

Emergence of Turko-Tatar States in 15th Century Part-2: A Study of Kazan Khanate

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Abstract

The current article “Emergence of Turko-Tatar States in 15th Century Part-2: A Study of Kazan Khanate” is second among the set of two Articles, aimed to provide an overview of two important Islamic Turko-Tatar states which emerged in 15th Century in Volga-Ural region of Russia. The present article deals with and discusses about some major aspects of Kazan Khanate pertaining to its formation as an independent Khanate, territory, population, economy and government. This paper gives an insight into the region and its developments.

Key words: Tatars, Kazan, Khanate, Turks, Russia

This is an undeniable fact that the Kazan Khanate arose in the place of the *Bulghār* Golden Horde *Vilayat*, albeit neither the structure nor the specific limits of this administrative body on the eve of the emergence of separate states are known. At the end of the 14th Century, a Russian historian records that in addition to the *Bulghār* towns, there were towns such as Zhukotin, Kazan, and Kirmenchuk in the region that extended from *Bulghār*, i.e., the *Bulghār Vilayat's* centre; he also notes the existence of several additional cities. According to the same Chronicles, this area was ruled around 1410 C.E. by the *Bulghār* and Zhukotin rulers, who were afterwards referred to as the princes of Kazan. The latter were apparently responsible for relocating the province's political centre from *Bulghār* to Kazan (it is unknown whether this was the old or new Kazan) in the 14th Century. Nonetheless, the title "prince of *Bulghāria*" "It appears to have retained its meaning, despite the fact that in Russian Chronicles it was superseded by the title prince of Kazan.¹ It is worth noting that in the 16th Century, the concept of the “*Bulghār Vilayat*” was synonymous with the concept of the Kazan Khanate, as evidenced by *Hadji Tarhani's Zafer name-i-Vilayat-i-Kazan* in 1550 C.E.

Between the mid of 1390s and 1420s, in addition to the princes, *Tsareviches* (sultans) began to appear in the *Bulghār Vilayat's* lands, including *Entyak* (1395/96 or 1398/99); *Talych* (1410/1411 C.E.), and possibly another, whose name is unknown, who ruled in 1429 C.E. While the titles *Tsarevich* and "prince" appear in the final two examples, it is unclear from the sources whether they referred to the same person or to distinct individuals. However, one thing is certain—until the foundation of the independent state, there is no mention of Khans in the *Bulghār Vilayat*,² which may imply that this province was subordinated to the central administration. Simultaneously, when the Golden Horde disintegrated, the latter could no longer subsist alone in the Lower Volga region. There is evidence that "the town of *Bulghār* and its environs" was subjugated in the late 1420s, primarily by *Shibanid Hadji-Muhammad*, the founder of the Tumen Khanate, and later (in 1429/30 C.E.) by his conqueror, Khan *Abulkhair*, ruler of the Shibanid kingdom.³

