

The last khan of the Siberian land

The history of downfall of the Khanate of Sibir is one of the most littlestudied pages in this state's history. The Khanate of Sibir emerged over the course of the Juchid state collapse; in different forms it existed over the 15th-16th centuries.

The history of Western Siberia (Siberian jurt) has passed several stages, related to the given region peculiarities.

In the 1220s Western Siberia was conquered by Juchi khan and consequently it entered his state. These lands had been divided between different branches of Juchi descendants. At the period of final disintegration of Juchid Empire in the end of the 14th - beginning of the 15th century, the lands of Western Siberia were mostly under power of several semi-independent Shaybanid rulers. In 1428-1432 one of those rulers Abu'l-Khayr Khan managed to unite all these territories under his power and established an independent state with its centre in Chimgi-Tura (in history this state became known as Uzbek khanate or the state of nomadic Uzbeks). In 1446-1448 the centre of this state formation moved to the south, to the area of Sygnak on Syr Darya, and the first independent state formation, Syberian Shaybanid state, got founded on lands of Western Siberia. Siberian Shaybanid khanate reached its zenith under Saeid Ibrakhim Khan (second half of the 15th century). His death (around 1494) led to the state's rapid decay. Eventually, the state of Siberian Shaybanids ceased to exist in the end of the first decade of the 16th century.

Unstable state formation, Taibugid principality, came in the Shaybanid stead; it was a peculiar confederation of Turkic and Ugrian princedoms and tribal domains, which had existed until the middle of the XVIth century.

A new stage in the history of Western Siberia was a period of existence of Shaybanid Khanate of Sibir – a state formation within the state of Abdullah II.

Internal structure of Shaybanid Empire permitted existence of state formations with different levels of independence, up to semi-independent khanates, within its borders. Balkh and Siberian Khanates were the most significant among those states. Power in Siberian Khanate belonged to Siberian Shaybanid descendants – Kuchum khan and Akhmad Giray khan.

Representatives of Kazakh aristocracy played an important role in Turkic states of the Western Siberia, first of all in whole Khanate of Sibir. A considerable part of Kazakhs in the khanate was represented by Jalairs, who founded their ulus in the Middle reaches of Tobol. Jalair Kazakh domain appeared in Siberia after downfall of Siberian Shaybanids' state in the beginning of the XVIth century. In the second half of the XVIth century the power in ulus belonged to Kadyr Ali bek. His position emphasized Jalairs' importance for Siberian state and this state's influence on policy of Western Siberia rulers. Jalairs in the Khanate of Sibir favoured preservation of stable relations with Kazakh khanates' rulers.

A period of 1580-1582 was the time of maximal territorial expansion of the Shaybanid state, which encompassed territories of Middle Asia, Western Siberia, Kazakhstan, Eastern Iran and Northern Afghanistan. Nevertheless that power turned out to be fragile. Seemingly insignificant events of 1581-1582 such as advance of Yermak and a small group of Cossacks on the Western border of the Siberian jurt, and transition of power to Tavakkul khan, triggered downfall of the khanate.

Urged by suspicions in Abdullah's malevolent intentions and considering Uraz Mukhammad khan to be a threat, Tavakkul khan set out against Abdullah II.

International political environment in 1582 was exceptionally unfavorable to Kuchum khan. Kazakh khanate of Tavakkul khan became the Shaybanids' enemy. Abdullah II got stuck in a continuous war against Baba sultan, later he entered lasting wars in Khorassan and Eastern Turkestan. In fact, Kuchum khan could rely only on forces of the khanate of Sibir, i.e. voluntary forces of separate Siberian-Tartar domains, Ugrian tribal confederations and sparse Guards of Middle Asian origin.

The situation got worse after escape from Sygnak, where he had been held in captivity by Saeid Akhmad bek Taibugid – the rightful heir to Taibugids dynasty; for local aristocracy the dynasty was embodiment of the independent Siberian state. Soon, together with a small group Saeid Akhmad bek intruded into Kuchum khan's territory and opened hostilities against Shaybanids.

