

M.N. Mouraviev. Voyage en Turcomanie et à Khiva fait en 1819 et 1820.

French translation from Russian:

<http://archive.org/details/voyageenturcoma01klapgoog>

English translation:

<http://archive.org/details/muravievsjourne00muragoog>

A junior Russian officer sent to Khiva by his hierarchy. A risky journey indeed at the time.

Mouraviev was later to raise to the rank of general and to be trusted with several high functions in the Transcaspian provinces.

Although his escort is mainly Turkmen during his journey, he does not share their life while staying in the Khiva khanate where he mainly has to deal with Khivan Uzbeks and with Sarts (descendants of the previous owners of the oasis, active in agriculture, commercial affairs and in religious hierarchy). He has to refrain showing curiosity since he is already suspected of being a spy. Thus, his informations on Turkmen is rarely very original, but there are still some interesting informations.

First Part: The trip to Khiva and back.

Page 88: According to an old Turkmen tradition, the tomb of the eponymic founder of the Ersari («Er Saré Baha») is on a hill of the (Great-) Balkan range, East of the Caspian sea, roughly halfway between Khiva and the Russian port of Krasnavodsk. The Ersari are said to have been the owners of this area before moving to the Amu Darya.

(Note: from his trip description the tomb location appears actually to be on the Úst-Yurt plateau, closer to Khiva.)

In 1820 the only strong tribe in the area are Yomud Turkmen. Among them the Djafar Bai (or-Bey) sub-tribe have a certain pre-eminence. Mouraviev mentions the Turkmen's general opinion that the Tekes are the most obnoxious raiders. They even come all the way from Akhal Teke to raid Yomud caravans.

(Note: O'Donovan quotes Merv Tekes' claim that their Akhal Teke brethren and the Amu-darya Ersari were actually the worst robbers around, an atypical modesty) .

Page 97: Mouraviev does believe the local Turkmen's legends about a recent change of course of the Amu darya which was thought to have formerly been emptying itself in the Caspian: the author comes across a large dried bed directed towards the Caspian, which his Yomud guides identified as the «Amin-Derĭ».

Many wells, often of better than average water quality, dot this dried bed and its immediate vicinity. Vegetation is also significantly more important than in the desert near by.

(Note: Modern scientists believe that what he saw (and still can be seen on satellite pictures), is the Uzboy, a chain of small residual marshes and tiny dried lakes dotting a former river bed, already dried during previous geological times and that the Amu darya never reached the Caspian Sea during historic times)

Page 105: Mouraviev meets a Chodor Turkmen caravan, (from the Igdyr clan), on their way back to their home in the Mangyshlak peninsula, from Khiva where they have sold a few slaves and bought grain.

Page 108: Several Turkmen tribes live around the Khiva oasis, many having two seasonal jobs: growing food in Spring-Summer, then moving to the Persian border for slave hunting.

Page 109: The best Turkmen horses come from an area near the Atterek and the Gurgien rivers.

(Note: Yomud and Göklan Turkmen)

Djogan (sorgo) and koundjout (sesame) are among the main crops of the Turkmen.

Page 111: Another Yomud sub-tribe, the Koudjouk Tatars accept the rule of the Khan of Khiva and serve as irregular cavalry or hunt for slaves for him.

Mouraviev praises the high quality of the farming in the Khivan oasis «not even seen in Germany».

(Note: As in Bokhara, a high percentage of the population are slaves who take care of most farming and handicraft production, for the benefit of Uzbek gentlemen farmers).

Page 116: «Uzbek» means «his own master» according to Mouraviev. Other authors give different explanations.

Page 188: In 1820 3 000 Russians are still enslaved in the Khiva oasis.

(Note: and much more Persian slaves. 24 years later, most Russian slaves will be liberated, thanks to the diplomatic talent of a daring young British officer, Lieutenant Shakespear, who will escort them back to the Russian lines. The Tzar will confer great honors to the Briton, secretly raging though, since the young fellow's initiative deprives him of a perfect excuse for annexing Khiva. Obviously Shakespear will act under of the Foreign office orders.

In 1873 the victorious Russian army will free between 20 000 and 40 000 Persian slaves.)

Page 206: Mouraviev writes that the Mangyshlak peninsula is heavily settled by «Kirghiz» tribes with marauding habits

(Note: The Russian, perhaps voluntarily, make a great confusion with calling « Kirghiz » both the Kazakhs and the genuine Kirghiz, probably to avoid confusion with their own Cossakhs. The Mangyshlak peninsula is in fact shared by Kazakhs and Chodors / Igdyrs Turkmen. (See Abbott page 187-188.) Today, the area is still mostly settled by Kazakhs, while the Kirghiz tribes lived and still live further East).

Page 224: Back to Baku (Caucasus). Mouraviev visits the same fire-worshippers temple which O'Donovan will find still in activity 50 years later.

Second Part: General description of Khiva oasis and its dependance. Its population & history (Kwaresm).