However, on the eve of the founding of the Kazan Khanate, the *Bulghār Vilayat's* true ruler can be considered to be the Kazan prince *Libei*; in 1445 C.E., this prince is referred to in Russian Chronicles as the *Votchitch*, i.e., the ancestral ruler. A prince *Ali-Baba* was recorded in conjunction with the Kazan Tatars' invasion on Russian territory in 1429 C.E.; this may be the same prince.⁴ His given name would have been *Ali/Ghali*, and he would have been addressed as *Bey*. In that case, the prince in question would have been *Alim (Ali)/Ghali Bek*, who was, according to Tatar sources, the son of "Khan" Ghabdulla, the *Bulghārs'* monarch who Timur slew. There is no agreement on the provenance of this *Votchitch* at the moment,⁵ but if it was, this is who faced *Ulu-Muhammad* and his people in 1445 C.E. when they seized the *Bulghār Vilayat*. It is well known that *Ulu-Muhammed*, the Khan of the Golden Horde, was dethroned in 1437 C.E.; after settling in the Middle Volga region, he captured Kazan, the capital of the *Bulghār Vilayat*, in 1438 C.E.; according to another source, his son *Mahmutek* conquered the town after assassinating the aforementioned *Votchitch Ali Bek*, the prince of Kazan.⁶ Despite the poor quality of the sources, and despite the difficulty of establishing *Ulu Muhammed* in Kazan, the *Bulghār Vilayat's* political capital, it is vital to clarify that the Tatar historical record as preserved in folklore and Chronicles includes this Khan among the *Yurt* kings.⁷ Given that the Russian Chronicles describing *Mahmutek's* conquest of Kazan in 1445 C.E. contain phrases such as he set himself to rule Kazan (the *Voskresenie* Chronicle) and the Kazan kingdom began from there (the *Nikonov* Chronicle), it's unsurprising that *Mahmutek* was referred to in 1448 C.E. as the *Tsar* of Kazan.⁸ Even if the period of the Kazan Khanate's foundation is considered broadly chronologically, between 1438 C.E. and 1445 C.E., the formation of a new independent state in the Middle Volga region was quite obvious to its neighbours, as confirmed not only in the Russian Chronicles, but also in a number of other documents. Specifically, the phrase appears in a dispatch delivered by Moscow metropolitan *Iova* to Kazan prince *Shait'ak* in 1455 C.E., "to the power of the liberal Prince *Mamotyak*".⁹ The term "liberal prince," when used to Prince *Mahmutek*, attests to the state's sovereignty, which was governed for an extended period of time by this prince.

The emergence of a faction led by the Khan of the Golden Horde *Ulu-Muhammed* in the *Bulghār Vilayat* in 1448 C.E. should be regarded as a normal transition in the reigning dynasty.¹⁰ Indeed, the entry and capture of power by the *Cingizides* constituted the actual political revolt—a territorial administrative jurisdiction became an autonomous entity with a new administrative structure. The fact that the *Ulu-Muhammed* group, whose size ranged between 3 and 3.5 thousand warriors (with family members, this number could reach ten thousand) on the eve of the conquest of Kazan, was organised in a particular way means that its mention in Russian Chronicles as the "Horde" is not coincidental. The *Ulu-Muhammad* Horde was most likely structured around four clans: the *Argyns*, *Baryns*, *Shirins*, and *Qipfaqs*. These clans (later joined by the *Mangyts*) formed the basis for the Khanate's split into principalities (*Darugas*). However, it is vital to recognise that the Kazan state's inter-state split could have been superimposed on some older territorial area boundaries in the *Bulghār Vilayat* (until a partial cohesion of their clan bases took place). In summary, there is little doubt that the Tatars, who were organised according to the clan concept, were the political foundation of the Khanate.¹¹

The Khanate's boundaries ran along the Sura, Vetluga, and Moksha rivers in the west, and along the lands that extended to Murom town in the east.¹² In the north, the Kazan Khanate controlled the territory up to the Cheptsy River, where the Tatar fortified headquarters were located near the river's mouth.¹³ The eastern frontier ran along the Sylva and Ireni River basins,¹⁴ along the lower Belaya River, and up to Turatau (now Ufa), which was also under the Khanate's jurisdiction.¹⁵ The

Khanate's southern frontiers remained more ambiguous—they extended up to the Soka, Kineli, and Kinelchik Rivers in the south-east,¹⁶ eventually reaching Saratov; however, this latter assertion is difficult to substantiate.¹⁷ Although the majority view in the literature is that the Kazan Khanate obtained the above-mentioned borders via invasion battles, these borders could have been those of the *Bulghār Vilayat*. The third option is that as a result of the Russian state's and the Noghay Horde's military actions, some modifications happened in the Kazan Khanate's frontiers.

