

1. Prologue

On 13 March 1912 Colonel Nil Sergeevich Lykoshin (1860–1922), a Russian colonial officer with nearly three decades' service in various positions in Russian Turkestan, was appointed to the office of Commandant of the Amu-Darya Department. The Amu-Darya Department (*Amu-Dar'inskii Otdel*), also known by its acronym ADO, was an administrative unit within the Turkestan General Governorship, comprising the territories in the lower reaches of the Amu-Darya River that had been annexed from the Khanate of Khiva following the latter's military defeat in 1873. Spread over an area of about 76,000 sq. km – roughly the size of modern Czechia –, the ADO was centered around Fort Petro-Aleksandrovsk, a fortified town that since its foundation in 1873 played the role of the Russian “point of defense, observation and support vis-à-vis with the Khan of Khiva”.¹ Although much of the Commandant's work involved overseeing various everyday economic, administrative and military matters within the territory of the ADO, he was also tasked with other, more challenging duties. Among these was responsibility for maintaining direct communication with the Khan of Khiva. This required some diplomatic finesse, given the Khan's deftly delineated status as supreme ruler of a polity that, by the terms of the Gandemian peace treaty, was simultaneously sovereign and bound to Russia in a state of “vassal dependence”. The sensitivity required in maintaining diplomatic relations with the Khan meant that the position of the ADO Commandant, with simultaneous responsibility for overseeing the Khivan Khanate, was regarded by the Turkestan administration as one of the most challenging offices within the entire colonial government, and one that, if successfully executed, offered a springboard for subsequent career growth.² Lykoshin's own career

¹ Seymour Becker, *Russia's Protectorates in Central Asia: Bukhara and Khiva, 1865–1924* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 60.

² Several of the officials who held that office at different times, including A.S. Galkin (1896–1903), V.N. Susanin (1904–1905) as well as N.S. Lykoshin himself (1912–1914), were subsequently promoted to the higher office of Military Governor of the individual provinces of Turkestan. Furthermore, the first ADO

was no exception here: a few years later, in 1914, he would be promoted to the office of Military Governor of the larger Samarkand Province.

Promising as it was in terms of career development, the office of the ADO Commandant nevertheless could entail manifold pitfalls for its holder. The vagueness of the Commandant's mandate vis-à-vis the Khanate of Khiva, coupled with the ADO's distance from imperial logistic centers, meant that there were occasions when the Commandant had to assume the initiative and act upon his own authority, and in cases where things went badly there was a risk of being scapegoated by imperial policymakers. This was the fate of Lykoshin's successor as Commandant, Major-General V.P. Kolosovskii (in office: 1914–1916), who in the wake of the large-scale Turkmen uprising in Khiva in 1916 was assigned a good deal of blame for provoking the unrest, and consequently was subjected to dishonorable discharge.³

For the newly appointed Lykoshin, things must have looked particularly challenging given that he took up office in the midst of various turbulent developments that unfolded in what the Russian officers in Petro-Aleksandrovska came to call “the Khanate beyond the river” (*zarechnoe khanstvo*). A year and half prior to Lykoshin's promotion, the Khivan Qonghlat ruler Muḥammad Raḥīm Khān II (r. 1864–1910) had passed away. He had ruled the Khanate for more than four decades, the majority of this time after the Russian takeover of Khiva. The father of six sons, each of whom – in the lack of clear practices of succession to the khanal throne – was potentially entitled to ascend the throne of Khiva,⁴ the elderly Khan (*qarī-khān*),

Commandant N.A. Ivanov (1873–1877), later in 1901–1904 acted in the capacity of Governor-General of Turkestan.

³ For more on the Turkmen uprising in 1915–1916 and the role of V.P. Kolosovskii in said events, see Ulfat Abdurasulov, “Konflikt kak resurs: Anatomia ‘turkmenskikh besporiadkov’ v Khorezme, 1914–1916 gg.” *Ab Imperio* 3 (2018): 141–186.

