

V. V. BARTHOLD

FOUR STUDIES ON THE
HISTORY OF CENTRAL ASIA

VOLUME II

ULUCH-BEG

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FOUR STUDIES ON THE HISTORY OF CENTRAL ASIA

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN

BY

V. AND T. MINORSKY

VOLUME II

ULUGH-BEG



LEIDEN
E. J. BRILL
1963

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VOLUME II
ULUGH-BEG



Ulugh-beg's likeness from the monument erected to him
in Samarqand.

FOREWORD

The avowed purpose of Barthold's monograph on Ulugh-beg¹ was to represent Tamerlane's grandson not as a detached king-astronomer, but as a son of his time with the background of his family relations, political strife and military expeditions. The death of Ulugh-beg by the order of his son marks the end of a period in the history of the Timurids, on the eve of the interminable series of divisions and struggles among the later princes hard pressed by the Qara-qyunlu and Aq-qoyunlu Turcomans from the West and by the Uzbeks from the East.

While Barthold turned his attention to historical realities, an interesting attempt has been made by a countryman of Ulugh-beg's Professor T. N. Kari-Niyazov (Member of the Uzbek Academy of Sciences), to revive and complete the picture of Ulugh-beg's achievements as a promoter of science and especially of astronomy. The Uzbek mathematician's book on Ulugh-beg's astronomical school² contains a full description of the remains of Ulugh-beg's observatory, of the tables known by his name and the biographies of his scientific collaborators. From this book we reproduce, with proper acknowledgment, four photographs: that of the idealised image of Ulugh-beg on the monument erected to his memory in Samarqand, representing him as a meditative star-gazer (*frontispiece*); that of the Gūr-i Mīr, the mausoleum of the Timurids (p. 124); that of Ulugh-beg's quadrant, as unearthed in 1908 amid the ruins of Ulugh-beg's observatory (p. 132); that of the skull of Ulugh-beg, as retrieved in 1941 (p. 180)³; that of his likeness, as reconstructed from his remains by the sculptor M. M. Gerasimov (p. 180).

¹ V. V. Barthold, *Ulughbek i yego vremya, Mémoires de l'Académie des Sciences de Russie*, VIII-e série, vol. XIII, No. 5, Pétrograd 1918.

² Published in Russian under the title *Astronomicheskaya shkola Ulugh-beka*, Moscow 1950, 330 pp.

³ On 17 June 1941 Ulugh-beg's tomb in Samarqand was opened by a committee of specialists and his head, severed by the executioner's sword, was found beside his body.

Barthold (see below p. 14) considered as spurious the official pedigree of Ulugh-beg's grandfather Tamerlane, which gives him an ancestor (Tumenay) in common with Chingiz-khan. A Turkish scholar¹ by patiently re-examining Mongol genealogies has recently sought to reaffirm Timur's claim to nobility². The fact remains that Timur himself did not aspire to any higher distinction than the appellation *küräkän* (in Persian read *gürgän*), i.e. "son-in-law" (cf. Chinese *fu-ma*), which points to his matrimonial link with the family of akhan. The transformation of the *Mongol* tribe of Barulas into the *Turkic* clan of Barlas, to which Timur belonged, needs also further elucidation.

¹ Prof. A. Z. V. Togan in his article contributed to the Presentation volume to Prof. M. Shafi, Lahore 1955, pp. 105-114.

² As claimed by the inscription on the stone erected over Timur's tomb by Ulugh-beg. In it the genealogy goes up to the fabulous Alan-goa, who conceived from a sunbeam (Rashid al-din, ed. Berezine, VII, 173), and it adds that the sunbeam was "a descendant of 'Ali ibn Abi-Talib'!"

