

*Rare section*

REPORT  
OF A  
JOURNEY  
THROUGH THE KHANATE OF  
KHIVA  
DURING THE EXPEDITION  
OF 1873

By  
A.L. KUHN

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TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN BY

N. E.

(the Russische Revue, Vol. III., pp. 58-74.)

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Report on my journey through the Khanate of Khiva  
during the expedition of 1873, by A. L. Kuhn.

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(Read before the Russian Geographical Society on 5th December 1873.)

[All except well-known names are spelled according to the German original.]

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WE left Khiva on the 19th June and struck out for Kunia Urgendsch by way of Kasawat, Taschhaus, Illiali, Kysyl Takyr, and Schah Murad. Whilst following the *corps d'armée* we were able to make a few excursions from Kasawat to some of those traces of the ancient bed of the Amu Daria to be found thereabouts, and which are called Daudan and Darjalyk.

As far as Kysyl Takyr our road led us along the southern border of the Khanate, through a region well cultivated but crossed, at intervals, by tracts of sand jutting out from the desert that forms the western border of the Khanate, and that terminates most of those canals having their origin in the Amu Daria. Those, however, which flow further on into the desert have their banks occupied by the pastures and winter camping grounds of Turkomans belonging to the Jomud, Imrali, Tschandor and Karadaschli tribes. These Turkomans, who enjoy all the benefits of the canals and who group themselves round the fields watered by them, lead a semi-nomadic life, and take no part whatever in the duties necessary towards keeping them in repair, but leave them entirely to the care of the settled population, the Usbecks. In return for being allowed the use of these fields, however, each of the tribes is bound, according to a treaty concluded with the Khan, to supply, in case of war, several hundred "Alaman" or horsemen, and besides are pledged to pay a duty on all cattle they send to the bazaar.

As before remarked, the district between Khiva and Kysyl Takyr is eminently a well-cultivated one, but it is most sparsely populated, indeed one sees human life only on the banks of the canals. Beyond this again, past Schah Murad, as far as Kunia Urgendsch, the aspect is a sad one and everywhere one is struck by the extent of land, rich and

in every way suited to agriculture, now unoccupied except by the dry beds of former canals, which stand as witnesses of the life that not long since must have reigned over the district. And this devastation, it is said, dates only from the time of the last Turkoman rebellion, when the Laudan (or old Amu Daria) was dried up by the father of the present Khan cutting it off, for until then, it is asserted, the banks of the Laudan as far as Sary Kamisch were occupied by the pasturages and fields of the Jomuds of the tribe of Ata Murad.

On the 25th June our *corps d'armée* formed camp close to the township of Kunia Urgendsch, and on the site of the old town of that name. The troops had orders to remain until further orders from the Commander-in-Chief, but the Uruu-Daria expedition had to make a topographical survey, and if possible also a levelling, of the old bed of the Amu Daria as far as Sary Kamisch, and after that, as had been previously decided at Khiva, they had to ascend the bed of the Laudan from Kunia Urgendsch to the point where it branches off from the river and finally return to Khiva with the cavalry.

Having a view to archæological explorations in the neighbourhood of Kunia Urgendsch itself, I had to decline taking part in the Uruu-Daria expedition to which my travelling companions invited me, but remained instead, in the neighbourhood of the troops, hoping to make some discoveries in the ruins of old Urgendsch of relics of the ancient "Dschordschaniha" of the Arabian historians and geographers. Thus about a week was spent in exploring the ruins of Urgendsch, and in collecting ethnographical and statistical data regarding the inhabitants of this portion of the Khanate, and in carrying on other work, including a topographical survey of the ruins..... We (that is M. N. Bogdanow, J. J. Krause and myself) then determined to lose no further time in continuing to prosecute our explorations in the Khanate, and with this end in view started, in company with a few natives, but without escort of any kind, for Chodscheili,\* intending to proceed from there to Kungrad and other towns of the Khanate.

