Introduction

In the early 1820s the Iranian traveler Zain al-ʿĀbidīn Shīrvānī gave an enthusiastic description of the oasis of Herat. He praised the pleasant climate of the region, its tasty water, and the outstanding quality of its grapes and melons. In his opinion, the unique position of Herat and its relationship to the rest of the world was most adequately summed up by the following Persian poem: [1]

> To he who seeks to find the most pleasant town,
> The only truthful answer is Herat;
> Consider this world an ocean, Khurāsān a shell within,
> And the city of Herat the pearl in its midst.[2]

This poem can be traced back to the fourteenth century. With slight variations, it is recorded by a number of notable Persian authors, including the Kartid historiographer Saif al-Haravī, [3] the Ilkhanid geographer Ḥamdullāh Mustaufī,[4] the Timurid historian Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū,[5] the seventeenth-century traveler Ibn Valī,[6] and the Qājār officials Riżā Qulī Khān Hidāyat[7] and ʿAlī Qulī Mīrzā Iʿtiżād al-Salṭana.[8]

Herat's favorable conditions notwithstanding, Shīrvānī observes that the city has undergone a number of crises in the course of its history. Citing such authorities as Saif al-Haravī and the Timurid authors Isfizārī (d. 903/1497–98) and Khvānd Amīr (d. 942/1535–36), he singles out the Mongol invasion and the plague epidemic of 838/1434–35 as historical junctures which inflicted heavy losses on the urban population and brought it to the brink of extinction. Later on, Herat weathered periods of invasion and unrest associated with the rise and decline of the Safavid and Afsharid empires.[9] The size of Herat and its wealth thus rose and fell with the ebb and flow of events described by Shīrvānī. The latter quotes Saif al-Haravī's account of the Mongol invasion of 619/1222, in the course of which "no head retained its body" and the urban population was reduced from 1.6 million to 16.[10] By the time the Timurids came to power, the population of Herat seemed to have rebounded. Interestingly, Shīrvānī changes perspectives here and switches from historical telescoping to a more visual form of representation: Seemingly assuming a bird's eye view, he states that at the time of the onset of the plague epidemic of 838/1434, the entire valley of Herat was so densely populated that a space of 30 *farsakh* or 120 miles seemed like one large city. The plague, which is said to have cost 600,000 lives in the city, is seen as a natural outcome of the pollution and moral decay brought about by the

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[1] AT 154; HS IV: 553; AM 166. See also Röhrborn 1966: 16, 103–104, 112.
[2] *Agar kasī pursad tu-rā kaz shahrhā khushtar kudām;*
gar javāb-i rāst khvāhī guft ū-rā gū "Harī";
hamchu baḥr ast īn jahān, dar vay Khurāsān chūn ṣadaf;
dar miyān-i ān ṣadaf shahr-i Harī chūn gauharī.
[3] Saif al- Haravī 1943: 6.
[4] Le Strange 1993: 150.
[5] Krawulsky 1982: 18.
[6] Akhmedov 1977: 81.
[7] *Sifāratnāma,* Persian text, 111.
[8] *Vaqāyiʿ va savāniḥ* 26.
[9] *Riyāż al-siyāḥat 427–30.*
[10] *Hīch sarī-rā bar tan va badanī-rā bā sar nagudhāshtand* (Saif al-Haravī 1943: 80–82). According to Shīrvānī, the following order was issued to the Mongol soldiers: *Hīch kas-rā sarī dar badan va bārī dar gardan nabāshad* (*Riyāż al-siyāḥat* 428).

excessive concentration of people.[11] By the time Shīrvānī visited Herat in the early nineteenth century, the city population amounted to no more than 6,000 families.[12]

Shīrvānī's overview of the history of Herat provides the framework for the historical narrative recounted in this book and sets the stage for further exploration. The tension between the enduring features of Herat and the ups and downs of its history constitute the subject of the present study. Urban spaces are best understood within and against the "broader canvas" they are situated in.[13] The poem cited above names Khurāsān as the regional frame of reference. The goal of the book is to make the history of Herat tangible against the background of the horizontal relations linking the city to other nodal points within this expanse. In what follows, I will take a closer look at the elements constitutive of the "map" of Herat and Khurāsān between the fifteenth and the nineteenth century. The urban topography, the geographical setting, the people and goods of the region will figure to the extent that contemporaneous observers consider them noteworthy. Special attention will be paid to the mode in which the terrain is perceived and represented: What local coordinates and points of gravity are identified in a given period, and do they shift over time? Which qualities are attributed to individual sites, and how are the latter fitted into the regional and imperial framework?

Such an enquiry posits that territorial conceptions are part of a larger *Weltanschauung* shaping the horizon of the political and literary actors of the time. To be sure, the physical environment and ecological conditions play a fundamental role in molding perceptions of space. The rich agricultural setting of Herat and its pleasant climate are enduring features which have been taken up by the authors throughout the period. But on a conceptual level, perceptions of space are strongly influenced by overarching patterns of authority, the local exercise of power, and prevailing modes of delegation and administration.

The following history consists of two parallel narratives. First, I will attempt to uncover the historical facts that can be gleaned from the available Persian chronicles. One important concern is to trace the larger shifts of power and their effects on the city and its environs. In this strand of the narrative, Herat figures primarily as an administrative and economic unit. Particular attention will be paid to the ways in which the city relates to the larger polities it is embedded in. Then, there is the local cast, in other words, the administrative units that are grouped around the oasis and reflect the extent ordinarily ascribed to the province by the same name. Another aspect of the political landscape may be termed "demographic". Whenever it is possible, I attempt to assess the composition of the population and to identify the prominent local actors who interacted with the powers in presence.

The second strand of the narrative focuses on the sensual aspects of space and their representation, capturing some of the local sights, sounds, and tastes reflected by the Persian chronicles and, later on, by the European accounts. By allowing the primary sources to "speak for themselves", I hope to highlight some of the ways in which the landscape was represented in the accounts of the time. The available material points to a whole range of possible perceptions. One lasting field of tension is created by the composite views emphasizing both the centrality of Herat and its strategic value as a "gateway".[14] This concept was even applied to the whole of Khurāsān by the author of the tenth-century Persian geography entitled *Ḥudūd al-ʿālam*, who places the region "near the centre of the Inhabited Lands of the world'" but also identifies it as the "gate of Turkistān".[15]

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[11] *Riyāż al-siyāḥat* 429. Shīrvānī adduces the testimony of Khvānd Amīr for this statement. But I have not been able to locate this information in HS. For the year 838/1434, Khvānd Amīr does mention a plague epidemic in Herat which caused the death of up to 10,000 persons in the city and the suburbs (*balda va bulūkāt*) a day, but the passage does not contain any of the details Shīrvānī ascribes to this source (HS III: 625; Thackston 1994: 344). Isfizārī, by contrast, gives a detailed description of a plague epidemic lasting from 7 Rajab–15 Dhū al-Qaʿda 838/6 February–12 June 1435, which killed a total of one million persons, 600,000 in the city and 400,000 in the suburbs (Isfizārī II: 92–94). See also Allen 1983: 19.

