

ANDREAS WILDE

WHAT IS BEYOND THE RIVER?  
POWER, AUTHORITY, AND SOCIAL ORDER IN TRANSOXANIA  
18<sup>TH</sup>-19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES

Volume 2

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ANDREAS WILDE

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VERLAG DER  
ÖSTERREICHISCHEN  
AKADEMIE DER  
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## 4. The Order of Things in Eighteenth-Century Chronicles

The results of the last chapter suggest that in spite of all modifications of Transoxania's social order, patron-client relations still played a major role in the social and political life of the region. In this chapter I will shed light on power relations in *Mā Warā' al-Nahr* from an intrinsic perspective. Special attention will be paid to the dimension of authority that can be deduced from relationships and practices. Therefore I will investigate the language of power used in concrete authority relations.

The investigation pursues the following questions: How are social relationships described by the chroniclers and which vocabulary do they employ? To what extent does the picture derived from the chronicles correspond to Western theories on patronage? What particular services did dependent clients render to their master and what did they gain in return? Which conclusions may be drawn about the worldview of the Manghit chroniclers and their audience?

To find adequate answers to these questions, I will explore the semantic level of authority. By allowing the primary sources to speak for themselves, I hope to highlight the nature of patronage in Transoxania and the ways in which the social fabric of the region was described and perceived by the historians. The major focus will be on keywords and concepts connected with patron-client relations in the sources. This method is first of all indebted to Bourdieu, who argued that social power expresses itself in language. According to him, the spoken word exercises magical power; words make us see, believe and act.<sup>1</sup> However, the approach is also inspired by Mottahedeh and Paul, who explored the depiction of power relations in medieval sources. By placing emphasis on a range of settings and contexts connected to a kind of micro-politics, I will quote a large number of text passages to highlight different facets and aspects of social order as presented and illustrated in the sources. While the first sections deal especially with dimensions of patronage and its preconditions as reflected by the texts, the fourth and fifth sections will concern questions of gift giving and mediation, two topics closely linked to patronage. In the last sections I will discuss more general

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<sup>1</sup> Bourdieu, *Die verborgenen Mechanismen*, 83–85. On the ordering aspect of language see Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 20.

subjects like the depiction of order, the role of God as superhuman protector and the chronicles as products of power relations.

### PRECONDITIONS FOR THE FORGING OF PERSONAL TIES

Despite the countless variations and different descriptions of patron-client ties in the sources, two main reasons or preconditions for their being established can be identified. First, we observe the element of fear and uncertainty, even perceived threat. Especially in hopeless situations and under the pressure of life-threatening circumstances, men felt compelled to enlist the aid of another, stronger person. The second reason is ambition and personal interest. Time and again we read about skillful personages whose behavior and strategies were strongly informed by personal interest and the quest for resources or an influential social position.

One of the most prominent relationships, described frequently and in detail by Bukharan and other historians, is that between the Iranian ruler Nādir Shāh and the leaders of the Manghit tribe. Upon Nādir Shāh's arrival at Karkī on Jumāda I 27, 1153/August 19–20, 1740, Muḥammad Raḥīm Bī, the young son of the Bukharan *atālīq* Muḥammad Ḥakīm Bī, attended his camp and “paid homage to the king of the star-like legions.”<sup>2</sup> This act of tribute and submission is one of the central motifs in historical accounts and the subject of different interpretations and staging.<sup>3</sup> But what were the decisive factors behind a decision that led to the subsequent occupation of

<sup>2</sup> Qāzī Wafā, *Tuḥfat*, fols. 36a–b, 320b–321a; Bukhārī, *Histoire*, 46 (French text, 99). Mullā Sharīf gives Jumāda II 8, 1153/August 30–31, 1740, as the date of Nādir Shāh's arrival at Chār Jūy (Mullā Sharīf, *Tāj*, fol. 264a). Moreover, he provides a slightly different version of this event. According to him, Muḥammad Ḥakīm Bī recognized the military strength and power of the Iranian conqueror and dispatched his younger brother, Muḥammad Danyāl Bī, together with his own son Muḥammad Raḥīm Bī to attend the Iranian camp and offer submission (Mullā Sharīf, *Tāj*, fol. 262a). According to Ya'qūb, Muḥammad Raḥīm joined Nādir's army at Narazm located on the northern side of the Oxus (Ya'qūb, *Tārīkh*, fol. 3b). The Iranian author Kāzīm makes no mention of this fact. In his view, Muḥammad Ḥakīm Bī was sent by the Bukharan ruler Abū'l-Faiẓ Khān after the Iranians had crossed the river (Kāzīm, *Ālamārā*, II, 788).

<sup>3</sup> Qāzī Wafā, *Tuḥfat*, fol. 36b; Mullā Sharīf, *Tāj*, fols. 263a–b; Ya'qūb, *Tārīkh*, fol. 3b. Khwāja 'Abd al-Karīm also reports about this event. He writes that the notables of Bukhara decided to surrender because of Nādir Shāh's superiority and sent Muḥammad Ḥakīm Bī and his son Muḥammad Raḥīm Bī to the camp of the emperor (Kashmīrī, *Bayān*, 69).

the khanate by the Iranian army? Let us focus on the arrival of the Qizilbāsh at the southern banks of the Oxus. Qāzī Wafā describes the event as follows:

“At that point in time when Nādir Shāh’s camp was pitched in the area of Balkh and nobody turned their countenance from the precious Bukhara to welcome his army, the fire of his rage became inflamed and he threw the thunderbolt of punishment into the stack of patience. [Then] he issued the following decree from the source of orders: The prudent heralds shall fly with hastening wings from one side of the army of fixed stars and the legions of Iran to the other in order to proclaim that all people of Turan, the mean and the noble, the whole dominion of Mā Warā’ al-Nahr, from the city of Bukhara and its dependencies to the hamlets, the distant places and villages of every tract of land, all the tribes and tribal contingents (*īl wa ulūs wa hazārajāt*) of this kingdom, the clans and tribal factions, every renowned and glorious man, each and every being [...] have to be met and annihilated with the swords of the brave fighters. No rule should be disregarded in plunder and massacre of the whole populace and no path should remain unfollowed in the collection of tolls. They should exhibit all that is best and practicable in the customs of oppression and discord as well as in the requirements of sedition and wickedness to turn the kingdom of Turkistan upside down. With dispatching this statute the drums of departure came to sound and [...] his army moved from the area of Balkh toward Chahār Jū.”<sup>4</sup>

The author describes the deployment of the Iranian troops and Nādir Shāh’s choleric rage in vivid colors. The Iranian ruler had apparently expected the arrival of a delegation of Bukharan notables begging mercy and protection. If we believe Qāzī Wafā, the conqueror became all the more angry when he realized that the Bukharans had the audacity not to dispatch a delegation of nobles in spite of his overwhelming military power and the prowess of his troops. In light of the above-cited passage we can imagine how fast the news of his outrage spread throughout Transoxania through rumors and gossip. And it was not long before there was a reaction on the Bukharan side of the Oxus:

“When the sea of the Oxus and the stream of the Āmūya fell into perturbation, not only the king and all the *amīrs* of Bukhara but all areas and dependencies of Transoxania felt their state overthrown and they took a header into the abyss of fear and the maelstrom of dread.”<sup>5</sup>

Just the sheer size of the Iranian army triggered a wave of fear and sorrow on the side of Abū’l-Faiz Khān and the Bukharan *amīrs*, so they saw no other option than to dispatch the most senior Manghit *amīr*, Muḥammad Ḥakīm

<sup>4</sup> Qāzī Wafā, *Tuḥfat*, fols. 33b–34a.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 34a.

