
CONFERENCE ARTICLE

**THE SELECTION OF THE HEIR APPARENT AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE ATALIQ
INSTITUTION WITHIN THE SYSTEM OF POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION IN THE BUKHARA
EMIRATE**

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes one of the most pivotal political-administrative processes in the history of the Bukhara Emirate (1756–1920): the institutional evolution of the succession mechanism (heir apparent) and the methodologies employed for training the future ruler. Based on primary sources, the study elucidates the transformation of the traditional Ataliq institution during the Manghit dynasty era from a form of tribal military-political guardianship into a functional element of state bureaucracy—specifically, a system of "administrative-pedagogical mentorship." Furthermore, the phenomenon of the "Karmana School" in training crown princes for practical governance is examined alongside a scientific assessment of the crisis of legitimacy and political succession that emerged under the influence of the Russian Imperial protectorate in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Through comparative-historical analysis and a retrospective approach, the author substantiates that the disruption in the heir's education constituted one of the internal determinants leading to the decline of the Emirate's statehood.

KEYWORDS

Bukhara Emirate, Manghit Dynasty, institution of the heir apparent, Ataliq, political socialization, Karmana school of governance, legitimacy, administrative bureaucracy, Russian protectorate, political elite, succession to the throne.

INTRODUCTION

Within the paradigm of Central Asian statehood, particularly in the political history of the late medieval and modern periods, the issue of the transfer of power constitutes a fundamental factor ensuring state stability. During the Manghit dynasty, which ruled from the second half of the 18th century to the early 20th century, the political architecture of the Bukhara Emirate assumed the form of a centralized theocratic monarchy. As they were not of Genghisid lineage, the Manghit rulers were compelled to legitimize their authority not through the traditional "Golden Lineage" (Oltin Urug) right, but by relying on Islamic Sharia norms and the efficacy of a professional administrative apparatus. Consequently, the institution of the Valiahd (Crown Prince) and the mechanisms for his formation as a political leader transcended mere dynastic concerns, becoming an imperative component of the national security strategy.

Institutional Transformation of the Ataliq. From the perspective of historical source analysis and political science, a profound transformation can be observed in the traditional concept of Ataliq and its practical functional duties during this chronological period. Whereas during the Ashtarkhanid (Janid) era (17th – first half of the 18th century), Ataliqs acted as powerful tribal chieftains with the capacity to enthrone or dethrone the Khan—essentially operating as a force alternative to central power—under the Manghit emirs (specifically Amir Shahmurad and Amir Haydar), this institution was converted into a subordinate link within the state bureaucracy. The Ataliq was no longer a political rival but was reduced to the status of a "state mentor," responsible for educating, supervising, and protecting the interests of the state in relation to the future ruler. The objective of this article is to conceptually illuminate the role of the mentorship institution, the significance of the "Karmana School of Governance," and the impact of the colonial period on

the selection and preparation of the heir in the Bukhara Emirate, based on an analysis of primary sources and modern historiography.

Selection of the Heir: Between Primogeniture and Meritocracy. The mechanism for appointing a successor in the Bukhara Emirate was not strictly regulated by the principle of primogeniture (inheritance exclusively by the eldest son). In real political practice, the ruler's most capable son—physically healthy and, crucially, supported by a consensus of the ruling elite and the corps of Ulema—was selected as the Valiahd. Although the title of Ataliq was nominally preserved during the Manghit era, its political substance shifted. As noted by Academician A.A. Semenov in his fundamental research, while supreme administrative executive power passed to the Kushbegi (Prime Minister) under the Manghits, the upbringing and political socialization of the heir were conducted under the supervision of specially trusted representatives. These individuals might not have officially borne the title of Ataliq (as the title had become an honorary rank or a designation for provincial governors), but their functional role consisted precisely of political guardianship and pedagogical oversight [Semenov, 1954].

Pedagogical Approach and Court Environment. In his work *Tarikh-i Salatin-i Manghitiya*, historian Mirza Abdulazim Sami Bustani analyzes the socio-political reforms under Amir Shahmurad (1785–1800), noting that the Amir prioritized raising his children in a spirit of dervish-like asceticism and strict adherence to Sharia law, isolating them from court luxury. During this period, the function of "spiritual Ataliq" in preparing the heir was largely performed by religious scholars and Sufi pirs (spiritual masters) [Mirza Abdulazim Sami, 1962]. This theocratic-pedagogical approach reached its apogee in the

persona of Amir Haydar (1800–1826), who ascended to the level of both a sovereign ruler and a major Islamic scholar (mudarris).

The initial stage of the heir's preparation took place in the capital, Bukhara, within the Ark citadel or in specially designated residences. The state's most prominent mudarrises were engaged to enhance the future ruler's intellectual potential. Princes received fundamental education not only in Quranic and Hadith sciences but also in Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), Arabic and Persian languages, calligraphy, and classical poetry [Jumanazar, 2017].

