



Title	Shi'ite Captive Release Negotiations in Khiva : A Nexus of Khivan-Iranian and Anglo-Russian Relations
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Citation	Acta Slavica Iaponica, 43, 73-93
Issue Date	2022
DOI	https://doi.org/10.14943/ASI.43.73
Doc URL	https://hdl.handle.net/2115/93353
Type	departmental bulletin paper
File Information	Acta43_04_Shioya.pdf



Shi'ite Captive Release Negotiations in Khiva: A Nexus of Khivan-Iranian and Anglo-Russian Relations*

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INTRODUCTION

This article examines the background of the failure of the Qajar mission led by Muhammad 'Ali Khan to negotiate the release of Shi'ite captives held in Khiva in April–May 1842.¹ It shows the limitations of the control exercised over the Turkmens, who were the main supplier of the Shi'ite captives, by the Qongrats in Khiva and the Qajars in Iran, followed by a discussion on how and why the British attempted to mediate between the Qongrats and the Qajars regarding the release of Shi'ite captives, regardless of the limitations on the control that both courts exercised over the Turkmens. Then, we consider Russia's reactions to the British mediation, especially focusing on Russia's intentions toward the Russo-Khivan and the Anglo-Russian relations.

The Khanate of Khiva (1512–1920) and the Emirate of Bukhara (1756–1920), both established in the southern parts of Central Asia, were regarded as hotbeds of the slave trade by nineteenth-century Western European and Russian travelers and writers. The British, who had declared the abolition of slavery in the Empire in 1807, intervened in the negotiations of the Qajar missions aiming to emancipate such “slaves.” The Russians were also concerned about the Russian captives held in Khiva and Bukhara since the beginning of the nineteenth century and often demanded their release.² The Russians justified their 1873 expedition to Khiva and the transformation of the Khanate into an imperial protectorate as a “civilizing mission” and coerced the Khivan khan declare the “abolition of slavery.” However, this did not reflect the reality of the situation.³

* This piece is a modified version of the author's Japanese article “Qajar Mission to Khiva in 1842: Negotiation Over Release of Shiite Captives and the Participation of Anglo-Russian Representatives,” *Inner Asian Studies* 33 (2018).

1 In this article, based on the descriptions in the narrative sources of the Khanate of Khiva and the Qajar Iran, the author uses the term “captive” for the Shi'ites held in Khiva at that time, instead of the term “slave” adopted by recent authors on this topic. See J. Eden, *Slavery and Empire in Central Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

2 On cases of captive release through ransom payments by Russian border authorities in the nineteenth century, see E. Smolarz, “Saving Lost Souls or Doing Good Business? Interactions at the Russian-Kazakh Frontier and Strategies for Freeing Russian Slaves in Central Asia in the Early 19th Century,” *Diyâr* 1 (2020), pp. 34–57.

3 Eden (2018) argues that the abolition of slavery in Russia was nothing more than fiction;

Many of the captives bought and sold in the Khanate of Khiva were captured during the Turkmen military raids against the Shi'ite Iranian and Kurdish populations of the Qajar border regions in Khorasan and Mazandaran and sold in both Khiva and its hinterland. The Qongrat dynasty (1804–1920) in the Khanate of Khiva regarded the Shi'ites as “infidels” (*kāfir*) and on this basis, it justified the plundering and captive takings of the Turkmen. Hence, between the 1830s and 1850s, there were several negotiations between Tehran and Khiva for the release of captives.⁴ Muhammad 'Ali Khan's mission to Khiva is one example of these negotiations.

The history of the captive release negotiations between Tehran (the Qajar dynasty in Iran) and Khiva (the Qongrat dynasty in the Khanate of Khiva) is outlined in Mannanov,⁵ Amanat,⁶ and Allaeva.⁷ Recently, Noelle-Karimi⁸ and Eden⁹ have examined Muhammad 'Ali Khan's mission to Khiva, relying mainly on Persian sources (Muhammad 'Ali Khan's diary). However, all these studies are based only on Iranian and Russian sources and do not use British archival sources. Moreover, they do not clarify the intentions and expectations of the British and Russians how this negotiation reflected the dynamics of the relationship between the two countries. Besides, the nineteenth-century Anglo-Russian rivalry called the “Great Game” in Central Asia has been the subject of a vast amount of research.¹⁰ However, as Uyama put it, an especially problematic aspect of the old Great Game narrative is the treatment of local people as passive or irrational actors. Their cooperation with or hostile actions against empires are described episodically, and their motives and backgrounds are rarely analysed in detail.¹¹

rather, it was the slaves' own struggle for emancipation following the Russian occupation of Khiva that moved the Russian military commanders to declare abolition. Even after it became a protectorate, Russian authorities were not enthusiastic about abolishing slavery in the Khanate, which thus continued.