Bī, with gifts and presents to Nādir's camp. There he was to beg for mercy and protection of the populace. Prior to the *amīr's* departure, Abū'l-Faiẓ Khān had summoned his commanders and notables for a *kingāsh*. At the end of their consultations they agreed that resistance was unthinkable in view of the Iranian superiority and a lack of military capacity on the Uzbek side.<sup>6</sup> According to the *Tāj al-tawārīkh*, the supporters of Abū'l-Faiẓ Khān opted for resistance, but Muḥammad Ḥakīm Bī Atālīq voiced his opposition to such a plan because of the military strength of the Qizilbāsh. The senior Manghit leader argued that Nādir Shāh had defeated large armies and gained access to the vast treasures of Iran and Hindūstān; he had dealt a resounding defeat to the Afghans and ordered the construction of a bridge across the "ocean-like Oxus." Thus resistance would meet with no success but with bloodshed and plundering campaigns.<sup>7</sup> This picture is verified by the account of Khwāja 'Abd al-Karīm Kashmīrī, who, accompanying Nādir's camp, states:

"Bokhara from being the residence of the monarch, is the finest city in Turan. As I was the deputy of Mirza Mohammad Ibrahim, the Dewan, who was ordered to entertain the King of Turan, I had the best opportunity of seeing every thing that is curious in the country, amongst which are the tombs of the holy men celebrated at full length by Jami, in his poem entitled Reshehat. Also on account of my office, I had a share of every kind of provisions, and fruits, that were sent to Nadir Shah, by the governors of different places. The inhabitants of Turan, when compared with those of Turkey, Persia and Hindostan, may be said to be poor in point of money, and the luxuries of life; but in lieu thereof, the Almighty has given them abundance of most exquisite fruits; with robust forms, and healthy conditions, the greatest of earthly blessings."<sup>8</sup>

Elaborating on the economic poverty of Mā Warā' al-Nahr, Khwāja 'Abd al-Karīm offers three possible explanations: first, the region lacks a worldly government (*ḥukūmat-i dunyāwī*); second, Tīmūr had brought in the treasuries and riches of India only to destroy and to disperse all of them in a very short time; and third, he implicitly ascribes the political instability of the area to the waste of the former wealth of the populace and adds that the people of Turan obviously had no appreciation of or talent for preserving the financial wealth.<sup>9</sup> I will come back to these explanations in one of the subsequent chapters, but for the moment let us consider the reasons for the

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., fols. 37b–38a; Kāzīm, *'Ālamārā*, II, 788.

<sup>7</sup> Mullā Sharīf, *Tāj*, fols. 264a–265b.

<sup>8</sup> Gladwin, *Memoirs*, 41. For the original text see Kashmīrī, *Bayān*, 72–73.

<sup>9</sup> Gladwin, *Memoirs*, 42–43. For the original text see Kashmīrī, *Bayān*, 73–74.

Manghit decision to surrender. This decision was perhaps partly informed by the experience the Uzbek had made three years before, when a small Iranian army under the leadership of prince Rizā Qulī Mīrzā had gained quick military successes on the battlefield in spite of striking numerical inferiority.<sup>10</sup> According to Wafā, the personal ties between Nādir Shāh and the Manghit leaders can be traced back to that point in time. In 1737 the Iranian army occupied the town of Shulluk near Qarshī after a fifteen-day siege. After the fall of Shulluk, the conquerors arrested members of the local notability, among whom we find Muḥammad Dānyāl Bī, the younger brother of the *atāliq*.<sup>11</sup> Mullā Sharīf tells us that before the Uzbek-Qizilbāsh encounter the *amīr* had entered the town, where the warriors of the Manghit tribe were placed under his and Āla Shukūr Bī's command to organize the defense.<sup>12</sup> At the end of the siege Āla Shukūr Bī, who is mentioned as commander and governor of Shulluk, was injured by an arrow. He later died of the wounds.<sup>13</sup> Following the fall of the town, the family members of the dead commander including Dānyāl Bī were imprisoned and transferred to Balkh. In this situation it is likely that the *amīr* acted as advocate for his fellow prisoners. According to the *Tuḥfat al-khānī*, Nādir Shāh, who was at that time in Lahore, summoned the young Manghit *amīr*. On arriving at the Iranian camp, he paid homage to the ruler and entered his service later on.<sup>14</sup> In this particular case we see a different quality of uncertainty and hopelessness. Faced with the occupation of Shulluk, the death of Āla Shukūr Bī and his own imprisonment, the *amīr* and the other captives had to fear the same destiny as the slaughtered. What was at stake in this situation was their survival.

<sup>10</sup> Qāzī Wafā, *Tuḥfat*, fols. 26b–31b; Mullā Sharīf, *Tāj*, fols. 223b–233b; Ya'qūb, *Tārīkh*, fols. 3a–b; Kāzīm, *Ālamārā*, II, 590–602.

<sup>11</sup> Qāzī Wafā, *Tuḥfat*, fols. 319a–b; Ya'qūb, *Tārīkh*, fols. 3a–b.

<sup>12</sup> Mullā Sharīf (see *Tāj*, fol. 223b) refers to Qāzī Wafā, who describes in detail how Muḥammad Dānyāl Bī joined his brother for the defense of Qarshī (Qāzī Wafā, *Tuḥfat*, fol. 319a).

<sup>13</sup> Qāzī Wafā, *Tuḥfat*, fols. 31a, 319a.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 319b. The *Ālamārā-yi nādirī* does not tell us anything about this. Although Kāzīm describes the siege and the subsequent conquest of the fortress of Shulluk in great detail, in his version of the story Rizā Qulī Mīrzā ordered the slaughter of all inhabitants. He implicitly justifies this step with the ongoing resistance of the population and the death of several Iranian commanders (e.g., Bābā Khān Chapushlū and 'Azīz Qulī Dādkhwāh) (Kāzīm, *Ālamārā*, II, 597–602).

We read time and again about dangerous situations when the actors had no other choice but to surrender if survival was their major concern. Even Nādir Shāh himself was not spared from unpredictability. Prior to his ascent he very often had to deal with robbers and thieves from whom he snatched spoils made in plundering raids; sometimes he managed to free their captives. Once he had been the victim of a raid by Yāmūt Turkmen. On that occasion, his master Bābā ‘Alī Bēg Kūsa-Aḥmadlū rode out to free Nādir and protect him from slavery.<sup>15</sup> This short episode may be insignificant at first glance, but it reveals the relationship between both men in a perfect way. In principle, we can start out from the assumption that Nādir’s family was not well situated after the early death of his father. Although Nādir had already entered the service of Bābā ‘Alī Bēg, he was very dependent on the protection of his mentor after the death of two of his most important family members (his uncle and his father). The event further shows the readiness on Bābā ‘Alī’s part to risk his own life for the ransom and protection of his protégé, who owed him his loyalty and his life.