As M. N. Bogdanow was greatly interested in exploring the Amu Daria we travelled from Chodscheili to Kungrad in boats, though this, it must be mentioned, was not the only reason for our adopting this mode of travelling, another being

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\* Chodscheili is inhabited by Chodschas [Kojas] hence the name, "people of the Chodschas."

that at this time of year (July) the Amu Daria overflows its banks and submerges a tract of several versts wide in its neighbourhood, and we were told that during these floods all intercommunication with Chodscheili from Kungrad on the one hand, and Kiptschak on the other, was impracticable; in fact the whole distance between the two former places was said to be one vast marsh, or lagoon. Our native companions further informed us that before the Laudan was banked in, one of its arms stretched away to the westward and formed lakes, the drainage of which went to feed the Gulf of Aibugir; it is, however, now entirely dry. They likewise related how another arm of the Laudan once reached as far as Sary-Kamisch and was navigable for boats up to the ruins of the town of Diktscha in the neighbourhood of Sary-Kamisch.

From Kungrad we wended our way to the Ulkun Daria, at the spot occupied by the Aral flotilla as an anchoring ground, after leaving which we crossed the delta of the Amu Daria and reached the right bank at Koschkana-tau. Here we came upon a whole horde of nomads, who by order of the Commander-in-Chief, had been assembled from all quarters of the Khanate to assist in towing our steamers into the main channel of the river.

We now proceeded in company with several Karakalpaks to Tschimbai, the chief commercial town of those people. The whole of the right bank of the Amu, from the sea-shore up as high as Fort Nukuss,\* is occupied by semi-nomadic Karakalpaks, but our companions, who were chieftains of this tribe, informed us that before the last insurrection at Kungrad, which occurred towards the end of the "fifties" [1855-60], the greater part of their people inhabited the left bank and seldom crossed the river. After the overthrow, however, of Penah Khan, whom the Turkomans had set up, the bulk of the Karakalpaks came and settled over on the right bank, whilst a small proportion of them repaired to Bokhara. From Tschimbai to Chodscheili we travelled in boats on the Kuwantscha-Jarma arm of the Amu, which flows from that river into the Daukarin lakes. It was our intention to return from here by way of Kiptschak, Mangyt, Gürten, &c., but on being warned by the Governor of the place of the danger of proceeding up the left bank when the Turkoman bands were still roving about, and on being informed, also, that the overflow

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\* Such names as Nukuss, Chimbai, Chodscheili, &c., are to be found on Peter Lerch's map of "Chiwa oder Charezm" in the *Russ. Revue*, Nos. 5-6, 1873. Chimbai is situated between Jangi-ssu and Qara-baili. [See map in translation of Mr. Lerch's memoir by C. U. A., Calcutta, 1873.—Tr.]



of the Laudan had rendered the road to Kiptschak impassable, we decided to return to Chodscheili on the 17th July—precisely at the moment when the storm of war broke over the heads of the Turkomans. On the day of our arrival the people of the neighbourhood avoided us as much as possible, would not listen to our requests, and appeared to look upon us with the greatest suspicion; they evidently felt that something was wrong in the fact that three Russians should be travelling about in the Khanate when, within 300 versts, war was raging ..... A victory of the Russians over the Turkomans and the flight of the latter into the desert was shortly afterwards announced, and travelling being then again rendered safe we once more set out from Chodscheili and reached Nukuss, a small fort situated, now, somewhat higher up the Amu than the fork of the Kuwantscha-Jarma and on the right bank, though we were informed that up till ten or fifteen years ago it stood below Tschimbai, on the right bank of the Amu but on the left bank of the Kuwantscha-Jarma.\* On the third day after arriving at Nukuss we reached the town of Rahman-Berdy-bi-Bazar, having travelled the whole distance along the river bank passing by Tugai Tschatty, Dschangasy-chan, Kiptschak, &c., and crossing the Scheich-Dscheli mountains. The character of the country passed over was that of a sandy shore with every here and there small peninsulas, slightly elevated and covered with pasture, jutting out into the river. The Scheich-Dscheli range consists chiefly of bare rocks, which has the effect of clearly exposing its geological formation. Nearly all the valleys near the river bed crossed by our route were inhabited by nomadic Kirghis, and in some of them farms and small fortresses had been built, such as Nukuss, Tugai Tschatty, Dschangasy-chan and Rahman-Berdy-bi-Bazar. Near the last-named place we crossed the Amu Daria and proceeded to Gürlen, which being some distance from the frontier is not fortified. The country in this portion of the Khanate is beautifully cultivated, and we noticed no more of those small forts that hitherto had been so remarkable, encircling the towns in a sort of defensive work. The banks of the Amu being exceedingly low, all the towns of the Khanate, with the exception of Kiptschak, stand from two to six versts back from the river. From Gürlen we wished to return to Khiva taking Kat and Schavat on the way, but on learning from the inhabitants of Kat that the ruins of the ancient city of that name were to be found