V. MINORSKY

INTRODUCTION

In an article written after the discovery of the ruins of Ulugh-beg's observatory attention was drawn to the extreme paucity of our "information on Ulugh-beg's personality and his part in the work of the Samarqand observatory"¹. Ulugh-beg's personality and reign have never yet been the subject of a monograph by a European student of Oriental history. Astronomers who wrote about Ulugh-beg were naturally far more interested in him as the author of astronomical tables, than as a ruler and historical personage. The astronomers' pen turned Timur's grandson, — an ambitious ruler who, according to a Persian analyst, united in his person "the learning of Plato with the magnificence of Faridun"², — into a scholarly idealist who from the first years of his reign abandoned politics and devoted all his time to mathematics and astronomy³. The madrasa which he founded became by virtue of a free translation by one of the earlier Orientalists, a "school organised on the lines of the Museum of Alexandria"⁴. Few persons know that for Ulugh-beg's epoch the student has at his disposal several independent chronicles, a fact which lessens the scope for guesses and hypotheses far more than the astronomers who wrote on Ulugh-beg had believed.

It is true that our information on Ulugh-beg is much scantier than that on his father and grandfather. We have no historical works written at Ulugh-beg's court, nor any accounts by travelers who had seen Ulugh-beg, his court and his capital. The

¹ V. Milovanov, in *PTKLA*, XVIII, 52.

² Mirkhond, *L*, p. 1290.

³ Sédillot, *Prolégomènes*, Introd., p. CXXV: "entraîné par l'amour de l'étude, il abandonna promptement le terrain de la politique pour se livrer tout entier à sa passion pour les mathématiques et l'astronomie". A contemporary Russian scholar is still more categorical: Ulugh-beg was "an idealist scholar who had entirely consecrated himself to science, a man not of this world" (I. I. Sikora in *ITOIRGO*, IX, 1913, p. 82).

⁴ Humboldt, *Kosmos*, II, 161; in Th. Hyde's translation "a gymnasium"; cf. Sédillot, Introd., pp. CXXVI and CXXVIII.

reports of men who lived in Mawarānnahr in Ulugh-beg's time have come to us only at second-hand. The sources are completely silent on his outward appearance, whereas we have sufficiently full descriptions of the appearance of Timur¹ and even of Chingiz-khan². Portraits of Ulugh-beg will probably come to light in illustrated MSS., but up till now the problem has not been investigated and it is even doubtful whether a good likeness can be expected from such illustrations³. We shall see, however, that Timur's activities, on which we possess very detailed information, largely predetermined the subsequent destinies of his empire. In the events of his reign we can find a key to many of Ulugh-beg's actions, successes and failures. An outline of the life and rule of Ulugh-beg must therefore begin with a brief description of the legacy which he received from his grandfather.

¹ Clavijo, 249; IAr., p. 216.

² Jūzjānī and Meng-Hung, see Barthold, *Turkestan*, GMS, 457.

³ [See below p. VII].

