provides some information about Amir Shahmurad in his work The Reign of Amir Olim Khan. According to Fitrat, Shahmurad understood from an early age that the country was in decline during his father’s reign. He had little confidence in military commanders, religious scholars, and the inhabitants of towns and villages, believing that they could abandon him for insignificant reasons. Fitrat describes Shahmurad’s ascetic lifestyle during his father’s lifetime, stating that he sometimes walked barefoot and bareheaded and appeared more like a porter or beggar than a future ruler. According to Fitrat, Sufi shaykhs and eshans encouraged their followers to adopt similar lifestyles in order to demonstrate their rejection of worldly desires and material pleasures [7].

However, because Fitrat did not live during Amir Shahmurad’s reign and his work was written during the Soviet period, these accounts should be approached critically. The historiographical environment of the Soviet period often encouraged one-sided interpretations and negative assessments of the Manghit dynasty. Therefore, Fitrat’s statements should not be accepted uncritically without comparison with contemporary or near-contemporary sources.

Fitrat also claims that Shahmurad severely punished or secretly executed individuals who sought refuge in Bukhara from neighboring states. However, information contained in Mirza Salimbek’s Kashkuli Salimi does not fully support this interpretation. Therefore, such accounts may contain elements of one-sided historical interpretation and should be compared with other sources.

If we examine sources other than the works of Ahmad Donish, we also find generally positive assessments of Amir Shahmurad and his administration. Even authors who wrote after his death praised the security and prosperity experienced by the population during his reign. Mirza Sadiq Munshi metaphorically described the security of the population under Shahmurad by stating that "during the reign of this ghazi, no one except the wind could open the doors of his subjects' houses."

Amir Shahmurad also sought to raise his sons according to principles of justice and Islamic morality. This can also be observed in the writings of Ahmad Donish.

Shahmurad may furthermore be regarded as a patron and teacher of Islamic jurisprudence. In the madrasas, he taught Hanafi jurisprudence, particularly drawing upon Burhan al-Din al-Marghinani's al-Hidaya, the ideas of Imam al-Maturidi, and works of the famous Andalusian scholar al-Shatibi concerning the interpretation and commentary of the Qur'an [8].

According to the historian Miriy, Amir Shahmurad studied Sufism and Islamic legal norms and obligations under Shaykh Safar, while he studied Qur'anic sciences under three teachers: Hafiz Ashur, Nadir Baqi Qari, and Niyazquli Qari.

Amir Shahmurad did not limit his educational activities to Bukhara. He traveled to various provinces of the emirate and conducted lessons in mosques and madrasas concerning Islamic legal norms and their practical application. He sometimes served as an imam in mosques and, after the prayer, convened an "High Assembly" (Majlisi Oli), bringing together scholars, qadis, and specialists in Hadith. During these assemblies, he answered questions concerning Islamic jurisprudence and legal customs on the basis of Islamic law [9].

Shahmurad also organized scholarly debates and contributed to the development of religious sciences. Similar intellectual and religious practices can later be observed in the activities of his son, Amir Haydar. Such scholarly debates, however, became much less common after the reign of Amir Haydar.

Amir Shahmurad also promoted agricultural development throughout the Bukhara Emirate. In order to increase agricultural production and improve soil fertility, he ordered the construction and restoration of canals and drainage systems and the repair of rivers and irrigation channels. These measures contributed to the expansion of cultivated land and the development of agriculture in various parts of the emirate.

The American scholar G. Hambly paid particular attention to Amir Shahmurad's personality, his role as a state leader, and his distinctive approach to the art of governance. According to Hambly, Shahmurad spent his youth studying both religious and secular sciences in Bukhara's historic Kalyan Mosque. He retained the customs and clothing associated with the dervish community and, even when leading his army into battle, reportedly rode a simple, short horse. Hambly also emphasized his remarkable organizational abilities as a military commander.

G. Hambly evaluates Shahmurad's political and legal activities as follows: "Although he was unable to take Balkh from the Durrani rulers of Afghanistan, he successfully crossed the Amu Darya against Iran year after year. His principal objective was to capture Merv, which was regarded as an important cultural center of Iran. Therefore, the people of Bukhara respected Amir Shahmurad both for his military victories and for his strict adherence to the requirements of Sharia" [10].

