

## H.Moser. Durch Zentral-Asien, die Kirgizensteppe, Russisch-Turkestan, Bochara, Chiwa, das Turkmenenland und Persien. 1883-1884

<http://archive.org/details/durchcentralasie00moseuoft>

*A daring Swiss gentleman from Schaffhausen, with family alliances into German and Austrian nobility. He travels through Russian Turkestan, Bokhara, Khiva and Akhal Teke, shortly before Merv surrenders to Russia.*

*Merv-Teke raids are still rather frequent, especially against Khivans and Uzbeks of the Amu darya.*

*Moser's second hand informations are sometimes superficial, with some obvious embellishments, perhaps due to his Russian sources.*

*However many of his first hand informations are interesting and original. Well illustrated booklet.*

Page 165: inside the city of Bokhara there are 50 bazaars, 20 more are outside the walls.

Each bazaar with its own specialty.

*(Note: This makes it possible that in such a large city, earlier travelers missed the carpet bazaar and the carpet weaver's quarter near-by,*

*The peremptory judgments of some experts about a total lack of carpet production in Bokhara, basing this ukase on the opinion of only one early visitor's report, can be challenged. Moser is not the only visitor who signals a carpet bazaar and weavers in Bokhara, although he is the first one. Olufsen a few years later confirms it).*

Main export is cotton. Second in value comes silk yarn. Third are lamb skins

*(Note : lamb skins com from an area west of the town, near the Amu-darya and populated largely by Turkmen, mainly Ersari).*

Main imports: textiles (cotton, silk,..) from Europe, mainly from Russia, but also France, England and even Switzerland.)

Page 191: Around 1850 the city of **Charjew** on the left bank of the Amu-darya was smaller than at the time of Moser's visit. It consisted mainly of a fortress built against Turkmen raids. In **1883** the city is mainly inhabited by Uzbeks, at least as far as the leadership and military is concerned. Tadjiks make a sizable part of the population too and there is, as in Bokhara, a large «Lumpen Proletariat» of slaves.

Page 221-226: The **Khiva** oasis:

Settled Uzbek gentlemen farmers and their slaves.

Near their adobe houses, there is always a yurt for visitors. The oasis is extremely well tilled. There are no real villages, but many dispersed fortified farms, which density increases when one comes nearer to Khiva city (the capital), New Urgendj (the economical, commercial center) or to 3 other main cities.

Page 228: The clothes differ significantly between Khivans and Bokhara:

- the Khivans don large and hairy cylindrical hats made of black- or white sheep fell (similar to the Turkmen kalpak), rather sober «chalats » (also similar to Turkmen ones ) and high boots of (Russian) red leather (again as the Turkmen's, however the latter find the red color effeminate and wear their boots with the red side hidden, not so the Khivans),
- the Bokharans have more colorful and larger chalats, use silk profusely and don a large variety of head-gear, including turbans, especially the Uzbek ruling class.

Page 232: Moser (based on data from a certain Dr. Schmidt), guesstimates the population of the Khanate at about 750 000 souls, living in 150 000 houses and yurts of which:

about 65 000 settled people's houses either Uzbeks, Sarts, slaves or former slaves and

about 85 000 yurts of nomads or semi-nomads divided between:

- Kirghiz 20 000 yurts ( Either «true» Kirghiz or Kazakhs, which the Russian misname Kirghiz too, perhaps to differentiate them from their own Cossacks)
- Karakalpak 23 000 yurts
- Turkmen on the left bank of the Amu darya: 40 000 yurts (Yomuds, Yemralis, Atas and Chodors)
- Turkmen on the right bank: 2000 yurts (Atas)

It is possible that these data do not include the Turkmen and Kazakhs living on the shores of the Caspian Sea (Manghislakh peninsula and its South ), which in 1883 are still nominally subjects of Khiva, but de-facto already under Russian rule.

Page 248: Khiva itself is not the largest city in the Khanate, its population is inferior to 15 000 souls, its bazaar is much poorer than the ones seen in Tashkent and Bokhara. Many products are Russian-made, except the Khivan chalats and Tschugermahs (hats)

Page 261: Moser meets Turkmen en route to the market in Tachhaus (Khiva Khanate). They are Yomuds and Yemralis.