⁴ According to the Khivan authors, Muḥammad Raḥīm Khān II had six sons: ‘Aşqar Maḥmūd Tūra, Muḥammad Yār Tūra, ‘Ibādullāh Tūra, Muḥammad Yūsuf Tūra, Sayyid ‘Abdullāh Tūra, and Sayyid Isfandiyār Tūra, see: ‘Abdullāh

as his subjects came to call him, seems to have been well aware of the risks of possible disturbances following his death: after all, through the entire history of Qonghrat rule in Khorezm, khanal succession had seldom occurred without a fierce power struggle both within the court and in the diverse localities. The Russian colonial authorities seem to have been aware of this as well. Unsurprisingly, therefore, once reports began to circulate about a sharp deterioration in Muḥammad Raḥīm Khān II's health, they set in motion intense communication among various imperial and colonial officials. They furthermore intensified the discussion among imperial governmental bodies around succession to the Khivan throne, also looking at the possibility of full annexation of the Khivan protectorate.⁵ After intense exchanges between the imperial officials and the Khivan authorities, Sayyid Isfandiyār Tūra, the Khan's youngest son, was recognized officially as his heir.⁶ On 16 August 1910 the elderly Khan passed away. Within a couple of hours, Sayyid Isfandiyār Tūra was hastily elevated on the white felt in the Kuhna Arq Palace, following traditional enthronement practice,⁷ by members of the leading

Baltaev, *Khvārazm ta'rikhiga matir'iallar*, Khīva 1950, MS Tashkent, O'zR-FASHI, inv. no. 9320, fol. 4a. Ḥasan-Murād Laffāsī stated that it was the elder son 'Aşqar Maḥmūd Tūra who had the most right to claim the Khivan throne, see Ḥasan Madaminov, (Ḥasan-Murād Laffāsī), *Otryvki iz istorii Khivinskogo khanstva. Period 1910–1913 gg.*; O'zMA, f. I-125, op. 1, d. 609, ll. 64–64 ob.

⁵ A. Samsonov, then the Governor-General of Turkestan, reported to the Russian Foreign Minister A.P. Izvol'skii that "necessity of acknowledging of Sayyid Isfandiyār as a [true] successor was conditioned by the threat of probable unrest due to the presence of other sons of [Muḥammad Raḥīm] Khan, who also claimed the throne", Samsonov, *Telegramma*, 23.08.1910; f. I-2, op.1, d. 291, ll. 78–79.

⁶ Jum'a Niyāz Ḥājjī (Babaniyazov), yet another Khivan author, reported that in the light of these events, people in Khiva were lamenting "that it wouldn't be right if the sixth [and youngest] of the brothers ascends the throne", see: Jum'a Niyāz Ḥājjī b. Bābā Niyāz Khīvaqī (Babaniyazov), *Isfandiyār Khān davrinīng vāqi'alārī va yāsh khīvaliklār ūnga qārshī harakatlārī*, MS Tashkent, O'zFASHI, inv. no. 7568, fol. 4b.

⁷ On the tradition of the elevation of the new Qonghrat dynasts of Khiva on a white felt carpet, see further: Shioya Akifumi, "Islam and the Nomadic Political Tradition in the 19th-Century Khanate of Khiva" *Oriente Moderno* 102 (2022): 74–75.

dynastic factions.⁸ A peaceful transfer of regnal authority was ensured by the Russian Cossack regiment under the leadership of the Commandant of the ADO Glushanovskii.⁹

“*Davr, davr Isfandiyār Khān davrī!*” or “Long live the Khan,” proclaimed the street criers a couple of hours later in bazaars across the Khanate, thereby saluting the beginning of the reign of Sayyid Isfandiyār Bahādur Khān (r. 1910–1918).¹⁰



Sayyid Isfandiyār Bahādur Khān of Khiva (r. 1910–1918).

Photo credit: IQDM, inv. no. KP 2859

⁸ Bābājān Safarov, *Khawārazmda bülüb ütgān qūlchilīq ahvāllarīnīng vāqi‘alārī*, MS Tashkent, O‘zFASHI, inv. no. 11254/II, fol. 5a; Ḥasan-Murād Laffāsī, *Ta’rīkh-i gulshan*, MS Tashkent, O‘zFASHI, inv. no. 278, fol. 5a.