- 4 The best known cases are 'Abbas Mirza's (1832) and Riza Quli Khan's (1851) negotiations with the Khanate of Khiva.
- 5 B. S. Mannanov, “Otnosheniia Irana so sredneaziatskimi khanstvami vo vtoroi polovine XIX v.,” *Kratkie soobshcheniia Instituta narodov Azii AN SSSR* 39 (1963), pp. 56–71.
- 6 A. Amanat, “Central Asia: Relations with Persia in The 13th/19th Century,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1990), pp. 205–207.
- 7 N. Allaeva, “XIX asr Xiva xonligida elchilik xizmati: Eron elchisining safar tafsilotlari,” *O'zbekiston Tarixi* 2 (2014), pp. 31–43.
- 8 Ch. Noelle-Karimi, “On the Edge: Eastern Khurasan in the Perception of Qajar Officials,” *Eurasian Studies* 14 (2016), pp. 135–177.
- 9 Eden, *Slavery and Empire*, 40–47.
- 10 Morrison aptly organizes and critically argues about the results of great game research. A. Morrison, *The Russian Conquest of Central Asia: A Study in Imperial Expansion, 1814–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).
- 11 T. Uyama, “Shūen Kara Teikoku He No Shoutai, Teikoku, Tekiou: Chūōajia No Baai (From the Margin to the Empire, 'Invitation,' Resistance and Adjustment: In the Case of Central Asia),” in T. Uyama, ed., *Modern Eurasian Empires and Contemporary World* (Tokyo:

In this article, we investigate, from the context of the history of negotiations between the local administrations (the Qongrat and Qajar dynasties), the reasons for the failure of Muhammad 'Ali Khan's mission. Additionally, from the context of Anglo-Russian relations in Central Asia, we enumerate the reasons for the representatives of the two countries' interest in the negotiations. First, in Section I, the history of the relations between the Qongrat and Qajar dynasties in the first half of the nineteenth century is outlined. Section II discusses the content of the negotiations in detail, and Section III discusses the background to the negotiations between the Qongrat and Qajar dynasties and the mission's failure. Section IV and Section V clarify, respectively, the British and Russian interest in the negotiation.

The primary Qajar material is the diary (*rūznāma*) kept by Muhammed 'Ali Khan as an account of the mission.¹² The central British materials are the reports and enclosures sent to John McNeill, the British plenipotentiary in Tehran (in office 1836–1842), by Taylor Thomson, the attaché sent by McNeill on the mission with Muhammad 'Ali Khan.¹³ The Russian materials pertain to a collection of published documents regarding Russia's strategy in Central Asia.¹⁴ Regarding the Khivan materials, chronicles by Muhammad Riza Mirab Agahi do not mention negotiations during Muhammad 'Ali Khan's mission; neither were we able to discover relevant documents among the archives of the Khivan khans.¹⁵ Therefore, for information on the Khivan attitude to the

Mineruva Shobou, 2016), pp. 121–144: 122–123.

12 Muḥammad 'Alī Khān Ghafūr, *Rūznāma-yi Safar-i Khvārazm*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥasan Kā'ūsī 'Arāqī and Muḥammad Naṣīrī Muqaddam (Tih-rān: Mu'assasah-i Chāp va Intishārāt-i Vizārat-i Umūr-i Khārīja, 1994).

13 FO 60 [Foreign Office: Political and Other Departments: General Correspondence before 1906, Persia (National Archives, Kew)]/89, No 24, Lieutenant Colonel Justin Sheil, May–July 1842, contains all 27 reports, copies of letters, and English translations of some of those letters. These include translations of 10 letters (Enclosures Nos 17–26) between Muhammad 'Ali Khan and Khivan vizier Muhammad Ya'qub Mehtar; the originals, in Persian, of eight of these are also in the diary of Muhammad 'Ali Khan (Muḥammad 'Alī Khān 1994: 40–43). Later, Thomson's wife published a short description of his travel to Khiva, ignoring his diplomatic mission. M. L. Sheil, *Glimpses of Life and Manners in Persia: With Notes on Russia, Koords, Toorkomans, Nestorians, Khiva, and Persia* (London: J. Murray, 1856), pp. 358–370.

14 A. T. Serebrennikov, ed., *Sbornik materialov dlia istorii zavoevaniia Turkestanskogo kraia*, vols. II–IV (Tashkent: Tipografiia shtaba Turkestanskogo voennogo okruga, 1912–1914). This collection contains instructions and reports relating to the two missions, one in 1841 and one in 1842, dispatched from Russia to Khiva, which are currently stored in archives such as the Russian State Archive of Military History (RGVIA) and the Foreign Policy Archive of Imperial Russia (AVPRI). It also mentions Muhammad 'Ali Khan's mission. However, correspondence between Russian Foreign Minister Karl V. Nesselrode (in office 1822–1856) and the Russian plenipotentiary in Tehran, Aleksandr I. Medem (in office 1841–1845) and relevant reports have not been published. For this article, we were only able to access French translations of some of this material that were among the British documents. Relevant documents kept by AVPRI require future study.

15 By the “archives of the Khivan khans,” we mean the approximately 3,300 items confiscated

negotiations, we relied on comments in the British historical sources as well as Iranian and Russian sources.

I RELATIONS BETWEEN THE QONGRAT AND QAJAR DYNASTIES IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

1. *Advances into Khorasan by the Qongrat and Qajar dynasties*

Relations between the Qongrat and Qajar dynasties began with the three military expeditions into Khorasan in 1813, 1816, and 1818 by Muhammad Rahim Khan (r. 1806–1825) of the Qongrat dynasty, immediately after the integration of the Khorazm Oasis (1811). In Khorasan at the time, although a governor (*vāli*) was appointed in Mashhad, the Qajar control had not been fully established. Muhammad Rahim Khan built alliances with local Turkic and Kurdish leaders who opposed the governor of Khorasan and occupied the whole of northern foothills of the Kopet Dag Mountains, subordinating the majority of the Teke Turkmens living in that region, while the Salor, Sariq, and Teke Turkmens in Merv submitted to Muhammad Rahim Khan in 1822. His successor, Allah Quli Khan, conducted four military expeditions on Khorasan, in 1826, 1829, 1830, and 1832, taking advantage of conflicts between the governor of Khorasan appointed by the Qajar dynasty and local Khorasan leaders. According to Muhammad Riza Mirab, Rahman Quli, the younger brother of Allah Quli Khan, advanced as far as Sarakhs via Merv in 1825, for the first time levying taxes on the Salor, Sariq, and Teke Turkmens of that area.¹⁶ However, the Qajar control of that region was established as a result of two military expeditions into Khorasan in 1831–1832 and 1832–1833 by ‘Abbas Mirza, crown prince during the reign of Fath ‘Ali Shah (r. 1804–1832).¹⁷ Thereafter, military expeditions into the northeastern parts of Iran led by the Khivan khans were suspended, except the excursion in 1836, although they recommenced in 1846 when the rule of Muhammad Amin Khan (r. 1846–1855) began.