The Khanate's population was multicultural; this fact was amply demonstrated by A. Kurbski, who listed five other languages (nations) in addition to the Tatar language. Mordva, Chuvash, Cheremiss (Mari), Votyatski (Arski, i.e. Udmurtski), and Bashkirian were among them.¹⁸ Russian Chronicles bear witness to this. The Tatars were the state's politically dominant power, establishing the state as the Khanate's nucleus. If the Kazan Khanate had a total population of 500 thousand people, approximately 200 thousand of them were Tatars.¹⁹ External observers could see that this state was forming an independent ethnic community as early as the 15th Century, as Russian Chronicles frequently mention the "*Tatarovya Kazanskie*" or "*Kazantsy*" (the latter term can be found in Crimean material as well). In the early 16th Century, this territory was referred to as the "Tatars of Kazan" or "*Kazantsy*," referring to the Kazan Khanate's politically dominating ethnos; this designation was used in both Russian and European sources. However, Russian writers occasionally used the ethnic designation "*Bulghārs*" in reference to the Turkic population in the centre section of the state, with expressions like "Bulghārian territory" and "land of the Bulghārs" derived from this moniker. Although both systems of ethnic names were used interchangeably by the middle of the 16th Century, their very existence indicates a class division in Tatar society, with the upper classes consisting of "Tatars" and the lower classes—the mob—dating all the way back to the original *Bulghār* population. It is notable that both groups are referred to as "Muslims." By and large, it can be considered that the development of the Kazan Tatar nation occurred inside the borders of the Kazan state by the mid-16th Century. The ethno-estate division of the ethnos between the "noble" (*Ak halyk*) and "mob" (*Kara halyk*) observed during that period did not actually transcend the boundaries of a feudal society's appropriate division into lower and upper classes, though it could have been connected to earlier ethnic realities dating back to the Golden Horde's Tatars on the one hand, and to the Tatars on the other.

The fact that this kingdom arose from the ruins of the *Bulghār Vilayat*, whose economy was founded on agriculture and developed trade,²⁰ permits us to view the Kazan Khanate as the direct descendant of these traditions from the outset. S. Herbershtein, for example, stated the following about the Tatars: They farmed and lived in dwellings, engaging in a variety of trades.²¹ A. M. Kurbski, who visited many districts of the Kazan Khanate in the mid-16th Century and was a first-hand witness, observed: In these lands, the fields are vast, extremely fertile, and productive for every kind of plant...they are abundant with wheat fields; (there is) an infinite number of livestock of every kind.²² The author of the Kazan Chronicle, who spent many years in the Khanate's capital, observed that "the place" (Kazan country) is exceedingly lovely, with numerous cattle and bees and cereals of big harvest and vegetables, as well as a rich wild life and fishing.²³ Agriculture was practised in the state's centre districts, while forests were cut and burned and subsequently farmed. Numerous crops were cultivated, including wheat, rye, and barley. The area was cultivated with a *Saban*, a hefty plough with a metallic blade. Cattle breeding was stable since it had been tamed.²⁴ Nomadic cattle rearing may have existed in the south-eastern steppe areas that were suppressed by the Noghay people. Horses, goats, cows, and a variety of fowl were bred, including geese, ducks, and hens.

Gardening occurred, albeit in a very primitive state. Gardening is established by the presence of *Bakchahy* (gardener) on official listings.²⁵ Wild honey was harvested, and fishing and hunting were used to supplement the diet (the latter two were probably not typical for the Tatars). The importance of trade should be highlighted, as Kazan was located on significant trading routes and a sizable fair was conducted in its vicinity, which was frequented by merchants from Moscow, Russia, the Bukhara Khanate, the Siberian Khanate, the Noghay Horde, Persia, and the Ottoman Empire, among other places. It is worth noting that five thousand foreign merchants "barricaded" themselves in Kazan during the town's siege in 1552 C.E.²⁶ From Moscow, linen, salt, and western European fabrics were delivered; from the Bukhara Khanate and Persia, silk and cotton fabrics, jewellery, books, and household products were sent; and from the Trans-Caucasian region, fruit, steel, and vines were delivered to Kazan. Kazan exported furs, Bukhara fabric, leather goods, especially *Safyan* ("*Bulghāri*"), and fish. Slave trade, primarily with prisoners of war, occurred as well.²⁷

