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# SOME NOTES ON THE GOLDEN HORDE – SHIRVANSHAHS RELATIONS DURING THE DECLINE OF ILKHANATE AND TIMURID RULE IN AZERBAIJAN

**N.P. Nasirov**

*Khazar University*

*Baku, Azerbaijan*

*nurlan.nasirov@khazar.org*

**Abstract.** Research objectives: To explore the relations between the Shirvanshah dynasty and the Golden Horde during the decline of the Ilkhanate and the Timurid period.

Research materials: The article's author examined various primary Arabic and Persian sources, and secondary pieces of literature related to the history of the Shirvanshah dynasty and Golden Horde written during the Mongol and Timurid periods. Owing to the lack of comprehensive information in these sources, some numismatic materials were also utilized.

Results and novelty of the research: According to some primary sources, the ruler of Shirvan submitted to the vassalage of the Ilkhanate dynasty, which was created by Chinggis Khan's grandson Hulegu Khan during his occupation of Azerbaijan. However, the territory of Shirvan became the subject of contention between two Mongol ulus, the Ilkhanate and the Jochids, due to its status as the territory of Chinggis Khan and its historical role as a battlefield between the two Mongol ulus. During the decline of the Ilkhanate, the rulers of Shirvanshah and some local powers, such as the clergy and aristocrats, who had become more active in assisting the Jochids in their efforts to gain control of Azerbaijan, subsequently pursued a policy of re-establishing their independence. Following its appearance on the Timurid stage, Shirvan was once again transformed into a theater of war between Timur and his rival Toqtamish. The objective of this conflict was to secure control of the strategic caravan – trade routes in the Caucasus. During this period, Shirvan was briefly under the rule of the Golden Horde. Nevertheless, Sheikh Ibrahim Darbandi, the ruler of Shirvan, pursued a policy of maintaining equilibrium between these two powers during the initial stages. Ultimately, he chose to ally with Timur, who was in a stronger position of real power, and entered an alliance with him. This paper offers an attempt to investigate the relations of the Shirvanshahs with the Golden Horde during the fall of the Ilkhanate and Timurids as well as some less-researched aspects of these relations.

**Keywords:** Shirvanshahs, Ilkhanate, Jochid, Golden Horde, Azerbaijan, Chobanid

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## Introduction

The initial research on the history of the Shirvanshahs of the pre-Mongol period was begun in the 1840s<sup>1</sup>. However, in contrast to the pre-Mongol period, there is a paucity of information about the history of the Shirvanshahs during the reign of the Mongols in the primary sources. It is therefore unavoidable in some cases to rely solely on epigraphic and numismatic materials, in conjunction with these scarce written sources, to study the history of the Shirvanshahs in the 13th–14th centuries. In some instances, the names of specific Shirvanshah rulers and their successors can be reconstructed solely based on material sources. This can be attributed to the limited attention devoted to the history of the Shirvanshah dynasty during the Mongol period in existing studies, coupled with the persistence of various uncertainties surrounding the topic. The scholars who have focused on the history of the Shirvanshah dynasty have done so in terms of its strategic position within the region of *Arran*, which has been described as the "*area touched by the hooves of Tatar horses*". They have also examined the transformation of Shirvan into a battlefield between the two rival Mongol *ulus*, namely the Ilkhanate and the Jochids. However, there has been a dearth of scholarship evaluating the political role and activities of Shirvanshah rulers in the context of their relationship with these two Chinggisid *ulus*. As B. Spuler pointed that "*We lack sufficient knowledge about the political roles and activities of rulers of many minor states under Mongol rule, aside from their names.*" Those that did not play any role in terms of becoming a state are *Shirvan, Mazandaran, Mardin, and Yazd* [35, p. 155]. The author, who mentioned the name of Shirvan, did not deem it necessary to reiterate the list of rulers of these countries in the book, citing the lack of utility in doing so. The aim of this paper is to examine the political activities of the rulers of Shirvanshah, as well as the local forces that supported Janibeg during the decline of the Ilkhanate. Furthermore, it aims to re-examine certain elements of Shirvanshah Ibrahim Darbandi's conduct during Timur's conflict with Toqtamish Khan, with a view to providing a more nuanced understanding of the circumstances surrounding this event.

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<sup>1</sup> Bakikhanov A. Heavenly Rose-Garden: a history of Shirvan & Dagestan. Introduced, translated and annotated by Willem Floor & Hasan Javadi. 'Maga Publisher,' 2009, p. 226; B. Dorn, "Versuch einer Geschichte der Schirwanschache", Mémoires de L'Académie impériale des sciences de St. Petersburg, VI. seri: IV, St. Petersburg 1841, s. 533–534; Derbend-nâme, Or The History of Derbend, Publ. With The Texts and Notes by A. Kazem-beg, Palala Press, 2015, 288p; Dorn B.A. Otchot ob uchenom puteshestvii po Kavkazu i yujnomo beregu Kaspiskovo more. Saint Petersburg, 1861, p.24–73; Dorn B. Versuch einer Geschichte der Schirwanschache, Mémoires de L'Académie impériale des sciences de St. Petersburg, VI. seri: IV, St. Petersburg 1841, s. 533–534; Togan Z.V. Azərbaycan'ın Tarihî Coğrafiyası, İstanbul 1932, s. 10; Zeynal oğlu Cihangir. Şirvanşahlar Yurdu. İstanbul, 1931; Barthold V. Mesto prikaspiskiy oblastei v istorii musulmanskaya mira. Baku, 1925, p.35–42; Minorsky V. A History of Sharvān and Darband in the 10th–11th Centuries, Cambridge 1958; Sharifli M. Feodalniy gosudarstva Azerbaidjana v vtoroy polovniy IX–XI vekov. Baku, 1978, p.43–111; Bunyatov Z. Gosudarstva Atabekov Azerbaidjana: 1136–1225 gody. Baku, 1978, p. 77–96; Ashurbeyli S.B. Gosudartva Shirvanshakhov (VI–XVI vv.). Baku, 1983.