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- 'Ālam-ārā — Iskandar-munshi, 'Ālam-ārā, Tehran 1314.
- An. Isk. — Anonymous history of Iskandar. MS. Asiatic Museum 566bc; MS. British Mus. Or. 1566 (Rieu, p. 1062). Cf. IAN 1915, p. 1365, DAN 1927, 115-6; IAN 1929, 165-80.
- An. Sh. — Anonymous history of Shāhrukh. MS. Brit. Mus. Or. 159 (Rieu, p. 1365). See *Dnevnik*, I, p. XXXIII, and XVO, XXIII, 20. Identified by H. R. Roemer as Shams al-Ḥusn, *Tāj-i Salmāni*, Wiesbaden 1956.
- AR — 'Abd-al-Razzāq, *Matla' al-sa'dayn*, MS. University of Petrograd, No. 157. See the new edition by M. Shafi, Lahore 1941, 1949.
- Babur — *Bābur-nāma*, ed. A. Beveridge, GMS, 1905.
- Barthold, *Irrigation* — Barthold, *K istorii orosheniya Turkestana*, St. Petersburg 1914.
- Barthold, *Report* — Barthold, *Otchet o poyezdke* (Report on a mission to Central Asia in 1893-4). *Zap. Akad. Nauk*, SPb. 1897.
- Barthold, *Semirechye* — Barthold, *Ocherk istorii Semirechya*, 1898. See translated in part I of the present edition.
- Blochet — Blochet, *Introduction à l'histoire des Mongols*, 1900.
- Clavijo — Clavijo, *La vida y hazañas del gran Tamorlan*, ed. Sreznevsky, St. Petersburg 1881.
- DAN — *Dokladi Akademii Nauk*.
- Daulatshah — Daulatshah, *The Tadhkirat al-shu'arā*, ed. E. G. Browne, 1901.
- Dnevnik* — Ghiyāth ad-dīn Alī, *Dnevnik pokhoda Timura v Indiyu*, ed. L. Zimin, SPb. 1915 (*Teksti po istorii Sredney Azii*, I), SPb. 1915.
- E.I.* — Encyclopedia of Islam, first edition.
- Faṣīḥ, *Mujmal-i Faṣīḥi*, MS. Musée Asiatique 581.
- H. Abru, *Shahr*. — Ḥāfiz-i Abrū, *A history of Shahrukh*, MS. India Office, Ethé, p. 76, No. 171.
- H. Abru, Ḥāfiz-i Abrū, *Zubdat al-tavarikh*, MS. Zub., Bodleian, Elliot 422.
- IAN — Izvestiya Akad. Nauk (Bull. de l'Acad. des Sciences).
- IAR. — Ibn 'Arabshāh, *'Ajā'ib al-maqdūr*, Cairo 1285.
- I. Bat. — Ibn Baṭṭuṭa, *Voyages*, ed. Defrémery.
- ITOIRGO — Izvestiya of the Turkestan branch of the Imp. Russian Geogr. Society.
- HS — Khwāndamīr, *Ḥabīb al-siyar*, Tehran 1271; for part III/3 see Indian edition 1847.
- Lerch — P. Lerch, *Archeological journey to Turkestan* (in Russian), St. Petersburg 1860.

- Mirkhond — Mirkhond, *Rauḍat al-Safā*, Lucknow 1883.
- Musavi, *Khayrāt* — Musavi, *Tārīkh-i khayrāt*, MS. Br. Mus. Or. 4898 (Rieu Suppl., p. 270, No. 423); *Aṣaḥḥ al-tavārīkh*, MS. Bodleian, Elliot 2 (Sachau-Ethé, No. 32)-the different titles belong to the copies of the same work, see IAN, 1915, p. 1365.
- Nizam al-din — Nizām al-din, *Ẓafar-nāma*, MS. Br. Mus. Add. 23980, Rieu, p. 170 published by F. Tauer, Prague, I (1937); II (1956): notes.
- Ostroumov — Ostroumov, 'Madrasas in Turkestan', *Journ. Minist. Prosveshcheniya*, 1907, January.
- PTKLA — Proceedings of the Turkestan circle of archeology.
- Rashahāt — 'Alī b. Ḥusayn-Vā'iz, *Rashahāt 'ayn-il-ḥayāt*, Tashkent 1329.
- Rosen, *Muz.* — *al-Muẓaffariya*, offered to Baron V. Rosen, St. Petersburg 1897.
- Samariya — Abū-Ṭāhir, *Samariya*, ed. N. Veselovsky, 1904.
- Sédillot — Sédillot, *Prolégomènes des tables astronomiques d'Oloug-beg*, Paris 1847-53.
- Suter — Suter, *Die Mathematiker und Astronomer der Araber*, Leipzig 1908.
- TR — Muhammad Ḥaydar, *The Tārīkh-i Rashīdī*, transl. by E. D. Ross, 1895.
- Turkestan* — Barthold, *Turkestan*, English edition, GMS, 1928.
- Turkestan*, texts — Barthold, *Turkestan*, Russian ed., I, 1898.
- Vasifi — Vāsifi, *Badā'i' al-viqāyī'*, MS. Asiat. Museum 568a. See *Mélanges As.*, VI, 400 Cf. A. N. Boldirev, *Zaynaddīn Vāsifi*, Stalinabad 1957.
- Vyatkin — V. L. Vyatkin, *Year book of Samarqand province*.
- Vyatkin, *Materials* — V. L. Vyatkin, *Materiali po istor. geografii Samark. vilayeta*, Samarqand 1902 (in *Year-book of Samarqand province*, fasc. VII, with separate pagination).
- Wassāf — Wassāf, *Tārīkh*, Bombay 1269.
- Zahīr — Zahīr al-dīn, *Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān*, ed. Dorn, St. Petersburg.
- ZAN — Zapiski Akad. Nauk.
- ZN — Sharaf al-dīn 'Alī, *Ẓafar-nāma*, Calcutta 1887-8.
- ZVO — Zapiski Vostochnogo Otdeleniya.

