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## I.D. Khokhlov's mission to Bukhara in 1620–1623 and the communication networks of Russian diplomacy in Central Asia

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**Abstract:** This article examines Ivan Danilovich Khokhlov’s mission to the Khanate of Bukhara in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century to gain a better understanding of the Russian envoy’s links with the Central Asian states. Working with the embassy’s report and related sources, the author looks at both the official and unofficial contacts of the mission’s members and pays particular attention to identifying with whom they dealt. Unusually, the diplomat limited himself to official contacts in building his information network. Together with his interpreter, Khokhlov worked hard to set up a network of horizontal contacts to provide him with comprehensive and detailed intelligence. Endeavoring to improve relations, he described the ruling khans and those close to him, all the while making sure that he strictly adhered to Russian diplomatic protocol.

**Keywords:** khanate of Bukhara, the khanate of Khiva, the Russian-Uzbek relations

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## Миссия И.Д. Хохлова в Бухару в 1620–1623 гг. и коммуникационные сети русской дипломатии в Центральной Азии

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**Аннотация:** Предлагаемая статья посвящена обстоятельствам миссии И.Д. Хохлова в Бухарское ханство. Проведен анализ контактов русского посланника в центральноазиатских государствах, рассмотрено участие членов миссии как в официальных, так и неофициальных связях. Особое внимание уделено выявлению сведений о лицах, вступавших в контакт с русскими дипломатами. Основным источником исследования являются статейные списки миссии, а также другие дипломатические документы. Особенностью деятельности Ивана Хохлова по выстраиванию информационной сети стало то, что он намеренно ограничивал свои контакты с официальными представителями. Одновременно с этим он активно создавал сеть горизонтальных контактов, которые обеспечивали его всесторонними и подробными сведениями. Главными агентами в деле создания коммуникационной среды,

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кроме посла, являлись переводчик и толмач дипломатической миссии. Посол фиксировал круг лиц близких к правящим ханам и давал им краткую характеристику. Сделано это было не в последнюю очередь с прицелом на будущее. Этими же соображениями объясняется его последовательное соблюдение в переговорах с бухарскими и хивинскими властями русских церемониальных норм.

**Ключевые слова:** Бухарское ханство, Хивинское ханство, коммуникационные сети, русско-узбекские отношения

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## Introduction

Russians first became interested in the history of their relationship with Central Asia's khanates in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a time of active expansion in the region. Nevertheless, their work was incomplete, and they ignored most of the missions. This is particularly true for Ivan Danilovich Khokhlov's embassy from 1620 to 1622. Although N.I. Veselovskii provided some basic biographical details and published two documents, he did not describe the mission's activities.<sup>1</sup>

The research for this article is based on the diplomat's report, his petition, and his list of expenses, as well as Khivan and Bukharan sources. In the context of the “new diplomatic history,” the author pays particular attention to the communication networks the ambassador set up in his host country.<sup>2</sup>

## On the way to Bukhara

Khokhlov did not travel to Central Asia as a novice. Twenty years earlier, he had been an official assigned to the Iranian ambassador, Perkula-bek, and commanded the *streltsy* in Kazan. In 1605, he began serving on the Terek River in the Caucasus, but was then exiled to Astrakhan by supporters of the “False Dmitrii,” a pretender who briefly reigned Russia after usurping the throne. Dmitrii's widow, Marina Mniszech, and the Don Cossack Ataman Ivan Zarutskii subsequently sent Ivan Khokhlov on a diplomatic mission to Iran's Shah Abbas. Upon his return in 1615 the envoy was imprisoned on charges of collaborating with Zarutskii, but quickly pardoned. Joined by the Bukharan ambassador Rakhim-Kuli, Khokhlov set out on his mission to Bukhara in 1620,<sup>3</sup> and arrived in Astrakhan on the eve of St. Simeon Stylites Day<sup>4</sup>. In the petition he submitted to the *posol'skii prikaz* (foreign office) after his return, on 21 December 1622, the envoy

<sup>1</sup> N.I. Veselovskii, “Ivan Danilovich Khokhlov (Russkii poslannik v Persiiu i Bukharu v XVII veke),” in *Zhurnal ministerstva narodnogo prosveshcheniia* 273 (January 1891): 48–72.