However, this process was not without contradictions. The prominent 19th-century thinker Ahmad Donish, in his work *Tarikh-i Saltanat-i Manghitiya*, critically analyzes the psychological and pedagogical flaws in the upbringing of Amir Muzaffar (1860–1885) and his sons. Donish writes that the mentors assigned to the heir often chose the path of sycophancy, fearing the future emir's wrath, rather than curbing his whims. This laid the groundwork for the formation of despotism and arbitrariness in the heir's character [Ahmad Donish, 2014]. Thus, the weakening of the Ataliq institution—specifically the mentor's inability to exert full influence over the mentee—created the psychological determinants for future political crises.

The "Karmana School": Practical Governance Experience. The most crucial and decisive stage in preparing the heir in the Bukhara Emirate was the practice of appointing him as a provincial governor. From the mid-19th century onwards, by established tradition, the Valiahd was primarily sent as the governor to the strategically important beylik of Karmana (occasionally to Charjou or Gubar). This was a unique political institution, acknowledged by researchers as the "Karmana School," where the prince developed independent decision-making skills away from the intrigues of the capital. Renowned ethnographer O.A. Sukhareva, in her study of Bukhara city and the emirate's administrative system, emphasizes that the heir's provincial court served as a model of a "Little Bukhara." Experienced bureaucrats appointed from the center—Devonbegi, Mirzaboshi, and military commanders—were attached to the heir. They provided the young ruler with practical training in fiscal policy (collection of kharaj and zakat), diplomacy with local clan leaders, and border security [Sukhareva, 1966].

For instance, before ascending the throne, Amir Abdulahad (1885–1910) served as the Bey of Karmana for many years. It was during this period that the trusted individuals around him evolved into his future ministers and closest advisors (political team). This indicates that the group of officials performing the "Ataliq" function in the province constituted the core of the future government. As noted by Mirza Salimbek in *Tarikh-i Salimi*, the accession of a prince who had earned a reputation for just governance in the province was viewed by the populace and the army as a natural acceptance of legitimacy [Mirza Salimbek, 2009].

The Russian Protectorate and the Crisis in the Succession System. Following 1868, when the Bukhara Emirate became a vassal of the Russian Empire, geopolitical factors began to take precedence in the heir training system. The persona of the Valiahd was now subject to confirmation not only by the Amir but also by the consent of the Governor-General of Turkestan in Tashkent and the Imperial Court in St. Petersburg. During this period, the role of traditional Ataliqs was partially supplanted by the oversight of the Russian Political Agency.

The most drastic paradigmatic shift occurred under Amir Abdulahad. He sent his son, the future last emir Said Alim Khan (1910–1920), to study at the Nikolaev Cadet Corps (affiliated with the Corps of Pages) in St. Petersburg. This was an unprecedented event in the history of Bukhara: the future "Amir al-Mu'minin" (Commander of the Faithful) was receiving military education and European upbringing in a non-Muslim land. American historian Seymour Becker, analyzing this situation in his fundamental monograph, writes: "Amir Alim

Khan's education in Russia gave him a superficial veneer of European culture, but upon returning to Bukhara, he remained suspended between two worlds (marginalization). His knowledge of Russian and his connections with the Imperial Court exacerbated the conflict with the conservative Ulema and the old guard officials within Bukhara" [Becker, 2004].

Abdurauf Fitrat, the leader of the Jadid movement, sharply critiques this crisis in the succession system in his treatise *The Reign of Amir Alim Khan*. In Fitrat's view, the heirs grew up isolated from the people and national interests, surrounded only by a narrow circle of sycophantic "mentors" within their courts. Consequently, leaders emerged who were incapable of state governance, lacking in will, and prioritizing personal interests [Fitrat, 1992].

Sadriddin Ayni also analyzes the negative impact of Amir Alim Khan's upbringing on his political views in his *Materials for the History of the Bukhara Revolution*. He writes that the emir did not dare to implement in Bukhara the "progress" he had witnessed in Russia, because the representatives of the old regime who raised him (Ataliqs and Kushbegis) interpreted any innovation as hostility towards religion [Ayni, 1926].

Conclusion

From the mid-18th century to the 1920s, the practice of selecting and training the heir in the Bukhara Emirate traversed a complex evolutionary path. A scientific-theoretical analysis of this process yields the following conceptual conclusions.

First, during the Manghit dynasty, the Ataliq institution lost its tribal-military essence and transformed into an administrative-pedagogical system fully integrated into the state apparatus. While this served to strengthen central authority, it limited the heir's formation as an independent political figure.

Second, although the "Karmana School" provided heirs with a degree of governance experience, the scholastic nature of the educational system and the lack of modern secular knowledge failed to prepare them for the global challenges of the early 20th century.

Third, under the Russian protectorate, the intensification of external factors and the deformation of the national upbringing system (as exemplified by Amir Alim Khan) led to a profound crisis in the institution of succession. The antagonistic contradiction between traditional mentors (Ulema and court nobility) and the demands of the modern era rendered the Emirate's administration ineffective, ultimately becoming one of the primary internal factors accelerating the collapse of Manghit power in 1920.

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