⁹ A.D. Kalmykov, *Smert’ Seid Mukhamed Rakhim Khana Khivinskogo i vstuplenie v upravlenie delami Khanstva syna i naslednika ego Seid Asfendiara*; O‘zMA, f. I-2, op. 1, d. 291, ll. 162–164; Jum‘a Niyāz Ḥājji Babaniyazov, *Isfandiyār Khān davrinīng vāqi‘alārī*, fol. 4b.

¹⁰ Laffāsī, *Ta’rīkh-i gulshan*, fol. 3a.

The young and weak-willed Khan, as the contemporaries come to depict Isfandiyyār,¹¹ fell under the influence of one of his courtiers, Sayyid Islām Khvāja (1872–1913). This individual’s rise to power was already underway during the previous ruler’s reign.¹² Sayyid Islām Khvāja’s role seems to have been pivotal in negotiations with the Russian authorities over promoting Isfandiyyār Tūra as the new Khan of Khiva. There were clearly a variety of reasons for Sayyid Islām Khvāja to align with the Heir: not only was he the prince’s maternal uncle, but he was also his father-in-law: Isfandiyyār Tūra having married his daughter Hājji Pāshā.¹³ It is unsurprising, therefore, that following Isfandiyyār Khān’s accession to power Sayyid Islām Khvāja’s authority grew immensely. He henceforth came to be regarded as *de facto* ruler of Khorezm, boasting the title of *vazīr-i akbar* (grand vizier) – a rank that was unparalleled in the previous history of the Khanate. According to some testimonies, Sayyid Islām Khvāja’s private residence constituted a sort of parallel, or

¹¹ Lykoshin, *Raport G. Turkestanskomu General-gubernatoru*, 28.11.1912, no 53; O’zMA, f. I-2, op. 1, d. 289, l. 166 ob.; Alexander Baranovskii, a diplomatic official at the Turkestan Governorship-General (off. 1911–1915), for instance, attested that Isfandiyyār Khān was an irresolute, persuadable personality, easily subjected to extraneous influences, though at the same time was someone who “painfully strives for self-standing, which he understands in a rather peculiar way”, see his *Raport*, AVPRI, f. 147, op. 486, d. 182, l. 20, cited from A.Iu. Bakhturina, *Okrainy Rossiiskoi imperii: gosudarstvennoe upravlenie i natsional’naia politika v gody Pervoi mirovoi voiny (1914–1917 gg.)* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2004), pp. 328–329.

¹² Already in 1902–1903, the Russian military authors Girshfel’d and Galkin reported that Sayyid Islām Khvāja’s remit included overseeing (*zavedyvanie*) the settled population of the Khanate, see: V.A. Girshfel’d, and A.S. Galkin, *Voenno-statisticheskoe opisanie Khivinskogo oazisa*. Pt. II (Tashkent: Tipografiia shtaba Turkestanskogo voennogo okruga, 1903), p. 22. Later, in 1908 Alexander Samoilovich, upon his visit to Khiva, noted the fact that Islām Khvāja “enjoyed immense influence on [all] Khivan affairs ... suffice it to say that he keeps in his hands all finance of the country”: see A.N. Samoilovich, “Kratkii otchet o poezdke v Tashkent i Bukharu i v Khivinskoe khanstvo v 1908 godu”, in *Izvestiia Russkogo komiteta dlia izucheniiia Srednei i Vostochnoi Azii v istoricheskoi, arkhologicheskoi i etnograficheskoi otnosheniakh* 9 (St Petersburg: Tipografiia Imperatorskoi Akademii nauk, 1909), p. 9 (fn. 1).

¹³ Baltaev, *Khvārazm ta’rīkhīa matir’iallar*, fol. 4a.

“a lesser court” operating alongside the court of the Khan, to which many of the Khanate’s officials deemed it necessary to come and pay homage with a bow (*salām*) to the grand vizier; it was also recognized that various issues of policy had first to be discussed and approved at this “lesser court”.¹⁴ Sayyid Islām Khvāja additionally seems to have overseen the chancellery of the Khivan Khan as well as the Khanate’s liaisons with Tashkent and St. Petersburg.