[12] *Riyāż al-siyāḥat* 430.

[13] Horden & Purcell 2007: 91.

[14] See, for instance, TA (Humāyūn) 432.

[15] *Ḥudūd* 102.

The present study takes its departure in the early fifteenth century when Herat, as the capital of Khurāsān, was at its highest in terms of cultural and economic development. Not surprisingly, this illustrious period in the history of the region is reflected by the abundance of data concerning the local sites. They testify to the Timurid attainments in terms of wealth, military strength and religious patronage. The richness of the environment is highlighted by detailed descriptions of the economic assets and unique sensory experiences Herat has to offer. In later Safavid and Qājār accounts, the terrain recedes to the sidelines of the narrative and mostly figures as a backdrop for military action. A case in point is the narration of the Shibanid siege of Herat of 1587–88, in the course of which the city gates are only mentioned to situate the position of the influential Shibanid/Uzbek military leaders who stood in front of them.[16] This sort of description is typical of the battle scenes that dominate much of the chronicles up to the nineteenth century. They represent an altogether different but equally essential "map", in which the domain is determined by a web of allegiances crucial for the upkeep of power. The physical terrain is only interesting insofar as it fits major strategic considerations, such as river crossings, stages in the desert, and the technicalities involved in the siege or defense of cities.

Another field of enquiry lies in the tension between transmitted territorial concepts and the emergence of new polities in the course of the nineteenth century. In this context, the dimension of time, or rather the historical memory and its role in shaping current perceptions of space becomes an important issue. The poem cited above, which ascribes pearl-like qualities to Herat, continued to be quoted in the second half of the nineteenth century. Thus, it perpetuated the image of Herat's grandeur even at a time when not much was left of its former splendor. From the Iranian point of view, these persisting pretensions to greatness were coupled with a sense of bereavement, as it increasingly became clear that the Qājār government was unable to live up to its claim to all of the regions constitutive of the ancient Safavid domain. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the political scene changed dramatically. The consolidation of international borders brought about new ways of charting territory and defining state power. The sense of constriction that came with these changes clashed with the persistent memory of former imperial greatness and far-flung territorial possessions.

The gap between Qājār claims to authority and the actual scope of government was noted in the 1820s by the British traveler James Fraser. He felt that the difficulties in delineating the domain of Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh (r. 1212–1250/1797–1834) were most pronounced in the eastern territories, where "the district of Herat and the provinces of Seistan and Beloochistan blend with the mountains of Afghanistan".[17] Fraser noted that the vagueness of the boundaries of Khurāsān coincided with an inherent tension between historical claims to an immense stretch of land on the one hand and the actual confines of the Qājār province on the other:

> The limits assigned to this country were at one time magnificent; for they comprehended on the north every thing to the Oxus, including the steppe of Khaurezm [Khvārazm], Balkh, and all the intervening country to the east: on the south east not only the city and dependencies of Herāt, but those of Subzawur [Isfizār], Furrah [Farāh], Geereēsh [Girishk], and even Candahar [Qandahār] itself: on the south, it was always bounded by Kermān [Kirmān] and Seieestān [Sīstān]: on the west it included the district of Yezd [Yazd], but its salt desert was bounded in that direction by the districts of Ispahān [Iṣfahān], Cashān [Kāshān], and Rhē [Ray], somewhere near Semnaun [Simnān]; beyond the Elburz mountains, the district of Astrabad [Astarābād] and of Goorgaun [Gurgān] were also considered as dependencies of this vast territory. If Khorasān were to be considered merely as a province of Persia, and were the appellation limited to that portion of country east of Irāk, which obeys the Persian monarch, its extent would now be small indeed.[18]

At the same time, Fraser pointed out that Khurāsān as a territorial and political unit had repeatedly been subject to redefinition in the course of history. The ongoing re-creation of this conceptual space had taken place in a setting which, in Fraser's opinion, was characterized by contest rather than by actual control over the land. The competition between the imperial neighbors was matched locally by the military prowess and high mobility of the inhabitants of Khurāsān:

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[16] McChesney 1993: 84–91.
[17] Fraser 1834: 19.
[18] Fraser 1825: 242.

> Khorasān having from the earliest ages been a sort of debateable land, upon the confines of several great monarchies, and a constant object of desire to their sovereigns, was always the theatre of fierce and bloody wars; in which the wandering tribes in its vicinity were generally enlisted on one part or other.[19]

This "debateable" land, and the transformations it underwent over time, lie at the core of this book. The material is organized according to the chronological sequence while the focus of the narrative shifts according to the nature of the information yielded by the primary sources. Given the relative abundance of data dealing with Herat in the fifteenth century, Chapter 1 serves two purposes. Besides describing the position of Herat in Timurid times, it is also intended to acquaint the reader with the lay of the land. In this manner, I hope to create a regional frame of reference and to facilitate orientation in the subsequent chapters. In addition to impressions from the city of Herat, this chapter contains a complete listing of all the administrative divisions that make up its hinterland. The second chapter deals with Herat under the auspices of Safavid authority. As the primary sources yield little information on local circumstances, this chapter rather assumes a bird's eye view to locate Herat within a larger regional framework. The narrative switches to the ecological setting and highlights some of the strategic considerations that determined the movements of the court within Khurāsān. Herat is situated in relationship to the other important urban coordinates in the region, that is, Mashhad, Qandahār, and Multān. This axis was "opened" up by Nādir Shāh's sweeping conquests in the eighteenth century, which effectively put an end to the old balance of power in force between the Mughals of India, the Chingizids of Central Asia, and the Safavids in Iran. In the following chapters I adopt a polycentric approach to capture the breaking up of territorial allegiances after 1747. The third chapter describes the Afghan empire that emerged on the shattered remains left in the wake of Nādir Shāh's conquests. Given the Durrānī rulers' continued orientation towards India, the point of gravity shifted to Qandahār, and Herat became the western outpost of their realm. Chapters 4 and 5 elucidate the delineation of Iranian and Afghan spheres of influence from both sides of the emergent border. In the long run, the creation of fixed boundaries had a similar effect on the conceptualization and exercise of power in Iran and Afghanistan. The resulting linkage between government authority and a territorially defined space strengthened the government's "hold" over the land and its inhabitants. Yet for most of the nineteenth century, the circumstances in the environs of Herat and in the eastern reaches of Iranian Khurāsān were characterized by a great degree of movement, as tribal groups either sought to evade government control or faced forceful deportation and resettlement. In the sixth and final chapter I attempt to position the changing status of Herat in a wider context. The description of the political developments in northeastern Khurāsān and in Sīstān serves to juxtapose expansive early modern notions of territorial entitlement with the actual configurations of power "on the ground". The account of the events leading up to the delineation of the Irano-Russian borders in the northeast of Khurāsān and the delimitation of the Irano-Afghan boundary in Sīstān highlights the new territorial realities that took shape in the late nineteenth century.