### **The role of the Shirvanshah dynasty in the elimination of Chobanid rule in Azerbaijan by the Golden Horde**

After the death of Ilkhan Abu Said *Bahadur Khan* without an heir in 1335, a period of complex, contradictory, and confused political struggles for power began in Ilkhanate history<sup>2</sup>. Following short reign of Arpa Khan, the period of struggle for preserving and continuation of the Huleguids sovereignty of various Mongol tribes – *Chobanids* and *Jalairids* – began. Concepts of political legitimacy generally dictated that sovereignty should remain within the lineage of Chinggis Khan, preferably the Huleguid branch, and thus various Chinggisids were briefly installed across different regions. Within this framework, local dynasties in several parts of the realm found opportunities to assert their independence [23, p. 83]. This struggle reached its apex during the reign of the cruel and unusual person and last representative of the Chobanid dynasty *Amir Malik Ashraf* who ruled the country on behalf of a figure of *Qipchak* origin, the puppet Ilkhanate ruler named "*Anushiravan-e Adel*". According to Vagif Piriyev, who dedicated PhD thesis to the history of Azerbaijan during the decline period of Huleguids, Anushiravan-e Adel, who had formal authority, acted as a "king" until the execution of Malik Ashraf Chobani by Janibeg. This indicates that the Chobanids were not an independent state, and Malik Ashraf was solely the chief emir (like his brother Sheikh Hasan) and never becoming king of the Ilkhanate [27, p. 51]. Almost all the primary sources that have reached us have clearly described the consequences of Malik Ashraf's cruel actions against his state officials and subjects. According to Persian-language sources, he killed people under various pretexts and considered women of subject families as his *harem* [7, p. 31]. As a result of Malik Ashraf's radical behaviors, the people living in Azerbaijan and other surrounding areas were forced to migrate to the territories on the outskirts. Refugees mostly went to *Dashti-Qipchak*, *Gilan* and *Shirvan* [36, p. 74]. Undoubtedly, at that time, the plague pandemic<sup>3</sup> that occurred in Azerbaijan, which was the core of the Ilkhanate *ulus*, had a negative impact on the demographic structure and socio-economic areas, especially trade relations of region. Thus, the plague in Tabriz prompted the flight of its population, along with the Chobanid ruler himself. The consequences of the epidemic and the resultant demographic decline can be observed in change of Tabriz's economic situation during those years [6, p. 65].

Jalairid historian al-Ahari pointed out that "*three things were abundant: oppression, dearth and the plague*" [36, p. 73]. The tyranny of last Chobanid emir seriously affected lives of different social classes, not only ordinary people (in particularly peasants, townspeople and merchants) but also well-known people from different cities of Azerbaijan (Tabriz, Sarab, Ardabil, Beylagan, Barda and

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<sup>2</sup> For further information see: Melville Ch. The End of the Ilkhanate and After: Observations on the Collapse of the Mongol World Empire. Chapter –13, The Mongols' Middle East, pp.307–335, Charles Melville. *Wolf or Shepherd? Amir Chupan's Attitude to Government. The Court of the Il-Khans, 1290–1340* by Julian Raby, Teresa Fitzherbert. Oxford, 1996, pp. 79–93.

<sup>3</sup> For further information, see: Schamiloglu U. The Impact of the Black Death on the Golden Horde: Politics, Economy, Society, Civilization. *Zolotoordynskoe obozrenie = Golden Horde Review*. 2017, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 325–343. <https://doi.org/10.22378/2313-6197.2017-5-2.325-343>

Nakhchivan). Therefore they could not tolerate Malik Ashraf's persecutions and had to move to other safe territories [36, p. 76].

It is possible to find repeated records in primary sources related to some religious figures and sufi sheikhs who were respected and enjoyed the patronage of previous Ilkhans, that were now, persecuted by Malik Ashraf in this period [34, p. 42]. So, among the immigrants *جلى وطن* (jala-i vatan) who abandoned their homeland, *Khaja Sheikh Kechachi* was forced to go to *Shiraz* and from there to *Sham*, *Khaja Sadreddin Ardabili* to *Gilan*, and *Qazi Mahieddin Bardai* to *Saraycik* (the capital of Golden Horde) [9, p. 184; 42, p. 186]. Ibn Bazzaz narrated unique stories related to the relations of Safavid Sheikh Khaja Sadarddin with Malik Ashraf. Although the author first tried to connect the deterioration of the Chobanid emir's relations with the Sheikh to the vizier Abdulhey, he explained it in relating later events, to the fact that Malik Ashraf considered the Sheikh as a real threat to himself. As a result of his avidity, Malik Ashraf imprisoned Sheikh Sadruddin, as well as other clerics and nobles of Azerbaijan, in *Rab-e Rashidiya* to serve him. However, it is clear from Ibn Bazzaz's stories that Sheikh Sadreddin was forced to migrate to a remote part of Gilan province after a brief imprisonment [13, p. 1072]<sup>4</sup>. According to N. Musali, people from different social classes were forced to leave the city of Ardabil due to Malik Ashraf's heavy taxes and the arbitrariness of the Chobanid officials. One of these refugees was the prominent poet *Arif Ardabili*, the author of the poem "*Farhadname*" [24, p. 1082].

According to Michel M. Mazzaoui, the turbulent conditions of the post-Mongol era created a favorable environment for the unprecedented growth of Sufi orders. Beyond offering spiritual comfort to ordinary believers through the framework of popular Islam, the lodges of Sufi shaykhs frequently served as sanctuaries for individuals seeking refuge from the oppressive rule of secular despots. [16, p.56]. It can be said that most Persian-language sources narrated a similar story that as the result of the insufferable persecution of Malik Ashraf, *Qadhi Mahieddin Bardai* who was one of the outstanding spiritual figures of Azerbaijan went to the capital city of the Jochid ulus. When Qadhi described the oppression of Malik Ashraf in his speech, Janibeg who heard and was seriously affected by all of these stories decided to make a campaign to Azerbaijan. Major Islamic sources legitimized the campaign of Janibeg as protecting oppressed Muslim subjects [9, p. 185; 42, 27]. As might be expected, the sources validate Janibeg's campaign as a consequence of the power struggle between the Jochid and Hulaguids for control of Azerbaijan, given the Islamic motivations that underpinned it. It is interesting that author of "Chingis-name", Ötemiş Haji, who lived in the 16th century, somewhat exaggerated this matter [26, p. 55]. R.Groesset points out that Janibeg took advantage of the anarchy that had prevailed in Persia since the fall of the Hulegoid khanate to realize the long-held ambition of his family – the conquest of Azerbaijan [8, p. 405]. Undoubtedly, he understood that this was the only way to establish a direct route through the Derbend–Shirvan pass, which followed the Caspian Sea coast down to Tabriz, the terminus of the southern route linking China, India, Egypt, and the Mediterranean. Controlling this area would provide the Jochids with access to the route and enable them to divert the operations of the Latins, particu-