<sup>2</sup> I. Lazzarini, “News from Mantua: Diplomatic Networks and Political Conflict in the Age of the Italian Wars (1493–1499),” in H. Noflatscher, M.A. Chisolm, B. Schnerb, eds. *Maximilian I. (1459–1519). Wahrnehmung – Übersetzungen – Gender* (Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 2011) 111–129; C. Fletcher, *Diplomacy in Renaissance Rome. The Rise of the Resident Ambassador*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 105–121.

<sup>3</sup> N.I. Veselovskii, “Ivan Danilovich Khokhlov,” 50–57.

<sup>4</sup> “1620–1622, December 12. Stateinii spisok posol'stva v Bukhariiu dvorianina Ivana Khokhlova,” in *Sbornik kniazia Khilkova* (St. Petersburg: Bratiia Panteleevy Press, 1879), 389.

recalled that he had gotten the order for his embassy in Kazan on 13 July 1620, and the local governor, Prince B. M. Lykov, had already sent diplomats to the Caspian port on 21 July. Due to the haste, Khokhlov was forced to borrow money at interest and buy everything he needed at twice the regular price.<sup>5</sup> The ship carrying the mission set sail in September.<sup>6</sup> At first it had planned to dock at Kabaklych, but the vessel was way-laid by a storm and made land instead at “Tiurkhmeni on Tupkaragani”<sup>7</sup> (probably Cape Tiub-Karagan), near what is now Fort Shevchenko, Kazakhstan. Khokhlov recalled that there was no pier, the ship was damaged, all supplies were lost, and the personal property was soaked.<sup>8</sup> The mission’s surviving members came ashore at midnight. Not recognizing the area, they sent two Urgench Tadhiks and two Tatars to reconnoiter it. Three were captured by what the lone Tatar who managed to return described as “nomadic Turkmen, who were owned by the people of Baksha da Onbegi, and they did not obey any ruler...” He added that the Tiub-Karagan Turkmen wanted to beat the mission’s members, since “people who were brought to their shore were given to them by God, and were their property now.” This message prompted Khokhlov, who had military experience, to react quickly by “building a circular stone fortification and began to fight.”<sup>9</sup> The siege lasted two days and nights. While the fire of the group’s arquebuses impressed the Turkmen, they refused to let it go on. Suspecting that the mission was going to the Iranian shah rather than Arab-khan in Kwarasm, the nomads<sup>10</sup> accused the diplomats of lying. Khokhlov then sent the Bukharan ambassador Rakhim kuli to their leaders. After being thoroughly questioned, Rakhim kuli managed to convince them that he really was Khan Arab’s diplomat, and they agreed to let the mission continue its journey upon payment of a toll. As he explained in his report, Khokhlov refused to pay the fee and it took two days of negotiations for the Turkmen to sell him horses and camels as well as provide men to drive them.<sup>11</sup> Since he did not trust them, Khokhlov insisted that the men “give an oath according to their faith, that they will not beat and rob us or do any harm...”<sup>12</sup> However, neither the oath nor the Koran meant anything to them. Indeed, as they approached the White Mosques, they drove the horses and camels away. Going on to beat the Khivan diplomat, the hired men forced the group to buy more carts, horses and camels.<sup>13</sup> Ultimately, Ivan Khokhlov hired a Turkmen known to the Khivan ambassador, and sent him

<sup>5</sup> N.I. Veselovskii, “Ivan Danilovich Khokhlov,” 63.

<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, none of the documents include the dates of departure from Astrakhan or that of the return, although in his petition Khokhlov recalls that the voyage took place in “autumn time.” See: N.I. Veselovskii, “Ivan Danilovich Khokhlov,” 63.

<sup>7</sup> “1620–1622, December 12,” 389.

<sup>8</sup> In his expense report of 21 December 1622, Khokhlov states that he was “helped” by 30 loaves of crackers, 20 hams, and 100 portions of corned beef. See N.I. Veselovskii, “Ivan Danilovich Khokhlov,” 63.

<sup>9</sup> “1620–1622, December 12,” 389–390; Veselovskii, “Ivan Danilovich Khokhlov,” 63.

<sup>10</sup> This is the term Khokhlov uses. See Veselovskii, “Ivan Danilovich Khokhlov,” 63.

<sup>11</sup> “1620–1622, December 12,” 390–391.

<sup>12</sup> N.I. Veselovskii, “Ivan Danilovich Khokhlov,” 64.

