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THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS SCHOLARS IN THE SHAYBANID STATE ADMINISTRATION

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ANNOTATION: This article examines the role of religious scholars in the administrative system of the Shaybanid state in Central Asia during the sixteenth century. The research analyzes the political, judicial, and ideological influence of ulama within state governance. Historical-comparative and historiographical methods were applied using primary and secondary historical sources. The findings demonstrate that religious scholars played a decisive role in legitimizing political authority, strengthening centralized administration, and preserving social stability in Mawarannahr. The study also reveals that madrasas, waqf institutions, and Naqshbandi religious leaders became important components of the Shaybanid political structure. The article concludes that cooperation between rulers and religious elites significantly contributed to the political consolidation and cultural development of the Shaybanid state in Bukhara and other regions of Central Asia.

KEYWORDS: Shaybanid State; Religious Scholars; Ulama; Central Asia; Mawarannahr; Islamic Governance; Political Legitimacy; Bukhara Khanate; Naqshbandiyya; Waqf Institutions; Sunni Islam; State Administration; Muhammad Shaybani Khan; Abdullah Khan II; Medieval Central Asian History

ABSTRACT. The Shaybanid dynasty established one of the most influential political systems in Central Asia after the decline of the Timurid Empire. This article investigates the role of religious scholars in the state administration of the Shaybanids during the sixteenth century. The research focuses on the interaction between rulers and ulama, the influence of Islamic institutions on governance, and the role of religious legitimacy in political consolidation. Historical-comparative, source-analysis, and historiographical methods were used throughout the study. Primary sources such as Muhammad Salih's Shaybaninama and Hafiz Tanish al-Bukhari's Abdullanama were comparatively examined alongside academic studies by V. V. Bartold, Audrey Burton, Robert McChesney, and modern historians of Central Asia. The results indicate that religious scholars occupied important positions in judicial administration, diplomatic mediation, education, and ideological support of the ruling dynasty. Madrasas, mosques, and waqf institutions became closely connected with the administrative structure of the state and contributed to the development of Islamic scholarship in Bukhara, Samarkand, and other urban centers. The article concludes that the alliance between political authority and religious elites played a significant role in ensuring political stability and strengthening centralized governance in the Shaybanid state.

INTRODUCTION. The establishment of the Shaybanid state at the beginning of the sixteenth century represented an important transformation in the political and religious history of Central Asia. Following the decline of the Timurid Empire, Muhammad Shaybani Khan unified Uzbek tribal groups and conquered major cities of Mawarannahr, including Samarkand and Bukhara, between 1500 and 1501. After consolidating political power, the Shaybanid rulers relied on Sunni Islamic ideology and close cooperation with religious scholars to legitimize their authority. Ulama, qadis, Naqshbandi sheikhs, and mudarris figures became influential participants in political administration and public life. Religious institutions such as madrasas, mosques, and

waqf foundations received strong state support and gradually transformed into important administrative and intellectual centers.

During the reigns of Ubaydullah Khan and Abdullah Khan II, Bukhara became one of the leading centers of Islamic scholarship in the Muslim East. Historians emphasize that the Shaybanids considered religion an essential instrument for strengthening political unity and maintaining social order. The close relationship between rulers and religious elites allowed the state to preserve ideological stability during periods of internal conflict and external threats. Therefore, studying the role of religious scholars in Shaybanid governance is essential for understanding the interaction between religion and political authority in Central Asian history.

LITERATURE REVIEW. The political and religious structure of the Shaybanid state has been studied by numerous orientalists, historians, and modern Central Asian researchers. V. V. Bartold examined the political transformation of Turkestan and highlighted the significance of Sunni Islam in the formation of Shaybanid legitimacy [1]. According to Bartold, the rulers of Mawarannahr relied on Islamic ideology and cooperation with ulama to strengthen centralized administration. Audrey Burton, in her work The Bukharans, analyzed the diplomatic and socio-political development of Bukhara and demonstrated the growing influence of religious elites within state institutions [2]. Robert McChesney investigated waqf systems and religious endowments in Central Asia, emphasizing their contribution to urban development, educational institutions, and economic administration [3].

Primary historical sources also provide detailed information about the participation of ulama in governance. Muhammad Salih's Shaybaninama describes the political campaigns of Muhammad Shaybani Khan and mentions the importance of Islamic legitimacy during military expansion [4]. Hafiz Tanish al-Bukhari's Abdullanama contains valuable information regarding the reforms of Abdullah Khan II, the activities of qadis, and the role of Naqshbandi religious leaders in public administration [6]. Modern scholars such as A. N. Samie focus on the ideological foundations of Shaybanid rule and the interaction between tribal traditions and Islamic political thought [5]. These historiographical studies confirm that religious scholars occupied a central position within the political and cultural system of the Shaybanid state.

Methodology. This research employs historical-comparative, analytical, and historiographical methods to investigate the role of religious scholars in the political administration of the Shaybanid state during the sixteenth century. The study is based on both primary and secondary historical sources related to the political, religious, and socio-cultural history of Central Asia. Primary written sources such as Muhammad Salih's Shaybaninama and Hafiz Tanish al-Bukhari's Abdullanama were comparatively analyzed in order to identify information regarding the activities of ulama, qadis, Naqshbandi sheikhs, and Islamic institutions within the governmental system. These chronicles contain detailed descriptions of political reforms, military campaigns, administrative structures, and the ideological foundations of Shaybanid rule.