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<sup>4</sup> According to the "Silsilat-al nasab-i Safaviyya", it was only three months [34, p. 42].

larly the Genoese, whose increasing presence in Crimea posed a direct threat to the Jochid *ortaqs* (licensed merchants) [38, p. 288].

The Jalairid historian al-Ahari describes Jani beg's campaign as the following passage:

*He went to the kingdom of Jagahtay and conquered those regions. After settling down for a short time in this residence – it is said that he did not stay more than three days – he prepared to march. He crossed the river Terek and came to Darband. From there he came to Shirwan and sent a messenger to Malik Ashraf to say: I am coming to take possession of the Ulus of Hulagu. You are son of Chuban whose name was in the yarligh of the four uluses. Today the uluses are under my command and I also wish to appoint you emir of the ulus; get up and come to meet me. [36, p. 76–77].*

We can understand from the passage in the source that Janibeg accepted Emir Choban not as the legal heir of the Ilkhanate ulus, but as emir of the whole Mongol ulus as heir to his charismatic predecessor, Hasan Choban. We see this clearly as when Malik Ashraf was captured, Janibeg hesitated to kill him and intended to take him with him to the territory of the Jochid ulus. However, Malik Ashraf's reported response to Janibeg reveals the point of view of the Chobanids and, certainly, the Jalairids for whom al-Ahari was writing.

*He is the king of the ulus of Barkah, he has nothing to do with the ulus of Abaqa, for King Ghazan rules(exists) here and the emirship belongs to me [36, p. 77].*

According to P. Wing the clear message was that the Jochids had no business in the Ilkhanid territory, and that any claims that they may made to Azerbaijan on the grounds of Chinggisid lineage were illegitimate [39, p. 104]. This information also confirms that Anusiravan Adil was the puppet ruler of the Ilkhanate and continued to rule legitimately until his death. Unfortunately, after the death of Malik Ashraf in 758 (1357), there is almost no information in the sources about Anushiravan. However, some sources have information about his life after the death of Malik Ashraf and his contacts with Janibeg. Several researchers write that even after the execution of Malik Ashraf (1357), Anushiravan-e Adil was alive and he established contact with Janibeg and received help from him [33, p. 50]. According to Seyfaddini, from the years 745 (1344–45) to the end of 758 (1357–58), the discovery of coins in the name of *Anushiravan* in the cities of South Azerbaijan, Shirvan, Mughan, Eastern Georgia, and Armenia, indicates that he was in formal power [32, p. 36].

Highlights of the almost 20-year complex and conflicting decline of the Ilkhanate were the processes taking place in Azerbaijan and particularly in Shirvan, which were the main centers of the struggle. Unfortunately, the question of what role the Shirvanshahs played during the weakening and fall of the Ilkhanate, and whether they had a certain position in Shirvan or not, remains unclear due to the lack of information in the primary sources. However, it would not be right to think that the Shirvanshahs were left out of the struggle in this period. Thus, during the decline of the Ilkhanate, the Shirvanshahs actively participated in the feudal internicine war in the country after becoming economically stronger taking advantage of the situation that appeared during the reign of Sheikh Hasan Chobani and gained real independence [27, p. 71]. However, political relations with the Shirvanshahs during the reign of the later Chobanid emir, Malik Ashraf are one of the most interesting, contradictory, and at the same time little-noted issues. Data in

the sources reflect that Malik Ashraf attempted to subjugate the Shirvanshah ruler. Kavus and his elderly father, Keygubad. Despite this, the Shirvanshahs gradually strengthened their independence and did not submit to the Chobanids for a while during the reign of Malik Ashraf [27, p. 71]. Malik Ashraf, who understood the strategic significance of Shirvan, tried to capture Kavus, the ruler of Shirvan, by various means to turn him into his vassal. According to the testimony of primary sources, Malik Ashraf met Shirvanshah Kavus in Karabakh and presented valuable gifts to him [42, p. 19; 22, p. 981]. However, during this meeting, the cruel emir executed *Haji Shahraban's son of Emir Vafadar*, causing the panicked in Shirvanshah Kavus and to flee to Shirvan at night. According to Piriyeu, Kavus could not have been expecting Malik Ashraf's cruelty though the Shirvanshah was aware of Malik Ashraf's activities in the feudal warfare and the disasters he caused. Kavus' arrival in Karabakh was related to a certain issue. Negotiations were ongoing on between Malik Ashraf and Kavus, and the results of this negotiation did not satisfy Malik Ashraf. Despite the Shirvanshah's acceptance of this act as hostility, Malik Ashraf took steps to settle the matter peacefully, taking into consideration his relations and especially the strategic importance of the Shirvan territory. So, he sent the vizier to Shirvan together with Akhishah Malik, the son of Abdulhey. Moreover, he sent an ornate belt, hat, and precious robes to Shirvanshah Kavus and his father Keygubad. He, furthermore, expressed his intention to establish a close relationship with the – Shirvanshah by marrying his daughter. However, although Kavus welcomed the envoys with respect and provided them with food and other provisions, he did not agree to the issue establishing of kinship. The Shirvanshah's second decisive step toward disobedience can be explained by his lack of trust in Malik Ashraf. Yet, this fact shows that the Shirvanshahs were independent at this time. Besides, according to Alizadeh, there is no information about Shirvan paying tribute to Malik Ashraf in the primary sources [2, p. 408]. If we believe Zeyn al-Din Qazvini and Mirkhwand, Malik Ashraf was in Karabakh near Shirvan at that time, but he did not deal with this issue and he reached Tabriz in only 746 (1346) because it was the end of winter [42, p. 19; 22, p. 981].