In Khorasan, Turkmen and Iranian Shi‘ite captives had already been taken since the middle of the eighteenth century by either side during the Turkmen military raids and retaliation for those raids. With the establishment of the control of the Qongrat and Qajar dynasties, both two parties held negotiations for the release of these captives. Such negotiations are first mentioned

from the Khanate court on the occasion of the Russian army's occupation of Khiva in 1873, which were, in 1962, transferred to the central state archive of the modern Republic of Uzbekistan. For information about the collection, see Iu. Bregel', "Arkhib khivinskiikh khanov (predvaritel'nyi obzor novykh dokumentov)," *Narody Azii i Afriki* 1 (1966), pp. 67–76.

16 Muḥammad Riẓā Mirāb Āgahī, *Riḡāz al-dawla*, İstanbul Üniversitesi Kütüphanesi, Türkçe Yazmalar, N. 82, ff. 524b–758a: 557b–558a.

17 S. Komaki, "19 Seiki Shoki No Horāsān: Shoki No Kājāru Chō Ni Tsuite No Ichi Shiron (Khorasan at the Beginning of the 19th Century: An Essay on the Early Qajar History)," *Journal of Sophia Asian Studies* 10 (1992), pp. 17–42, here 30–31.

in the Qajar chronicles in 1246/1830–1831. At that time, 2,000 Teke Turkmens had captured 500 pilgrims who were going to the Emam Reza Mausoleum in Mashhad. The Qajar dynasty staged a punitive expedition on the Turkmens and gave the local Kurdish leader, Riza Quli Khan of Khabushan, 10,000 tomans, ordering him to buy back the captives from Khiva. The envoy succeeded in buying back the captives but it was estimated that an equivalent of 100,000 tomans was extorted.¹⁸ However, there is no mention of this event in Qongrat dynasty chronicles. In addition, during his second military expedition into Khorasan, 'Abbas Mirza advanced as far as Sarakhs, taking a large number of captives from among the Turkmen tribes (Salor, Sariq, and Teke). This led to demands by Turkmens from Sarakhs for the return of the captives through the mediation of Allah Quli Khan. 'Abbas Mirza agreed to the release of captives, on the condition that the Khivan Khans and Turkmens of Sarakhs and Merv would cease incursions into Khorasan, guarantee the safety of Khorasani merchants, and prohibit the sale of captives.¹⁹

2. The beginning of negotiations for the release of Shi'ite captives

After both 'Abbas Mirza (October 20, 1833) and Fath 'Ali Shah (October 23, 1834) had died, Muhammad Shah was victorious in the struggle for succession and ascended the Qajar throne.²⁰ During his reign, negotiations for the release of captives began through a continuous mutual exchange of envoys between the Qongrat and Qajar courts. In 1837 and 1838, based on a territorial claim on the Greater Khorasan, undertook a military expedition on Herat, surrounding the city.²¹ During the siege (from February 1838 to November 1838), Allah Quli Khan dispatched an expeditionary force led by his vizier Muhammad Yusuf Mehtar to Merv to relieve Herat, hoping to resist the advance of the Qajar through alliances with cities in Afghan Turkestan and with the government of Herat.²² The British intervened in the siege of Herat and, in June 1838, the Qajar army began to retreat as the siege failed.²³ Immediately afterward, Muhammed

18 Riza Quli Khan Hidayat, *Tārīkh-i Rawzat al-ṣafā-yi Nāṣiri*, 10 vols, ed. J. Kiyānfār (Tihārān: Asāṭir, 2002), pp. 7940–7941.

19 Komaki, "19 Seiki Shoki," 31. On the occasion of the 1842 negotiations, Allah Quli Khan tells Muhammed 'Ali Khan that "we ourselves" paid 70,000 tomans to 'Abbas Mirza at the time and bought back the captives (FO 60/89, No 24, Enclosure 23, Muḥammad 'Ali Khān to [Muḥammad Ya'qūb] Mehtar, Khiva, no date).

20 Ibid.

21 The Greater Khorasan corresponds not only to a north-eastern territory of the contemporary Islamic Republic of Iran but also to a land including cities such as Merv, Herat, Balkh, and other historically known developed cities in a part of Afghanistan and Turkmenistan.

22 Muḥammad Riza Mīrāb: 716b–728b.

23 S. Komaki, "Herāto No Yāru Mohanmado Hān: 19 Seiki Chūki No Iran Afuganisutan Kankei-Shi (Yār Muḥammad Khan in Herat: History of the Relationship Between Iran and Afghanistan in the Middle of the 19th Century)," *Journal of Oriental Researches* 65:1 (2006), pp. 81–103, here 84.