\* The *nukuz* of Lerch's map is thus the old fort of that name.—Tr.

on the right bank of the river, I separated from my companions (who continued their journey to Khiva) and repaired to Schavat and New Urgendsch, and then crossed the river to Schach Abbas Wali, which is said to be the site of ancient Kat.\*

In order to shorten the road I struck out from Schach Abbas Wali, which lies opposite to New Urgendsch, to the ferry of Chanka, where I procured a boat on the 28th of July, and travelled along the Palwan-Arik to Khiva. The country thus traversed between Gürlen and Khiva is the best cultivated district in the whole Khanate and, comparatively speaking, also the most populous.

Here I will venture to make a few remarks on the general impression the country of the Khanate made upon me, so far as the portions I traversed will allow of. The left bank is the best cultivated and most populous of the whole State. The great bulk of the natives of the soil settle, with their well-stocked farms, along the banks of the canals, and their branches, that are derived from the river. Here one frequently sees immense tracts of land, eminently fitted for cultivation, lying fallow, and fields and meadows on the immediate banks of the canal, uncultivated and deserted, though they bear unmistakable traces of former settlement and husbandry. Here and there, as above remarked, occur occasional tracts of sand which stretch up from the desert beyond the borders of the Khanate. On the right bank the scene is entirely different. There the population is absurdly thin in comparison with the peculiar character of the country they have to deal with. The most populous region of this bank is that lying between Rahman-Berdy-bi-Bazar and the territory of Ak-Kamysch; here are the districts of Schach Abbas Wali and Schurachan, which consist of a string of oases with luxuriant vegetation, and where each farm stands in its own garden.

On a closer examination of the constitution of the Khanate, one cannot fail to observe, on the one hand, great luxuriance in the land, and on the other extreme poverty in population; and the only solution of this anomaly must be the fact that each year a large proportion of the population is annihilated by the uninterrupted wars with the Turkomans and by internal disturbances. Slavery, which is simply a

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\* According to Peter Lerch the site of ancient Kat should be sought for between the modern Kat and Gürlen (Russ. Revue, No. 5 of 1873.)

national institution in Khiva, has, according to my idea, but little effect on the population, for, according to the data at my command, the quantity brought into the country for sale is very trifling, though the number differs every year. The figures, moreover, which have been arrived at from native information show this number to have been in modern times constantly falling off. Formerly, taking all the markets of the Khanate together, several thousands were brought in and sold each year, whereas now-a-days the number does not reach one thousand, the reason being, it is said, the proximity of the Russians at Krasnovodsk. The occasional raids across the Persian border did not produce, at any time, a larger number of slaves than at present, and that is a very insignificant quantity; the great bulk of "booty prisoners," or *captured* slaves, at all times depended upon the success of the wars the Khans of Khiva were constantly waging against the Persians; after a successful campaign whole townships of Persians were frequently brought over to the fallow lands of the Khanate and there settled; such cases as these, however, were of rare occurrence in late days. According to the notes I had the opportunity of taking at Khiva, during the general emancipation that took place after the occupation of the town, it would seem that the slave-market of the Turkomans was not only supplied from Persian territory but also from all the countries lying to the south and east of Khiva; thus one might recognize a host of various races and nationalities, such as Kurds, Afghans, Arabs, Persians, Aderbaidshans, &c. In Persian territory, on the contrary, the Turkomans used to sell Khivans as slaves and, not unfrequently, even their own countrymen if belonging to a different tribe to themselves. Besides slaves, which however formed the chief commodity of trade with the Turkomans, they also brought to the Khivan market carpets, wool, stuffs made of camel-hair, and cattle.