Sayyid Islām Khvāja was not the only influential figure at the court: there were clearly other notable players and factions, who enjoyed a great deal of authority and whose interests seem to have been at odds with those of the grand vizier. First and foremost were three sons of Mat-Murād Divānbīgī (1830–1902), whom we find referred to in Russian documentation as ‘the *Divanbegi*-ites’ (*divanbegiitsy*). Mat-Murād Divānbīgī, who had made a stellar career under the previous ruler Muḥammad Raḥīm Khān II, had famously advocated strong resistance to the Russian troops on the eve of the Russian conquest of Khiva in 1873.¹⁵ It is to him that one local historian attributes the promise to “harness the White [=Russian] Tsar onto a cart”, were the Russians to try to conquer Khiva.¹⁶ In punishment for his belligerence, following the Russian takeover he was expelled to the Russian city of Kaluga. With the passage of time, however, in 1879–1880, upon the repeated requests of Muḥammad Raḥīm Khān II, Mat-Murād Divānbīgī secured from the

¹⁴ N. Lykoshin, *Raport G. Turkestanskomu General-gubernatoru*, 30.09.1912, no 15; O‘zMA, f. I-2, op. 1, d. 289, ll. 162 ob.–163.

¹⁵ For more on the Russian takeover of Khiva in 1873 and the role of Mat-Murād Divānbīgī in these events, see Alexander Morrison, *The Russian Conquest of Central Asia. A Study in Imperial Expansion, 1814–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 356–362.

¹⁶ *ḥalī bīzlār tīz kūnda āq pādshāh-nīng ūzīnī ‘aravagha qūshamān*. This is a phrase that the Khivan author Safarov attributed to Mat-Murād Divānbīgī, see his *Khvārazmda būlūb ūtgān qūlchilīq aḥvāllarīnīng vāqi ‘alārī*. For the Chaghatay text and English translation of Safarov’s text, see further: Ulfat Abdurasulov and Nuryoghdi Toshov, “Soviet ‘Local’ Knowledge: Babajan Safarov’s Notes on Slavery in Khwarazm”, in N. Purnaqcheband and F. Saalfeld eds., *Aus den Tiefenschichten der Texte: Beiträge zur turko-iranischen Welt von der Islamisierung bis zur Gegenwart* (Wiesbaden: Riechert Verlag, 2019), p. 288.

Russian autocrat both a pardon and permission to return to his home country. From then until his death in 1901 he reoccupied his former position, where he was regarded as “indispensable” by the Russian authorities due to his expertise in governing over the Khanate.¹⁷ During his post-exile life the Divānbīgī seems to have been on rather frosty terms with another courtier called Sayyid Ibrāhīm Khvāja, who was the father of Sayyid Islām Khvāja. The enmity between the two courtiers was continued after their death by their sons. Mat-Murād Divānbīgī’s sons – Ḥusayn Muḥammad Bāy, Shaykh Naẓar Bāy and Āmān Kildī Bāy – were appointed from young ages to various important positions at the court, and on many occasions, they were in direct competition with Sayyid Islām Khvāja.¹⁸

The concentration of power in the hands of Sayyid Islām Khvāja in the initial years of Isfandiyār Khān’s reign allowed him to inflict a crushing blow to the positions of his long-time rivals and thus, seemingly, put an end to this long inter-familial contestation. At the very end of 1911, all three sons of Mat-Murād Divānbīgī, along with some other courtiers, were detained upon the Khan’s orders on charges of high treason, and most of their property was confiscated in favor of the treasury. We will address in greater detail the story of how these courtiers fell into disfavor and then redeemed themselves in a later section of this Introduction; for the moment, though, it is worth simply noting that the Russian authorities were taken by surprise by this development. Despite the web of informants at the Khivan court and the fact that the Commandant of the ADO was in charge of keeping constant track of the situation in Khiva, the Russians failed to anticipate this course of events, and their responses to these and other political developments were often very belated. Apart from the fact that the disfavor towards influential

¹⁷ Akifumi Shioya, “*Povorot* and the Khanate of Khiva: a New Canal and the Birth of Ethnic Conflict in the Khorazm Oasis, 1870s–1890s” *Central Asian Survey* 33/2 (2014): 238.