The second episode related to Shirvanshah Kavus belongs to the year 747 (1347). In this year, Malik Ashraf probably marched to Shirvan to punish Kavus, but after hearing the news that the Shirvanshah had gathered troops and occupied the bank of the river (probably the Kura river), he decided to make peace [40, p.20]. In the winter of the same year, Malik Ashraf went to Karabakh and sent his vizier to Shirvan. This time Kavus and his father Keygubad, who had no way to resist, had to take refuge in one of the castles. Although Malik Ashraf's troops captured Shirvan and looted the city, they could not subjugate Kavus and Keygubad [3, p.199]. According to Piriyeu after keeping the Shirvanshahs under siege for 3 months, the Chobanids could not leave Shirvan by their consent and could not easily abandon their successes. Probably to leave Shirvan, they had to first make certain negotiations and an agreement. Although the terms of the peace are unknown to us, this reconciliation led to the withdrawal of the Chobanid army from Shirvan [27, p. 72–74]. Thereafter, the Shirvanshahs were mentioned only in connection with Janibeg's campaign in the primary sources. In the course of research, episodic information is found in the sources related to the relations between Shirvanshah Kavus and Janibeg, but no detailed information about any correspondence (letters) or negotiations between them has been found.

One of the essential issues in this period was the diversity of the social classes who were dissatisfied with Malik Ashraf's aggressive reign. Some evidence in the sources suggests that dissatisfaction with the oppressive Chobanid emir included not only the masses of ordinary people but also the landowners and merchants [40, p. 159]. The discontent of the local feudal lords and religious figures of Azerbaijan was manifested in their refusal to support the Chobanid emir during Janibeg's march to Azerbaijan. In the sources, one can find some examples of rebellions against Malik Ashraf by the local sedentary population and nomadic military aristocracy of Azerbaijan. Z. Qazvini highlighted the rebellion of the population of Tabriz against the tax oppression of the Chobanids in 1344, something which is not found in the major Muslim sources [42, p. 16–17]. We encountered one revolt in the leadership of *Deli Beyazid* in the territory of Karabakh in the spring of 752 (1351) against Malik Ashraf in the sources. This evidence also indicated not only ordinary people but also nobles of Azerbaijan were displeased with the brutal policy of Chobanids. Although, the rebellion was suppressed with difficulty, Malik Ashraf subsequently became fearful and withdrawn from the world, and leading a lonely life. He sat in *Rab-e Rashidi* and protected it from all sides by digging trenches around it. By his order, all the prominent officials of the state built apartments around *Rab-e Rashidi* and moved there. [28, p. 62]. Hammer notes that "*he himself sat like a bat in a dark chamber, afraid of everything. The poultry and dishes prepared for his meals were brought into the same subterranean chamber; they had to be strangled and boiled in his presence, and the water had to be drawn before his eyes from the spring flowing in this grotto. So great was his fear of poisoning, for not one among those closest to him had failed to mourn the death of a relative at the hands of the tyrant.*" [10, p. 339].

Malik Ashraf's cruelty had a negative impact on his relations with the religious figures of the region, particularly, the sufi sheiks. As noted by P. Jackson, the unprecedented increase in the number of shaykhs and sufis during the Mongol era addressed the need of ordinary people for protection from widespread hardship, insecurity, and oppression [14, p. 323]. Even if we believe the stories of *Saffat al-Safa*, Sheikh Sadreddin of Ardabil, who was invited to Janibeg after capturing Malik Ashraf, wanted to intercede for him, but his followers did not agree to it [18, p. 1085]. At the same time, it is possible to see in the sources that a number of emirs of Malik Ashraf defected to Janibeg after he crossed the border of *Darband* and entered *Ardabil*. It is also possible to see this in the example of *Muhammad Balqchi* who, deprived of all his strength, found refuge in his house. Despite being one of Ashraf's closest people, he sent a message to Janibeg to capture him [42, p. 29]. It can be supposed that Shirvanshah Kavus led the local nobles against Malik Ashraf. However, it is clearly stated in the sources that when Malik Ashraf was held captive by Janibeg, the latter was not inclined to execute him. However, Shirvanshah Kavus and Qazi Mahieddin Bardai insisted to Janibeg on the execution of the last Chobanid Emir which is a very remarkable data. Thus, Z. Qazvini describes the detention of Malik Ashraf when he was captured and brought to Tabriz, staying in the house of *Khaja Kechechi's* mother:

*"Amir Kavus Shirvani and Maulana Mehieddin Bardai were there. Malik Ashraf kissed Kavus's hand, begged, and pleaded. Kavus hugged him. After that, they took him to the presence of the king (Janibeg). The king asked him, why did you ruin this country? In his answer, he said that the servants were corrupt and did not*

*listen to my words... The king did not want to kill Ashraf and wanted to take him to his country. Kavus and Qazi Mehieddin Bardai persisted very hard and said that if he survived, the people of this country would not trust him, sedition and panic would arise. The king thought and said that you can do it yourself. They took Malik Ashraf to the people who opposed him to destroy him. On the way, he was thrown from the horse. They thrust a sword into his side so that the tip of the sword came out the other side. His head was brought to Tabriz. They hung it from the door of the Maraghanians mosque in the square. The people of Tabriz celebrated this event" [42, p. 30].*

As mentioned above, Janibeg's hesitancy in executing the last Chobanid emir can be explained by his intention to maintain Malik Ashraf in the status ("*Emir of the Four Ulus*") of his ancestor Emir Choban in the region. However, undoubtedly, seeing that the fact that almost all classes of the population of the region demanded his death, and the fact that the local aristocracy and the clergy were also inclined to this request, drove Janibeg to make the decision on execution. Moreover, the Shirvanshah's persistence in this matter can be explained by his fear of the resumption of his enmity with Malik Ashraf, or by his ambitions for independence in the future. Shirvanshah Kavus, who saw it as important to eliminate him at the source, could insist on it as a request of the local aristocracy of Azerbaijan, and Qazi Mahieddin Bardai as a representative of his spiritual clan and at the same time as a kind of organizer of Janibeg's campaign. Their demands show the reality of the dissatisfaction of all classes during the time of Malik Ashraf. With regard to this, Yakubovsky points out that many people in Azerbaijan were loyal to Janibeg Khan. They spread propaganda in favor of the Jochid family [40, p. 160].