Northeastern Khiva border is a loop of the Amu Darya. Across the river are the Karakalpak (black bonnets), volatile subjects of Khiva.

Northern border: Settled by «Kirghiz» tribes *(in fact mostly Kazakh- and some western Kirghiz-tribes)* and the shores of the Aral Sea, in which the Amu Darya flows from the south.

The Khan of Khiva wishes to establish his rule as far as the delta of the Syr-darya and to control the local «Kirghiz», which would create a serious further threat for caravans between Russian Orenburg and the rival Uzbekh Khanate of Bokhara.

Southeastern border: the Amu Darya and the desert, both offering routes to Bokhara.

Southern border: the Karakoum desert, the Merv oasis *(at the time in hands of Saryk- and Salor tribesmen, the Turkmen switching back and forth their nominal allegiance between Bokhara and Khiva)* and further the Tekes of the Tejen- and Akhal oases.

Western border: Sterile plains till the shores of the Caspian Sea. Yomud- (dominants) and some Ata clans live mostly along the Caspian shores. A volatile population, which has commercial relations with Khiva, supplies irregular cavalry and reluctantly acknowledges the Khiva leadership. Yomuds routinely exchange slaves for cereals on the Khivan markets.

Northwestern border: (Mangyshlak peninsula): the local Chodors have commercial relationship with Khiva, ensuring Khiva's commerce with the Volga & Astrakhan. They have interest in this protection deal which allows them to buy food, mostly corn on Khiva markets, but they also exchange slaves for food.

Page 237-241: Hypothesis of a previous bed of Amu darya opening into the Caspian.

Page 247: Mouraviev. never sees anything like a forest or real trees. Since wood is shipped up the Amu-darya, the author supposes (wrongly) that large forests exist North of Khiva.

Page 255-260: **Habitants:**

«Sarts» aborigenes, numerous (100 000), mainly living in- and near cities and involved in commercial and agricultural activities. Looked down upon by both Uzbeks and Turkmen.

Karakalpaks. In part nomads (East of the river) in part farmers, poor, unsophisticated, exploited by the Uzbeks and the Sarts.

(Note: Recent theories, (see Moshkova), doubt that the spectacular «Karakalpak»rugs were woven by these farming tribes, and attribute them for example to «Turkoman Uzbeks», living in the Nurata area, northeast of Khiva. No proof, as customary in Rugdom. Besides what is a Turkoman-Uzbek?)

Turkmen. They are gravitating around Khiva and form part of the irregular military of Khiva. They come and go at their pleasure, their main activity being raiding. Mouraviev trusts them with military (guerilla-) talents superior to the Uzbeks and mentions the extraordinary resistance of their horses. The main tribe near Khiva, East and Southeast of Caspian shores are Yomuds. With Chodors in the southern part of Mangyshlak peninsula and pockets of Atas. They all see the farmers of the oasis as slaves (quite literally probably, since the majority are abducted Persians), they indulge in some seasonal small scale farming.

Uzbeks («The masters of themselves», the conquerors and masters. Somewhat degenerated, but still occasionally warlike and capable of violent short-time actions, and raiding. Many are settled as «gentlemen farmers». Relatively speaking, they have a more straightforward mentality and a stronger sense of honor than their subjects. A trifle naive and easily cheated by their slaves, who take care of most of the agricultural jobs Many Russian slaves are in charge of handicrafts. The Qongrat Uzbek tribe is here the leading one.

Page 264: 5 main cities :

Khiva, perhaps 10 000 inhabitants, no particularly impressive buildings, even the khan's residence is quite mediocre.

New Ourghendj, the commercial capital, somewhat larger than Khiva, mainly settled by Sarts. Site of the main bazaar.

Other cities: Chevat, Kiat and Gurlian.

Page 284: Relations between Khiva and Bukhara are characterized by frequent hostility, even though both Khanates are under Uzbek rule.

(Note: Strictly speaking Bokhara was at the time an Emirate, its ruler was called the Amir, just as his colleague ruling Afghanistan)

The larger, much more populated and industrious Bokhara Khanate keeps mostly the upper hand. The ruler of Bokhara is, at the time of Mouraviev's trip, a good and strong administrator (*Mir Hhaïdar el edil «the fair one»*)

(Note: His capital is larger than all Khivan cities together with its 150 000 inhabitants).

In 1813 Khiva attempted an attack on Persia near the Giurgen river. Neither the Teke nor the Yomud accepted to join.

(Note: the former had recently been bashed by the Persians, were still hurting and in no mood for a fight).

Nothing came out of it, but the Khan of Khiva, Mohammed Rahim, then attacked with some success the Tekes.

(Note: probably the Akhal Tekes ?) .

Page 290-291: Description of the Khan. Not overly flattering.

Page 339: Recent import of *Rubbia tinctoria* from Dagestan is mentioned.

Page 341: Turkmen sold to Khiva: camel weavings, felt, sheep and horses, but as was later also apparent from O'Donovan's report, no rugs are specifically mentioned, though pictures show that the Khans of Khiva owned Turkmen rugs.!