As a result of invasion of Russian forces, defeat of Kuchum khan's army and capture of the main commander Mukhammad Kuli sultan (the nephew of Kuchum khan) in 1583, Kazakh aristocracy of Siberia got out of Shaybanids' control. Having entered into alliance with Taibugid Saeid Akhmad bek and Uraz Mukhammad sultan, Kadyr Ali bek Jalair renounced his subordination to the khan. At the period of Kuchum's rule, Saeid Akhmad bek lived in Urgench, at the time of war with Yermak he left Central Asia and moved to Western Siberia, expecting to win back his heritage. Uraz Mukhammad was a Kazakh sultan who took refuge at Kuchum khan court. Formation of the alliance had been completed by 1584, when its members started a fight against Yermak's Cossacks.

In different sources appearance of Uraz Mukhammad sultan in Western Siberia has been explained in different ways. Kadyr Ali bek Jalair in his work "A collection of chronicles" asserts that "Uraz Mukhammad sultan was captured by Kuchum khan and stayed in captivity until the period of Saeid Akhmad bek rule. At the age of 16 he entered into service under the sovereign of entire Christian world Boris Fedorovich. Since then he served the tzar, who was quite favourable to him." It is obvious that Kadyr Ali bek intentionally misrepresents history as it is a well known fact that Uraz Mukhammad got into Russian captivity and arrived to Moscow in 1588, ten years before Boris Godunov's reign.

Death of Yermak in 1585 and expulsion of Ali khan from Qashliq in 1586 led to restoration of Taibugid Siberian khanate. Saeid Akhmad bek was enunciated the ruler of Western Siberia, but virtually the power in Western Siberia passed to triumvirate which included Kadyr Ali bek Jalair and Uraz Mukhammad sultan alongside with Saeid Akhmad bek. We can assume that Saeid Akhmad bek who was not a Genghis khan descendant and thus could not acquire the title of khan, enunciated Uraz Mukhammad sultan the nominal khan of Siberia. Siberian chronicles indicate that in the restored Taibugids state Uraz Mukhammad sultan was not living in excruciating captivity, but together with Saeid Akhmad bek he even took part in falconry.

Before 1586 Kazakh aristocracy had never played such important role in Siberian jurt. Actual power in Western Siberia in 1586-1588 belonged to Kazakh aristocracy, which had moved to this region before. Nevertheless, that power was not stable as there were some contradictions between members of the ruling triumvirate; besides, Russian government was not going to put up with preservation of the Siberian state independence. Its program suggested final accession of the Siberian jurt territory to Russian Empire. In the beginning of 1588 Tobolian military governor D.Chulkov managed to capture Saeid Akhmad bek, Kadyr Ali bek, and Uraz Mukhammad sultan by ruse. Captives were sent to Moscow and formal Khanate of Sibir got terminated.

Fate of Kazakh-Siberian aristocrats in Moscow turned out to be quite pacific. Uraz Mukhammad sultan soon became the khan of Qasim Khanate (perished at the Time of Troubles in 1610),

while Kadyr Ali bek became a councilor of the Qasim Khanate and in the beginning of the XVIIth century he wrote “A collection of chronicles”. Until our days, in spite of multiple misinterpretations and suppressions caused by political situation peculiarities, his work has been one of the main sources on Siberian jurt history; it contains unique data on existence of the restored Taibugid khanate.

Summing information up, we should note that status of the Khanate of Sibir had remained relatively unstable over the whole period of its existence. Local population’s enmity towards Shaybanids, who did not forget the period of independent Taibugid state, as well as tension on western border with Russian Empire and remoteness of Shaybanids’ state centre from northern domains had caused multiple problems for Kuchum khan. Thus, Kazakh aristocracy, which moved to Western Siberia, offered support in the process of preserving Shaybanids’ power in Siberia.

The role of Uraz Mukhammad sultan on the final stage of the Khanate of Sibir existence has not been an object of a special study up to present days. Access to sources let us make a conclusion that Uraz Mukhammad sultan played the role of a formal khan, whose presence made it possible for the state to preserve a sovereign status of a khanate, headed by the representative of Juchid dynasty. His early age did not present an obstacle as it let Saeid Akhmad bek preserve full authority which the khan did not contend for.

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