The population of the Khanate consists of settlers and nomads; the former live in villages, towns, and homesteads in the oases on the banks of the canals that connect with the Amu Daria, whilst the latter frequent, in feeble numbers, the steppes in which the oases are situated. Some of these so-called nomads, however, are but semi-nomadic for they own fields and meadows on the border of the Khanate. The settled population consists of Usbecks, Sarts, (a mixed race from Central Asia), Iranians, and a small number of Tadschiks [Tajiks]; the nomads and semi-nomads are Kirghis, Karakalpaks, and Turkomans, the latter of whom surround the

Khanate on three sides with their pastures, namely on the east, south, and west. Amongst the townships are to be found the pasture grounds of the Kirghis and Karakalpaks, the greater number of whom inhabit the northern and eastern frontiers, and also to a great extent the north-western corner. Other races, such as Afghans, Jews, Indians, &c., are not to be found in these parts. In the bazars at Khiva and New Urgendsch I saw one or two Jews, who had embraced Mahomedanism, but they were very fearful of allowing the fact to be known that they had ever been Jews.

The entire population, including settlers and nomads of all tribes and degrees, may be approximately stated as follows:—

|                     |                          |    |                |
|---------------------|--------------------------|----|----------------|
| Settled inhabitants | 50 to 65,000 houses      | of | 250,000 souls. |
| Karakalpaks         | ... 25,000 huts or tents | „  | 125,000 „      |
| Turkomans           | ... 40,000 „ „           | „  | 200,000 „      |
| Kirghises           | ... 20,000 „ „           | „  | 100,000 „      |

which by reckoning five souls to each habitation makes a total of 700,000. But in this number I have not reckoned the nomadic Turkomans in the eastern and south-western portions of the Khanate, as for instance the Teke and Saruk tribes.

The chief occupation of the settled population is agriculture, in which cotton plays a considerable part; and the Khiva cotton is looked upon as the best of all the Central-Asiatic kinds. The commodities sent chiefly to our markets from the Khanate are cotton, silk, and sheep's wool, and to Kasalinsk corn. The nomadic population is occupied entirely with cattle and sheep-breeding, but especially the latter. Urgendsch may be regarded as the chief centre of trade and after it Khiva; and it is for this reason that the Khivan traders in all Central-Asian bazaars call themselves "Urgendschi." Besides these two, there are some twenty towns in the Khanate, where more or less trade is carried on, though almost exclusively of a local nature and in special commodities, as for instance at Gürlen, silk, silk khalats or robes, rice, &c.; at Taschhaus, cotton and wheat, and so on. The products of these second-class marts are usually bought up by the merchants of New Urgendsch, for the reason that foreign merchants are not allowed to travel at will in the Khanate, and thus visit what markets they choose; indeed they seldom venture to visit Khiva but nearly always remain at Urgendsch.

In spite of the constantly disturbed state of the country and of the fact that the greater part of the nomads, including the Turkomans, pay no money taxes at all, still when the taxes in kind are reckoned at their money value, it will be found that, on the whole, the Khan's treasury received about 400,000 rubles annually; and besides this, the inhabitants were bound to provide 22,000 workmen yearly for the conservancy of the canals. The revenue of the Khanate is composed of three kinds of taxes: firstly, the money taxes, which are divided into *Salgut*, or ground tax, levied on the area occupied, and *Säket*, or trade and cattle tax; secondly, of taxes in kind. The land of the whole Khanate is divided for revenue purposes into Khivan lands properly speaking and conquered districts. Under the first head are reckoned those portions of the country that, from time immemorial, have constituted part of the Khanate and have always been Mahomedan; these consist of five districts: Kat, Schawat, Kunia Urgendsch, Khiva, and Hasarasp, the land in which is the hereditary property of its inhabitants. On the other hand, the districts on the right bank of the Amu Daria, as for instance Kungrad, &c., are regarded as territory that has been subdued by force of arms and therefore belongs to the Khan, who lets it on payment of half or a third of the harvest. The revenues of the Khan were chiefly devoted to the maintenance of his court and army, though the latter was by no means so regularly organized as those of the neighbouring Khanates. Those who do not serve in the army seldom receive any pay, but they are entitled to remunerate themselves from the offices they hold; thus fraud and corruption are developed to the highest degree. Indeed it must be remarked that in Khiva, on the whole, mutual mistrust and corruption have reached a higher state of development than in any other part of Central Asia, which renders the fact of the Khan's surrounding himself with Persian slaves, perfectly comprehensible.