I now suggest leaving the upper level of authority aside for a while to focus on local conditions. We can assume that in an environment characterized by constant warfare, sieges and looting campaigns, almost every individual was in urgent need of continuous protection. Thus we learn from Mullā Sharīf how local governors in the area of Balkh quaked with fear in the face of the Qizilbāsh advance in 1740:

“Arriving at the region of Balkh in Jumada I, they pitched the army camp at a distance of one *farsakh* in the area of Qūshkhāna. Whilst the troops were gathered, the message about the arrival of the royal army triggered a quake of immense fear which made the governor and the whole population (*khwāṣ wa ‘āmm*) in the regions of Andkhūd, Shibarghān, Kunduz, Badakhshān, Qabādiyān and Khatlān but also in Kilīf and Karkī tremble. The custodian of the towns of Andkhūd, Shibarghān and Balkh, who had been appointed by Rizā Qulī Mīrzā, set off together with the notables (*a ‘yān wa akābir*), the judges and *sayyids* laden with abundant gifts in order to welcome Nādir’s troops.”<sup>16</sup>

Here we observe how members of the local elite, who had been confirmed in their positions as governors or province officials by Rizā Qulī Mīrzā some years ago, were driven by fear and hurried to welcome the Iranian troops. They all owed their loyalty to the prince but nevertheless feared

<sup>15</sup> Peter Avery, “Nādir Šāh,” 5–8. See also J. R. Perry: “Nadir Shāh Afshār,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn., VII, 853.

<sup>16</sup> Mullā Sharīf, *Tāj*, fols. 257a–b.

infringements and looting campaigns. To avoid the latter, they prepared themselves for the reception of the troops and offered a number of gifts.

The population of the tiny principality Kunduz experienced a similar situation when the local potentate Yūsuf Khān died in spring 1738 and Iranian troops led by Rizā Qulī Mīrzā approached the town. Just before this campaign, Yūsuf Khān had shown disobedience to the Qizilbāsh and provoked a rebellion with the assistance of the former *atālīq* of Balkh, Sayyid Khān Ming (Qipchāq?). However, after the death of Yūsuf Khān and the flight of his ally, the populace quickly surrendered.<sup>17</sup>

### THE IMAGE OF THE PROTECTORS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE PROTÉGÉS

The death of a protector and the resulting gap indeed caused a tremendous feeling of insecurity. Persons in need of protection had to look for a new potential patron as soon as possible, and there is no question that anyone wanting to grant protection needed the resources and skills required for the demanding task of ensuring the survival of others. In the *Tuḥfat al-khānī* we find a long and interesting passage describing a message written by Muḥammad Ḥakīm Bī's associates and addressed to his son. This message and the entire context illustrate the bewilderment and consternation caused by the death of the *atālīq*:

“After the recitation of the *qur’ān* for the lord of the slaves and the giving of meals and victuals, they read the prayers for the *amīr-i kabīr*. The agents of the government of the dead *amīr* like Daulat Dīwānbēgī and others wrote a message with an explanation regarding the death of the laudable commander and sent it to Iran for the attention of the fortunate *amīr* [Muḥammad Raḥīm Bī]. The essence of the message was as follows: When the magnificent father of the glorious commander left this transitory world and gave up his life to death, a group of followers and adherents remained without strength and wealth here in Bukhara at his camp. Having lost the means of subsistence, they bound tongue and heart to salvation by this exalted person. May the benevolent and kind protector providing the means of livelihood (*karīm-i banda-nawāz-i ḥaẓrat-i muḥaiman-i kār-sāz*) [Muḥammad Raḥīm Bī] turn the look of mercy on the helpless, may he take the weakened under the umbrella of protection and security. Sitting on the throne of esteem, he will in every way look after us humble and poor [subjects]. Moreover, the honorable brother Yūqāshī Bī is entrusted with the guardianship of the tribes in Nasaf, his heart is also filled

<sup>17</sup> Kāzim, *Ālamārā*, II, 608–09.

with anxiety. The rest of the affairs are manifest and apparent in the clear mirror of the thoughts of this exalted prince. May your days pass on as you desired. Farewell.”<sup>18</sup>

No matter whether the message really existed or whether it was invented by the author to achieve more authenticity, this extract is very instructive in several ways. First, it shows the importance of such laudable characteristics in the eyes of the chronicler, who makes every imaginable effort to extol his master for his flawless personality. Second, it allows the conclusion regarding the feeling of uncertainty, confusion and loneliness possibly overwhelming Muḥammad Ḥakīm Bī’s followers after his death. In their message they lament having lost the means of subsistence, implying that the order of their world was out of joint. The author places emphasis on this great uncertainty in a situation where the *atālīq*’s servants and followers had lost their protector and employer. It therefore seems reasonable that they pinned all their hopes on his son Muḥammad Raḥīm Bī, who at that time was staying at the Iranian court in Mashhad.

It does not surprise us that Muḥammad Daulat Dīwānbēgī and his colleagues extolled the *amīr* for his laudable characteristics. Thus the text is full of synonyms describing all the attributes ascribed at that time to a patron. First we come across *karīm*—a word of Arabic origin—meaning a generous, kind, benevolent and merciful man.<sup>19</sup> An individual adorned with these attributes is termed *karīmu’l-akhlāq*, a respected, very kind and generous person who is exceptional in his behavior from every point of view. In addition, the word is ascribed to somebody coming from a prestigious family.<sup>20</sup>

The term *karīm* also carries a marked religious connotation as it is one of the ninety-nine names and attributes of God: in Muslim historiographies and religious texts based on the Koran, God is described as merciful. Yet in the Koran itself, the word refers only in two short passages directly to God. Otherwise it is often ascribed to the prophets, the angels and, ironically, to

<sup>18</sup> Qāzī Wafā, *Tuḥfat*, fols. 52a–b. See also Mullā Sharīf, *Tāj*, fol. 289b.

<sup>19</sup> For the meaning of *karīm* (كريم) see Heinrich Junker and Bozorg Alavi, *Persisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch* (Leipzig: Verlag Enzyklopädie, 1965), 600; F. Steingass, *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary. Including the Arabic Words and Phrases to be met with in Persian Literature* (1892; repr., Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1975), 1026.