<sup>13</sup> “1620–1622, December 12,” 391; N.I. Veselovskii, “Ivan Danilovich Khokhlov,” 64.

to the Khivan khan along with a *tezik* (merchant) to request an escort to protect them for the rest of the journey. The mission now found itself besieged for 20 days. When one of the Turkmen fell in the fighting, his comrades insisted that the lives of the Khivan envoy and the translator Ivan Tyrkov be taken as well. Facing hunger and thirst, Khokhlov ultimately paid a bounty for the casualty.<sup>14</sup> The former enemies accompanied the ambassadors to the khan, with only a robbery of the Bukharan ambassador marring the rest of the journey.<sup>15</sup>

The ambassadors were met by the *iasauls* (officers)<sup>16</sup> of Khan Arab Muhammad and his middle son, Sultan Abesh. After the accompanying Turkmen shared their booty with the Khivans, they took the mission to Urgench, which was under Abesh's authority. Riding past the diplomats incognito, the sultan sent an *arbap* (village elder) bearing food to them. The elder invited the party to the sultan, telling Khokhlov to bring gifts of three sabres, two marten and two squirrel fur coats, as well as dark-red cloth. The Russian envoy replied that the tsar had sent him to Bukhara's Khan Imamkuli, rather than Abesh, therefore had not prepared any gifts for him. In any case, having been plundered by the Turkmen, he had nothing left to offer him, to which the arbap replied that, were he not to give presents to the khan's son, the Russian ambassador would go to prison. That evening Abesh's men came to the ambassadors and demanded the gyrfalcons meant for Bukhara's khan. When Khokhlov refused, a *iasaul* and the treasurer took them by force. The envoy sent his interpreter Semeika Garasimov and the falconer to retrieve the raptors, but the young sultan, who was 21 at that time,<sup>17</sup> did not admit them. However, after seeing the gyrfalcons he returned them. On the third day of their stay in Urgench, Abesh demanded gifts for himself, on pain of being put in prison.<sup>18</sup> With no alternative, Khokhlov mounted his horse and rode out to Abesh. Entering the house, he appeared before the khan's son, who asked him about his health and put his hand on him. When Abesh learned that the ambassador was not going to make an official speech, he told him to sit down and had him served some food. After a modest meal of a flat cake, fried carp and a melon, he allowed Khokhlov proceed to his father in Khiva, but refused to let his embassy go on to Bukhara.<sup>19</sup> The sultan accepted gifts, but did not give him anything in re-

<sup>14</sup> "1620–1622, December 12," 391–392; N.I. Veselovskii, "Ivan Danilovich Khokhlov," 63, 66.

<sup>15</sup> "1620–1622, December 12," 392.

<sup>16</sup> On *iasauls* see A. Saidov, "Svedeniia Mukhammada Iusufa Mushni ob administrativnom ustroystvo Bukharskogo khanstva XVI – nachale XVIII vv.," in *Uchenye zapiski Khuzhanskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta im. Akademika B. Gafurova. Gumanitarnye nauki*, no. 2 (2014): 157.

<sup>17</sup> Abul-Gazi pointed out that in 1616 Hebeshe was 16 years old, but the events took place in 1621, making it easy to calculate his age; "Rodoslovnnoe drevo tiurkov khana Abul'-Gazim, v perevode i predislovuem G. S. Sablukova," in *Izvestiia obshchestva arkhologii, istorii i etnografii pri imperatorskom Kazanskom universiteta* 22, no. 6 (1906): 248.

<sup>18</sup> "1620–1622, December 12," 393

<sup>19</sup> "1620–1622, December 12," 394; Thanks to his inventory, we know that for his gifts to Abesh he had to use his own property and that of the merchanta. See N.I. Veselovskii, "Ivan Danilovich Khokhlov," 66.

turn, and delayed their departure for a day as his treasurer and the iasaul extorted more presents.<sup>20</sup>

When the mission reached the city gates of Khiva, it was met by *pristav* (police officer) Mirza Shah-Avul, who accompanied it to the courtyard, where the diplomats were fed and lodged in a guest house. The next day, Arab-Muhammad granted them an audience. As when he had appeared before his son, Khokhlov said that he had no official speech to present since he had been sent him Bukhara's khan. Meanwhile, the ambassador showed the official letter from Tsar Michael Fedorovich. Laying his hands on the Russian envoy and his interpreter, the khan invited them to sit down and ordered a feast of melon, flat cakes, washed down with the wine the ambassador had given him as well as a bucket of *braga* (home-brewed beer). After the meal, nine flat cakes and melons, a bowl of berries and more braga were brought to the courtyard.<sup>21</sup>