In addition, modern historiographical studies by V. V. Bartold, Audrey Burton, Robert McChesney, and Central Asian historians were critically examined. Special attention was given to the relationship between religion and political authority, the functioning of waqf institutions, and the role of madrasas in state administration. The research also applies comparative historical analysis to evaluate differences between the Timurid and Shaybanid political systems. Data collected from historical sources were classified according to judicial administration, political legitimacy, educational policy, and socio-economic influence. Through this methodology, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how religious elites contributed to the consolidation and stability of the Shaybanid state in Mawarannahr.

RESULTS. The results of the research demonstrate that religious scholars occupied an influential and institutionalized position within the Shaybanid administrative system. After establishing political control over Mawarannahr in the early sixteenth century, Muhammad Shaybani Khan sought to strengthen his authority through Sunni Islamic legitimacy and close cooperation with ulama and Naqshbandi religious leaders. Historical evidence indicates that religious scholars actively participated in judicial administration, political consultation, diplomatic negotiations, and ideological support of the ruling dynasty. Qadis and muftis supervised legal issues according to Hanafi Islamic law, including marriage, inheritance, taxation, waqf management, and social disputes.

The study also reveals that educational and religious institutions became important components of state administration. During the reign of Ubaydullah Khan, the construction of the Mir Arab Madrasa in Bukhara strengthened the position of Islamic scholarship and contributed to the training of religious and administrative elites. Madrasas functioned not only as centers of education but also as ideological institutions supporting centralized authority. Waqf foundations provided financial support for mosques, madrasas, libraries, and charitable organizations, increasing the economic and social influence of religious elites within urban society. Robert McChesney's research confirms that waqf institutions played an important role in the economic administration of Bukhara and other cities.

During the reign of Abdullah Khan II, cooperation between political rulers and religious authorities became stronger and more organized. The ruler promoted Sunni orthodoxy, reconstructed Islamic architectural complexes, and supported religious scholars to maintain political stability and ideological unity. Historical chronicles indicate that ulama frequently acted as intermediaries between the state and society during internal conflicts and political crises. Consequently, the research confirms that religious scholars became one of the principal pillars of governance, legitimacy, and cultural development in the Shaybanid state.

DISCUSSION. The findings of this research indicate that the relationship between political authority and religious institutions was one of the defining characteristics of the Shaybanid state. Unlike some earlier dynasties in Central Asia, the Shaybanids systematically integrated Sunni Islamic ideology into state administration and governance. Religious scholars were not limited to spiritual leadership; instead, they became active participants in judicial administration, educational policy, diplomacy, and ideological legitimization of political authority. This demonstrates that religion functioned as both a spiritual and political instrument within the Shaybanid system.

The study further shows that cooperation between rulers and religious elites strengthened centralized governance and contributed to social stability in Mawarannahr. Madrasas and waqf institutions created an intellectual and economic foundation for the expansion of Islamic scholarship and urban development. Historians such as Bartold and McChesney argue that the ulama served as intermediaries between rulers and society and helped maintain legal and moral order within the state. The policies of Abdullah Khan II especially demonstrate how religious legitimacy could be used to consolidate political unity during periods of internal conflict.

At the same time, the increasing influence of religious elites also expanded their authority over social and cultural life. The integration of Islamic institutions into state governance shaped the political identity of the Shaybanid dynasty and influenced the later development of the Bukhara Khanate. Therefore, the research confirms the hypothesis that religious scholars were among the central actors in the formation, stabilization, and ideological development of the Shaybanid political system in sixteenth-century Central Asia.

CONCLUSION. The present study demonstrates that religious scholars played a decisive and multidimensional role in the administrative and political structure of the Shaybanid state during the sixteenth century. After the collapse of the Timurid Empire, the Shaybanid rulers sought to establish a centralized political authority in Mawarannahr by relying on Sunni Islamic legitimacy and close cooperation with ulama, qadis, Naqshbandi sheikhs, and religious institutions. Historical sources and historiographical studies confirm that religious elites actively participated in judicial administration, ideological legitimization, educational policy, and diplomatic mediation within the state system.

The research also reveals that madrasas, mosques, and waqf institutions became important socio-political and economic foundations of the Shaybanid administration. The rulers, particularly Ubaydullah Khan and Abdullah Khan II, promoted Islamic scholarship and supported religious institutions to strengthen political unity and social stability. Bukhara developed into one of the most influential Islamic intellectual centers in Central Asia, while religious scholars became intermediaries between the state and society. The cooperation between political rulers and religious authorities contributed significantly to the consolidation of centralized governance and the preservation of Sunni orthodoxy in the region.

Furthermore, the findings confirm the hypothesis that religion was not only a spiritual phenomenon in the Shaybanid period but also a strategic political instrument used to legitimize power and maintain administrative control. The integration of Islamic institutions into governance shaped the political culture of the Shaybanid state and influenced the later development of the Bukhara Khanate. Therefore, the role of religious scholars should be regarded as one of the principal factors behind the political stability, ideological unity, and cultural development of Central Asia during the Shaybanid era.

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