The last days of my sojourn in Khiva, 29th July to 12th August (the day of the departure of the last of the Russian troops), I occupied in making further explorations in the town, and in arranging and despatching my collections of objects of scientific value. On first leaving Khiva on their homeward march the troops assembled at the town of Khanka, and the next day halted half-way between that place and Schurachan, at the garden of Mat-Nias-divan-begi, where the fort of Petro-Alexandrowsk has been erected as the chief station on the new Russian border province of "Amu Daria."

The new Russian settlement stands on the bank of the Busiab canal, about eight versts from Schurachan, on the caravan road which leads through the township of Min-balak and over the Baranta mountains into the Syr Daria territory. The work of founding this settlement being completed towards the end of August, we set out on our return journey to Taschkent, following up the bank of the river, passing by the camps of Ak-Kamysch, Meschekly, Utsch-Utschak, Kükertli and Kis-Kala, the townships of Chodscha-Kanefsi, Forts Ustü and Karakul, and the towns of Bokhara Kermine, Iliatdin, and Katty Kurgan.

From Petro-Alexandrowsk to Ak-Kamysch the country, though but slightly populated, exhibits well-cultivated fields and, in many places, gardens, which stretch away, in some instances, as far as the grave of Meskin-ssaid-ata. From Ak-Kamysch the road leads over a sandy steppe, elevated high above the river, but here and there sloping down towards the river in the shape of small green oases which, under the native name of "Tugai," form small peninsulas covered with various species of steppe flora. In some places also the fine, moveable drift-sand stretches across the road towards the river and constitutes a considerable impediment. The nomads usually settle on the Tugai only in winter though they pasture their herds on them all the year round. On the roadways leading down to the most convenient fords across the river, are to be seen the ruins of brick buildings which appear to have forts erected to protect the passage of the river. Between Forts Ustü and Karakul there lies a desert of 25 versts in width composed of fine drift-sand. On leaving the green environs of Fort Ustü and entering on this desert, one sees, on all sides, the grey ruins of deserted buildings and the withered stems of trees rising out of the sand, sorrowful witnesses of better days. We were told that 10 to 25 years ago, flourishing townships stood hereabouts, but the sand drifted gradually down from the north-west and before long destroyed them. Each year, say the natives, the sand-storms sweep away from some poor inhabitant the last corner of his field and each year the cultivable land becomes less and less. In the Karakul district the same results from this terrible drift-sand are visible, which cause that portion of the Bokhara Khanate to present its present sad, cheerless aspect.

After we had passed the sandy desert, our eyes were greeted with the uninviting sight of what was once the most populous district of the Khanate—for the fresh traces of

flourishing villages now half-buried in the sand leave a sad impression on the mind. After Karakul, begins a cultivated district and the nearer one gets to Bokhara the more pleasant becomes the prospect. One sees in every direction luxuriant plantations of cotton, "dschugara," and other plants for which the Khanate is so celebrated, whilst the town itself is entirely surrounded by gardens. The magnitude of Bokhara as a mart is truly astonishing. All caravanserais, booths, &c., were literally filled with specimens of Russian manufacture, and if its commerce is astonishing its other institutions are equally so—its schools, courts of justice, mosques, sanctuaries.

After all the dark pictures drawn by various travellers, previous to our journey, of the dangers of a visit to Bokhara, I must confess that the way in which we were treated struck me as remarkable; during the whole of my stay there I strolled about without escort or protection beyond a simple guide; and I can safely say that not the slightest annoyance was ever offered to me by any one. As I sauntered along from shop to shop, I was invariably followed by a crowd of idlers who wondered not a little to see a Russian master of the Persian language in the Bokhara dialect.