<sup>20</sup> Steingass gives some additional meanings of the term, e.g., courteous, generous, gracious, forgiving, respectable, venerable, reverent, high-bred and God-fearing (see Steingass, *Dictionary*, 1026).

unbelievers too. *Karīm* very often designates the rewards and provisions coming in useful to the believers.<sup>21</sup> In Sura 27/40 we read:

“So when he saw it set in his presence, he said: ‘This is of the bounty of my lord in order to try me whether I shall be thankful or ungrateful; he who is thankful to his own good is thankful, and if anyone is ungrateful—my Lord is rich and generous’.”<sup>22</sup>

Although this verse centers on the relationship between God and men, it can be applied to conventional patron-client relations. God is so sublime in his infinite mercy that gratitude is favorable but not a necessary obligation. However, in the second sura in which we come across the word *karīm*, he admonishes gratitude:

“[82, 6] O man, what has put thee wrong with thy Lord, the Generous, [7] Who hath created thee, and formed thee and balanced thee, [8] In whatsoever form He pleased constructed thee?”<sup>23</sup>

The last verses again describe the relationship between God and the believer. God the Generous created and formed men, and gave them an appropriate form. Although he is not dependent on the gratefulness of his creatures because of his generosity and sublime nature, the chronicler gives the advice to be loyal and grateful to the Creator. The same may be said with regard to the relationship between protector and protégés. Showing mercy toward them, the former solicitously takes care of the latter and guarantees their survival and freedom from harm. In addition to *karīm*, Qāzī Wafā used attributes like *banda-nawāz* and *muhaiman* in his text. The first is more or less the Persian equivalent of the Arabic *karīm* and serves as an attribute for a kind and merciful person, while *muhaiman* stands for a protector par excellence. Moreover, it is also one of the many attributes of God, who has the power to protect men from danger and fear.<sup>24</sup> The next laudable characteristic applied to Muḥammad Raḥīm Bī is that of a *kār-sāz*, meaning somebody who provides the means of subsistence and satisfies other men’s requirements and material needs. *Kār-sāz* is likewise one of the ninety-nine names and attributes of God, the Deity.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>21</sup> T. W. Haig, “*Karīm*,” *Enzyklopädie des Islam*, Ger. edn., II, 815.

<sup>22</sup> Richard Bell, trans., *The Koran* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1937), Sura 27: 40, 367.

<sup>23</sup> Bell, *The Koran*, Sura 82: 6/7/8, 640.

<sup>24</sup> See Steingass, *Dictionary*, 1357; Junker and Alavi, *Wörterbuch*, 105, 784.

<sup>25</sup> ‘Alī Akbar Dihkhudā, *Lughatnāma*, 50 vols. (Tehran: Dānishgāh-i Tehrān/Dānishkada-yi adabiyāt, h.sh. 1341/1962), vol. 34 (ک-کاخ هشت بهشت), 133.

Besides these central terms, Manghit authors make strikingly frequent use of the element of *marḥamat*—the favor, mercy and compassion one has in relation to others. Seeking protection, the slaves and followers of Muḥammad Ḥakīm Bī appeal to his son for favor and compassion, because he should eventually take care of them. The vocabulary described above underlined the practical concepts of shelter (*panāh*) and protection (*ḥimāyat*) as well as care for the well-being of the subjects subordinated to a patron.

In the course of his work, Qāzī Wafā repeatedly refers to Muḥammad Raḥīm's praiseworthy virtues (*makārim-i akhlāq*) and innate mindfulness (*markūz-i jibillī*) including his merciful behavior,<sup>26</sup> causing him to treat defeated enemies with lenience and to close his eyes to the shortcomings of his officials. There was no lack of opportunities for displaying merciful and lenient behavior. For instance, when approached by the envoys of the Burqūt leader, Tughāy Murād Bī, asking for pardon in 1163/1749–50, the *amīr* generously forgave his wrong actions.<sup>27</sup> The author also puts forward his patron's personal qualities to explain Muḥammad Raḥīm Bī's conduct in the aftermath of his final campaign to Shahr-i Sabz at the end of Jumāda II 1165/first days of May 1752. In Qāzī Wafā's view, the *amīr* "showed signs of dispensation of justice to the subjects of the area." At the same time, he ordered the affairs of this region and undertook measures for the security of the subjects.<sup>28</sup> In connection with the surrender of the Qazāq of Dīzakh in 1168/1755, the author effusively refers to him as "showing a royal diamond from the treasure of the illustrious mind which is the invisible inspirer."<sup>29</sup> Qāzī Wafā also adduces these characteristics to describe Muḥammad Raḥīm Khān's actions subsequent to the subjugation of the Qungrāt chiefs of Shīrābād near the northern banks of the Āmū Daryā in spring 1170/1756. After the surrender of the Qungrāt, he generously forgave "their infamous actions."<sup>30</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Qāzī Wafā, *Tuḥfat*, fols. 139a, 149a, 156a, 212b passim.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 165b.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 199b.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 225b.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 270a.

RITUALS OF POWER: THE *BAY'Ā* AND *KŪRNISH*

Since I have discussed one of the reasons for the establishing of personal bonds, I shall now concentrate on the formal acts required to bind protectors and protégés together. Mottahedeh has provided one of the best works with respect to the forging of personal ties. Focusing on the oath system, he examined the patterns of acquired loyalties and personal commitment in Iraq during Buyid times. According to his results, oaths of allegiance (*bay'ā*) were highly formalized demonstrations of loyalty that were exchanged between subject and ruler, but also between the officials in the chain of the administrative hierarchy, and even between local leaders. Oaths of allegiance and vows served as instruments in cases of conflict and dispute, but were also exchanged between individuals who liked to assure one another of their continued friendship, cooperation and mutual commitment.<sup>31</sup> Performed as a handclasp, the *bay'ā* served initially to seal a purchase or commercial contract. With this, the oath had a formal, almost “contractual” dimension.<sup>32</sup> Yet it did not take the form of an ordinary, written contract bearing seal and signature. The oaths and vows were exchanged in purely oral form, without this diminishing the formality of the act. Remarkably, the relationship between God and man, according to the Koran, is defined by and based on a primal covenant between them. Islamic tradition considered this a very powerful argument for the moral responsibility of every individual toward the Creator.<sup>33</sup> Later the *bay'ā* served as an essential instrument for the demonstration of political loyalty implying concrete mutual obligations.<sup>34</sup> At the beginning, the *bay'ā* was performed between the Prophet and new

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<sup>31</sup> Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership*, 58–59.

<sup>32</sup> The term can be etymologically traced to the Arabic word *bā'a* (to sell), describing sale and purchase as an exchange transaction. But this seems a very artificial explanation. The term derives from the physical gesture itself, which, according to ancient Arab custom, symbolized the conclusion of an agreement between two persons and consisted of a handclasp (E. Tyan, “Bay'a,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn., I, 1113; Cl. Huart, “Bai'a,” *Enzyklopädie des Islam*, Ger. edn., I, 611).

<sup>33</sup> Mottahedeh notes that we find a series of passages and verses referring to the covenant (*'uhūd*) between man and God in the Koran. The text directly addresses the perennial religious questions of the origin of man's moral responsibility to God. It furthermore shows that proof of man's commitment is a solemn covenant made between man and God at the beginning of time (Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership*, 42–43).