Researchers have noticed the existence of numerous crafts, including ironwork, jewellery, ceramics, metallurgy, leather tanning, textiles, brick-making, stone carving, woodworking, and fur.²⁸ Kazan, the Khanate's capital, had artisans' guilds that catered to the Khan's court's feudal demands.²⁹ Other crafts may have existed in other town centres, for example, in principalities (*Darugs*) such as Arsk (*Archa*), Alat, Chally, and Zuri, given that several of these towns were well guarded. For instance, Arsk had a population of between 5,000 and 15,000 people in 1552 C.E.³⁰, when it was besieged by Russian troops. This information appears to be rather remarkable, given that *Mamuk Khan's* armies, representing the Shibanid dynasty that controlled the Kazan throne, were unable to seize Arsk in 1496 C.E.³¹ The author of the *Kazan Chronicles*' assertion that nearly 1,000 tents were erected during the 1508 C.E. celebration (dubbed "the king's tents" or "officials *Katorgs*"), as well as the words of *Muhammat Amin Khan*, who was ill at the time, about "expensive laces of the tsars," "golden crowns of the tsars," and "expensive dresses and beds," can be regarded as indirect evidence of. Finally, when Russian armies stormed Kazan in 1552 C.E., the same author describes fighters who "captured uncountable quantities of gold, silver, and pearls, as well as other precious stones and crimson costly fabric and every golden and silver utensil".³²

The Kazan Khanate had a comprehensive system of truces and taxation; we can split it into four categories: 1) land and profit taxes (*Yasak*; *Haraj*; *Goshur*); 2) different tolls and natural resources; 3) offerings and gifts to the feudal ruler; and 4) capita or deim based taxes i.e., *Salygi Tutun*, *Sany* etc.³³ Different categories of the people were taxed differently (some were designated only for Muslims). The primary sort of tax was *Yasak*, which was almost certainly a form of tithe.³⁴ However, many of the taxes specified in the Khan's proclamation are incomprehensible.³⁵ Surprisingly, the Khanate lacked a mint or monetary system.³⁶ Although it has been reported in certain places that such a system persisted until the 15th Century, this is a subject that should be investigated more.

The Kazan Khanate's government was built on the Golden Horde's political traditions. The Khan, a descendant of the *Cingizides* family, was the supreme ruler; several Khans ruled Kazan until the state's collapse: Ulu Muhammed (until 1518, with an interruption in 1496 C.E. when the throne was occupied by *Mamuk* of the Shibanid dynasty, a member of Tumen Khan's family); the Khans of the Great Horde from the Kasimov horde The *Karacha-Beks*, led by the *Shirins* (*Beklaribeks*), appear to have played a critical part in the Khan's enthronement. The rule inviting the Khan to come was issued by the "The *Karachi Beks* were characterised as being from *Seit* and from *Ulans*, and from princes and from *Karacliciei*, and from the entire territory of Kazan; these were the *Karachi Beks*."³⁷ However, little information about the ceremony of installing the Khan on the Kazan throne has been

preserved; it was most likely comparable to the event held in the Kasimov Khanate. Additionally, there is no indication regarding the throne's successor wearing any particular title, as was the case in several other Golden Horde late republics. The throne was traditionally passed down from father to son, although beginning in the late 15th Century, it might be inherited by brothers. At the Khan's court, a council (*Divan*) comprised of a supreme nobility, such as the *Seyyids*, *Karachi*, and *Ulangs*, functioned.³⁸ An earlier view on the existence of the so-called "*Kurultai*"³⁹ institution, which was a gathering of all feudal rulers and is stated in Russian sources as including "all Kazan land", which deserves additional research.⁴⁰ In addition to the *Emir* and *Seyyid*, *Sahib Giray's* edict included *Hakim*, *Kasi*, *Mauali*, *Zaav El'-Ihtiram*, *Vokil'*, *Makaaman*, *Il'chij Bakchachi*, *Kshti-Baanan*, *Gusar-Baanan*, *Tutnagul*, and *Tamchagi*.⁴¹ Additionally, there is information about "the keeper of the Kazan tsars," which includes the treasury, the Khan's major domo, grooms, weapons chief, atalyk, and *Bahshi* (secretaries/clerks).⁴² During the Golden Horde period, all of these categories existed. Additionally, the clergy were involved in state issues, most notably diplomatic missions.⁴³ In general, the Muslim clergy of the Khanate was led by head *Seyyids*, who were quite numerous and appeared to have their own hierarchy (in addition to the *Seyyids* there were also *Sheiks*, *Sheikhzades*, *Mullas*, *Mullazades*, *Kaziis*, *Mavalis or Danishmends*, *Hajjis*, *Haphises* and *Dervishes*).⁴⁴