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I. THE MONGOL EMPIRE AND THE CHAGHATAY STATE

1. The empire created by Timur was a unique combination of elements of the Turco-Mongolian political and military system with elements of Muslim, mainly Persian, culture.

A number of works published on Chingiz-khan and his empire¹ have completely reversed the previous views that the Mongol conquests were nothing but a chaotic, elemental surge of savages who crushed everything by the weight of their numbers and destroyed the culture they could not understand. For all its simplicity, the existence of the nomads differs considerably from the primitive life of savages. In the steppe there is a contrast between rich and poor, with the resulting class antagonism; there is a necessity of defending property, especially herds, against the external enemy; there is also an armed struggle for grazing grounds, spreading sometimes over vast areas. Crises that arise make the people organise their forces and unite under one man or one clan. The usual conditions of nomad life², under which there is only a social but no political organisation, are soon replaced by a strong central authority with its concomitant concept of power on an imperial scale, which under favourable circumstances develops into an idea of world domination. For this idea to succeed, its bearer must dispose of an imposing and well organised force. The usual conditions of nomad life do not favour such aspirations. To achieve any amount of stability a nomad empire must be provided by its leader with the riches of civilised countries, either by conquest or by plundering expeditions. In a conquered country the nomads, and especially the dynasty and its principal supporters, gradually succumb to the influence of a higher culture, but their own heritage does not

¹ On the literature see *Turkestan*, p. 59 sq.; *Čingiz-khan* in *EI*.

² The best description of these conditions is in V. V. Radloff, *Kudatku-Bilik*, Introduction (in German), p. LI sq. *On the Uyghur problem* (in Russian), Suppl. to ZAN, vol. LXXII, No. 2, 1893, p. 65 sq.

disappear immediately and without trace. The conquerors endeavour to combine the freedom of nomad life with the benefits of civilisation, and this creates peculiar relations between the monarch, his tribesmen and his new subjects. The political system which emerged in the conqueror's original home, with some assistance from more cultured elements, finds in the conquered land conditions more favourable for its development. It triumphs over the political ideals which previously obtained in the conquered country, and leaves here more enduring traces than in its original home. (The Mongol political organisation led to the establishment of a more stable political order in China, Muslim Asia and Russia ¹, although it hardly affected the history of Mongolia in this respect. Similarly, the political organisation created by Muhammad and the first caliphs had a far greater influence on the fate of the countries conquered by the Arabs than on that of the Arabian peninsula.)

2. The empire founded by Chingiz-khan is an exceptional phenomenon among nomad empires. In every other case the united nomads succeeded in establishing their domination only over a small number of civilised countries. The Mongols destroyed many civilised states, conquered the entire Asiatic continent (except India, Syria and the Arabian peninsula) and Eastern Europe, and founded an empire more vast than any that had ever existed. And yet, these exceptional results were obtained by a people not very numerous and apparently not in need of new territories. As had been the case with the empire of the ancient Persians, the bulk of the people remained in their native country. The Mongol epic, composed about 1240 A.D. and known under its Chinese title *Yüan-ch'ao-pi-shi*, ² testifies to the Mongols' lack of interest in the activities of Chingiz-khan outside the confines of Mongolia. The sayings attributed to Chingiz-khan and his companions ³ refer only to the seizing and dividing

¹ See *Mir Islama*, 1912, I, 72.