Thus, according to Al-Ahari, after Janibeg's 300,000 men<sup>5</sup> strong army entered the Ilkhanate territory from Darband, the oppressed population encouraged Malik Ashraf not to flee to another place in order to destroy him, and they spread rumors about the weakness of the Jochid army.

*People had taken a dislike to him and had grown desperate. They did not want him to escape, they all implored him, saying "The Emir should not fear him this; their superiority lies in the horse (viz cavalry); they have horsemen without a weapon. Their horses have no shoes, and their arrows no flights. Let us fight till the bitter end" [36, p. 77].*

All the above details suggest that almost all social categories of the population living in the Ilkhanate ulus were dissatisfied with Malik Ashraf, and the worldly and spiritual leaders who aroused their dissatisfaction crucially helped Janibeg to acquire Azerbaijan. As A. Alizadeh rightly stated, Janibeg's campaign differed from that of previous Golden Horde rulers in that it was supported by the sedentary population of Azerbaijan [2, p. 362]. According to Egorov, as a result of this march, not only the territory of Shirvan but also the northern and southern regions of Azerbaijan came under the rule of the Jochid realm [5, p. 217]. We see from the sources that the local aristocracy and clergy class of Azerbaijan who did not support the Chobanids, prepared a kind of background for Janibeg's military campaign on this territory. Rashid al-Din, in his "Mokatebat" (The Letters), respectfully mentions his son's kinship

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<sup>5</sup> There are different numbers regarding Janibeg's army in the primary sources. According to V. Piriyeu and I. Kamalov, "The Khan of the Golden Horde, who sought to conquer Azerbaijan, did not come with a small army, but, according to sources, probably with a number of at least 100 thousand" [27, p. 61; 15, p. 83].



relations with the Shirvanshahs whose reign dates back two thousand years, and the current presence of this generation in Darband and Shabran [30, p. 186]. The fact that Mongol nomadic aristocracy and officials attempted to form close relations with the Shirvanshah dynasty and respected them because they had an ancient statehood background. Such a factor was behind Malik Ashraf's intention to establish kinship relations with the ruler of the Shirvanshah which had an ancient statehood heritage. Thus, Malik Ashraf, who understood well the authority of the Shirvanshah over the feudal aristocracy and religious figures of Azerbaijan, tried to establish relations with him by any means (by violence or by creating kinship ties). However, the Shirvanshah was disturbed by his strong character and violent actions, and thus his faith in him was shaken. As a result of this, the Emir of the Chobanids, Malik Ashraf, was deprived of the help of Shirvanshah Kavus and the forces in his sphere of influence during the march of the Tatars into Azerbaijan, something which could even be considered among the most important reasons that facilitated his defeat. The dissatisfaction of the lower social strata with Malik Ashraf's tyranny is also evident by the disrespectful and humiliating actions they committed against him when he was captured and by their organization of festivities after his execution [42, 29–30]. In addition, it can be seen in the sources that after Janibeg took possession of Azerbaijan, various social categories, especially those who were persecuted and had emigrated to other places, returned. After this, Janibeg Khan entered Tabriz with a 10,000 men-strong army. He stopped in a house that belonged to an emir and spent one day there. He performed prayers at the Ali Shah Mosque. The army spent the night between the road and a place called "Rudkhane". The army there did not commit any robbery; they did not even break into the house of any Muslim. Janibeg Khan distributed Ashraf's property among the army as a trophy [15, p. 84]. According to Z. Qazvini, when Janibeg abandoned Tabriz, taking Malik Ashraf's daughter, Sultanbakht, and son, Timurtash,<sup>6</sup> with him and left for his country [42, p. 30].

After the possession of Azerbaijan by Janibeg, his positive attitude toward religious figures, particularly Sufi sheiks and their followers – dervishes – became one of the important emerging issues. Regarding this relationship, the Safavid author, Shaykh Husain Zahid, who lived in the 17th century, wrote:

*"Janibeg entered the Shirvan province of Azerbaijan via the Bab-ul-Abwab road. When he captured Tabriz and executed Malik Ashraf, he moved south from here. He wrote a loving letter to Sheikh Sadreddin and sent him away. The letter indicated that one of the reasons for his coming to this province was to establish contact with him. When the Sheikh received the letter, he immediately set out and was greeted with respect by the king, both he and his dervishes. He receives the Sheikh in private and says: I have heard how long you have been in a foreign land, and the dervishes at your father's doorstep are also in distress. So return to your homeland, because the have-nots are also waiting for you. And I have no intention of staying in this province. The property must belong to you and your disciples. The property (land, buildings) should be properly registered and the account brought*

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<sup>6</sup> In 1360, Timurtash, the son of Malik Ashraf, first came to Kharazm together with Janibeg, then to Shiraz together with his sister, and then escaped to Khilat. Hearing about this, Jalayir Sheikh Uwais wanted to march there to capture Timurtash and subjugate Khilat. However, knowing about this, Khizrshah, the governor of Khilat, killed Timurtash and sent his head to Sheikh Uwais. Thus, the representative of the last Chobanid generation was eliminated [42, p. 33].