Page 262: At Hally (or Jellali), the last village with mud houses and the last place settled by Uzbeks West of the oasis. One is now entering Turkmen territory.

The author mentions a second guess of the Turkmen living under Khivan rule on the left bank of the Amu darya, based on General N. J. Grodekoff's information (Skobeleff's chief of his staff at Geok Tepe):

Instead of 40 000 yurts the Russian guesstimates between 55 000 and 60 000 yurts from the following tribes:

Yomud 15 000-20 000 yurts

Chodor 17 000 yurts  
Yemrali 10 000 yurts  
Ata 9000 yurts  
Alieli 1000 yurts

and six other tribes: 1500 yurts.

*(Note: The difference between Herr Dr. Schmidt's and General Grodekow's data might be due to the 17 000 Chodors, living mainly in the southern Mangyshlak peninsula, far in the West and of which Schmidt was perhaps unaware, or, alternatively he may have counted only the Turkmen « tscharwas» (nomads).*

Page 263 : General von Kaufman, the commander of the Russian army which seized Khiva, estimates that the number of Turkmen yurts is about 50 000, most Turkmen being «tscharwas» (nomads) but some being «tschomri» ( settled). The number of the latter has increased notably after Khiva lost its independence in 1873 , since the slave market closed and raids were forbidden.

However, Moser is informed that it still takes very little to convert any peaceful tschomri into a dangerous tscharva or «Robin Hood», for example a slight difference of opinion with a Khivan tax officer.

Page 264: In a recent past the Turkmen had much more political clout in the Khanate, as the Yomuds always were the better, more competent part of the Khan's army.

*(Note: they even stormed Khiva several times:*

*For example after Nadir Shah (the last strong Shah of Persia) conquered the city in 1740 and left it under a weak puppet Khan).*

*In 1855 the Tekes defeated and killed a Khan of Khiva and his successor.*

*The strongest Khivan Khans used to launch forays into Turkmen territory and all the main tribes were defeated a few times, including the Yomuds, the Chodors, the Tekes, the Ersaris and the Salors, the Saryks. The latter 3 tribes even left definitely the Khivan territory after a different with a strong Khan and his Yomud allies. (See salon 132 [http://www.turkotek.com/salon\\_00132/salon.html](http://www.turkotek.com/salon_00132/salon.html) ).*

This situation changed after the Russian conquest of Khiva, when von Kaufman taxed the Yomuds beyond their possibilities and the unwittingly rebelled giving this general the excuse he was waiting for. A Russian army marched on the main Yomud concentration, who attacked them with great courage, again and again, during three days. More than 10 000 Yomuds participated to this action. When finally the Russian infantry broke the Turkmen's backbone, the Cossack cavalry attacked and thoroughly pillaged 3 of the Yomud's main encampments, killing all leaving soul.)

Page 272-273: Huge distances covered by Turkmen during an alaman. Amazing Turkmen's love and sweetness for their horse.

Page 283: The Yomuds would like to be ruled directly Russia, the Uzbeks puppet Khan behaves like a parasite to his own people.

Page 293: Meeting a group of Akhal Tekes from Kysyl Arvat (thus already under Russian rule in 1883) in the desert between Khiva and Kyzyl Arvat. The author's escort being mostly Yomud tribesmen, hostile to the Akhal Tekes, there is some initial tension around the camp fire, but finally the two groups share food and tea. The Akhal Tekes are on their way to Khiva to sell carpets and other artifacts.

Page 297: Picture of a Turkmen horseman, showing the typical horse-felt blanket and the way it is used.

Arrival at Kyzyl Arvat on the Transcaspian railway: The author notes the high proportion of recently immigrated Armenians, Persians and Caucasians in this small town.

Page 298: The Yomud- and Göklen tribes, South of the Atterek (thus in Persia) are again making trouble.

Page 300: Administrative organization of the Transcaspian province in 1883: Three subdivisions: Mangyshlak, Atterek (Yomud & Gökklans), and Ashkabad (Akhal Tekes).

Page 301: Another description of the storming of Geok Tepe. Moser's information is not fully coherent with all other sources though.

Page 304: The author quotes Grodekov (future general) who believes that the Tekes lived in the Mangyshlak peninsula until about 1718, when the pressure of other turkic tribes forced them to move South and South east.