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 52–53. See also S. D. Goitein, *Studies in Islamic History and Institutions* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966), 203.

believers. In later times, the act signaled the formal recognition of authority and obedience.<sup>35</sup> It was publicly performed after the enthronization of a new caliph and was subsequently repeated on many occasions. As a sign of servility, the oath was sworn by putting one's hand into the open palm of the caliph.<sup>36</sup> When semi-independent dynasties arose at the margins of the Abbasid caliphate, the *bay'a* and all its connotations were transferred to local dynasties. For instance, the Samanids took the oath for themselves and the heir apparent. The Buyids likewise used the oath as an instrument to maintain the loyalty of their followers.<sup>37</sup>

In the Bukharan sources like the *Tuḥfat al-khānī* we also come across the practice of the *bay'a* in connection with the installation of a new ruler. Qāzī Wafā in particular gives exact descriptions of the celebrations at Muḥammad Raḥīm Khān's enthronization. This text says that on Rabī' I 23, 1170/December 15, 1756, the court servants cleaned the "hall of the royal reception" (*ṣahn-i kūrniṣh sarā-yi sulṭānī*) and spread out colorful carpets in order to prepare everything for the coronation of Muḥammad Raḥīm Bī. Beforehand, he had summoned the tribal leaders and commanders of the army as well as the representatives of the craftsmen's communities and the subjects to the Bukharan court.<sup>38</sup> After his coronation, the new ruler first turned to the public audience to receive homage from the urban population and was afterward placed on the white felt and put on the throne in accordance with the Mongol tradition.<sup>39</sup>

"[Coming] from all corners of the hall of obeisance, the masters of congratulation and the lords of eloquence and salutation opened the hand of prayer for the congratulation of his royal majesty, and requested from God the augmentation of his power and rank. By the royal order, the distinguished possessors of administrative ranks as well as the entourage of *amīrs* and the 'pillars of government' (*arkān-i dawlat*) came outside the court and turned around after the conclusion of magnificence [i.e., the enthronization]. Bowing their heads, they renewed the custom of obsequiousness and the ceremony of offering allegiance (*rasm-i mutābi'at wa āyīn-i mubāyi'at*). The great *amīrs*, the most revered

<sup>35</sup> Tyan, E., "Bay'a," 1113. Even if the *bay'a* served as a mere formal gesture, the Prophet never ignored or forgot it when he received new believers into the Muslim community (Reuben Levy, *The Social Structure of Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 277, footnote no. 3).

<sup>36</sup> Huart, "Bai'a," 611.

<sup>37</sup> Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership*, 51–52.

<sup>38</sup> ... فرمان شد که نواب سلطنت و سران نصرت و پیشروان اهل حرفه و رعیت را خیل خیل بفتای بارگاه آورده ... (Qāzī Wafā, *Tuḥfat*, fol. 253a).

<sup>39</sup> Qāzī Wafā, *Tuḥfat*, fols. 253b–254a.

judges and *sayyids*, the inferior government officials and [all those] gazing at ministerial ranks, came from the right-hand and left-hand side of the court and took seat in their places and positions.”<sup>40</sup>

The festivities including a large banquet were about to start after the confirmation of a multitude of personal allegiances.<sup>41</sup>

In addition to the concept of the *bay'a* or *mubāyi'at*, we frequently find the ceremony of the *kūrnish* mentioned in the sources. However, at first glance it is not clear whether the two terms, the *bay'a* and the *kūrnish*, are used as synonyms or not. Since the Persian term *kūrnish* has several meanings, like obeisance, homage, salutation and prostration, the concept was linked to demonstrations of loyalty. Time and again we read about princes, tribal leaders and local dignitaries receiving the honor of the *kūrnish* before a superior leader or king. In some cases, the procedure appears to be just a kind of royal reception. Unfortunately, in most cases the texts do not permit concrete conclusions and deeper insights into the ceremonial aspects and details of the performance of the *kūrnish*. Although the term occurs very frequently in the sources, implying its importance in the daily life of subordinate individuals and power wielders, it seems problematic to reconstruct a detailed sequence of gestures, words and probable oaths exchanged from the texts. I presume the procedure was so common that most of the chroniclers did not pay attention to it, let alone give detailed information. Nevertheless, the fact that the *bay'a* was performed in a hall designated as the *kūrnish-gāh* or *kūrnish-sarā* (the hall of the royal reception) suggests a certain proximity or a very thin line of distinction between the *bay'a* and the *kūrnish*.

Let me reflect a bit more on the *kūrnish*, which was performed on an ongoing basis not only in front of the ruler, but also before high-ranking commanders and government agents like the *atālīq*. For instance, we read time and again how soldiers and government officials received the honor of salutation before the *atālīq* Muḥammad Raḥīm Bī. This more or less ritualized act generally symbolized the formal recognition of authority of

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., fol. 254b. My translation differs from that of Ron Sela (see Sela, *Ritual and Authority*, 14). Other Manghit chronicles devote far less space to the *bay'a* before the time of Muḥammad Raḥīm Khān (see von Kügelgen, *Legitimierung*, 276–77).

<sup>41</sup> In the *Tāj al-tawārīkh* the term *bay'at/bay'a* appears in its original form only in one passage (Mullā Sharīf, *Tāj*, fol. 132b). In Bukharan chronicles the equivalent Arabic term *mubāyi'at* (derived from the same root) is occasionally encountered (see Qāzī Wafā, *Tuḥfat*, fols. 63b, 149a, 254b; Mullā Sharīf, *Tāj*, fol. 454a).

any superior actor in a variety of situations, no matter whether he was a powerful commander, tribal leader or the king in person. It is remarkable that the Bukharan authors always write from the perspective of the subordinate actors promising fidelity when they come to talk about the *kūrnish*. The addressees of the salutation appear in contrast as passive recipients, even as unapproachable and enraptured. For example, Qāzī Wafā describes Muḥammad Raḥīm Bī's salutation in front of Nādir Shāh as follows:

“[...] he paid with most excellent politeness homage to that king of the legions as numerous as the stars belonging to the celestial throne and presented [...] precious gifts and presents worthy of the authority of that illustrious king. These gifts seemed abundant and venerable under his [Nādir Shāh's] penetrating eyes and he granted him [Muḥammad Raḥīm] favors and attention. [...] Therefore, he treated him with royal benevolence and clothed his stature in a robe of honor (*khal'at-i mukrim*).”<sup>42</sup>

Although this passage describes Muḥammad Raḥīm Bī's homage to the Iranian ruler, it remains relatively vague in terms of content and words exchanged. We just learn that the young commander paid attention to all the rules of the procedure and approached the Iranian king with utmost politeness. Especially the beginning of this *kūrnish* is veiled in darkness. The offering of gifts in all likelihood marked the conclusion of the ceremony. However, the *kūrnish* in itself seemed to initiate a finely balanced sequence of acts involving a lot of giving and taking. What also becomes obvious is that it served as a demonstration of loyalty and that the entire procedure was accompanied by further exchange activities. The passage also suggests that it initiated the bond between Muḥammad Raḥīm Bī and his new overlord. The final granting of the robe (*khal'at*) by no means marked the end of the chain of reciprocities. Now the young *amīr* together with his companions had entered Nādir's service.<sup>43</sup>

The nature of my sources and the grid of available data unfortunately do not leave further scope for interpretation of this particular case. Yet the sources frequently reveal the same procedure that I have described here in a more exemplary and fragmentary manner. When Muḥammad Ḥakīm Bī, the father of the young Muḥammad Raḥīm Bī, was dispatched from the Bukharan court later on to obtain mercy and extensive guarantees of security from Nādir Shāh, he was first received by his son, who was already in

<sup>42</sup> Qāzī Wafā, *Tuḥfat*, fols. 36b–37a.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, fols. 36b–38a; Mullā Sharīf, *Tāj*, fol. 264a; Ya'qūb, *Tārīkh*, fol. 3b.