The Khanate was divided into five *Darugsor* principalities during the administration: Arsk (apparently the Qipfaqs principality) in the north-east; Zureisk (apparently the Shirines principality) in the south-east; Noghay (Mangyts principality) in the south; Alat (Mangyts principality) in the north; and Ghalitsk (Argyn principality) in the northeast.⁴⁵ *Darugs* were apparently grouped into *Volosts* (nations), which were possibly coupled with *Sotnyas*. *Sotski* and *Desyatskiye* were the princes; they ruled nations and smaller areas. It is worth noting that the *Darugs* did have non-Tatar people, who were likely of lesser social standing and paid *Yasak*. However, it should be emphasised that there was also a Tatar community that paid *Yasak*, comprised of *Bulghār* ancestors. The Khan, his family members, and four more branches comprised the dominant upper strata of feudal society: the Muslim clerics, the *Ulangs*, princes, and *Murses*, and the *Kasaks* (*ichki*, court and external court). It is not implausible, however, that the *ichki* had a greater position and were closer to princes.⁴⁶ Contrary to one researcher's assertion,⁴⁷ it was not the representatives of the upper social layers that got land in exchange for their services as owners of patrimony in the Khanate, but rather the lower strata, such as the *Kasaks* (privates, *desyatskie*, and *sotskiye*). They probably controlled up to a fourth of the state's land.⁴⁸ This is understandable given that during the first year of the so-called Russian invasion, "service Tatars" were defined as groupings of landowners dispersed among numerous villages.⁴⁹

¹ For details see: Ishaqov D.M., *O titulakh "knyaz' Bulgharski" i "knyaz' Kazanski, Etnosy i kul'tury na styke Azii i Evropy, Collected articles for 50th anniversary of scientific activity of G. Kuzeev, Corresponding Member of RAN—Ufa: Publishing house of "Gilem", 2000, p.155.*

² The only exception is the Tatar historical writing of the 17th century "*Defter-i Cingiz-name*", in which "*Ghabdulla Khan*" is mentioned for the time of Timur's campaign on the town of Bulghar (See "*Defter-I Cingizname*", Kazan, 2000, p. 28).