*(Note: In 1718, these hostile tribes might have been the various Qalmiks clans who roamed the area during the XVII and XVIII century and not as wrongly claimed by Vambery, the much later owners of the area, the Kazakhs hordes).*

The Tekes pushing south, caused the emigration of some Yomuds towards the Atterek river and conquered the Kopet dagh oases, pushing back, further south into Persia, the Alieli Turkmen and the Kurdish and Turkik tribes settled on the frontier by several the Persians Shahs to protect them. They destroyed the Persian cities and Alieli villages north of the Kopet dagh.

*(Note: According to O'Donovan they completely destroyed Ashkabad, the largest Persian town north of the Kopet dagh during the second decade of the XIX century.)*

The Tekes were at times, nominally dependent from either the Khan of Khiva or the Shah, but independent de-facto and most of the time at war with either Persia, Khiva or Bokhara. They were also always hunting slaves, mostly in Persia.

In 1855, They even defeated a Khivan army killing the Khan.

Page 316: In Akhal Teke: « ..Their rugs , which are woven by their women, are the most beautiful and the most resistant of all. They are also very expensive, since even in the Akhal oases, a beautiful large carpet easily costs 40 roubles. I have seen example of such large carpets fetching 6000-8000 Mark.... »  
(Note: In other words such a top carpet is costing about five time the price of a spouse in 1883. No wonder that it never be bought at the market. At least not until the Russian favored mass production of Turkmen rugs, targeted at European suckers).

Page 321: Many rivers in the Kopet Dagh range, disappear underground and reappear in the Akhal Teke piedmont. The Kopet-Dagh is mostly limestone and the underground is therefore much perforated.

(Note: we can therefore suppose that in this area the water was always very hard (high concentration of calcium and magnesium salts), but probably much less contaminated with red clay thus with less traces of iron than in other Turkmen abodes.

I would risk the same hypothesis for the rivulets of the Little- and Grand Balkan. This might lead to a credible hypothesis about the red and yellow shades dyed in these area, assuming of course that the other potentially influencing parameters (mainly the metal of which dyeing pot are made and the purity of alum) would be identical in all weaving tribes, which is far from being certain:

- As far as alum purity from iron contamination is concerned, I have no clue about its sources and quality.

- About the propagation of very cheap (and potentially rusty) Russian-made cast-iron pots in the region, it is reasonable to assume that the Chodors and the northwestern Yomuds adopted them first, perhaps as early as the middle XVIII century. Then the tribes dealing with the Bokharan markets (Ersaris, Yemralis, Saryks, who were roaming the area during the XVIII century, before moving to Merv towards the end of this century), while the Tekes, Akhal Tekes and Salors could rest assured of a rich «harvest» of tinned copper pots during their frequent alams deep into in Persia. As they also were (arguably) richer than most other Turkmen, they might have bought more of these expensive pots from Meshed, Herat or Bokhara merchants ).

A rather shaky hypothesis could therefore be that the 18th-19th century Tekes and Salor would enjoy the highest percentage of clear reds in their rugs. The Yomud and Chodors may have had to live with the highest percentage of duller brick reds.

Just a thought, mind you.

Page 322: At Ashkabad, the new capital of the Region. The governor is general Komaroff.

(Note: Komarov was an enthusiast ruggie. Alas, I am not aware of any book written by this officer though.)

Page 324: Moser watches as Persian slaves are brought back from Merv to Ashgabat, and from there to their country, thanks to Alikhanoff's diplomacy.

Page 326: « ...The fact that there is no true local currency is a proof of the weakness of commercial activity...». Even the known talent of Turkmen as coin forgers (Lessar dixit) is no solution.

Page 328: About Merv history: The author gives year **1856** as date of the Tekes offensive against the Merv Saryk. **and March 3, 1884** for the date of the capitulation of the khans and the 24 heads of the Merv Teke sub-tribes. Only a minority of opponents tried to fight but were easily beaten and most surrendered.

Soon followed by the Yolatan Saryks (estimated at 13 000 yurts).

(Note: this figure probably includes the Pendj-deh Saryks as well, who jumped on the band wagon a little later.)

Page 330: **Carpets** and camel-hair textiles made by the Pendj-deh Saryks are highly praised.

(Note A further confirmation, if necessary, that Dudin did not check the right sources before he claimed that the Saryks did not weave rugs before the Russian take-over).