Nādir's service. Muḥammad Raḥīm Bī accompanied his father in paying reverent homage to his overlord:

“Showing laudable respect and salutation, the noble *amīr* offered presents and rendered illustrious gifts under the eyes of the honored king. [Afterward], Nādir Shāh granted him royal favors (*iltifāt-i khusrawāna*) and pleased him with exquisite gifts and incomparable rewards.”<sup>44</sup>

Looking at this and the previous extract, we come to conclude that on the one hand the *kūrnish* served the firm recognition of superiority and authority; on the other hand it involved demonstrations of courtesy and praises. Muḥammad Ḥakīm Bī probably wanted to appeal to the conqueror's leniency. After all, he had been dispatched by his own master, Abū'l-Faiẓ Khān, and other Bukharan notables to obtain assurances and guarantees of security and to spare the populace plundering campaigns and massacre. The Bukharan *atālīq* knew that everything was at stake and his success depended on his conduct as well as on Nādir Shāh's concessions. Therefore he additionally underlined his submission with presents and recognized Iranian supremacy. The acceptance of the submission was likewise signaled by the presentation of counter-gifts. With this gesture, the Iranian ruler pledged the *amīr* his friendship, mercy and leniency.

Besides this coarse-grained data on homage and the exchange of gifts, early Manghit sources give instructive information leading to the conclusion that this act of salutation not only served to forge personal bonds between ruler and subject but, similar to the *bay'a*, also initiated “covenant-like ties” between the actors involved. In connection with the establishing of binding relationships, Qāzī Wafā informs us that at the end of Rabī' I 1169/December 1755, some envoys of the rabble-raising *amīr* Fāzil Bī Yūz arrived at the court. After performing the *kūrnish*, they presented gifts and a message from their master in which he offered obedience and submission. Furthermore, the ruler of Ūrā Tippa reaffirmed the sincerity and trustworthiness of the envisaged “contract” by promising the delivery of the canonical alms (*zakāt*) and the provision of auxiliary troops.<sup>45</sup> Wafā depicts Muḥammad Raḥīm Bī's reaction to these suggestions as follows:

<sup>44</sup> Qāzī Wafā, *Tuḥfat*, fol. 38b.

<sup>45</sup> جهت تأکید صداقت پیمان و وثوق عهد و اطمینان قلب را بابیمان مؤکد و ممهّد ساخته مال ذکوة و آق اویلی و چریک خود را می دهیم ... (Qāzī Wafā, *Tuḥfat*, fol. 237b).

“Since it is the long-lasting rule of the paramount masters not to put the hand of rejection on the bosom of those asking [for pardon], and the envoys taking refuge in forgiveness and acquiescence in royal kindness, confirm the acceptance of submission and obedience by delivering the *zakāt*, the *āq ūylī* and the *chirīk*, they must send a son of Fāzil Bī to the world-protecting court and have to deliver the obligatory taxes, the *kharāj* and so on year by year in order to strengthen the covenant (*jihat-i mushayyad-i wuthūq-i ‘ahd wa paymān*).”<sup>46</sup>

From this passage we learn that a covenant, probably based on an oath, was at least the subject of the negotiations immediately after the *kūrnish*. In another chapter of his comprehensive work, Qāzī Wafā tells us about the relationship of a certain Jum‘a Bēg with the Bukharan court. The chief of the Turkomān Yūzī had been a traditional ally of Tughāy Murād Bī Burqūt for years. The author informs us that Jum‘a Bēg had formed part of Tughāy Murād’s “compact” when the latter had maintained good relations with the court.<sup>47</sup> After the beginning of Muḥammad Raḥīm Bī’s rule, the Burqūt leader broke with the government and the compact became obsolete. We see here an interesting case of an indirect relationship with the royal court mediated by the bond of allegiance maintained by a third actor.<sup>48</sup>

Demonstrating the importance of making covenants based on personal relationships and trustworthiness, Qāzī Wafā states that “for the bride of the kingdom the hand of compact is [like] a sharp sword, whilst the matrimony of the flaming sword Dhū’l-fiqār is essential for the well-being of authority.”<sup>49</sup> This mirrors the dual strategy of maintaining authority by forging alliances through covenants based on mutual agreements and exchanged oaths of allegiance (*‘ahd wa paymān*) on the one hand, and employing coercive force if necessary on the other. The resulting bond was maintained by serious commitment and personal loyalty but also by military force when alliances were dissolved and obligations disregarded. Such bonds were not only made on the level of the ruler and subservient followers and allies, but tied even local actors together. One very prominent example in this regard is the forging of an alliance between local Uzbek chiefs, the leaders of the rebellious Kīnakās and Yūz tribes in Dhū’l-Qa‘da 1164/September–October 1751. At that time, the Kīnakās leadership resorted

<sup>46</sup> Qāzī Wafā, *Tuḥfat*, fols. 238b–239a.

<sup>47</sup> ... بنا برآنکه رابطه قدیمی با جماعه بر قوتیه داشت داخل در صلح و معاهده طغایمیراد بی شده ... (Qāzī Wafā, *Tuḥfat*, fol. 246b).

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 247b.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 252b.

to Muḥammad Amīn Bī Yūz, the ruler of Ḥiṣār, with whom they exchanged oaths of allegiance.<sup>50</sup>

The relevance of oaths (*saugand*) is repeatedly mentioned in the sources.<sup>51</sup> Following the information given by Qāzī Wafā, Mullā Sharīf records how Muḥammad Amīn Bī evaded a military defeat by hatching a plot in Ramaḥān 1168/June–July 1755. The chroniclers accuse the rebellious Yūz leader of having slipped a false message to Muḥammad Raḥīm Bī. According to this faked letter, a certain Quwwat Bī Qīrghiz, a commander in the camp of the Khoqandian ally Īrdāna Bī, was said to have clandestinely offered an oath of allegiance with the opponent Yūz leaders.<sup>52</sup> Muḥammad Amīn Bī and his ally Fāzil Bī decided on this intrigue when Bukharan troops spelled a series of defeats for them. When Muḥammad Raḥīm Bī learned about the treacherous content of this letter, he ordered a proper investigation of the affair since he had lost his trust in Īrdāna Bī's loyalty. He sent out his commanders Daulat Bī and Jum'a Qul Mingbāshī to confront his ally with the truth and to investigate the state of affairs. In this very unpleasant situation, the lord of Khoqand vehemently mentioned the oaths exchanged and reiterated the covenant with a new oath.<sup>53</sup>

Muḥammad Ḥakīm Bī's chronicler devotes an entire chapter to the binding nature of oaths and emphasizes the steadfast commitment of his patron to covenants (*rusūkh ba 'ahd*), which he describes as one of the most praiseworthy characteristics of human beings.<sup>54</sup> Another mention of oaths describes a punitive expedition of Iranian troops against rebellious Uzbek tribes in the eastern and central parts of Miyānkāl in spring and early summer 1747. Upon the conclusion of the campaign, the Iranian commanders received a letter from Nādir Shāh's nephew 'Alī Qulī Khān.