The reforms implemented by Amir Shahmurad were also recognized by foreign scholars. In particular, the English historian H. Malcolm characterized Shahmurad as a reformer of the state and legal system, an ideological and practical advocate of Islamic legal norms, and a ruler who participated personally in the proceedings of the Forty A'lam Court. According to Malcolm, Shahmurad supported reconciliation between the parties and encouraged settlements between victims and accused persons [11].

He also reportedly used funds from the state treasury to compensate victims for half of the damage they had suffered. In certain cases, interest-free financial assistance was provided to accused persons in order to facilitate their future social rehabilitation and prevent their families and children from being left without support. In this respect, the reconciliation mechanism introduced under Amir Shahmurad had considerable importance for its time.

Nevertheless, it should also be noted that the military campaigns organized during Shahmurad's reign, particularly the struggle for Merv against Bayram Ali Khan and the wars with Iran around 1795, contributed to an increase in the number of slaves in the Bukhara Emirate during the eighteenth century. According to T. Fayziyev, Shahmurad captured Bayram Ali Khan's son and approximately 5,000 people and brought them back as slaves. It is also reported that the price of slaves increased significantly, with ten slaves sometimes being offered in exchange for the price previously paid for two [12].

These circumstances contributed to the violation and marginalization of human rights within society. The recognition of such social problems may have been one of the reasons for Shahmurad's efforts to reform the judicial system.

Shahmurad also restored old madrasas, mosques, khanaqahs, schools, and mausoleums through waqf properties and the taxes and obligatory payments derived from them. When appointing candidates to religious positions such as madrasa teachers (mudarris), muftis, imams, and qadis, he paid particular attention to their adherence to Sharia principles, their legal knowledge, and their level of legal literacy.

Through these reforms, Amir Shahmurad emphasized the importance of knowledge and education as a means of preventing the country from falling into decline. He introduced a system under which advanced madrasa students who demonstrated a strong command of Sharia received additional educational stipends from tax revenues. Shahmurad not only encouraged students but also urged ordinary citizens to acquire knowledge of Islamic legal principles, providing them with various privileges and opportunities. Such measures functioned as incentives for young people to pursue education.

According to Khumuli, Amir Shahmurad required jurists and provincial governors to explain authentic Islamic legal norms, customs, and obligations to the population in mosques and madrasas throughout the emirate and to raise the level of their knowledge of Islamic law.

As noted by the historian Miriy, Amir Shahmurad studied Sufism and Islamic legal norms and obligations under Shaykh Safar, while he studied the sciences of the Qur'an under Hafiz Ashur, Nadir Baqi Qari, and Niyazquli Qari.

Khumuli further emphasizes that Shahmurad prevented crime not only through strict punitive measures but also by attempting to transform people's inner moral and spiritual lives. He regarded Shahmurad as an example of such moral leadership. In his conclusion,

he states that because of the piety of this man, who possessed the virtues of the Mahdi (Shahmurad), people eventually became capable of protecting themselves and their families, managing their own affairs, and living without dependence on others. From Balkh to Samarkand and as far as Labi Ab, near Charjuy, discussions were held concerning the meaning of the saying attributed to the Prophet Muhammad that "people follow the religion of their rulers." In these territories, both educated and ordinary people increasingly inclined toward Islamic norms and piety, and the population developed a stronger inclination toward virtuous conduct [13].

Based on the evidence presented above, it can be concluded that the reign of Amir Shahmurad was characterized by a considerable degree of internal stability and public security. During his rule, theft and banditry reportedly declined significantly, while administrative, judicial, financial, military, educational, and agricultural reforms strengthened the state and contributed to social order. In this respect, Amir Shahmurad's reign may be compared, with appropriate historical caution, to the period of Amir Timur, particularly in terms of political consolidation, military strength, and the emphasis placed on justice and public security.

CONCLUSION. In conclusion, it can be stated that during the reign of Amir Shahmurad, who was recognized by the title "Amir-i Ma'sum," a number of significant domestic and foreign reforms were implemented in the country. His efforts to punish oppressive individuals, improve the country's economic situation through monetary reforms, and restore the city of Samarkand were among the notable aspects of his rule.

Amir Shahmurad was committed to Islamic law from an early age and governed the country according to the principles of Islamic justice. He also used the state treasury not merely for his personal needs, but primarily in accordance with the interests and welfare of the population.

The personality of Amir Shahmurad and his system of governance require further comprehensive study. In particular, a deeper examination of contemporary historical sources and a critical comparison of different historiographical interpretations would contribute to a more objective understanding of his political legacy and his role in the history of the Bukhara Emirate.

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