¹⁸ N. Tashev, “Zanimal li Mukhammad-Iusuf Baiani dolzhnost’ divan-begi?” *O‘zbekiston tarixi* 2 (2009): 18–20; Shioya, “*Povorot* and the Khanate of Khiva”, pp. 238–239.

courtiers occurred behind the back of the Russian authorities, the more sensitive fact was that one of those who was detained, Ḥusayn Muḥammad Bāy Divānbīgī, the eldest of the *Divanbegi*-ites, had previously been appointed by the Russian Emperor to the honorary rank of lieutenant colonel of the Russian army.¹⁹ The Russians thus regarded the move by the Khivan authorities now to imprison this individual as a calculated affront to the “prestige of Russian power” – something that the colonial authorities were perennially concerned to protect.²⁰ For that reason over the course of 1912 the Russian authorities gave central priority in their negotiations with Khiva to “alleviating the plight of the *Divanbegi*-ites”. In the meantime, perhaps due to the fact that the detainment took the colonial administration in Petro-Aleksandrovsk completely by surprise, Major-General N.G. Glushanovskii, then the Head of the Department, was recalled and replaced with Colonel Nil Sergeevich Lykoshin, who it was hoped would be a more authoritative figure.

Another pressing matter that faced Lykoshin upon his arrival was the so-called implementation of the program of reforms announced by the Khivan authorities earlier in September 1910. This program was not, in fact, wholly of the Khivans’ own making. Indeed, as we have shown elsewhere, it was the Russian officials who, following the death of Muḥammad Raḥīm Khān II and the enthronement of his successor Isfandiyār Khān, compelled the Khivan authorities to design a set of measures aiming at the reorganization of the Khanate’s administrative, financial and legal affairs in order to lay the groundwork, it was hoped, for its subsequent

¹⁹ Ḥusayn Muḥammad Bāy Divānbīgī was bestowed that rank in 1911, upon his visit to the Russian Emperor’s court as a part of Isfandiyār Khān’s retinue. On that occasion, the Khan himself secured promotion to the rank of major-general of “His Imperial Majesty’s Retinue”, see: Pahlavān Niyāz Ḥājī (Yusupov), [*Khāṭiralar*]. MS Khiva, Private Collection, fol. 8b; Jum‘a Niyāz Ḥājī Babaniyazov, *Isfandiyār Khān davrinīng vāqi ‘alārī*, fols. 5a–5b.

²⁰ Kolosovskii, *Dokladnaia Zapiska General-maioru Geppeneru*, 4.08.1915, no 333; O‘zMA, f. I-1, op. 1, d. 290, l. 97

annexation.²¹ The reform program broadly sought to reconcile the interests of multiple parties, namely the Khivan authorities, the members of colonial administration, who advocated the complete annexation of the Khanate, and that part of the Russian establishment which preferred to preserve the existing order with regard to the Khivan protectorate. As it turned out, however, the program did not achieve much. Not only did the Khivan authorities fail to implement meaningful reforms over the following years, but furthermore some of the program of reforms provoked strong antagonism from various court factions and the wider population. One particularly contentious issue was the suggestion that the land tax (*sālghūt*) should be re-calculated based upon the actual size of land plots, in accordance with the new land cadaster. The proposed land survey was the subject of fierce opposition from large landlords, including royal family members, as well as from certain groups of the Khivan Khān's Turkmen subjects. Opposition was particularly entrenched among Turkmens from the vicinity of Kuhna-Urgench, who had reason to believe that the upcoming land survey might be used by the Khivan authorities as a mean of imposing compliance on tribal groups that had previously enjoyed varying degrees of autonomy.

Lykoshin's arrival at Petro-Aleksandrovsk thus came in the midst of some turbulent developments in the neighboring Khanate. These developments would dominate much of Lykoshin's tenure. They would furthermore constitute the leitmotif of most of the administrative reports and memoranda which Lykoshin composed during his period in office.