*so that all of them are re-documented and put in order. What is in front of me is to give to you" [4, p. 42].*

It is obvious that Janibeg was not just satisfied with respecting the Sufi sheikhs who supported him in achieving an easy victory over Malik Ashraf and carried out ideological propaganda, but also tried to restore their previous property rights and privileges. However, the subsequent events in the source indicate that the return of Janibeg, especially in connection with the political events in the Golden Horde, did not allow him to completely realize this process. Furthermore, the elimination of the Abbasid Caliphate by Hulegu Khan meant that Islamic ummah saw the Ilkhanate as enemies for a while – until Ghazan Khan's conversion to Islam – and this was as used propaganda by the Jochids who presented themselves as the true protectors of the ummah. This is one of the most important themes. Thus, we can clearly see this motive presented by Muslim historians who attempted to legitimize the raid of Janibeg as a true Islamic ruler ending the rule of an unjust and oppressive ruler. Janibeg heard of Malik Ashraf's aggression and brutality during the Friday Ceremony in the mosque and immediately decided to campaign to Azerbaijan upon receiving the news. Maybe this anecdote is a fiction in the imagination of Muslim historians. Based on Krimy's account, İ. Mirgalayev points out that Janibeg was often compared to Omar al-Faruq, the Prophet's companion and the second Caliph, who was highly respected by Sunnis for his fairness and decisiveness. Was Janibeg compared to Omar al-Faruq because he, like Caliph Omar, conquered the remnants of Hulaguid Iran? These comparisons draw a parallel between the history of Islam in its first centuries and the history of the Golden Horde khans, Berke Khan being very similar to the companion of the prophet Abu Bakr, and Janibeg to the companion of Omar [18, p. 98]. According to Howorth's account, since Janibeg ruled with justice and was a patron of literature, in 756 AH Molla Sa'id al-Din al-Taftazani dedicated an abridged edition of the *Talkhīṣ* to him [12, p. 656].

After taking possession of Azerbaijan, Janibeg did not delay in giving the news that would please the Mamluk sultan of Egypt, his ally who had always been the arch-enemy of the Ilkhans in the region. In his reply letter, the sultan of Egypt, Al-Malik al-Nasir Hasan (1354–1361), replied to Janibeg, "*Your father and I have always been one, and we suggest you to renew our friendship*" [41, p. 92]. In addition, he sent a message to the Muzaffarids about the capture of Azerbaijan. [11, p. 175].

In any case, Janibeg's rule in Azerbaijan did not last long. So, leaving his son Berdi Beg in Tabriz, he returned to the territory of the Golden Horde. However, his sudden death and the return of Berdi Beg to seize power in the Golden Horde again complicated the political situation in the territory of Azerbaijan. [37, p.6]. In the words of B. Spuler, they left a ruin of Iran [35, p. 154]. With this, the period of struggle of new forces for possession of Tabriz began. At this time, the ruler of Shirvanshah, Kavus, took the opportunity to become politically active again with the help of the local nobles, acting as an independent ruler. He continued to fight against the forces inherited from Malik Ashraf and led by an emir named Akhjug. The Tatar invasion, the execution of Malik Ashraf, and the subsequent Muzaffarid invasion of Azerbaijan had all weakened the Chobanids and greatly facilitated Sheikh Uwais in conquering the region. With the dissolution of Chobanids power, Sheikh Uwais became recognized in Azerbaijan, as well as by foreign rulers, as the

political authority in both Baghdad and Tabriz [39, 107]. Shirvanshah Kavus could not withstand Sheikh Uweis' destructive march to Shirvan, and continued to rule the Shirvanshah dynasty with the status of a vassal until the end of his life.

### **The role of Shirvanshah dynasty in the Golden Horde – Timurid relations**

After the death of Janibeg and the short reign of his son Berdi Beg, a period of political turmoil began in the ulus of Jochi. According to Yakubovsky, within 20 years, from 1360 to 1380, i.e. until the arrival of Toqtamish in the Golden Horde, more than 25 khans fought with each other [40, p. 167]. One of the important goals of Toqtamish Khan's active foreign policy after establishing his sovereignty was to fight for the possession of the Caucasian territories which his rival, Timur, who had become a real power in Central Asia, had tried to seize. It is very significant to analyze this struggle in the sense that Timur presented himself as the heir of the Ilkhanate in the region and considered it as a continuation of the Golden Horde-Ilkhanate struggle. Undoubtedly, Timur's occupation of the Caucasus and Iran, in particular Azerbaijan, meant the isolation of the Golden Horde from the essential trade routes and this was seen as a serious political and economic problem for Toqtamish Khan. Safargaliev correctly emphasizes that the shift of commercial routes from the northern corridor toward the south heightened the strategic importance of Azerbaijan and Iran for the rival states. Within this framework, Timur was the first to embark on the struggle for control over Iran, preceding Toqtamish in this endeavor [31, p. 146].

In response to Timur's occupation of the cities in Iran and Azerbaijan, Toqtamish attempted to establish diplomatic relations with the Mamluk Sultanate of Egypt, which had previously been allies against the Ilkhanids. Additionally, according to some sources, during this period, Toqtamish also sought to form an alliance with Ahmad Jalair, Timur's main adversary in the region, but this effort was unsuccessful [40, p. 167].

Toqtamish's entry into Azerbaijan in 787 (1385) with an army of 90,000, documented in various sources, passed through Darband and Shirvan. However, most studies do not address the issue of whether the Shirvan population resisted or submitted to Toqtamish. A. Alizadeh indicates that the people of Shirvan were opposed to the Tatar army. According to Petrushevsky, Sheikh Ibrahim of Shirvan did resist Toqtamish while he was in Shirvan territory but was unable to fend off the Golden Horde troops and was compelled to mint coins in Toqtamish's name. Conversely, based on T. Metsopksy, I. Mirqalaev argues that during Toqtamish's first campaign into Azerbaijan, the local population not only did not resist but even opened the "*gates of the land*" and made peace. The submission of the Shah of Shirvan to Toqtamish is also supported by coins minted in the name of Toqtamish that have been found in the cities that fell within Shirvan's territory (Shamakhi, Shabran, Mahmoudabad, Gustasb, Baku) [19, p. 101; 17, 11–12].