Shah dispatched Hadi Khan as an envoy to Khiva.²⁴ It is possible to confirm from both Qajar and Qongrat chronicles that exchanges of envoys were carried out continuously from that time.²⁵

When Muhammed Shah's envoy Mirza Riza arrived in Khiva at the end of Ramadan 1255/Nov-Dec 1839, Allah Quli Khan issued an edict (*farmān*) forbidding the Turkmens to engage in military raids.²⁶ However, on 26 Sha'ban 1256/November 23, 1840, when Khivan envoy to Tehran, Ata Niyaz Mahram, returned home accompanied by Qajar envoy Shahsavār Bek, Allah Quli Khan reversed his edict forbidding the Turkmens to engage in military raids. The Qongrat chronicler concluded that this was because of aggression by Allayar Khan Asaf al-Dawla, the Qajar-appointed governor of Khorasan (in office 1834-1847), against the Teke Turkmens in Akhal, who were regarded as Khivan subjects (*fuqarā*).²⁷ On 12 Sha'ban 1257/September 28, 1841, Muhammad Vali Khan, the nephew of Allayar Khan, was captured on the outskirts of Mashhad during a military raid by Sāriq Turkmens from Merv and sent to Khiva.²⁸ In response, in December 1841, Muhammad Shah began preparations to lead a military expedition against Khiva.²⁹

To summarize, the Qongrat dynasty of the Khanate of Khiva began to advance on the northern foothills of the Kopet Dagh Mountains in 1813, subordinating the Teke Turkmens of that area. By 1822, the Qongrats were also advancing on the Merv Oasis area, a strategic passage linking Bukhara and Mashhad, and, allying with the local Khorasan leaders, they resisted attempts by the Qajar to establish control in Khorasan. During the military expedition of 'Abbas Mirza to Khorasan in 1831-1833, when the establishment of Qajar control looked likely, negotiations began between the Qongrat and Qajar dynasties regarding the release of people captured as a result of Turkmen military raids and punitive retaliatory Qajar military expeditions. In addition, after the 1837-1838 siege of Herat, such negotiations were carried out directly between the two courts. As a result, at the end of 1839, Allah Quli Khan of Khiva issued an edict forbidding the Turkmens to engage in military raids, which he revoked within a year. Capitalizing on the capture of Muhammad Vali Khan in September 1841, at the end of that same year, the Qajars were planning a military expedition into Khiva.

24 Muḥammad Riẓā Mirāb: 690a-b.

25 Ibid., 729b, 734a.

26 Ibid., 730a-b.

27 Ibid., 736b-737a.

28 Ibid., 741a; Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān I'timād al-Salṭana, *Tārīkh-i muntaẓam-i Nāṣirī*, 3 vols., ed. Muḥammad Ismā'īl Riẓvān (Tih-rān: [no publisher], 1984-1985), pp. 1656-1657.

29 FO 248 [Foreign Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Embassy and Consulates, Iran (formerly Persia), General Correspondence (National Archives, Kew)]/102, No. 58, McNeill to Aberdeen, December 31, 1841; Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān 1984-1985: 1657.

II CAPTIVE RELEASE NEGOTIATIONS BY MUHAMMAD 'ALI KHAN'S MISSION

Muhammad Shah's plans for a military expedition into Khiva prompted a three-way discussion in Tehran on January 8, 1842, between grand vizier Hajji Mirza 'Abbas Aghasi Iravani (in office 1835–1848) and foreign minister Mirza Abu al-Hasan Khan Ilchi (in office 1838–1845)—both of the Qajar dynasty—and John McNeill. At this meeting, the decision was made to send a mission to Khiva before the military expedition could properly start to conduct final negotiations surrounding the release of the Shi'ite captives, with a British representative acting as a mediator.³⁰ Later, Russian plenipotentiary Medem announced that he would also cooperate with the negotiations, and cooperation was also sought from P. Nikiforov, the proposed resident representative of Russia in Khiva.³¹

On 27 Zu al-Hijja 1257/February 9, 1842, the mission led by Muhammad 'Ali Khan left Tehran, accompanied by an envoy from Khiva, Muhammad Hasan Bek, from the Russian legation, and Taylor Thomson.³² The following account of the mission and the course of its negotiations is based on the diary of Muhammad 'Ali Khan and British documents. Traveling via Mashhad, Sarakhs, and Merv, the mission arrived in Besh Ariq on the outskirts of Khiva on April 14, 1842. The first meetings with Allah Quli Khan (who was on his way to supervise the dredging of a water channel outside Hazarasp) were held on the evening of that same day. Thomson was received first and presented a letter to Allah Quli Khan from McNeill. Allah Quli Khan immediately asked for the latest news on the worsening situation of the Anglo-Indian Army in Afghanistan, Britain's victory in the First Opium War (1840–1842), and Arthur Conolly and Charles Stoddart, British officers who had gone missing in Bukhara.³³ Thomson denied rumors of a recent disaster in Afghanistan, discussed both the British success in China and the possibility of additional deployment of the Anglo-Indian army in Afghanistan and explained that there was still no news of the missing officers. Allah Quli Khan then received Muhammad 'Ali Khan, who expressed his desire for friendship between the two countries and because of the late hour, sought another opportunity for state-related negotiations. Allah Quli Khan met with Thomson again on the following day, April 15, but only inquired about BRITISH merchandise and industrial products. Muhammad 'Ali Khan, Thomson, and the others reached Khiva on April 17 and were allocated quarters in the garden (*bāgh*) of Angarik

30 L/PS/9 [India Office Records: Records of the India Office Political and Secret Department: Correspondence on Areas outside India, 1781–1911 (The British Library, London)]/121, pp. 41–48, Memorandum, January 8, 1842.