The mission stayed in Khiva for 12 days, and was then delayed for another three by *pristav* Shagaul-mirza, who also demanded gifts. As he explained, "the Khiva khan granted him the Russian mission as a source of profit." Meanwhile, Sultan Shiri also demanded gifts for himself and for another brother, the future Khivan khan Abu al-Ghazi. Unable to convince khan to intercede, Khokhlov presented them with "high quality Russian leather and squirrel fur coats."<sup>22</sup> He also gave Mirza Shah-Avul some red leather and four ten-kopek coins in exchange for a decree from the khan exempting them from any duties during the rest of the voyage (Khokhlov specified in his report that the decree cost him 13 three-kopeck and 2 half-kopeck coins).<sup>23</sup> Only then was the mission allowed to go on its way. The diplomats travelled through the village of Khanke, the home of Jafar-Khodja's son-in-law, without incident. However, when they reached the Amu Darya River, Shiri and Abul-Ghazi's toll collectors seized them and only after a lengthy squabble and another payment could the party continue on its way. Having crossed the Amu-Darya, the ambassador learned from an Urgench merchant, Turmamet-bai, that a friend had warned him that Khan Arab had sent his men after the caravan to kill its members. Duly alert, the ambassador and his retinue walked along the river and stayed awake at night. Four days later, as Khokhlov reached the border with Bukhara, the khan's assassins cut off the chase and returned to Khiva. The mission's caravan arrived at Khayrabat 15 kilometers from Bukhara.<sup>24</sup>

### I.D. Khokhlova in the Bukhara Khanate

The Bukharan ambassador Rakhim Kuli sent his brother to Bukhara, who presented its "governor" Khokhlov's request for food and carts. However, since this was not the custom, neither were given. As they approached Bukhara's gates, the city *arbab*<sup>25</sup> met them and

<sup>20</sup> "1620–1622, December 12," 394.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 395.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 395–396.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 397; N.I. Veselovskii, "Ivan Danilovich Khokhlov," 67.

<sup>24</sup> "1620–1622, December 12," 397.

<sup>25</sup> *Arbab* – In Bukhara this official supervised cleaning the Shakh-rud irrigation canal and discharge ground water. He could also collect taxes and fill municipal reservoirs with ground water; A.A. Semenov,

lodged them in a caravanserai, where they were fed. At the time the khan was in Samarkand on a campaign against Tashkent's Sultan Tursun. When Bukhara governor Murza-bek demanded that Khokhlov come to him instead to begin the negotiations and present the gyrfalcons, the Russian diplomat refused; his instructions were to deal directly with the khan. After repeating his request several times, to no avail, the governor sent Adam-bai, Bukhara's former ambassador to Moscow, who tried forcibly to take the raptors on the grounds that they had been sent to Bukhara with him. Likewise rebuffed, Adam-bai clashed with the mission's interpreter before turning back empty handed.<sup>26</sup> Another prominent Bukharan, Nasyr kush-begi, came to the Russian mission with the same request and was also rebuffed. Murza-bek now resorted to trickery. He ordered the embassy to move to another place. As it travelled to its new lodgings, the governor's men tried to take the birds. There was a struggle and as the Russians reached for their arquebuses the Bukharan thugs retreated. When it became clear to Murza-bek that he would not get his way, he gave the group leave to proceed to Samarkand, although he provided no carts and only three horses. It took five days to reach the city, where Adam-bai met the mission and put its members up in a caravanserai. The following day, Adam-bai, accompanied them to the khan, who was staying "in the courtyard of a townsman" at the time.<sup>27</sup> Surrounded by 20 noblemen, Imamkuli sat on a bench on a raised platform. Even before he could make his address, Khokhlov was approached by a *dadkha*<sup>28</sup> Datkhe (Tatkhe)-esaul, who tried to take the letter from the tsar before the ambassador could speak. Firmly refusing to yield the document, he acted according to Muscovite protocol and made his speech to the khan. Imamkuli did not rise upon hearing the tsar's name, nor did he inquire about his health. When the ambassador expressed his surprise at such a flagrant lapse, the khan replied that there had never been a Russian ambassador to his court. He added that he was happy on this occasion and, listening with such delight, he was so lost in thought about the speech's content that he did not make the obligatory bow. His speech read out, Khokhlov agreed to yield the letter to the *dadkha*, the negotiations proceeded, and the gifts were presented to Imamkuli.<sup>29</sup> After returning to Bukhara five days later, Khokhlov sent his interpreters back to Samarkand to request the khan's permission to go back to Moscow. Instead, Imamkuli summoned the mission back to Samarkand, ordering Bukhara's governor to provide it with carts and food. However, when the group arrived in the city once again,

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"Bukharskii traktat o chinakh a zvaniakh i ob obiazannosti nositelei ikh v srednevekovoi Bukhare," in *Sovetskoe vostokovedenie*, no. 5 (1948): 142.