THE SECONDARY SOURCES

My attempt to capture the historical coordinates, patterns of authority and ecological conditions determining the framework of political activity in Khurāsān draws on the established scholarship in this field. Bert Fragner's macro-historical surveys have spurred my interest in the genesis and development of regional concepts and the effects of tribalism on military organization. I owe my understanding of the constraints and opportunities delimiting the horizon of pre-modern and early modern political actors to the works by Jean Aubin. The dynamic aspects of the exercise of power are also highlighted by Charles Melville's research on the itineraries of the Ilkhanid and Safavid court.

V. V. Barto'ld's *Historical Geography of Iran* is a valuable source concerning the lay of the land. The topography of Timurid Herat has been treated in detail by Terry Allen, Lisa Golombek, Dorothea Krawulsky and Maria Szuppe. Nataliya Tumanovich combines a description of the topography of the city from Kartid times to the nineteenth century with a general historical account. Furthermore, her edition and translation of

[19] Fraser 1825: 257.

a text on the *khvājas* of Barnābād gives rare insights into the local circumstances in the vicinity of Herat and highlights one particular instance of the relationship between spiritual authority and royal patronage. Caroline Stack has provided a general overview of the events surrounding Herat from Timurid times to the end of the nineteenth century. Gisela Reindke's dissertation on the form and function of Afghan towns contains one chapter concerning the historical development of Herat, its economic conditions and population in the nineteenth century. Rafi Samizay and Abdul Wasay Najimi have produced useful architectural surveys of the Islamic monuments around Herat and the old city quarters.

As this study spans five centuries, I have relied on a number of secondary sources to gain an understanding of the main forces at work in each given period. The early Timurid era is covered by Beatrice Forbes Manz's finely grained probe into the relationship between government and society. Eva Maria Subtelny's research on Timurid agricultural policies and patterns of patronage has proven a particularly useful source for the situation of Herat in the late fifteenth century. There are a number of valuable works on the Safavid period. My understanding of the administrative system derives from the works of Klaus Röhrborn and Roger Savory. I have greatly benefited from Giorgio Rota's expertise on the role of Caucasian *ghulāms* in the Safavid administration and military. The military organization of the Safavids is treated in depth by Masashi Haneda. Maria Szuppe has devoted a detailed study to the situation in Herat at the time of the Uzbek and Safavid intervention in the early sixteenth century. My description of the "Uzbek" factor in the politics of Khurāsān and the nature of Central Asian dynastic concepts draws widely on Robert McChesney's work. Charles Melville's account of Shāh ʿAbbās I's patronage of Mashhad sheds light on the waning position of Herat in the seventeenth century.

My description of the Afsharid period is primarily based on Lockhart's landmark study of 1938 and Peter Avery's account of Nādir Shāh's military career.[20] John Perry's work on Karīm Khān Zand contributes to our knowledge on the circumstances in western Khurāsān subsequent to Nādir Shāh's death in 1747. The developments in "Afghan" Turkistān are treated in detail by Robert McChesney and Jonathan Lee. Apart from these studies, very little literature deals with the era of the Sadūzai kings. Despite a number of inaccuracies, Ganda Singh's work still represents the most important source for the reign of Aḥmad Shāh. The material compiled by ʿAzīz al-Dīn Vakīlī Fūfalzāʾī concerning the reigns of Tīmūr Shāh and Shāh Zamān documents the position of the nobility and administrative divisions in the Sadūzai Empire. However, on the whole, this domain remains largely uncharted, and a great part of my work has been devoted to the elementary task of reconstructing the essential facts of the historical narrative.

Similar difficulties are met by the study of Khurāsān in the nineteenth century. The only source dealing with Herat during this period is David Champagne's account of its position between the Qājār and Muḥammadzai fields of gravity until its incorporation into the Afghan domain in 1863. Largely based on British documents, this work illustrates the strategies adopted by the Iranian, Afghan, and British forces involved. Yet it yields little information on the circumstances prevailing in Herat or on the local configurations of power. The picture somewhat brightens when it comes to the developments in Iranian Khurāsān and the adjacent regions. There is a much greater density of sources concerning the history of this region and the geographic and political position of individual tribal groups. Sayyid ʿAlī Mīr Niyā has tackled both issues. A number of authors have investigated the local circumstances in the eastern Iranian realm. The names of Ramażān ʿAlī Shākirī and Kalīmullāh Tavaḥḥudī are associated with the history of the Khurasanian Kurds. Pirouz Mojtahed-Zadeh has documented the history of the Khuzaima Arabs of Qāyin. Ata Dshikijew, Hafez Farmayan, William Irons, Wolfgang König, Urāz Muḥammad Sārlī and William Wood have contributed works concerning the Turkmens. Manūchihr Sutūda and Asadullāh Maʿṭūfī have compiled material on the history of Astarābād. The circumstances in Sīstān have been explored by Īraj Afshār "Sīstānī" and Muḥammad Aʿẓam Sīstānī.

The administrative structure of the Qājār government and the patterns of redistribution between center and periphery are dealt with by a number of works. Colin Meredith has written about the early Qājār administration. A classic in this field is Ann K. S. Lambton's work on Qājār Iran. Aside from analyzing the

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[20] For more recent works on the Afsharid era, see Axworthy 2006 and Tucker 2006.

workings of Qājār bureaucracy, A. Reza Sheikholeslami and Heinz Georg Migeod also shed light on the relationship between the central government and the entrenched tribal leadership of Khurāsān. Abbas Amanat is to be commended for his book on Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh and his numerous entries in the *Encyclopaedia Iranica* which highlight the role of individual Qājār officials. Another valuable resource is Mihdī Bāmdād's six-volume "Who's Who" covering the period from the eighteenth to the twentieth century. Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet provides an overview of the processes leading up to the delineation of borders between Afghanistan and Iran.