31 L/PS/9/121, pp. 59–66, McNeill to Aberdeen, January 25, 1842; Serebrennikov 1912–1914: IV, 40–42. However, as mentioned in part 1 of Section V, at the time in question, Nikiforov had already left Khiva.

32 Muḥammad 'Ali Khān 1994: 3.

33 This probably refers to the murder of Shah Shuja' near Kabul on April 5, 1842.

near Ichan Qal'a.³⁴ Thus, during the initial process of the negotiation of Muhammad 'Ali Khan's mission, the Khivan court treated the Iranian mission separately with the British one. In the course of further negotiations, the Khivan court came to realize the British intention of mediation between the Qongrats and the Qajars, which later made Khan unpleasant.

Allah Quli Khan returned to Khiva on April 23 and met the delegation again on the evening of April 25. Thomson informed Allah Quli Khan that Muhammad Shah was planning a military expedition into Khiva, that the British government had offered to act as an intermediary in the negotiations between the Qongrat and Qajar dynasties, and that the Qajars had accepted the offer and sent him to Khiva. He also added that in a recent similar case of conflict with Russia, the Khan had accepted a similar offer from a British agent, to the great advantage of the Khanate. The "recent similar case" referred to is the successful release of Russian captives through the mediation of Richmond Shakespear, an officer in the Anglo-Indian army, as will be discussed in Part 2 of Section IV. Allah Quli Khan responded that the circumstances surrounding the release of those Russian captives were different and that when he had negotiated the release of the Russian captives, his own merchants and their merchandise was being held by the Russians. He had agreed to the offer to bring about their release. Thomson argued that war between Iran and Khorazm would be of no profit to either party and that "Muhammad Shah dispatched the mission, respecting the amicable recommendation from the governments of the two greatest powers: Britain and Russia" and that Allah Quli Khan should also respect that fact. In addition, when Allah Quli Khan declared that the source of the conflict lay in Qajar attacks for which there should be retaliation, Thomson replied that it was meaningless to discuss the roots of the conflict and stressed that Muhammad Shah was strengthening his military with the intention of sending an expedition to Khiva. Allah Quli Khan then proposed a one-for-one exchange of captives in principle, with a ransom to be paid for any captives in excess of that number. Muhammad 'Ali Khan replied that Muhammad Shah was unlikely to agree to either exchange of captives or buy them back, after which the day's meeting drew to a close.³⁵

Negotiations continued thereafter between Muhammad 'Ali Khan, Thomson, and the vizier of the Qongrat dynasty Muhammad Ya'qub Mehtar. On April 29, Muhammad 'Ali Khan sent a letter to Mehtar, with a request that Khiva should repatriate the Iranian captives who wished to return and that both sides should in the future refrain from aggression.³⁶ In a meeting with

34 Ibid., 12-13; FO 60/89, No 24, Enclosure 1, Thomson to McNeill, Uaz, April 15, 1842.

35 FO60/89, No 24, Enclosure 2, Thomson to McNeill, Khiva, April 26, 1842. However, according to his diary, Muhammad 'Ali Khan first proposed the release of captives to Allah Quli Khan on 9 Rabi' al-avval 1257/April 30, 1842 (Muhammad 'Ali Khān 1994: 18-20).

36 Muhammad 'Ali Khān 1994: 42; FO 60/89, No 24, Enclosure 22, Muhammad 'Ali Khān to [Muhammad Ya'qub] Mehtar, Khiva, [April 29, 1842].

Mehtar on the same day, Thomson enquired about the proposal of the Khivan side. Mehtar proposed that any exchange of captives should be limited to those seized after the dispatch of Muhammed Shah's envoy Mirza Riza to Khiva in Nov-Dec 1839 and after Allah Quli Khan's edict forbidding the Turkmens' military raids. In response, Thomson proposed that, first, the Khivan side should release a certain number of captives and both sides should refrain from aggression; the Qajars should then release the same number of captives and neither side should seek compensation for past attacks. Muhammad 'Ali Khan and Mehtar both agreed to this proposal. Mehtar asked Muhammad 'Ali Khan to specify what "certain number" meant and received a reply of 2,000-3,000. He said that he would report back to Allah Quli Khan and await approval, bringing an end to the day's discussions.³⁷

Later, probably around May 12, Allah Quli Khan summoned Muhammad 'Ali Khan and the captured Muhammad Vali Khan and suggested that Muhammad Vali Khan acts as an intermediary (*kadkhudāyī*) in discussions with Muhammad 'Ali Khan and Thomson. During the discussions, Allah Quli Khan suggested that he might reach a compromise by approving the unilateral release of captives who had purchased their own freedom and who wanted to return home. However, his final response was that he would only agree to a one-for-one exchange of captives. He also expressed his unhappiness about the mediation of the British and the presence of the Qajar army stationed in Gorgan.³⁸ The discussion closed at the point where Muhammad 'Ali Khan said that he was requesting, not an exchange of captives, but the unilateral release of even some of the captives held in Khiva. On May 13, Muhammad Ya'qub Mehtar delivered a message from Allah Quli Khan to Muhammad 'Ali Khan putting an end to the negotiations.³⁹ Thomson considered that to be Allah Quli Khan's final answer, but Muhammad 'Ali Khan had one more set of discussions with Allah Quli Khan. At that meeting, however, Allah Quli Khan went no further than to reiterate his unhappiness at the inclusion of British and Russian representatives in the mission.⁴⁰

Thus, the negotiations broke down, with the Qajars still insisting on the unconditional release of a limited number of captives and the Qongrats refusing that proposal and continuing to call for an even exchange of captives or their repurchase.⁴¹ The Qajars did not, however, stage any more military

37 Muḥammad 'Ali Khān 1994: 21-22; FO 60/89, No 24, Enclosure 3, Thomson to McNeill, Khiva, April 30, 1842.

38 This refers to the Qajar army dispatched to combat a Turkmen insurgency led by Hazrat-i Ishan that arose in Gorgan in 1841. According to Qajar records, the army in question was set to advance on Khiva, depending on the outcome of the negotiations conducted by Muhammad 'Ali Khan's mission (Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān 1984-1985: 1657).