<sup>26</sup> "1620–1622, December 12."

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 399.

<sup>28</sup> *Dadkha* – "striving for justice," his duty was to bring to the khan "the petitions of the offended persons and hand them the answers they received." See: A.A. Semenov, *Bukharskii traktat o chinakh i zvaniakh i ob obyazannostyakh nositelei ikh v srednevekovoi Bukhare*, 148; A. Saidov, *Svedeniia Mukhammada Yusufu Munshi ob administrativnom ustroistve Bukharskogo khanstva v XVI – nachale XVIII vv.*, 155–156; In the 1610s – 20s known as Mansur Haji Dadha, who was sent as an ambassador to India to Jehangir. See about it Mukhammed Yusuf Munshi, *Mukim-khanskaya istoriia* (Tashkent: Akademii nauk UzSSR Publ., 1956), 91–92.

<sup>29</sup> "1620–1622, December 12," 400–401.

the khan was absent, since he “had escaped from the traitors to his brother in the town of Balkh.”<sup>30</sup> Imamkuli returned to Samarkand at the end of July.<sup>31</sup> Having fallen ill, he could only communicate with Khokhlov through a window. He said that he was releasing the mission as well as Russian captives who were “in his yard” and those “whose term of captivity expired.” He would release the others after he had dealt with other matters. Khokhlov was also told that the khan would send his ambassador to Moscow with a letter. The next morning, Adam-bai came to the Russian ambassador and brought him the khan’s gifts, which included – an *argamak* (a type of Asian thoroughbred) with a saddle and bridle, a turban of white silk with gold and silver, and other gifts. A few days later, Khokhlov sent a request to khan's uncle Nadir Divan-begi<sup>32</sup> for a decree confirming the “freed captives” could return to Russia without fear.<sup>33</sup> Nadir replied with an order to come to him with gifts, but sent his interpreters instead. Having accepted the gifts, Nadir summoned the diplomat again, explaining that he had to speak to him directly. When the diplomat arrived, the influential nobleman began a conversation about the Nogai. Asking whether these nomads were subjects of the Russian tsar he was told that the Nogai “had long served the great sovereigns.” However, “in the troubled and stateless times” they had abandoned the tsar, but now submitted to his protection again. But then why did the Nogai attack the tsar’s towns, Nadir countered. Khokhlov said that this had happened in “troubled and stateless times” when the Nogai had made incursions on frontier into “villages, whose people they fought took captive.” Nadir agreed, stressing that he knew this from the captives’ questions. Then he conveyed the khan’s explanation of his principles for releasing the captives, which Khokhlov promised to relay to the tsar. The ambassador also learned that the captives had been given money for their journey and the decree he had requested was in the hands of the mission’s guardian – Nazarshagaul.<sup>34</sup> On 6 August 1621, the Russian mission returned from Samarkand to Bukhara, where Bokaz-azi released nine prisoners.

### Hostages. I.D. Khokhlova in the Khiva Khanate

The mission left Bukhara on 13 September 1621 along with the captives. On their way, getting word of turmoil in Khwarazm, Khokhlov decided to ask Imamkuli for a travel letter to return via Iran. But while he was waiting for a response, the Khivan sultans Abesh and Ilbars sent a message promising to let the mission pass through their

<sup>30</sup> “1620–1622, December 12,” 400–401.

<sup>31</sup> In the article list, Ivan Khokhlov mentions that the khan returned “another week after Ilyin's days,” which falls on July 20. See: “1620–1622, December 12,” 402.

<sup>32</sup> Nadir Divan-begi Tagay from the Arlat clan – A well-known dignitary close to Khan Imamkuli. In 1619–1623 he financed the construction of a *khanaka* (Sufi monastery) and a caravanserai in Bukhara, which was later rebuilt into a *madrasa*. These buildings are part of the Lyab-i-Hauz architectural ensemble. See: Muhammed Yusuf Munshi, *Mukim-hanskaia istoriia*, 83, 85, 89; A. Saidov, “Svedeniia Muhammada Yusufa Munshi,” 154.

