



## Sherbachas and Afghan Groups in the Emirate of Bukhara

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**Abstract:** *The establishment of the Soviet system in 1957 and the Kolesov events of 1918 forced Emir Alimkhan to focus on the military. Emir started the preparation of war tools and soldiers. The salaries of the military have been increased several times. Emir Alimkhan conducted negotiations with the British, Tibetans on the creation of a military alliance. New military groups of the 1917-1920 were the military-volunteer of Afghan groups, the second were Ibrahim's army which the Prisoners, thieves had been given military group of "sherbachas". It was very difficult to manage the conflicts of the groups, even they asked help from Soviet Government for some problems. These situations had accelerated the demolition process of Emirate.*

**Keywords:** *The dynasty of Mangits, Bukhara Emirate, Sherbachalar, (lionkids), Afghan groups, the events of Kolesov, commander Ibrohimcha, military groups.*

### Introduction

During the first years of the Mangits dynasty the Emirate didn't have any regular army. The main function of those few military men existing in the Emirate was to protect the Emir and his advisors as well as to maintain peace in the city.

During the Mangits dynasty besides the commanders of Emir several new military groups had been set up by 1920. Historian Mukhamad Said Baljuvoni writes that the structure of army in the Emirate between 1917 and 1920 was as follows: The Bukharian army consisted of seven groups:

1. The men with guns 2. The cavalry kazaks 3. Shefski 4. Terski 5. Arabbachas (the generation of Arabs) 6. Turkman group 7. Ordinary warriors [1].

While examining the structure of the group warriors, the question about whether (if) there were Russians, Azerbaijanians, Armenians, Georgians and Kazakhs of Volga in the group of cavalry Kazakhs was clarified. According to the archive data till 1918, it was found out that all the cavalry Kazakhs were the citizens of the Emirate [2]. But, since 1918 it became apparent that the Emirate army had Russian, English and other foreign troops opposing the Soviet Union.

The political position of the world has changed since 1917. In particular the establishment of the Soviet Union started causing threat to the Emirate. The events of Kolesov which occurred in 1918 is an obvious example of it. After it Emir Alimkhan began to pay all his attention to the military sphere.

### Literature review

The historian Mukhamad Said Baljuvoni describes the history of this period as the following: "Even though it had a friendly relationship with the Russian Empire, actually he was rather afraid of it. Because Russia has taken some land of Bukhara into its own territory. During the reign of Emir Alimkhan the controversy and resistance was obvious and danger was increasing. That's why all attention were drawn to the preparation of weapons and soldiers. The salaries of the military have been increased several times. Emir conducted negotiations with the English people, Tbilisians, Afghans and Khorezmians for the purpose of friendship and alliance [3]."



The factors given above caused for the formation of new military group between 1917 and 1920. After the events of Kolesov, the first thing that Emir did was to gather soldiers. Most of the soldiers gathered by Emir these days consisted of two groups. The first one consisted of Afghan volunteers, and in the second group there were the prisoners, thieves that had been arrested together with their leader Ibrokhimcha. They were released and they with guns and military uniforms. It was the group of “Sherbachas” which consisted of nearly a thousand of soldiers [4].

Realizing that the relation with the Soviet government were deteriorating, Emir Alimkhan fueled negotiations with foreigners for the purpose of military support. On this purpose, as mentioned above Domlo Kutbiddin Sudur and Turakhodja Nakib were sent to Afghanistan. A number of resolutions were made by the Emir of Afghanistan and his ministers, 6 elephants and 200 devoted soldiers were sent to Bukhara for help. The ambassadors were treated with honor and sent back with royal outfits [5].

However, ten thousand soldiers and other military aids that were being expected to be sent to Bukhara failed because of a serious politically intricate condition in Afghanistan. ( 3rd Anglo-Afghan war in 1919, the military support given by the Soviet Union in Afghanistan).

According to the information by Sadriddin Ayni, most of Afghan volunteers had come to Bukhara running away from Afghanistan. Some of them entered the army service as volunteers during the war and therefore they earned the Emir’s respect. Others also joined them hearing about the respect and gifts, even new Afghan people came from Afghanistan to join the group.

### **Research Methodology**

The army groups of Afghan volunteers were independent, their leaders also belonged to their army groups. They eventually started doing things their own way and went beyond the limit. They would enter and sit at any house or garden, beat anyone they wanted calling him “jaded”, delivered them to the government, and get anything they wanted from the government. They also began to oppress the children of the people. After a while the relations between Afghans and Sherbachas got worse[8]. The Afghans side was ready to make a rebellion. The Emir was for the Afghans and Sherbachas to Karmana from Bukhara. The Afghans who saw it got even more furious than before. They began to scare with weapons the one who showed a bit of contradiction. Even some cases of murder occurred. For example a tea merchant Khodji Rakhmat’s man was beaten and killed. Consequently, the Afghans annoyed the people of Bukhara and people of Bukhara were fed up with them. They complained about Afghans everywhere.

While being busy with the Afghans issue, the government of Bukhara couldn’t solve this problem and couldn’t get back the weapons which were given to Afghans by the government itself. In September, 1918 The Bukharian government and the Kagan Resident of the Republic of Turkistan had a good relation of “friendship”.

The Emir appealed to the Resident about the Afghan volunteers and urged him to take away the weapons in Kagan in case they were to leave Bukhara. Consequently, the Afghans were sent to Kagan from Bukhara with weapons. The Soviets took away their weapons and sent them to the Bukharian government and the Afghans were transferred to the territory of Afghanistan. Thus the issue of Afghan volunteers was over[6]. It can be another reason for failure of the support and ten thousand military men of Afghanistan government.

Sadriddin Ayni didn’t point out any positive views in the field of military affairs of the Emirate as well as in all the other fields. While expressing his opinion about Sherbachas he says: “All the famous thieves were gathered in this band. For being a member of this group one had to prove himself by numerous stealing actions and evidences of bad deeds. The more one stole the higher



his status he got. Not only Bukharian thieves but also famous thieves of Samarkand were assigned to great positions by the government.

Sherbachas continued with their blood thirsty deeds with weapons given by the Emir after moving to Karmana. Even in Karmana they gathered their regular band and they organized attacks on the roads [7].”

Though during the period up to the middle of the 19th century some changes in the structure of the army could be noticed, these changes weren't worthy of praise for the development. The last rulers of the Emirate Emir Abdulakhadkhan and Emir Alimkhan have carried out some attempts to make positive changes in the structure of the army in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, most of the changes referred to the structure of the army and did not provide adequate fighting spirit in the activity of the army[9]. Though since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Emirate army had started to stand in ranks, to have the military exercises, marshing, having service uniforms and accepted certain aspects of the military rules and service regulations of the Russian Empire, some progressive rules were neglected. For instance, the age of service of the ordinary warriors, admission to the army, applying the body punishment to the ordinary warriors and other medieval rules were conserved. In the years 1917-1920, a considerable amount of attention was paid to the work of the army. If we point out the political independence of the Bukharian Emirate during these years, to preserve the freedom of the land was their main duty[10]. However, it was difficult to find a solution to this matter in such a short period of time. There were dozens of reasons impeding it.

### Conclusion

The Emir himself started being frightened by the newly formed military units. In some cases it became difficult to rule them, and the Emir even had to ask the Soviet government for help in some of these matters. (Disputable matters between Sherbachas and Afghan volunteers can be an obvious example of it). This situation in its turn has accelerated the destruction process of the Emirate evenmore.

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