39 Muḥammad 'Ali Khān 1994: 23-27; FO 60/89, No 24, Enclosure 4, Thomson to McNeill, Khiva, May 14, 1842.

40 Muḥammad 'Ali Khān 1994: 29.

41 Ibid., 40-41.

actions against Khiva. Thereafter, envoys were no longer exchanged between the Qongrat and Qajar dynasties. Negotiations between the two parties recommenced when Muhammad Amin Khan (r. 1846–1855) succeeded Rahim Quli Khan (r. 1842–1846) to the Qongrat throne.⁴²

III CONTROL OVER THE TURKMENS BY THE QONGRATS AND THE QAJAR

Underlying the Qongrat and Qajar dynasties' failure to reach an agreement in their negotiations for the release of captives during the 1830s and 1840s was the fact that neither was able to stop, respectively, the Turkmen raids or the retaliatory raids, during which the captives were taken. The factors underlying this situation are discussed below.

1. Qongrat dynasty's control over the Turkmens

Military expeditions toward Khorasan, led by the Qongrat Khans and starting in 1813, were justified as part of a holy war against the "heretic" Shi'ites in Iran. Many people were taken captive as spoils of war. There were also cases of whole communities or tribes being relocated to Khorazm, including the relocation of the Jamshidi tribe in 1841.⁴³ The seizure of captives and the increase in the number of voluntary and forced migrants are likely to be related to the expansion of irrigated land in the territory of the Khivan Khans in the first half of the nineteenth century and the accompanying demand for labor to undertake irrigation work and cultivate the newly irrigated land. Indeed,

42 Rizā Qulī Khān 2002: 8321, 8535–8536. From May to August 1849, the British home government had plans to send a mission to Khiva to investigate Russia's advance into Central Asia, but they did not materialize (L/PS/3 [India Office Records: Home Correspondence, 1807–1911 (The British Library, London)]/28, 311–312, Correspondence, Palmerstone to Foreign Office, August 6, 1849). Although the Qajars dispatched a mission to Khiva led by Riza Quli Khan in 1851, its negotiations for the release of Shi'ite captives again ended in failure. Rizā Qulī Khān Hidāyat, *Sifārat Nāma-yi Khvārazm: Relation de l'ambassade au Kharezme de Riza Quoly Khan, 1800–1871*, ed. et tr. Ch. Schefer (Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1975), pp. 70–73; A. Granmayeh, "'Sefarat Name-ye Khwarazm': The Last Iranian Mission to Central Asia in the 19th Century," *Central Asian Survey* 15:2 (1996), pp. 233–255.

43 A. Shioya, *Chūōajia Kangai-Shi Josetsu: Rauzān Unga To Hiva Han-Koku No Kōbō (A History of Irrigation in Central Asia: The Lawzan Canal and the Rise and Fall of the Khanate of Khiva)* (Tokyo: Fūkyōsha, 2014), pp. 72–75. Amir Shah Murad (r. 1785–1800) of Bukhara occupied Merv in 1785 and forcibly relocated its population (said to be between 18,000 and 30,000 households) to Bukhara and other places. At least 20 more times, most notably in the autumn during harvest time, he conducted military expeditions in the direction of Khorasan in the name of a holy war against the Shi'ite "heretics." S. Kimura, "Mangito Chō Seiken No Tai Shīa-Ha Seisen To Meruvu Jūmin No Kyousei Ijū (Manghit Dynasty's Holy War Against the Shi'ites and the Forced Migration of Inhabitants of Merv)," in T. Morikawa, ed., *Travel, Migration and Interaction in Early Modern Asia* (Sapporo: Hokkaido University Press, 2016), pp. 59–85, here 68–69. These military expeditions had many points in common with the expeditions of the Khivan khans toward Khorasan.

the increase in the number of military expeditions to obtain manpower and military force correlates with the expansion in irrigation projects led by the Khans.⁴⁴

However, the Qongrat court was unable to control the process of seizure, sale, and resale of captives. The Qongrat court had direct involvement in transactions relating to captives acquired via Turkmen raids and that they levied a tax on such transactions.⁴⁵ However, as clarified by Eden, the buying and selling of captives not only occurred in the cities, which were seen as central to the trade but also on the steppes and across a wide area focused on caravansaries on trade routes.⁴⁶ Captives taken through this trade route were also continuously resold via the same hubs.⁴⁷ It was therefore difficult for the Qongrat court to keep track of the whereabouts of the captives, and it was not in a position to respond to demands from the Qajars for the mass release of captives.

In addition, among Merv, Sarakhs, and the northern foothills of the Kopet Dag Mountains, adjacent to the Qajars and their zone of influence, it was only in Merv that there was a governor (*hākīm*) and garrison force sent by the Qongrat court. In addition, unlike the case of the Khanate of Kokand, which had colonized the Syr Darya river, there was no relocation of the Khorazmian people toward the regions outside Khorazm.⁴⁸ Qongrats maintained control of these areas entirely by periodic military expeditions led by a Khan, a member of the royal family, or a high-level official.