<sup>33</sup> “1620–1622, December 12,” 403.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 403–405.

lands. Taking them at their word, the Russian ambassador diverted his caravan to Khorezm.<sup>35</sup> But as soon as it crossed the border, Ilbars sent his iasaul to demand duties and insist that Khokhlov travel to his court. He tried to refuse, but Ilbars' men were persistent, and Khokhlov had to agree. During the audience, Ilbars announced that he was sending his ambassador, Makhtaman-bai, to the tsar. Meanwhile, the mission had to wait at its camp for permission to proceed. When Khokhlov asked about the delay, he was told that he would be able to leave once the caravan with the Khivan ambassador had been organized. Duly skeptical, the Russian sent a translator, Ivan Tyrkov, to Ilbars and he was likewise told to wait for the caravan. The news came as a disappointment to the ambassador since the looming onset of winter made it unfeasible to travel to Astrakhan. To inform the tsar about the delay, he sent his interpreter, who travelled through Iran. Meanwhile, he also ordered two Tatars to make their way on the steppe to Astrakhan, paying for their journey out of his own pocket. He then added three more men and a guide from Astrakhan, Iakov Ivanov. Khokhlov also requested a pass from with Abesh, who provided one as well as a guide, Chafar. At the time, the Russian mission was staying in the village of Mushrif near Khiva, and it maintained regular contact with Abesh and Ilbars and their supporters through the translator Ivan Tyrkov. After some negotiation, the Russian caravan left for Bavat, where Abesh was expecting it. At the town's entrance customs officers demanded duty, which was paid after some heated discussion. However, their attempt to take the group's arquebuses met with no success. Some 20 of Abesh's men now came to the mission's camp and took Khokhlov with them for an audience with the sultan. However, after leaving they ordered the envoy to return and took his interpreter instead. In the end, they sent him back as well, after confiscating his saber. On the next day, three iasauls, a "clerk" and "municipal elders" arrived, and, after a brief conversation, seized 23 of the released captives. Interrogating them, they demanded that they inform on the Russian ambassador. Unable to force the captives to do so, they took their new possessions and left. Khokhlov responded by sending his interpreter to Abesh to demand an end to the shenanigans, as well as the immediate release of the captives. Ignoring the envoy, Abesh took the best of the group and distributed the others among his people. Securing an audience with the sultan for himself, the ambassador repeated his complaints and again insisted that the captives be freed. Abesh still refused, arguing that these captives had converted to Islam which made it impossible to let them go to the Christian land of Russia. Khokhlov objected, pointing out that Bukhara's khan had released his charges, going on to accusing him of trying to provoke the tsar. Abesh reiterated that he was merely acting according to his faith. After that discussion, the sultan invited the invited the ambassador for some milk, which Khokhlov refused on the grounds of his fast.<sup>36</sup>

Still in Bavat with no departure in sight, the mission was told that it would have to wait until the elusive Khivan ambassador, Makhtaman-bai, whom Ilbars planned to send

<sup>35</sup> "1620–1622, December 12," 405–406.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 406–415.



to the tsar in Moscow, arrived, but there was no sight of him. Meanwhile, the mission's camp turned into a center of attraction for the local population. As for Khokhlov, some anonymous "Urganch men" gave him the alarming news that a few of the khan's heirs had seized power in Khiva and wanted to rob and kill the diplomats. It was said that Khokhlov had done the right thing by sending one messenger to Russia via Iran, and others to Astrakhan through the steppe, thereby thwarting the sultans' nefarious plans. Even without these sinister intentions, Abesh and Ilbars had good reasons to be angry with the Russians, for Khiva had just been raided by Cossacks, who killed many of its people. Furthermore, the khan's ambassador wrote that he had been badly treated by Astrakhan's officials. Khokhlov tried to explain to Ilbars that these Cossacks were criminals who also robbed the tsar's people. As for the Khivan ambassador's complaint, it was all a misunderstanding. But Ilbars would have none of it, telling Khokhlov unequivocally, "...I will not let you go before my man is back from Russia." Meanwhile, Ilbars' man Chiufar returned from Astrakhan bearing a message from the ambassador with complaints about the behavior of Astrakhan's governor towards both himself and Khivan merchants. However, he was intercepted by the new Khivan ambassador, Makhtaman-bai, who persuaded Chiufar not pass on these details and rewrote the letter to omit the complaint.<sup>37</sup> As a result, the attitude towards the Russian mission improved. Makhtaman did not limit himself to forgery; he also went to Abesh's *ataliq* (tutor), Devlet, and begged him to convince his disciple to stop threatening the Russians and abandon plans to kill and rob them. However, he did not manage to talk Abesh into releasing all the captives he had taken, and only 13 of the 23 were freed.