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- 3 *Ishagov D.M., O metodologicheskikh aspektakh, p.13; Idem, "Vvedenie v etnopoliticheskuyu istoriyu sibirskikh tatar", Suleimanovskie chteniya-2004, Materialy VIII mezhhregionalnoi nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii, Tyumen, 2004, pp. 26-27.*
- 4 *Ishaqov D.M., O titulakh, p. 151. See also: Gorskiy A.A., Moskva I Orda, Moscow: Nauka, 2000, p. 142.*
- 5 *Ishagov D.M., Eshcho raz o kazanskikh knyazyal'nykh rubezha 14th- 15th vv.*
- 6 *Khudyakov M., Ocherki po istorii Kazanskogo khanstva, Kazan, 1990.—pp. 24-25, 29-31; Safargaliev M.G., Raspad, p. 244-249; Kharnidullin B., Narody Kazanskogo khanstva: etnosotsiologicheskoe issledovanie, Kazan, 2002—pp. 128-130.*
- 7 *See: Defter-i Cingiz-name", p. 38; Safargaliev M.G., Raspad, p. 247.*
- 8 *PSRL. Vol. 11-12., Patriarshaya ili Nikonovskaya letopis', Moscow: Nauka, 1965, p. 73.*
- 9 *Istoricheskie akty, sobrannye i izdannye Arkheograficheskoyu komissieyu, Vo1.1., St. Petersburg, 1841, p. 497.*
- ¹⁰ *See, for example: Alishev R.Kh., Kazan I Moskva: mezhhgosudarstvennyye otnosheniya v 15-16 vv., Kazan, 1995, pp. 12-19.*
- ¹¹ *For details see: Ishaciov D.M., Ot srednevekovykh tatar.*
- ¹² *Khudyakov M., Ocherki, p.18; Safargaliev M.G., Raspad, p. 258.*
- ¹³ *Ishagov D.M., Ot srednevekovykh, p. 31-42; Khudyakov M., Ocherki, p.18.*
- ¹⁴ *Ishaqov D.M., Ot srednevekovykh, p. 131-132.*
- ¹⁵ *Usmanov A.N., Prisoedinenie Bashkirii k Russkomu gosudarstvu, Ufa, 1960, p.320; Ishagov D.M., Ot srednevekovykh, p. 150.*
- ¹⁶ *Ishagov D.M., Yugo-vostok Tatarstana, p. 67-68.*
- ¹⁷ *Khudyakov M., Ocherki, p. 18; Safargaliev M.G., Raspad, p.258.*
- ¹⁸ *"Sochineniya knyazya Kurbskogo", Vol.1., Russkaya istoricheskaya biblioteka, Vol.31.—StPetersburg, 1914—p. 147.*
- ¹⁹ *Ishagov D.M., Demograficheskaya situatsiya v tatarskikh khanstvakh Povolzh'ya, Kazanskoye khanstvo: aktualnyye problemy issledovaniya, Kazan, 2002, pp.141-148.*
- ²⁰ *Smirnov A.P., Volzhskie Bulghary, Moscow, 1951; Fakhruddinov R.G., Ocherki po istorii Volzhskoy Buigharii, Moscow: Nauka, 1984; Gorod Bulgheir. Ocherki remeslennoy deyatelnosti, Moscow: Nauka, 1988; Gorod Bulgheir. Remeslo metalurgov, kuznetsov, liteyshchikov, Kazan, 1996.*
- ²¹ *Istoriya Totarii v dokumentakh, p.99.*
- ²² *Ibid., p. 97.*
- ²³ *PSRL, Vol. 19, Istoriya o Kazanskom tsarstve (Kazanskiy letopisets), Moscow, 2000, p.10.*
- ²⁴ *Alishev S.Kh., Istoricheskie sud'by narodov Srednego Povolzh'ya: 16th—nachalo XIX v., Moscow: Nauka, 1990, p.38.*
- ²⁵ *Khudyakov M., Ocherki, p. 208.*
- ²⁶ *Ibid., p.217.*
- ²⁷ *Ibid., p. 222.*
- ²⁸ *Alishev S.Kh., Istoricheskie, p.46; Khudyakov M. Ocherki, pp 223-224.*
- ²⁹ *Ibid., p. 47.*
- ³⁰ *Ishagov D.M., Ot srednevekovykh, p.38.*

³¹ PSRL, Vol, 11-12, p. 243.

³² PSRL, Vol. 19, pp. 27, 30, 162.

³³ Alishev S.Kh., *Istoricheskie*, pp. 44-45.

³⁴ Khudyakov M., *Ocherki*, p. 210.

³⁵ *Pyerechen' ih see Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

³⁷ Muhamadiev A.G., *Bulgharo-tatarskaya monetnaya sistema X11-15th vv.*, Moscow: Nauka, 1983, pp.118-134.

³⁸ PSRL, Vol. 11-12, pp.31 -32, 56-51, 68, 81,167.

³⁹ Khudyakov M, *Ocherki*, p.190; Alishev S.Kh., *Istoricheskie*, p.51.

⁴⁰ Khudyakov M., *Ocherki*, p.208.

⁴¹ See Alishev S. Kb., *Istoricheskie*, p.51.

⁴² Khudyakov M., *Ocherki*, p.208.

⁴³ Alishev SKh, *Istoricheskie*, pp.51-52.

⁴⁴ Ishagov D.M., *Seyidy*, pp 40-41.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.39.

⁴⁶ For details see: Ishagov D.M., *Ot srednevekovykh*, pp.14-60.

⁴⁷ Alishev S.Kh., *Istoricheskie*, p.52.

⁴⁸ Ishagov D.M., *Ot srednevekovykh*, pp.61-80.

⁴⁹ Khudyakov M., *Ocherki*, pp.201-203.