It may be that the Qongrat Khans incorporated the perpetually ongoing Turkmen raids into their own military expeditions toward Khorasan. According to Rosliakov, who analyzed the 114 relevant raids that occurred in the nineteenth century, there was no significant seasonal bias on the timing of the 114 raids (26 in spring, 27 in summer, 40 in autumn, and 21 in winter) and that 24 of the 27 summer raids coincided with military expeditions organized by the Qongrat Khans.⁴⁹ According to the Khivan chronicles, during these military expeditions, the Qongrat Khans would set up headquarters in an encampment

44 Ibid., 81.

45 See Shioya (2014: 102) for information on a high-level official in the Qongrat court in the first half of the nineteenth century thought to have come from Iran, who chose competent persons from among the captives to serve as slaves in the court. In addition, according to interviews immediately after Russia's 1873 military expedition on Khiva, the court levied 2 or 3–5 tillas (gold coins), respectively, for each male (*dūghma*) or female (*chūri*) slave subject to sale (Arkhiv vostokovedov, Institut vostochnykh rukopisei Rossiiskoi Akademii nauk, f. 33, op. 1, d. 13, l. 29ob.).

46 J. Eden, "Beyond the Bazaars: Geographies of the Slave Trade in Central Asia," *Modern Asian Studies* 51:4 (2016), pp. 919–955.

47 This case should be compared with the cases in the Indian Ocean slave trade. See H. Suzuki, *Slave Trade Profiteers in the Western Indian Ocean: Suppression and Resistance in the Nineteenth Century* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 73–96.

48 Shioya, *Chūōajia Kangai-Shi*, p. 101.

49 A. A. Rosliakov, "Alamany," *Sovetskaia etnografiia* 2 (1955), pp. 41–53.

in the Merv Oasis or in the oasis area in the northern foothills of the Kopet Dag Mountains, from where they would send out the Turkmens on raids. The Khans took one-fifth of the spoils acquired during the raids, and the rest was distributed among those who had participated in the raids. Captives were included among these spoils. The main bodies of the Qongrat and Qajar armies only fought each other directly once between 1813 and 1855. Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, there was a tendency for the scale of the expeditionary forces to expand, with Turkmen soldiers increasing both their actual numbers and their proportion of the whole force.⁵⁰

2. Qajar dynasty's control over the Turkmens

Meanwhile, the Qajar court had even less influence over the Turkmens than the Qongrats. According to Schneider, the Quyunlu group within the Qajars that produced Aga Muhammad Khan was originally in alliance with the Yomut Turkmens. However, from 1792, when Aga Muhammad Khan reorganized the Qajars, the two groups descended into a state of perpetual enmity. As a result, the Yomut Turkmens remained independent of the Qajars and were not subject to tax levies or military obligations. They were also able to maintain trade links with cities such as Astarabad and to obtain "protection payments" (*sākhilū*) from sedentary peoples. Schneider also argued that they were still able to profit from attacks on people and livestock after the 1870s when the border with the Russian empire appeared. In contrast, the Qajar dynasty was deprived of a source of foot soldiers and cavalymen, and tax revenue. They were unable to maintain stability on their northeastern borders and lacked the authority to fulfill the primary responsibility of a ruling group, namely to administer a government with justice and keep their territory and people safe.⁵¹

50 Iu. Bregel', *Khorezmskie turkmeny* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo vostochnoi literatury, 1961), pp. 180–182; R. Komae, "Kongurato Chō Muhammodo Rahimu Han No Seiken Ni Tsuite — *Firdaws al-Iqbāl* Ni Yoru Kousatsu (Muhammad Rahim Khan of Qongrat Dynasty— An Analysis based on *Firdaws al-iqbāl*)," *Nairiku Ajiashi Kenkyū* (Inner Asian History) 16 (2001), pp. 39–59, here 59; Shioya, *Chūōajia Kangai-Shi*, pp. 79–80. The scale of the Turkmen raids was put at 150 men or more in the various Russian records and between 25 and 500 men in the Qongrat chronicles. The length of each raid was at most 20–25 days. According to Fraser, who travelled to Khorasan in 1821–1822, the Turkman raids extended as far as Sabzevar and Nishapur. J. B. Fraser, *Narrative of a Journey into Khorasan, in the Years 1821 and 1822. Including Some Account of the Countries to the North-East of Persia: With Remarks upon the National Character, Government, and Resources of that Kingdom* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1825), pp. 274–275.

More or less, the only direct clash between the Qongrat and Qajar armies was in Sarakhs in 1855, in which Muhammad Amin Khan, who was in command of the Qongrat army, died. W. A. Wood, "The Sariq Turkmens of Merv and the Khanate of Khiva in the Early Nineteenth Century" (PhD diss., Indiana University, 1998), pp. 253–255.

51 I. Schneider, "Allies or Enemies? The Military Relations between the Yamūt Turkmen and the Nascent Qājār State in Late 18th and Early 19th Century Iran," in I. Schneider, ed., *Militär und Staatlichkeit* (Halle/Saale: OWZ, 2003), pp. 171–199, here 194–195.