<sup>50</sup> (ibid., fol. 168a; see also Mullā Sharīf, *Tāj*, fol. 368b).

(ibid., fol. 168a; see also Mullā Sharīf, *Tāj*, fol. 368b).

<sup>51</sup> The terms *'ahd* and *paymān* have the additional meaning of an oath besides the ordinary connotation of a contract (see Steingass, *Dictionary*, 269, 874).

<sup>52</sup> Mullā Sharīf, *Tāj*, fol. 396b. Qāzī Wafā does not give detailed information about the content of the letter, but only mentions that it was a trick engineered by Muḥammad Amīn Bī. In addition, he says that the faked message was addressed to the Yūz *amīrs* Muḥammad Amīn Bī and Fāzil Bī. The essence of the message followed the rules of enmity and the path of trickery and fraud (Qāzī Wafā, *Tuḥfat*, fol. 236a).

<sup>53</sup> روز دیگر دولت بی و جمعه قل منگ باشی به امر کامیابی نزد ایردانه بی رفته تفحص حال گذشته نمودند او به ... غلاظ و شداد سوگندان یاد کرده پیمان را مؤکد به ایمان نمود (Qāzī Wafā, *Tuḥfat*, fols. 236a–b).

<sup>54</sup> Muḥammad Amīn, *Mazhar*, fol. 25a.

Attached to this message we find the promise of distinct compacts and an oath (*mawāzīq-i bayān wa saugand*). In view of Muḥammad Raḥīm Bī's ambitions, the Qizilbāsh leaders were ordered to protect Abū'l-Faiz Khān and not to allow his authority to become endangered.<sup>55</sup>

The picture derived from sources like the *Tuḥfat al-khānī* and *Tāj al-tawārīkh* reveals that oaths were considered important. Yet although there are indications that oaths were subject to negotiations following the *kūrnish*, it remains uncertain whether the procedure involved an exchange of promises of fidelity. However, it can be regarded as a kind of initiator for the set-up of personal relations and as an instrument to ensure their maintenance and continuity. It was by no means an isolated act just performed to appeal to the mercy of superiors or to ease negotiations for security guarantees. *Kūrnishs* were performed frequently and repeatedly in order to maintain the continuity of personal relations and to persuade the factions and actors involved to meet their mutual obligations. For example, Qāzī Wafā mentions that when Nādir Shāh returned from Khwārazm via Bukhara to Mashhad, Muḥammad Ḥakīm Bī again presented gifts once he had recognized that the well-being and the security of the populace were not affected by the Iranian troops. Nādir Shāh is said to have been happy and pleased by this gesture.<sup>56</sup> The sources also reveal that Muḥammad Raḥīm Bī expressed his fealty toward his lord more than once. The *Tāj al-tawārīkh* describes how after returning from Transoxania, he and his companions paid homage to Nādir immediately upon their arrival at the Iranian court in early summer 1747. On this occasion, the Bukharan *amīrs* and notables presented various gifts and were granted royal favors in return.<sup>57</sup>

The rulers or commanders received the *kūrnish* from their warriors even during military campaigns. Especially in such critical situations, it was apparently important to assure oneself of the continued fidelity of one's own

<sup>55</sup> ... از آنجمله رقمی مشحون به نصایح ارجمند و مستحکم به مواتیق بیان و سوگند نزد بهبود خان و حسن خان و جعفرخان و سایر سرکرده های قزلباشیه ارسال نمود که سعی بلیغ در صحت حال و رونق آمل شاه ابو الفیض (Qāzī Wafā, *Tuḥfat*, fol. 111b) بظهور آرند ...

<sup>56</sup> چون امیر کبیر از معاودت کریاس کیوان مماس شاه ایران اطلاع یافت مراعات امانی و آمل مقیم و مسافر مملکت بل رفاهیت حال سپاه و رعیت را ملاحظه نمود و تنسوقات نامی و بیلاکات کرامی برداشته عشر آخر رمضان المبارک چون صبح ارادت مقارن آن آفتاب دولت گردید بعد از داخل شدن به کورنش آن عالیجاهی ایثار تحف و هدایا و اظهار از معانی و پیش کش نموده بملاقات آن خسرو جمشید جاه فایز و بهر مند آمد آن شاه نامی از وصول امیر (Qāzī Wafā, *Tuḥfat*, fol. 47a).

<sup>57</sup> حسب الامر شاهی بعز کورنش جمشید دستگاهی مشرف شده کرایم تحایف و شرایف ارمغانی از پیشگاه نظر ... (Mullā Sharīf, *Tāj*, fol. 306b).

following. When Muḥammad Raḥīm Bī campaigned against the local ruler of Ūrā Tippa in summer 1168/1755, he took the *kūrnish* from his soldiers.<sup>58</sup> Although we do not possess any information about the particular behavior and actions of the Yūz leader, it seems reasonable that he likewise received homage from his warriors. There are indications in the sources that the rulers or commanders took oaths of fidelity from their followers prior to campaigns and major combats because it was precisely in these situations that loyalties were tested—there was always the risk of them eventually being broken. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Ṭāli’ provides a very illustrative example in this regard.<sup>59</sup> The procedure took place in 1722 at Hazāra near the city of Karmīna. At the time, the tribes of Miyānkāl had sided with Rajab Sulṭān and his Kīnakās allies to put an end to the reign of Abū’l-Faiḏ Khān. After all, the important cities of Samarqand and Shahr-i Sabz were already in the hands of the rebels and the scope of Abū’l-Faiḏ Khān’s authority had shrunk dramatically. In light of this and the enemy’s superior numbers, a desertion of his warriors seemed the most probable scenario. Taking the *kūrnish* from them was the most suitable way to secure the support of the tribal leaders and their followers. The procedure described by Ṭāli’ followed a strict hierarchy. The first man paying obeisance was a certain Muḥammad Ḥāshim Khwāja Sayyid Atā’ī, who bore the rank of *naqīb* and expressed his loyalty with the following verses:

“O God, the king of the kings of Bukhara may live  
 As long as the heaven keeps on rotating,  
 And may his nature always be illuminated  
 By the grace of the possessor of the splendid sun [God]”<sup>60</sup>

The *naqīb* was followed by other members of Sayyid Atā’ī’s entourage.<sup>61</sup> Subsequently, it was the turn of Muḥammad Ḥakīm Bī Atālīq and his

<sup>58</sup> امرای نامی به همراهی اهل ایل قراقلیاق قرین معسکر همایونی شدند امرا داخل کورنش عالی گردیده ... (Qāzī Wafā, *Tuhfat*, fols. 229b–230a).

<sup>59</sup> Ṭāli’, *Tārīkh*, fols. 80b–89a; Semenov trans., 98–107.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., fol. 80b; Russian text, 99.