Prior to assuming office, Lykoshin had been summoned to Tashkent for a personal meeting with the Governor-General of Turkestan Alexander Vasil'evich Samsonov (off.: 1909–1914). Samsonov's tenure as Governor-General was notable for his repeated endeavors

²¹ On the program of the reforms and their implementation, see further Ulfat Abdurasulov and Paolo Sartori, "Neopredelennost' kak politika: razmyshliaia o prirode rossiiskogo protektorata v Srednei Azii" *Ab Imperio* 3 (2016): 118–164; idem, "Imperial Strategic Uncertainty: The Promises and Perils of a Russian Protectorate in Central Asia", pp. 233–264.

to impose direct control over the Russian protectorates in the region, namely the Khanates of Khiva and Bukhara, by means of truncating their autonomy and depriving them of their semi-independent status. Although his endeavors had received a cool reception from the agencies in the imperial metropole, Samsonov seems nevertheless to have remained keen to keep these regions, especially Khiva, despite its remoteness, under closer control than his predecessors had done. As a way for ensuring such control, Samsonov considered the establishment of a more stable channel of information, in which the newly appointed Commandant Lykoshin, was to play a principal role. In his meeting with Lykoshin, therefore, Samsonov instructed him not only to keep a close watch over Khivan affairs, but also to keep him personally and regularly informed of any developments “even if nothing noteworthy happens during the period under report”.²²

Faithful to these instructions, Lykoshin compiled numerous and extensive reports and memoranda on the state of affairs in the Khivan Khanate during his period in office between August 1912 and June 1914.²³ The most notable perhaps of this textual corpora, in terms of volume and information contained, was the 72-page report titled *Notes on the Present State of the Khanate of Khiva* (*Zapiska Nachal'nika Amu-Dar'inskogo Otdela Polkovnika Lykoshina o sovremennom sostoianii Khivinskago Khanstva*),²⁴ written by Lykoshin between the months of May and August 1912, on the basis of three tours of inspection that he undertook in various parts of the Khanate. In terms of genre the *Zapiska* is not an administrative report *stricto sensu*, but rather a bricolage of statistical data, ethnographic sketches, travelog notes, and, not least, literary prose. As such it

²² N.S. Lykoshin, *Raport G. Turkestanskomu General-gubernatoru*, 28.08.1912, no 43; O'zMA, f. I-2, op.1, d. 289, ll. 132–132 ob.

²³ Most of this textual output nowadays is held in the National Archive of Uzbekistan as part of archival holding (*fond*) I-2 (*Diplomaticheskii chinovnik pri Turkestanskom General-gubernatore*).

²⁴ N.S. Lykoshin, *Zapiska Nachal'nika Amu-Dar'inskago Otdela Polkovnika Lykoshina o sovremennom sostoianii Khivinskago Khanstva*, 1912 god; O'zMA, f. I-2, op. 1, d. 314, ll. 12–58.

represents one of the most detailed and eloquent accounts of the Khivan Khanate to survive from the colonial period, and one that was written by someone who was not merely an eyewitness to but also an active participant in the events described therein. Although Lykoshin's legacy, scholarly and administrative alike, has been the subject of detailed academic scrutiny in the previous scholarship, little has been written about his activities, let alone the textual output, from the time when he held the post of the Commandant of the ADO.

To this end, the current publication sets out to present the text edition and the translation of Lykoshin's *Notes on the Present State of the Khanate of Khiva*. We are confident that apart from its historical merit as a trove of historical detail about the history of the Khanate, the text in question gives an invaluable picture of the nature of Russian dominion over this far-flung region, and not least, that it sheds light on the persona of its author, Nil Lykoshin, as both colonial officer and scholar, whom one of his biographers, Alexander Morrison, has justly characterized as "one of the most important figures of pre-revolutionary Turkestan", and perhaps "the most prominent example of the very common overlap to be found between the production of scholarly work on Russia's colonial territories and their administration".²⁵

²⁵ Alexander Morrison, "Sufism, Panislamism and Information Panic: Nil Sergeevich Lykoshin and the Aftermath of the Andijan Uprising" *Past and Present* 214 (2012): 277–278.