SETTING THE STAGE: KHURĀSĀN IN THE COURSE OF HISTORY

This book is concerned with the historical entity of Khurāsān and the changes it underwent over time. It begins with a description of the region in the fifteenth century and ends with its division into three modern polities: the Russian province of Transcaspia, Afghanistan, and a truncated version of the former Iranian province. In order to place these developments in context, it might be useful to trace the contours Khurāsān was endowed with over time. Beginning with the formation of Khurāsān in Sasanid times, the following overview will describe the limits of the region, its constituent parts and the cities serving as regional capitals. Certain shifts in gravity notwithstanding, one may detect some degree of stability in the perception and structuration of this space. Territorial units were typically defined on the basis of the rivers delimiting them. The entity of Iran was thought to be bounded by the Oxus (*Jaiḥūn, Āmu Daryā*) in the east and the Euphrates in the west.[21] Viewed as the divide between Iran and Transoxiana (*Tūrān*, *Turkistān*, *Mā varāʾ al-nahr*), the Oxus also played an evocative role as the northeastern border of Khurāsān. Political unification did not necessarily imply the merging of territorial concepts. Even in periods when Khurāsān and Transoxiana were under one supreme ruler, the notion of the river as separating two distinct geographical realms remained tangible. As will be seen below, large-scale military campaigns aimed at the agglomeration of known territorial entities rather than at the definition of new ones. The position and identity of Khurāsān in contradistinction to Transoxiana was thus hardly affected by shifting patterns of military control.

In his account of the genesis of Khurāsān, Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū hints at the enduring bonds connecting the lands adjoining the Āmū Daryā. While adducing popular etymologies for the name of "Khurāsān", he assumes a genealogical connection between the two neighboring regions:

> Everybody has something [different] to say about the naming of Khurāsān. The genealogist Ibn Daghfal says that Khurāsān and Haiṭal were the sons of ʿĀlim b. Sām b. Nūḥ and left Zābul. Khurāsān settled here and his name became associated with this region. Hāiṭal crossed the river [Āmu Daryā] and settled over there and that region was named Haiṭala after him. Some have called [this region] *khūrsān*, 'sunlike' and some have called it *khūr āsān*, 'easily eaten'.[22]

The entities of Khurāsān and Iran owe their existence to Sasanian policies. In a deliberate attempt to legitimize their rule, the early members of the Sasanian dynasty (224–651 AD) fused the existing concept of *arya* with Zoroastrian traditions. Portraying themselves as heirs of the legendary Kayanid dynasty of Sīstān and elevating Mazdaism to a state religion, the Sasanians identified their realm as "Ērān-Shahr", thus setting it apart from their enemies in the eastern territory of "Tūrān" accross the Oxus.[23] During this period, Khurāsān – "there where the sun rises" – was defined as the easternmost region of the dominion. It comprised the regions of Hyrcania (Jurjān/Gurgān), Margiana (Marv), Areia (Herat) and later Bactria (Balkh). Within the province, Marv served as the administrative center and seat of governor general. Other

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[21] The idea of Iran as being bounded by the Oxus in the east can be traced to Abū Manṣūr Maʿmarī's introduction to the *Shāhnāma-yi Abū Manṣūrī* (346/957), which in turn represents the translation of a vanished Pahlavi original, the *Xvadāy-nāmag* (Khaleghi-Motlagh, "Abū Manṣūr Maʿmarī," *E.Ir.* I: 337). In this text, Ērān-Shahr is described as stretching "from the Amūya river to the river of Egypt (Miṣr)" (Minorsky 1956: 172).

[22] Krawulsky 1982: 12. The purport of the last etymology is not quite clear. The expression "easily eaten" may possibly be understood as an allusion to the region as an embattled zone frequently "swallowed up" in the course of military campaigns. In this case, it may be considered an equivalent of Fraser's "debateable land".

[23] Gnoli 1989: 137, 140, 156–7, 175; Morony, "Sāsānids," *E.I. 2*, IX: 71–2, 74. See also Fragner 1999: 14.

important cities were Nev-Shapur (modern Nīshāpūr) and Pūshang (later Fūshanj) on the Harī Rūd, both of which were founded by the second Sasanian ruler Shāpūr I (r. 240–270 AD).[24] Although Iran as a political denomination vanished with the demise of the Sasanian Empire only to resurface under the Ilkhanid dynasty (1256–1335) in the aftermath of the Mongol invasion,[25] the concept of Khurāsān as a territorial and political entity was to remain through time.

Its stability as a regional entity notwithstanding, the outlines of Khurāsān did not necessarily correspond to patterns of authority. The evocative idea of the Oxus as a divide between Iran and Central Asia often did not match the political realities. For the pre-Muslim and early Muslim periods, Hamilton Gibb has noted that the Murghāb river and the Sīr Daryā (Jaxartes) constituted more effective barriers against invading armies:

> The Oxus is a boundary of tradition rather than of history… [I]t has never proved a barrier to imperial armies from either side. It was not on the Oxus but on the Jaxartes that Alexander's strategic insight fixed the position of Alexander Eschate, and when the outposts of Persian dominion were thrust back by the constant pressure of the Central Asian hordes, their retreat was stayed not on the Oxus but on the Murghāb. Thus when the tide of conquest turned and the Arabs won back her ancient heritage for Persia, they, like Alexander, were compelled to carry their arms even further to the East and all unknowing re-establish the frontiers of the Achaemenid Empire.[26]

As pointed out by Gibb, the reach of government ended at the Murghāb river for most of the Sasanian period. The two administrative centers located on the river, Marv-i Shāhijān and Marv al-Rūd (present-day Bālā Murghāb) served as outposts against the Hephtalites (White Huns), who occupied Sogdia, the Oxus basin and the lands north and south of the Hindu Kush during the early sixth century. With the defeat of the Hephtalites in 563–568, the Oxus became the border between the Iranians and the Western Turks for a short period in history.[27] At the time of the Muslim conquest in the seventh and early eighth centuries, the river initially served as a boundary but eventually came to embody the core of the easternmost Arab possessions. The Arab forces crossed the Oxus for the first time in 33/653–4, and in 86–93/705–712 the great general Qutaiba b. Muslim (d. 715) conquered Bukhārā and Samarqand, thereby establishing control over the ancient Achaemenid province of Sogdia.[28] With its incorporation into the Muslim sphere, Sogdia lost its meaning as a regional designation for the expanse of land between the Oxus and the Jaxartes and was more narrowly applied to the Zarafshān valley feeding the oases of Samarqand and Bukhārā.[29]

During the Abbasid period, the concept of Khurāsān widened to include all the lands controlled by the Arab governors of Marv, which retained its erstwhile position as military and administrative center of the east.[30] Even so, there are indications that the lands beyond the Oxus continued to be perceived as a realm distinct from the former Sasanian sphere of influence. Arab geographers of the time coined terms like *Khurāsān va mā varāʾ al-nahr* ("Transoxiana"), *Khurāsān va al-mashriq* (the "East"), or simply *al-Mashriq* for the entire eastern territory.[31] In 232/846, Ibn Khurradādhbih listed Transoxiana as one of the four administrative units making up Khurāsān and described the other three parts of Khurāsān as consisting of Marv-i Shāhijān and adjacent districts, Balkh and the region of Ṭukhāristān, as well as Herat, including Fūshanj and Bādghīs.[32]

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24 Marquart 1901: 47, 49. See also Bosworth, "Khurāsān", *E.I., 2* V: 56; Bosworth, "Marw al-Shāhidjān," *E.I., 2* VI: 620; Frye 1983: 154; Fragner 1999: 14; Fragner 2001b: 344–5; Le Strange 1905: 383; *Riyāż al-siyāḥat* 383.