From Bokhara we travelled, with guides provided by the Kusch-begi, to Kermine, the district of which name stretches away towards the western end of the valley of Manikal and appears to be highly cultivated and exceedingly rich in vegetation, far surpassing in this respect even the environs of Bokhara; and the nearer we approached the district of the Serafschan the richer and more highly cultivated became the land. At length, on the 19th September, we reached Katty Kurgan, the first Russian settlement lying within the border district of Serafschan.

During the Khivan expedition I was able to collect the following scientific material.

At the taking of the place 300 volumes of Oriental MSS. were found, the greater part of which consisted of historical works. The chief circumstance remarkable about this collection is that the works are translations from the Persian into the Khivan-Turkish dialect. For the most part they have been composed during the present, or Kungrad, dynasty, but they are specially valuable from the fact that the Persian originals have been retained in the collection; thus for instance there is the great historical work of Mirchond

called the "gardens of purity" in both Persian and Khivan, and the Deeds of Mahomed "Syar Scheriff," also in the two languages. Another historical work contained amongst them is the "History of the Khivan Khans" by Junus Miráb, which has especial interest from having been begun during the reign of iltisar Khan, the founder of the present dynasty, and also on account of the valuable historical notices on the Khanate contained in it for the whole of the last century, but for which our knowledge of this subject would be extremely limited. It contains all the most remarkable occurrences that have taken place in the Khanate up to the occupation of the Russians, and as hitherto we have had the most imperfect knowledge of the history of this period, the book of Junus Miráb will be found to clear up many important questions. Besides the above-named works and translations, the collection contains MSS. of several original tales and romances in the Khivan dialect.

At the taking of the palace also, a number of documents were found containing the correspondence of the Khans; these may be divided into two groups: firstly, those having reference to the revenue and expenditure of the Khanate and property in mosques and schools; and secondly, letters, petitions, and diplomatic papers.

Among the documents of the first group we find the book on the taxes, (*Sälgut* and *Saket*) and the reports of Mat-Murat-divan-begi on the Khan's expenditure. Also letters and petitions to the Khan from Khivan merchants residing in Bokhara, Kasan, Constantinople, &c., and papers relating to decisions given in cases of the disputed tenure of land or offices. Among the diplomatic documents we find a letter from Lord Northbrook, Governor-General of East India, letters and firmans from the Sultan of Turkey, a treaty concluded by Lieutenant-Colonel Danilewski with the Khan of Khiva, and several letters to the Khan from the Governor-General of Turkistan.

Though, on the whole, this collection of documents is an extremely interesting one still it is much to be regretted that its importance in a historical point of view is marred by its incompleteness—much having been lost and stolen—and by the recency of the dates. And it is only possible to account for these circumstances by the general confusion that must have occurred in the palace at the news of the approach of the Russians, and by the fact that in the Mahomedan Khanates



it was not the custom to preserve written documents. Thus after the death of a Khan it was usual to divide all property found in the palace among the heirs, and State archives and matter of that description do not exist.

But in addition to this collection of manuscripts and documents the following objects taken with the booty may also have some scientific interest:—

*1stly.*—About 200 stamps, weighing 160lbs., which were used by the Khans of Khiva for stamping money. These will serve to enrich numismatics generally by bringing to light several hitherto unknown Central-Asian coins.

*2ndly.*—A bunch of 25 seals of the Khivan Khans, five of which are silver, but all the rest gold.

*3rdly.*—The Khan's throne.

*4thly.*—A collection of coins of the time of Timur (172 specimens), and of the Kungrad dynasty of the Khivan Khans (3 specimens) during the reigns of Allah-Kuli, Mahomed Rahim, and Mahomed Emin, and also coins of the present Khan and of his father Syud Mahomed.

*5thly.*—A quantity of ethnographical matter from the palace. Apart from all these collections too I gathered much material bearing on the ethnography, history, languages, &c., of the inhabitants of the Khivan oases, whilst other scientific members of the expedition each laboured hard at his special branch.

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