<sup>61</sup> The important military rank of *naqīb* was exclusively assigned to the descendants of Sayyid Atā. The *niqābat* set them apart from purely religious posts such as *qāzī* or *sheikh al-Islām*. Holding this position, Sayyid Atā’ī occupied one of the most prestigious seats to the ruler’s left side (for further details on this rank see Devin DeWeese, “The Descendants

Manghit contingents. According to Ṭāli', the commander-in-chief praised his lord and prayed for him. Genuflecting before the ruler, he praised him as follows:

“Oh world-possessing king and sublime conqueror of the world  
 May your person always be preserved from misfortune  
 It is my hope that all your enemies shall become unable  
 To repel an injury due to the protection of God the Merciful”<sup>62</sup>

Although the author does not mention whether we are dealing here with a *kūrnish* or a *bay'a*, the procedure is illuminating. It shows that all tribal leaders and commanders expressed their loyalty to the ruler in a similar manner. If we take the *atālīq*'s genuflection literally, the ceremony appears to be an act of utmost devotion and subservience symbolizing the recognition of Abū'l-Faiẓ Khān's superior rank and authority.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, in both passages the men referred to God as a witness to their allegiance. With this, their statements took on a distinct religious content, lending them additional validity. Unfortunately, the source does not inform us about the words and reactions of Abū'l-Faiẓ Khān, who appears as usual very passive in light of the procedure. In fact, this *kūrnish* is more a formal statement of fidelity addressed to the ruler than an exchange of oaths. The particular terms indicating an oath do not appear in the text. But similar to the *bay'a* on the occasion of Muḥammad Raḥīm Khān's coronation, the *kūrnish* described by Ṭāli' involved a prayer to God.

When in 1122/1710–11 the relationship between 'Ubaidullah Khān and his *atālīq* Ma'sūm Bī deteriorated,

“he several times summoned that *amīr* to his private room and gave [him] the opportunity of the royal reception and nothing other than kindness and favors was granted by the king to this commander. Furthermore, he brought in a new oath (*'ahd-i tāza wa paymān-i jadīd*) in order to do away with the doubts and suspicion of the *amīr* [...]”<sup>64</sup>

This oath mentioned by the court chronicler notwithstanding, it did not prevent the *amīr* from withdrawing his loyalty and performing the *kūrnish*

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of Sayyid Ata and the Rank of *Naqīb* in Central Asia,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 115, no. 4 (1995): 612–34).

<sup>62</sup> Ṭāli', *Tārīkh*, fol. 81b; Semenov trans., 100.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, fols. 80a–89a; Russian text, 98–107.

<sup>64</sup> Amīn Bukhārī, *'Ubaidullah Nāma*, fol. 219a; Semenov trans., 244.

before the king's younger brother when most of the other tribal leaders decided to remove 'Ubaidullah Khān. Hoping that the new oath between him and Ma'ṣūm Bī would work and unfold its binding force,<sup>65</sup> the old ruler still relied on the fidelity of his *atālīq* when it was too late. It is exactly against this background that the author mentions the following *ḥadīth*: “[For somebody without faith there will be no protection], and for someone without religion there is no covenant.”<sup>66</sup> With this reference, the making of covenants and the swearing of oaths gains a distinct religious hue. Qāzī Wafā describes only one oath of fealty in its exact wording. According to him, Muḥammad Raḥīm Bī summoned

“all *amīrs* and learned men of the guarded domains (*mamālik-i maḥrūsa*) and the governors and officials of the protected area (*wilāyat-i maḥfūza*). Thus, all small and big men from the cities, towns and villages assembled at the world-sheltering court [...] in order to put the right belief and the brilliant thought onto the touchstone. As soon as this ultimate goal and pleasing aim emerged safely and pure as gold out of the crucible of contention and disagreement, then the edict was drawn from the pages of the scribes and accepted by the polished signet ring [of the ruler]. And their request was generously received with the honor of [the ruler's] close attention. According to the divine will, in the first days of Rabi' I corresponding to the beginning of Sagittarius, the end of the autumn 1170/November–December 1756, orders were cautiously issued to the court servants to arrange the payments and goods, and to prepare everything for the dispensation of justice and required for the royal rank.”<sup>67</sup>

From this passage we learn about the preparations for Muḥammad Raḥīm's enthronement. Before usurping the Bukharan throne, he wanted to assure himself of the loyalty of the local governors. On the following pages, the author describes the arrival of everybody who was anybody. After a speech held by the future ruler in front of the notables, they recognized his claims with the following words:

“Oh King! Monarch, Sovereign

Oh Lord, Nourisher of the world

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., fols. 229a–b; Russian text, 255.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., fol. 229b; Russian text, 255. [*Lā imān li-man lā amānātun lahu*] *lā dīn li-man lā 'ahad lahu*. See *Musnad Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādr), III, 135; Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusain al-Bayḥaqī, *Fihris aḥādīth al-sunan al-kubra* 11 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-fikr, 1980, 1986), VI, 288; Nūr al-Dīn al-Ḥaithāmī, *Mujma' al-zawā'id* (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-'ilmīya 1408 ḥ.q./1988), vol. I, 96.

<sup>67</sup> Qāzī Wafā, *Tuḥfat*, fol. 251a. The second part of this quotation largely follows Sela's translation (Sela, *Ritual and Authority*, 7).

You are worthy of the crown and the throne  
 You are worthy of the parasol and the diadem of glory  
 In your time the old world is renewed  
 For you the throne of Khusrau is blessed  
 You are the giver of orders and we are the slaves  
 We bow to the scepter of [your] wisdom  
 Each of our hearts is at your command and disposal  
 All our oaths are bound to the covenant with you”<sup>68</sup>

This poem seems to echo the oath in its purest fashion by giving its actual wording. After referring to God, as witness of the oath, the text switches between the second person singular (you) and the first person plural (we). Effectively describing the forging of a bond between the future ruler and other local and regional power holders, the text takes the form of a chain built on the interchange of verses referring to Muḥammad Raḥīm Bī and his associates, who repeatedly point to their inferiority. The balance in the shift between we and you is further underlined by the fact that the poem contains exactly ten hemistiches. While the first two hemistiches appeal to God to validate the oath, the next hemistich strictly follows the distinction between the future *khān* (you) and the followers (we): “You are worthy of the crown and the throne” does not mention the nobles and governors. Yet when the governors and officials come to mention themselves in the corresponding hemistich, they not only refer to themselves but, in expressing the wish to give the insignia of authority to Muḥammad Raḥīm Bī, use the second person singular (you). The next verse shows the same pattern; both sides were tied together in the second hemistich. And the last two verses totally merge both pronouns! In every hemistich we find the mention of we and you, mutually changing their positions from the beginning of the hemistich to the end and vice versa. The principle of reciprocity seems very prominent here.

With the wording of these verses in mind, it becomes clear that we are dealing with a *bay’a* rather than with a *kūrnish*. The men promising fidelity mentioned an oath as well as a compact. The comparison with the

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<sup>68</sup> Qāzī Wafā , *Tuhfat*, fol. 252a. See also Sela, *Ritual and Authority*, 9; von Kügelgen, *Legitimierung*, 276.