² [Translated into German by E. Haenisch, Leipzig 1941, and into Russian by S. A. Kozin, Moscow 1941].

³ Quoted by me in *ZVO*, X, 110 sq.

of booty in war and hunt. This alone defined the entire object of the unification of the people under the power of the khan and the sum total of the rights and obligations of the khan and his lieutenants. Chingiz-khan's military successes which made this robber chief ¹ the ruler of the largest kingdom in the world, were bound to endow his name with a glamour that rarely fell to the lot of other founders of dynasties. His will was immutable law not only in his lifetime but even after his death. None of his successors would have dared to place himself on a level with Chingiz-khan and demand the same worship. On ascending the throne the founder of the dynasty, like the former Turkish monarchs, took a title which entirely superseded his personal name, Temüchin. All the Mongol khans who succeeded him bore one single personal name before and after their accession. In China, under the Mongol emperors, as before, we find special names for the dynasty, for the years of rule of each emperor, posthumous names etc.; but outside the frontiers of China these emperors too were called by their personal names, even in official documents ².

The Mongol empire stands out among the other nomad states both because of its dimensions and of its prolonged existence. V. V. Radloff ³ explains the latter by the fact that the Mongol state "had annexed many important countries of sedentary peoples, and that it broke up not into its constituent tribes, but into a number of civilised states (China, Central Asia, Persia etc.)". Apart from China, however, it is only in Persia that the Mongol domination can be regarded as the continuation and further development of the former political life.

3. In other works I have had the opportunity to speak of the state founded by the Mongols in Western Asia, and of its econo-

¹ At heart Chingiz-khan remained a robber chief to the end of his days, judging by the sayings attributed to him. I have drawn attention to this fact in the *E.I.*, under *Chingiz-Khan*.

² See for example the famous letter of 1305 sent to the king of France from Persia. Text, transcription and translation in Pauthier, *Le livre de Marco Polo*, II, Appendix No. 6.

³ *Kudatku-Bilik*, p. LVI. *On the Uyghur problem*, p. 75.

mic and cultural life¹. The facts show that throughout that period and despite the complaints of contemporaries about the utter ruin of the country and the complete decadence of learning, Persia held first place in the contemporary world, culturally and in all probability economically also. Urban life developed steadily. New trade centres sprang up which retained their importance even after the Mongols. The country carried on an extensive sea trade with India and China and relations, busier than ever before, were established between the civilisations of the Near and Far East. The destruction of the caliphate made it easier for the followers of other creeds to take part in intellectual life together with the Muslims. The Mongol monarchs patronised secular science, and especially mathematics, astronomy and medicine. New observatories with perfected instruments were erected in north-western Persia. Persian astronomical treatises were translated into Greek in Byzantium². With the co-operation of representatives of different nationalities a chronicle was composed in Persian incorporating the historical traditions of various peoples. The plan of this work has remained unsurpassed in its vastness.

The magnificent buildings of this epoch³ are rated by specialists among the most remarkable creations of Muslim architecture and, no less than the development of exact science and historiography, bear witness to the broadening of the scope of cultural relations, as compared with the pre-Mongol period.⁴

4. In Central Asia an entirely different kind of life developed under the Mongols. Despite the fact that many outstanding Mus-

¹ *The Persian inscription on the wall of the Manucha mosque in Ani*, (in Russian), SPb. 1911 (Ani series No. 5). *Mir Islama*, I, 73 sq.

² See H. Suter, *Die Mathematiker und Astronomen der Araber und ihre Werke*, Leipzig 1900, Supp. p. 161, (No. 397), and 219, (No. 80); C. A. Nallino, *Al-Battāni*, (Pubbl. del R. Osservatorio di Brera in Milano. No. XL, Parte I), pars I, p. XXXI, No. 5; C. Krumbacher, *Byz. Litteratur*, p. 622.

³ See in particular F. Sarre, *Denkmäler persischer Baukunst*, Berlin 1910.

⁴ This fact had already attracted the attention of Gobineau, *Trois ans en Asie*, p. 195. *Les religions et les philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale*, p. 84.