It is considered that the resistance of Shirvanshah Ibrahim against the numerically superior Tatar army is not particularly credible. Given that he would be unable to obtain support from his nominal suzerain, Sultan Ahmad Jalair, or from Timur who had recently departed the region, the temporary dependence of Shirvan on the Jochid ulus is corroborated by numismatic evidence. However, our examination of narrative sources has not revealed any data regarding negotiations or treaties between Shirvanshah Sheykh Ibrahim and Toqtamish, nor is there any indication of Ibrahim presenting tribute to the Jochid rulers as a sign of dependence. After Toqtamish sub-

jugated Shirvan, he sought to conquer the city of Tabriz, taking advantage of Timur's absence in the region. The accounts regarding Toqtamish's attempts to take Tabriz are described in greater detail compared to those concerning Shirvan. Most sources indicate that the population of Tabriz resisted Toqtamish, but ultimately the city was captured and subjected to devastation. [42, p. 49–50]. Following this, segments of the Tatar army traveled via the Nakhchivan route, ravaging the Marand and Nakhchivan provinces, while others advanced through the Ahar route and converged in Karabakh, capturing approximately 200,000 individuals as prisoners from this territory (Azerbaijan). [42, p. 50].

After Toqtamish's return via the Darband route in 1286, Timur commenced another military campaign in the region. As a result of Toqtamish's return, Shirvanshah Ibrahim likely resumed independent actions and chose to submit to Timur at the onset of the latter's three-year campaign. Upon assuming power, Sheikh Ibrahim, the first representative of the Derbendi dynasty in Shirvan, was compelled to contend with three principal threats: Toqtamish, Timur, and Sultan Ahmad Jalair, while implementing a policy to maintain the independence of the Shirvanshah dynasty. Ibrahim's diplomatic maneuvers among these three forces is a matter of considerable interest [2, p. 415]. Major Soviet-era historians, assessing the situation from a patriotic perspective, explained Sheikh Ibrahim's submission to Timur as a result of the latter's greater strength. It was done with the aim of safeguarding Shirvan from destructive invasions, as well as the difficulties posed by Timur's longer-distance incursions and prolonged presence in the region [2, p. 416; 3, p. 277; 29, p.16–23]. Furthermore, due to the harsh actions of Sultan Ahmad Jalair against his own subjects, Ibrahim viewed the formally subordinate Jalairid as a weak candidate for an alliance, lacking local feudal support.

During Timur's three-year campaign, following the subjugation of Georgia and his arrival in Karabakh, historical sources indicate that Shirvanshah Ibrahim visited Timur to express his loyalty and presented him with gifts. Ibn Arabshah, who provides a detailed account of this meeting, notes that Sheikh Ibrahim, contrary to the advice of his vizier Qazi Abu Yazid, who suggested that it was best to flee and fortify oneself in the mountains, decided to submit to Timur to save the city's inhabitants from slaughter, agreeing to mint coins in Timur's name [1, p. 73–74]. Timur's emphasis on the Shirvan ruler stemmed not only from Sheikh Ibrahim's personal qualities but also from Shirvan's strategic significance. Understanding the threat posed by Toqtamish from the north, Timur sought to win over Ibrahim, gaining an ally in the region, particularly among the local aristocracy who favored a noble lineage.

Subsequent events revealed that Sheikh Ibrahim acted as an ally of the Timurids in the conflicts against the Juchid ulus. Additionally, he participated in Timur's wars against Ottoman Sultan Bayazid, aligning with the Timurids [3, p. 279]. In turn, Timur assisted the Shirvanshah in preventing Toqtamish from claiming territory in Shirvan. When Toqtamish invaded Shirvan in 789 AH (1387 CE), Timur provided support to the Shirvanshah, leading troops to aid him. Despite Timur's desire to avoid conflict, Miranshah's supporting troops ultimately compelled Toqtamish to retreat, allowing the Timurids to launch an offensive through Darband and into Jochid lands [3, p. 278; 2, p. 419]. The outcome of this conflict suggests that Shirvan effectively fell back under Timur's influence. However, as

noted by Alizadeh, there are no records indicating that the Shirvanshah paid tribute to Timur, despite being his vassal [2, p. 418].

Further historical sources allow us to trace the results of Sheikh Ibrahim's far-sighted diplomatic orientations. By aligning with Timur, he weakened his northern neighbor and rival, the Jochi ulus, which enabled Shirvan to act as an independent ruler during the times of political instability among the Timurids, following Timur's death. As previously mentioned, the struggle for Shirvan, a crucial transit region connecting Asia and Europe, was a continuation of the traditional Ilkhanid-Juchid conflicts. Timur sought to legitimize himself as the principal heir to Hulagu Khan in Central Azerbaijan, something which he could leverage in his dealings with both the rival Ahmad Jalair and the Tatar khans.

In this context, Sharaf al-Din al-Yazdi's account presents Timur's 1392 expedition during which he allocated regions including Azerbaijan, Ray, Darband, Baku, Shirvan, and Rum to his son, Miranshah [33, p. 217]. Al-Yazdi also indicates that during the spring of 798 AH (1386 CE), following the Battle of Terek, Shirvanshah Ibrahim accompanied Timur in military campaigns in the North Caucasus. Upon returning, Timur spent time in Darband and Baku, where he built a fortress. Subsequently, he permitted Sheikh Ibrahim to welcome him with gifts. In that year, during his visit to Shamakhi, Timur presented Sheikh Ibrahim with gold-adorned garments, a golden dagger, and a belt, effectively granting him Shirvan and its surrounding territories, while instructing him to "secure and guard Darband" [33, p. 264]. Timurid historian, Shami, also recorded that Ibrahim, the ruler of *Shirvanat*, had come to Timur and showed obedience and that Shabran and Shamakhi provinces were to be subjugated [25, p. 122].

This information suggests that Timur, after granting the Shirvanshah symbols of authority, imposed a conditional obligation to protect Darband from future Jochid incursions. This was significant for Timur, considering Shirvan's strategic importance and security. Additionally, the source provides an insight into why Timur refrained from demanding tribute from Shirvan; he placed the responsibility on Sheikh Ibrahim to defend against northern threats. In essence, the protection of the Shirvanshah and the strategically vital Darband has been a longstanding tradition, upheld since ancient times by various powers, including the Sassanids and Arabs.