At the same time, having learned that Avgan-Muhammad, Ilbars and Abesh's 15-year-old younger brother, decided to leave for Iran, Khokhlov also asked the *ataliq* to convince the lad to go to Moscow and serve the tsar instead. The sultans agreed and at last the mission was free to continue its journey home. There was one more delay when, in the Kolpan region the mission's translator, Ivan Tyrkov, was summoned by Abesh to attend to Avgan. After another three weeks, the diplomats reached the Shamskie Kopani region where a soldier from Astrakhan and two Tatars informed them that the governor had arranged for five ships to meet them in Kabyklitsk. It took them another week to reach it, and by 22 October 1622 the group sailed into Astrakhan's harbor.<sup>38</sup>

### Khokhlov's communication networks

Khokhlov's embassy ultimately spent two years in Khiva and Bukhara. During that time, both the ambassador and his staff were able to set up official, semi-official and unofficial communication networks through the local population. Their official contacts consisted of meetings with the authorities, the unofficial ones were through conversations with captives and local residents, while there were semi-official communication links

<sup>37</sup> "1620–1622, December 12," 416.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 416–419.

as well via unauthorized contacts, such as Makhtaman-bai's conversations with Khokhlov. The mission's encounter with Turkmen shortly after they had made land at Cape Tiub Karagan, which Khokhlov described as a robbery, clearly was an effort to collection duties. This is suggested by the fact that after the envoy finally satisfied their demands, they accompanied his group to Khan Arab and Sultan Abesh's iasauls, to whom the Turkmen handed over half of the good they had seized.<sup>39</sup>

Let us consider whom Khokhlov contacted, and which members of his retinue helped him communicate. In Khiva and Bukhara, Khokhlov's official contacts were: Karaulagul, Arab-Muhammad-khan's iasaul, Abesh-sultan's iasauls, his treasurer and city elders, The city arbaps of Urgench and Bukhara, Shah-Avul-mirza (Shagaul-mirza), Arab-khan's pristav, Sultans Shiri and Abul-Ghazi's representatives and their collectors of duties, Jafar-khodja, Khanka's ruler, Murzabek's officials, Adam-bai, Bukhara's former ambassador to Moscow, Khan Imamkuli, his officials, and uncle, Bukhara's governor, Chegad (a representative of Abesh and Ilbars), Ilbars-sultan's officials, Makhtaman-bai, Abesh's customs officers, his clerk, and other, anonymous, subjects. Khokhlov's had semi-official contacts with the Tiub-Karagan leaders and Makhtaman-bai, while his unofficial contacts were with tezik Tursu-Mamet, captives and some inhabitants of Urgench. As for Tyrkov and Garasimov, they had dealings with individuals "close" to Khan Imamkuli, Nedir divan-begi, an unnamed senior Bukharan official, as well as Ilbars and Abesh and people close to them.

The data indicate that Khokhlov and his interpreters primarily had contacts with people in Khiva and Bukhara. The ambassador's frequent use of the verb "to order" in his report suggests that he did not personally carry out most of the communication, but it is unclear how it took place. We can assume that little if any of it was by correspondence; by "ordered" the diplomat most likely spoke to an official or, on occasion, sent his interpreter.

It is regrettable that Khokhlov's report lists few names, and only provided general descriptions or Russian equivalents of the interlocutors' titles; there are only more details for the most important ones. Along with the khans and their relatives, the envoy mentioned Bukhara's ruler, Murza-bek, governor Bokaz-azi, Nazar-kushbegi, and Nadir-divan-begi. The latter, who was the khanate's treasurer and Imamkuli's uncle, became prominent by building places of worship in Bukhara and Samarkand. Mention is also made of the former Bukharan ambassador Adam-bai. While this individual was less august, he was significant for any future diplomacy.

Khokhlov writes about two Bukhara governors: Murza-bek and Bokaz-azi. The former, Murza-bek is probably not a name, but a title, possibly mirza-bashi, the head scribe.<sup>40</sup> Khokhlov characterized Murza-bek as very influential and suggests

<sup>39</sup> "1620–1622, December 12," 392.