25 Fragner 1997: 121–31.

26 Gibb 1970: 1.

27 Gibb 1970: 1, 3; Marquart 1901: 53, 70; Shaban 1971: 479–82.

28 Gibb 1970: 15, 31, 56.

29 Barthold [Bosworth], "Al-Sughd", *E.I., 2* IX: 772–3.

30 Marquart 1901: 76. See also Bosworth, "Khurāsān", *E.I., 2* V: 56–7; Bosworth, "Marw al-Shāhidjān," *E.I., 2* VI: 620. The shift of the provincial capital from Marv to Balkh during the governorship of Asad b. ʿAbdullāh in 118/736 apparently constituted an exception and was not followed by later Umayyad or Abbasid governors (Gibb 1970: 80, 88).

31 Shaban 1971: 479–81.

32 Marquart 1901: 70.

With the rise of the Persian dynasty of the Samanids (819–999) and the shift of the capital to Bukhārā in 279/892, the Oxus again found itself in the heartlands of the empire.[33] Based on Ibn Khurradādhbih and Iṣṭakhrī, the tenth-century Persian geography entitled *Ḥudūd al-ʿālam* nevertheless distinguished between Transoxiana and Khurāsān. Seemingly a resident of Gūzgānān (present-day Jūzjān in northwestern Afghanistan), the author assigned vast proportions to Khurāsān, which he reported to be bounded by India (*Hindistān*) in the east, Gurgān in the west, and the Oxus (*Jaiḥūn*) in the north. He also pointed out that the political unity of Khurāsān and Transoxiana should be attributed to recent developments:

> The king of Khorāsān… in the days of old was distinct from the king of Transoxiana but now they are one. The *mīr* of Khorāsān resides at Bukhārā…; he is from the Sāmān family…These (princes) are called Maliks of the East and have lieutenants (*ʿummāl*) in all Khorāsān, while on the frontiers (*ḥadd-hā*) of Khorāsān there are kings (*pādhshāhān*) called 'margraves' (*mulūk-i aṭrāf*).[34]

The lasting notion of the Oxus as a borderline and the resulting competition between the regional centers of Herat and Bukhārā during the Samanid period is reflected by an anecdote describing the literary powers of the Persian poet Rūdakī (d. 940–41). The latter is said to have prompted the Samanid ruler Amīr Naṣr b. Aḥmad (r. 301–331/913–943) to return to Bukhārā after a prolonged stay in Herat, by means of a catchy poem. Recounted by the twelfth-century author Niẓāmī ʿArūżī, the anecdote makes it clear that, to Amīr Naṣr at least, the summer camp in Herat was so attractive that he was tempted to make it his permanent residence, had it not been for Rūdakī's intervention:

> Naṣr ibn Aḥmad, who was the most brilliant jewel of the Sámánid galaxy…, was most plenteously equipped with every means of enjoyment and material of splendor – well-filled treasuries, a far-flung army and loyal servants. In winter he used to reside at his capital, Bukhárá, while in summer he used to go to Samarqand or some other of the cities of Khurásán. Now one year it was the turn of Herát…
>
> There the army rested. The climate was charming, the breeze cool, food plentiful, fruit abundant, the air filled with fragrant scents, so that the soldiers enjoyed their life to the full during spring and summer. When Mihrgán [autumnal equinox, CNK] arrived, and the juice of the grape came into season…, they did full justice to the delights of youth… Mihrgán was protracted, for the cold did not wax severe, and the grapes ripened with exceptional sweetness…
>
> So the Amír Naṣr ibn Aḥmad saw Mihrgán and its fruits, and was mightily pleased therewith. Then the narcissus began to bloom, and the raisins were plucked and stoned… (T)hey wintered [in the vicinity of Herat, CNK], while the Mandarin oranges began to arrive from Sístán and the sweet oranges from Mázandarán; and so they passed the winter in the most agreeable manner…
>
> When [the second] spring came the Amír sent the horses to Bádghís… And when summer came and the fruits again ripened, Amír Naṣr ibn Aḥmad said, 'Where shall we go for the summer? For there is no pleasanter place of residence than this. Let us wait till Mihrgán.' And when Mihrgán came, he said, 'Let us enjoy Mihrgán at Herát and then go', and so from season to season he continued to procrastinate, until four years had passed in this way… the Amír's attendants grew weary, and desire for home arose within them, while they beheld the king quiescent, the air of Herát in his head and the love of Herát in his heart…
>
> [The courtiers solicit the help of Rūdakī and offer him a reward of five thousand *dīnārs* if he can induce the Amīr to depart for Bukhāra, CNK]
>
> (Rūdakī) composed a *qaṣída*; and, when the Amír had taken his morning cup… took up the harp, and… began this elegy:
>
> The Jú-yi-Múliyán we call to mind,
We long for those dear friends long left behind;
…
The sands of Oxus toilsome though they be,
Beneath my feet were soft as silk to me.
…
Long live Bukhárá! Be thou in good cheer!
Joyous towards thee hasteth our Amír!
>
> The Moon's the Prince, Bukhárá is the sky;

[33] Bosworth, "Sāmānids", *E.I., 2* VIII: 1026; Fragner 2001b: 345–6.

[34] *Ḥudūd* 102. See also pp. xiv, 325. Minorsky comments that the author's allusion to former kings intends the Tahirid (820–872) and Saffarid (867–903) dynasties. Writing in 988, that is, six years after the *Ḥudūd al-ʿālam*, the Arab geographer Ibn Ḥauqal likewise distinguished Khurāsān and Transoxiana as two clearly delimited geographical entities (Kramers & Wiet 1964: 413–99).