## **Conclusion**

After the weakening of the Abbasid Caliphate, the Shirvanshah dynasty, which emerged in the north-east of Azerbaijan and was able to maintain its independence for a long time, was not destroyed, although it could not escape the ravages of the Mongol invasions. This can be explained by the existence of its centuries-old statehood traditions and experiences. Although the members of this dynasty were in a vassal status at the time of the Ilkhanate, their internal independence was not completely taken away from them. In particular, the fact that the territories along the border with the Jochid nation were in the territory of the Shirvanshahs caused almost all the Ilkhans to always keep this region in mind and keep military forces there. At the same time, the economic interests that were the real cause of the conflict between the two nations – the fact that Shirvan was one of the areas where the traditional trade-caravan routes passed before the Mongols – did not lose any importance despite the existence of the Jochid-Toluid conflict. Undoubtedly, the destructive wars of the two nations in different years had a negative impact on the

socio-economic life of the Shirvan region. As a result of the weakening of the Ilkhanate dynasty, during the actual administration of the Chobanids, the Shirvan region became one of the sources of conflict again. In particular, the Shirvanshah dynasty tried to use the struggle between the Mongol tribes for power and to regain its independence. At the time, Shirvanshah Keygubad and his son, Kavus, who did not agree with the ambition of the cruel Chobanid emir, Malik Ashraf, to own Shirvan, began to approach. Their relationship with Janibeg was further supported by the local feudal aristocracy and clergy. As a result of the ideological foundation of this coalition, Janibeg entered Azerbaijan through the lands of Shirvan without resistance. Thus, the Jochid-Tuluid conflict, which has been going on for more than a hundred years, returned the region to its "owner" in accordance with the will of Chinghis Khan. Thus, to legitimize Janibeg's march to Azerbaijan, Muslim historians presented it not as the execution of Chinghis Khan's will, but rather as the restoration of justice by an Islamic ruler. The clerics who took an active part in this propaganda – the Sufi sheikhs who left their homelands due to the confiscation of their property and persecution – returned and were rewarded by Janibeg. Thus, the analysis of the data obtained from the sources of the period during the research shows that the rulers of Shirvanshah, as well as the clans (almost all social categories of the sedentary population) who supported him, during the termination of the power of the Ilkhanate ulus (the Chobanids who were considered its actual rulers) by Janibeg Khan of the Tatar, played an important role in facilitating this process. In the following period, sources reveal the political and strategic importance of the Shirvanshah dynasty in the struggle between the Tatar Khan Toqtamish and Emir Timur. So much so, in fact, that the Shirvanshah ruler, Sheikh Ibrahim, was soon forced to accept the rule of the Jochid, although in the early political period he had pursued a policy of accommodation between the two powerful rivals. Nevertheless, after Timur's defeat of Toqtamish Khan, Sheikh Ibrahim approached Emir Timur and formed an alliance with him to strengthen his security against his northern neighbor. The fruits of this decision were that he was able to achieve the independence that he gained after Timur's death.

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## НЕКОТОРЫЕ ЗАМЕТКИ ОБ ОТНОШЕНИЯХ ЗОЛОТОЙ ОРДЫ И ШИРВАНШАХОВ В ПЕРИОД УПАДКА ГОСУДАРСТВА ИЛЬХАНОВ И ПРАВЛЕНИЯ ТИМУРИДОВ В АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНЕ

*Нурлан Пашаоглу Насиров*

*Университет Хазар*

*Баку, Азербайджан*

*nurlan.nasirov@khazar.org*

**Резюме.** Цель исследования: изучить отношения между династией Ширваншахов и Золотой Ордой во время упадка Государства Ильханов и периода Тимуридов.

Материалы исследования: автор статьи изучил различные первичные арабские и персидские источники, а также вторичные литературные произведения, связанные с историей династии Ширваншахов и Золотой Орды. Из-за отсутствия полной информации в этих источниках были также использованы некоторые нумизматические материалы.

Результаты и новизна исследования: согласно некоторым первоисточникам, прави-тель Ширвана подчинялся вассалитету династии Ильханов, которая была создана



внуком Чингиз-хана Хулагу. Однако территория Ширвана стала предметом раздора между двумя чингизидскими улусами, Хулагуидами и Джучидами. Во время упадка государства Ильханов правители Ширваншаха и некоторые местные силы, такие как духовенство и аристократы, которые стали более активно помогать Джучидам в их усилиях по установлению контроля над Азербайджаном, впоследствии проводили политику восстановления своей независимости. После своего появления на сцене Тимуридов Ширван снова превратился в театр военных действий между Тимуром и его соперником Токтамышем. Целью этого конфликта было обеспечение контроля над стратегическими караванно-торговыми путями на Кавказе. В этот период Ширван недолго находился под властью Золотой Орды. Тем не менее, шейх Ибрагим Дарбанди, правитель Ширвана, проводил политику поддержания равновесия между этими двумя державами на начальных этапах. В конечном итоге он решил вступить в союз с Тимуром, который находился в более сильном положении реальной власти, и заключил с ним союз. В этой статье мы попытались исследовать отношения Ширваншахов с Золотой Ордой во время падения Ильханов и Тимуридов, а также некоторые менее исследованные аспекты этих отношений.

**Ключевые слова:** Ширваншахи, Ильханы, Джучиды, Золотая Орда, Азербайджан, Чобаниды

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### ИНФОРМАЦИЯ ОБ АВТОРЕ

**Нурлан Пашаоглу Насиров** – доктор философии по истории (PhD), преподаватель кафедры истории и археологии Школы гуманитарных, педагогических и социальных наук Университета Хазар (ул. Мехсети Ганджави, 41, Баку AZ1096, Азербайджан); ORCID: 0000-0002-0801-6096. E-mail: [nurlan.nasirov@khazar.org](mailto:nurlan.nasirov@khazar.org)

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Nurlan P. Nasirov** – PhD (History), Lecturer, Department of History and Archeology, School of Humanities, Education and Social Sciences, Khazar University (41, Mahsati Ganjavi Str., Baku AZ1096, Azerbaijan); ORCID: 0000-0002-0801-6096. E-mail: [nurlan.nasirov@khazar.org](mailto:nurlan.nasirov@khazar.org)

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