<sup>40</sup> V.V. Bartol'd "Tseremonial pri dvore uzbekskih khanov v XVII veke," in vol. 2, part 2 of *Sochine-nia* (Moscow: Nauka Publ., 1964), 389–399.

that, along with Nadir divan-begi, he was responsible for inciting hostility with Tursun-Muhammad.<sup>41</sup> At the same time, the diplomat described this governor as a “thief and a notorious robber,” going on to explain that that during his time in Bukhara, the official’s subordinates committed several robberies every night in the town, but these stopped after he was murdered.<sup>42</sup>

About Khiva, the ambassador mentioned just a few names, and he may have misunderstood some of their titles. For example, he refers to an official of Arab-Mohammed-khan, Shah-Avul-mirza, who is also called Shagaul-mirza. Again, this could also be a title rather than a name, since in Bukhara there was a shigaul who acted as the master of ceremonies; he was responsible, among other, for receiving foreign ambassadors.<sup>43</sup> In general, Khokhlov’s communication networks mostly included representatives of the khan’s court circle and divan officials.

One striking detail of the Russian ambassador’s report was his relative inactivity. According to its text of the report, after travelling, neither Khokhlov nor his retinue seemed to have been very busy. The ambassador and the translators only left their camp for official meetings, and it is not clear they were even in charge. Indeed, in Khiva, Khokhlov had to insist that he be provided with a companion.<sup>44</sup> At the same time, most of his intelligence came from captives and private individuals who had come to him. The ambassador may also have gathered some information from his conversations with officials, but he did not mention this in his report.

### Conclusion

Khokhlov’s main responsibility in the khanates was to defend the tsar’s honor. Having had some military experience, he acted aggressively when he became involved in clashes, especially those with the Tiub-Karagan Turkmen. He also consistently refused to meet with questionable and low-ranking officials, sending his interpreters in his stead, and he only made concessions when forced to do so. Khokhlov also tried to avoid meeting with the rebellious Khivan sultans who had overthrown and blinded the khan,<sup>45</sup> to avoid creating any precedents. The need to move his mission’s caravan did force him to act against his principles. As a result, the diplomat was unable to set up a wide communication network. At the same time, he did describe the people close to the ruling khans, not least with a view to the future. Meanwhile, Khokhlov’s consistency in obser-

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<sup>41</sup> For more details, see A.K. Alekseev, *Politicheskaiia istoriia Tukai-Timuridov. Po materialam persidskogo istoricheskogo sochineniia Bahr al-asrar* (St. Petersburg: Saint Petersburg University Publ, 2006), 122–124.

<sup>42</sup> “1620–1622, December 12,” 422.

<sup>43</sup> Bartol'd “Tseremonial,” 396; A.K. Alekseev, *Politicheskaiia istoriia*, 151.

<sup>44</sup> “1620–1622, December 12,” 411.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 406; “Rodoslovnnoe drevo tiurkov,” 252–256; N.I. Veselovskii, *Ocherk istoriko-geograficheskikh svedenii o Khivinskom khanstve ot drevneishikh vremen do nastoiashchego* (St. Petersburg: Bratiev Pantileevykh Press, 1877), 130.

ving his diplomatic protocol was meant to affect the way the khanates received Muscovite ambassadors, but such hopes proved illusory. Khokhlov's communication strategy may seem to have been ineffective. He deliberately minimized personal dealings with officials, possibly to avoid inadvertently damaging the tsar's high prestige, yet if Khokhlov deliberately limited his contacts, he did not avoid them altogether. As the result, he did get the merchant Tursu-Mamet's warnings of an impending attack, and talked the Khivan diplomat into interceding with the sultans to lessen their hostile attitude. Indeed, the Russian ambassador did gather important political intelligence, including about the coup in Khiva, the balance of power in Bukhara, the popularity of Balkh's khan, the Balkh-Indian and Bukhara-Kazakh conflicts, the attempted coup in Bukhara, and about the Iranian-Indian war for Kandahar. He also provided the first brief geographical descriptions of the Khanates of Khiva and Bukhara as well as their armed forces, including their tactics and weapons.

Given the very sporadic nature of Moscow's relations with the Central Asian khanates at the time, it was difficult to get a clear idea of the political hierarchies, which complicated the ambassador's efforts to preserve his sovereign's honor. A clearer picture of the most prominent men in the Bukharan khan's inner circle as well as of Central Asian diplomatic protocol was meant to facilitate diplomacy in the future.

Khokhlov did establish a network of unofficial contacts with merchants, officials, messengers and captives, which helped him to provide a relatively accurate account of regions' state of affairs. At the same time, such networks would not survive for the longer term, which meant that Russia's next ambassadors would have to set them up all over again.

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