> O Sky, the Moon shall light thee by and by!
>
> Bukhárá is the mead, the Cypress he;
> Receive at last, O Mead, thy Cypress tree!
>
> When Rúdagí reached this verse, the Amír was so much affected that he descended from his throne, all unbooted bestrode the horse which was on sentry-duty, and set off for Bukhárá so precipitately that they carried his leggings and riding-boots after him for two parasangs… nor did he draw rein anywhere till he reached Bukhárá…[35]

Under the Turkish dynasty of the Ghaznavids (977–1186), the center of gravity shifted to Ghazna (present-day Ghaznī), Panjāb and parts of Sind. During the reign of Sulṭān Maḥmūd (999–1030), the most powerful member of the dynasty, Ghaznavid authority extended not far beyond the right bank of the Oxus in the north, so as to include the ancient kingdom of Khvārazm, which had only nominally formed part of the Samanid Empire.[36] In May 1040, Maḥmūd's successor Masʿūd I suffered a decisive defeat at the hands of the Saljūqs, who had begun to move across the Oxus a decade earlier and occupied Marv in 1036.[37] Tughril Bēg (r. 429–455/1038–1063), the founder of the Saljūq dynasty (1040–1195), gained control over the former Ghaznavid dominions in the east and the Buyid lands in western and southern Persia. Over the following century, Marv served as the center of the Saljūq administration in the eastern part of the realm. While Tughril Bēg moved his capital westward from Nīshāpūr to Ray and Iṣfahān, his relatives holding the province of Khurāsān as an appanage came on an equal footing, or nearly so, with the central rulers, at times even assuming authority in the western parts of the realm. In the Saljūq era, Marv served as the seat of government for the two most famous governors of Khurāsān, Tughril Bēg's brother Chaghrī Bēg (r. 428–452/1036–1060) and Aḥmad Sanjar b. Malik Shāh (r. 511–552/1118–1157), who assumed an almighty position in Khurāsān and northern Persia and relegated his nephews in western Persia and Iraq to an inferior position.[38]

The next profound reshuffling of regional concepts occurred in the aftermath of the Mongol invasion of 1220, the brunt of which was borne by the urban centers of Transoxiana and Khurāsān. In the course of their far-ranging and constant movements, the Mongols created territorial divisions that reflected new and expanded notions of space. The nomad populations (*ulūs*) allotted to the four sons of Chingiz Khān (d. 624/1227) and his chief wife gradually came to be associated with fixed territories,[39] and the Oxus re-emerged as a dividing line. Transoxiana and its Inner Asian neighbor Mughūlistān fell to the patrimony of Chingiz Khān's second son Chaghatai (d. 1242), and Khvārazm and the lower Sīr Daryā became part of the Golden Horde under Chingiz Khān's grandson Batu b. Jochi (d. 1255) and his descendants for the next 140 years.[40] Subsequent to the conquest of Iran, Mesopotamia, Anatolia and the Caucasus by Chingiz Khān's grandson Hülegü b. Toluy (d. 1265) in 1255–59, the representation of Iran as a territorial unit regained currency. Indeed the Ilkhanid state (1256–1335) assumed proportions reminiscent of the Sasanian Empire. The center of gravity shifted to western Persia, with Tabrīz serving as capital from 1265–1305 and turning into a hub of political, economic and cultural life. Meanwhile, the regions adjoining the Oxus became an embattled zone between Iran and the Ulūs Chaghatai, and suffered further economic damage in the process.[41]

Implying territorial division on the basis of Chingizid lineages, Mongol "Ulūsism"[42] proved to be a lasting legacy. Henceforth, sovereignty was associated with Chingizid descent, and this linkage was to shape

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[35] Browne 1921: 33–36. See also *Chahār maqāla* 145–9; Browne 1951 I: 16–17; Landau 2011: 16–17.
[36] Bosworth, „Khwārazm," *E.I., 2* IV: 1063.
[37] Spuler, „Ghaznawids," *E.I., 2* II: 1050; Bosworth, „Saldjūḳids," *E.I., 2* VIII: 938; Cahen, "Čaghri-Beg," *E.I., 2* II: 4.
[38] Bosworth 1968: 49, 150–5; Bosworth, "Khurāsān," *E.I., 2* V: 58; Bosworth, "Marw al-Shāhidjān," *E.I., 2* VI: 620; Bosworth, „Saldjūḳids," *E.I., 2* VIII: 939–43.
[39] The term *ulūs* designates a coalition of tribal groups in the service of a Mongol ruler (Doerfer 1963 I: 175). According to Jackson, the awards allotted to Chingiz Khān's relatives in the early thirteenth century were by no means static. He describes the *ulūs* as an "extremely complex pattern of rights over tribal elements, colonies of enslaved subject peoples, and grazing grounds, with perhaps the addition of nearby cities and their agricultural hinterlands". In the course of the later thirteenth century, these domains consolidated into more clearly delineated possessions of fewer Chingizid princes (Jackson 1999: 27–28, 31, 35).
[40] Bosworth, "Khwārazm," *E.I., 2* IV: 1064.
[41] Bosworth, "Khurāsān", *E.I., 2* V: 58; Fragner 2001: 348–9; Gronke 2003: 56–7; Spuler, "Īl-Khāns", *E.I., 2* II: 1120–3.
[42] Fragner 2001b: 347–8.

the strategy and the mental map of the subsequent political actors well into the eighteenth century. A case in point is the famous Central Asian conqueror Tīmūr Lang, who gained legitimacy by styling himself *güregen*, "royal son-in-law" of a Chingizid family.[43] Between 1370 and 1405, Tīmūr Lang forged Transoxiana, Khvārazm and Iran into one political entity, in effect uniting the *ulūs* of Chaghatai and Hülegü.[44] At the height of its power, the Timurid empire covered the entire expanse from Transoxiana in the east to the Euphrates and the Caucasus in the west.[45] While Khvārazm remained the bone of contention between the Timurids and the Golden Horde Khāns for most of the fifteenth century, Khurāsān and Transoxiana became the heartlands of the empire and experienced a substantial economic revival. Tīmūr's son Shāh Rukh (r. 1409–1447) shifted the capital from Samarqand to Herat, leaving the administration of Transoxiana to his son Ulugh Bēg (d. 1449). This period witnessed an unparalleled flowering of architecture, literature and science.[46]

Subsequent rulers fashioned their ideas of sovereignty and entitlement according to a Chingizid and/or Timurid mold. While the Chingizid "constitution"[47] shaped ideas of legitimacy, it was the model of Tīmūr-i Lang that was invoked by the Abu al-Khairids, Safavids, and Nādir Shāh alike. This eagerness to claim Tīmūr's heritage highlights the selective nature of historical memory, which is often informed by current interests and amalgamates some historical instances into notions of continuity while ignoring others.

Timurid rule coincided with the division of Iran into an eastern and a western force field, with Herat and Tabrīz as focal points. In the west, the Turkmen Qarā Quyūnlū and Āq Quyūnlū tribal confederations used their footholds in Eastern Anatolia to expand into western Iran. Formally a vassal of Shāh Rukh, the Qarā Quyūnlū ruler Jahān Shāh (r. 843–872/1439–1467) made Tabrīz his capital. In 1467, Ūzūn Ḥasan Āq Quyūnlū (r. 861–882/1457–1478) entered the stage. Having defeated Jahān Shāh Qarā Quyūnlū and the Timurid ruler Abū Saʿīd (r. 855–873/1451–1469), he seized Tabrīz and reduced the Timurid realm to Khurāsān and Transoxiana.[48] The importance Herat and Tabrīz enjoyed in the late fifteenth century is highlighted by the Khurasanian poet Ḥusain Abīvardī Faiżī, who described them as two of the four "thrones" in the Islamic world, the other two being the Ottoman capital of Istanbul and the Arab lands under the Mamlūk capital of Cairo.[49] His statement confirms the evolution of Iran into a double-headed realm during this period.

The rise of the Safavid dynasty in the early sixteenth century coincided with the creation of two powerful political entities of Chingizid origin. Based in Agra, the Mughal rulers (1526–1858) laid claim to the eastern parts of present-day Afghanistan and opposed their Iranian neighbors over the possession of Qandahār. Of more immediate concern to the Safavids were the Abu al-Khairid (Shibanid) rulers of Transoxiana (1501–1599) and their repeated attempts to impose their authority over Khurāsān. Abu al-Khairid activity in Khurāsān peaked for the first time in the early sixteenth century. In 1510 the confrontation between Shāh Ismāʿīl I (r. 907–930/1501–1524) and Muḥammad Khān Shībānī over the possession of Marv resulted in the death of the Chingizid leader and was followed by the designation of the Oxus as borderline between the Safavid and Abu al-Khairid dominions.[50] Herat nevertheless changed hands several times until the death of the famous Abu al-Khairid general and later *khān* ʿUbaidullāh, in 1540.[51] Between 1588 and 1598 the Uzbek troops led by ʿAbdullāh Khān (r. 991–1006/1583–1598) and his son ʿAbd al-Muʾmin again made their presence felt in Khurāsān.[52]

[43] Manz, "Tīmūr Lang," *E. I., 2* X: 511.
[44] Fragner 2001: 349.
[45] Gronke 2003: 60.
[46] Bosworth, "Khwārazm", *E.I., 2* IV: 1064; Bosworth, "Khurāsān", *E.I., 2* V: 59; Hajianpur 1991: 165–7.
[47] McChesney 1993: 74–5.
[48] Minorsky-[Bosworth], "Tabrīz," *E.I., 2* X: 43–5; Roemer 1976.
[49] Ḥusain Abīvardī Faiżī, "Chār takht," ed. Īraj Afshār, *Farhang-i Īranzamīn* 15 (1347/1968). See also Woods 1999: 134 fn. 36.
[50] Szuppe 1992: 81.
[51] Hambly 1991f: 178–9; Roemer 1986d: 217, 236–9; Szuppe 1992: 84–7, 94, 99, 108–9.
[52] Müller 1964: 46–7, 62–5, 78.

At different historical junctures, both the Safavids and the Abu al-Khairids sought to bolster their claims on Khurāsān by activating links with the Timurid dynasty, thereby adding historical depth to their current territorial interests. In 1000/1592, the Abu al-Khairid leader ʿAbd al-Muʾmin justified his invasion of Khurāsān by claiming this region as part of the Timurid legacy. Rather than turning to the past, Shāh ʿAbbās I (r. 996–1038/1588–1629) emphasized the validity of the facts created by the more recent military achievements of the Safavids.[53] Later on, the Safavids' reluctance to be measured against the yardstick of territorial precedents set by the Timurids subsided. As the Safavid hold over Khurāsān became more stable and the concurring Uzbek claims receded into the background, the Iranian rulers increasingly tended to incorporate the Timurids and their former realm east of Iran into their legacy. Thus the late seventeenth-century geographer Muḥammad Mufīd portrayed Shāh Ismāʿīl as the one who conquered Iran and Tūrān, thereby wresting control from the Āq Quyūnlūs in Azerbaijan, Fārs and ʿIrāq-i ʿAjam, as well as from the Timurids in Khurāsān and Māzandarān.[54]

With the establishment of Twelver Shiism as state religion by the Safavids, the territorial competition was increasingly cast in religious terms, pitting Iran against its Sunnī neighbors. The separation between these spheres of influence became more pronounced with the decline of transcontinental trade along the Silk Road in the seventeenth century. As the regions located along its course were deprived of their former role in an extensive net of mercantile exchange, Khurāsān and Transoxiana became parts of different, reduced political orbits.[55] Within Iran, the Shiite orientation of the Safavid rulers enhanced the position of Mashhad. In the light of the fact that Najaf and Karbalāʾ, the holy cities of Iraq, fell into the Ottoman realm, Shāh ʿAbbās I encouraged Shiite pilgrimage to the shrine of the eighth Imām ʿAlī b. Mūsā al-Riżā (d. 203/818) in Mashhad.[56] As a result, Mashhad increasingly eclipsed Herat as the metropolis of Khurāsān and gained importance within the Iranian nexus of trade routes.[57]

The centrality of Mashhad received a further boost at the time of Nādir Shāh Afshār (r. 1148–1160/1736–1747), who used the nearby pastures as a staging ground for his extensive military campaigns. Apart from re-establishing the seventeenth-century border with the Ottoman Empire, Nādir Shāh devoted his 1737–1740 campaigns to the expansion of his authority to present-day Afghanistan, India, Transoxiana and Khvārazm. These wide-scale military movements obliterated the last vestiges of the former balance of power between the Safavids, Uzbeks and Mughals. Yet although Nādir Shāh momentarily succeeded in transcending the former Safavid boundaries in the east, he did not attempt to bring about a political union between Khurāsān and Transoxiana. Aware of advancing into "Tūrān", the seat of Chingiz Khān's descendants, he contented himself with establishing direct control over the cis-Oxus regions of Chārjūy, Marv, Balkh and Qaṭaghan, thus reinforcing the Oxus as borderline.[58] Nādir Shāh's formal confirmation of the weakened Chingizid Mughal and Tuqai-Timurid ruling houses earned him the sobriquet, "he who has placed the crowns on the heads of the kings of India and Tūrān/Turkistān" from his biographer, Muḥammad Mihdī Astarābādī.[59] At

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[53] According to Iskandar Munshī, the exchange between the Abu al-Khairid prince and his Safavid counterpart proceeded as follows: Citing a historical precedent from the late fifteenth century, ʿAbd al-Muʾmin attempted to establish himself as an heir to the Timurid domain while linking the Safavids to the Āq Quyūnlū and relegating them to western Iran. In keeping with this notion, he dismissed Safavid claims to the region on the grounds that his imperial forerunner Sulṭān Ḥusain Bāyqarā (r. 1470–1506) had ruled over Balkh and Khurāsān, while the western territories of ʿIrāq and Azerbaijan formerly belonged to the realm of Ūzūn Ḥasan Āq Quyūnlū (*Ḥasan pādshāh-i turkman*). Shāh ʿAbbās, on his part, coolly informed ʿAbd al-Muʾmin that, as his family had controlled Khurāsān for the past century, there was no need to hark back to Sulṭān Ḥusain, a "Chaghatai", and Ūzūn Ḥasan, a "Turkmen", who stood in no immediate relationship to either side. If peace was to be concluded, he added, this could only be on the basis of a more recent treaty reached between his grandfather Ṭahmāsp (r. 1524–1576) and ʿAbd al-Muʾmin's great uncle Kīstan Qarā of Balkh (d. 1547), whereby Khurāsān had been ceded to the Safavids (IM 707). See also Burton 1997: 71; Mitchell 2009: 187; Navāʾī 1973 I: 148, 217.

[54] *Mukhtaṣar-i Mufīd* I: 4–6; see also Fragner 2001b: 351.

[55] Fragner 1997: 123.

[56] Bosworth, "Khurāsān", *E.I., 2* V: 59.

[57] Perry 1979: 13

[58] Jones 1771 I: 400–2, II: 11, 16–17. See also Kāẓim 603, 797; Lockhart 1938: 189; Avery 1991: 43.

[59] Jones 1771 I: xv, 460–1, II: 16–17, 74. See also Kāẓim 749–50; 796; Malcolm 1811: 545.

the same time, this formal delegation of authority underlined Nādir Shāh's powerful position in relationship to the Chingizid line.

Aside from the initial phases of occupation, Nādir Shāh hardly interfered with the internal affairs of the Central Asian principalities he conquered. Even so, his "customary concern for collecting people"[60] – he raised a total of 24,000 soldiers in Bukhārā and Khvārazm alone[61] – had a lasting impact on the political makeup of these regions. Upon entering Nādir Shāh's service, the local leadership was able to bolster its position at home and came to form new ruling elites. The emergence of the Manghīt dynasty in Bukhārā[62] and of the Abdālīs/Durrānīs in present-day Afghanistan may be seen in this light. In Khīva, by contrast, the Manghīt leadership installed by Nādir Shāh only outlasted his withdrawal by four years.[63] A prolonged period of turmoil followed, which was eventually terminated by the rise of the Qunghrāt Khāns in 1770.[64]

Nādir Shāh's legacy was claimed by his Afghan followers who used the power vacuum caused by the demise of the Afsharid leader to assume authority over his easternmost possessions. Portraying himself as the ruler of Iran, Hind and Turkistān, Aḥmad Shāh Sadūzai Durrānī (r. 1160–1186/1747–1772) shifted his capital further east to Qandahār, more conveniently positioned for his numerous campaigns to India. Like Nādir Shāh, the Durrānī ruler glossed over his territorial gains by formally bestowing the government of India on the last representatives of the weakened Mughal dynasty, ʿĀlamgīr II (r. 1754–1759) and Shāh ʿĀlam II (r. 1759–1806).[65] On 7 Jumādā I 1170/28 January 1757 he placed a jewel encrusted crown on the head of his defeated adversary ʿĀlamgīr, formally entrusting him with the government of India. Not surprisingly, the contemporary sources credit him with attributes resembling those associated with Nādir Shāh. They describe him as the "crown-giving emperor" (*khāqān-i tājbakhsh*) or the "kingdom-bestowing king" (*shahriyār-i mamālikbakhsh*).[66]

In Khurāsān, Aḥmad Shāh paid respect to the descendants of his erstwhile overlord. In 1755 he placed the "crown of the hereditary kingdom" on the head of Nādir Shāh's blind grandson Shāh Rukh Afshār and permitted him "to assume the throne of independence".[67] Shāh Rukh ruled Mashhad as a vassal of the Afghan monarchs until the advent of the Qājārs in 1796. Yet the area under his control merely consisted of a truncated version of Khurāsān, which Perry has characterized as a "no-man's land" between the realms of the Durrānīs based in Qandahār and Kābul, and the Zand rulers based in Shīrāz.[68]

North of the Hindu Kush, Durrānī claims to sovereignty competed with those extended by the newly founded Uzbek principality of Bukhārā. This is underlined by Aḥmad Shāh's endeavor to establish the Oxus as the divide between the Afghan and Bukharan spheres of interest in 1768.[69] While Bukhārā continued to make its influence felt in Afghan Turkistān well into the nineteenth century, the Oxus was again conceived, at least on the Afghan side, as a boundary. With the Clarendon-Gorchakov Agreement of 1872, this river ultimately assumed the role of a border in the modern sense, separating the Russian sphere of influence from the nascent modern state of Afghanistan.

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[60] Avery 1991: 23.

[61] Jones 1771 II: 16, 28.

[62] While members of the Tuqai-Timurid dynasty continued to rule Bukhārā nominally until 1785, the effective power in the Khanate passed to the chiefs of the Manghīt Uzbeks. Enjoying Nadirid patronage, Muḥammad Ḥakīm Bī Manghīt (d. 1743) and his son Muḥammad Raḥīm Bī (d. 1758) were able to assert their power in Bukhārā in the 1740s. During the reign of Muḥammad Ḥakīm Bī's brother, Dāniyāl Bī (r. 1758–1785), the Manghīt administration became firmly established. Instead of styling themselves *khān*, Dāniyāl's descendants Shāh Murād (nicknamed Amīr-i Maʿṣūm, r. 1785–1800), Ḥaidar Tūra (r. 1800–1826), Naṣrullāh b. Ḥaidar Tūra (r. 1827–1860) and Muẓaffar al-Dīn (r. 1860–1885) assumed the title of *amīr al-mūʾminīn* (Boukhary 110–116; Bregel, "Mangit" *E.I., 2;* Bregel, "Bokhārā, iii", *E.Ir.* IV*;* Bregel, "Central Asia vii. In the 12th–13th/18th–19th Centuries, *E.Ir.* V: 193–4; Khanikoff 1845: 295–302; Nazarov 1963: 14–18; TRSN IX: 282).

[63] JN 458, 479–80; Kāẓim 817, 862–5.

[64] Bregel, "Central Asia, vii. In the 12th–13th/18th–19th Centuries," *E.Ir.* V: 194–5. See also *Sifāratnāma* (Schefer 1975): xiv.

[65] Aḥmad Shāh, *Nāma*, 43, 76–77.

[66] TA (Humāyūn) 265–7. According to Singh, this event took place on the night of 25–26 January 1757 (Singh 1981: 404).

[67] Aḥmad Shāh, *Nāma*, 36. See also T Hu 18–19.

[68] Perry 1971: 66.

[69] ST 27; McChesney/Khorrami 2013 I: 42.

This quick ride through history – beginning with an administrative fiat in Sasanian times and ending with the creation of fixed borders in the nineteenth century – serves to illustrate the longevity of the idea of Khurāsān and the fashion in which it was constructed and reconstructed over time. The events sketched above provide a conceptual background for the narrative to follow. After this overview of the history of Khurāsān throughout the ages, it is time to explore the relationships within this territorial entity. In the following chapter, we will open the shell and take a closer look at the pearl within.