Compounding their antagonism, the punitive military expeditions by the Qajars were uncompromising and prompted deep-rooted resistance from the Turkmens, with Turkmen captives being taken on such retaliatory expeditions.⁵² Whereas the Turkmens paid ransoms for the return of these captives, the inhabitants of Qajar territory did not attempt to pay ransom for captives taken by the Turkmens.⁵³

The Qajar dynasty carried out many military expeditions aimed at recovering their "lost territory" of Greater Khorasan that ultimately failed. Examples of such unsuccessful expeditions were the 1854 defeat of troops sent to the aid of 'Abd al-Rahman Khalifa, who was leading the Merv Turkmens in resistance against the Qongrat dynasty, and the 1858 defeat at the hands of the Merv Turkmens, who were said to have taken as many as 30,000 people captive.⁵⁴ Thus, in the process of establishing itself, the Qajar dynasty failed to incorporate the Turkmens within its regime, and its severe punitive military expeditions in retaliation for Turkmen raids further stiffened their resistance. The dynasty's military expeditions on its north-eastern border also failed to reconcile the gap between the court's perception of its territory and its real control in the areas near the border.

In contrast to the Qajars, the Qongrats incorporated Turkmen raids into their khans' own Khorasan expeditions and had ways of controlling the Turkmens, such as imposing military obligations in exchange for their exemption from tax and compulsory labor on irrigation works. However, as Merv was the Qongrats' only base for control over the Turkmens in the whole of the Kopet Dag Mountains, they were limited to displaying their authority via periodic military expeditions by the Qongrat Khans. In addition, the buying and selling of captives occurred widely on the steppe and at caravansaries on trade routes, and the resale of captives was not rare. For this reason, neither the Qongrat dynasty nor the Qajar dynasty had effective means of stopping the trade in captives who were taken in the Turkmen raids. In other words, the problem of the captives was not an issue that could be solved through negotiation between the two courts alone.

52 Ismā'il Khān Mīr-Panja, *Khāqirāt-i asārat: Rūznāma-yi safar-i Khvārazm va Khīva*, ed. Š. Tabrā'iyān (Tihṛān: Mu'assasa-yi Pazhūhish va Muṭāla'āt-i Farhangī, 1991), pp. 99–102. In June 1836, the Qajar military dispatched 5,000 soldiers to the Qarri fortress in Gorgan to attack the Goklen Turkmens. The commander of that army at the time did not accept the recommendation that the fortress should be used as a stronghold against the Turkmens and it was destroyed, with the provisions and fodder stored there being thrown into the Atrek River. Muḥammad Taqī Lisān al-Muluk Sipīhr, *Nāsikh al-tavārikh: Tārīkh-i Qājārīya*, 4 vols. ed. J. Kiyānfār (Tihṛān: Asāṭir, 1999), pp. 659–660. On his way to Khiva, between Mashhad and Merv, Muḥammad 'Alī Khān met a group of Turkmens from the area that the Qajarid army led by 'Abbas Mirza had bombarded and destroyed (Muḥammad 'Alī Khān 1994: 5–6).

53 M. Saray, "The Alamans or Raiding Parties of the Turkmens," *Asian and African Studies* 16 (1982), pp. 399–402, here 401.

54 See Wood (1998: 184–252) for information on the resistance against Qongrat rule on the part of the Merv Turkmens led by 'Abd al-Rahman Khalifa between 1843 and 1854.

IV BRITAIN AND MUHAMMAD 'ALI KHAN'S MISSION

If, as mentioned in Section III, neither the Qongrat nor the Qajar courts were able to resolve the issue of the release of the Shi'ite captives as a result of their direct negotiations such as Muhammad 'Ali Khan's mission's in 1842, why then did the British and Russian representatives join the mission?

1. *British abolitionism and the slave trade*

The abolitionist logic that the British were pursuing at the time in negotiations with European powers was used to justify British mediation as they regarded the Shi'ite captives in Khiva as slaves. On December 20, 1841, before the dispatch of Muhammad 'Ali Khan's mission, the five major European powers (Britain, Austria, Russia, Prussia, and France) supported the Vienna System after the Napoleonic Wars signed a treaty abolishing the slave trade. That treaty is the result of the diplomatic efforts of Viscount Palmerston, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (periods in office include 1835–1841), and the embodiment of British-style liberalism and moralism.⁵⁵ Meanwhile, the various abolitionist clauses included in the treaties between the British and the political powers on the west coast of the Indian Ocean, such as the Al Bu Sa'id dynasty, allowed the British navy to board ships suspected to be slave transport ships and, as a result, the maritime influence of the British expanded, paving the way for British interference in the local internal affairs.⁵⁶

Concerning the dispatch of Muhammad 'Ali Khan's mission, the British also interpreted the demand for the release of the Shi'ite captives and a ban on trading the captives as being an effort toward the abolition of the slave trade.⁵⁷ Palmerston had already suggested to McNeill in 1841 that information be collected to abolish the slavery system and the slave trade in Iran.⁵⁸ During their meeting on January 8, 1842 (mentioned at the beginning of Section II), McNeill said that the British government aimed "to abolish slavery in all

55 N. Kimizuka, "Jiyū Shugi Gaikō No Ōgon-Ki: Pāmasuton To Dorei Bōeki (The Golden Age of Liberalism in Foreign Policy: Palmerston and the Slave Trade)," in M. Tadokoro, ed., *The Royal Navy and Pax Britannica* (Kyoto: Yuhikaku Publishing Co. Ltd., 2006), pp. 23–46, here 41–42. In Britain, in the second half of the eighteenth century, organized movements calling for the abolition of the slave trade were active, trading in slaves using British ships was formally abolished in 1807, and the abolition of slavery within the British empire was declared in 1833. After the end of the Napoleonic Wars Britain also instigated the discussion of the abolition of the slave trade in the international meetings of European countries, leading to the signing of a treaty on the abolition of the slave trade by the five major powers in 1841 (Kimizuka 2006).

56 Suzuki, *Slave Trade Profiteers*.

57 The Persian word captive (*asīr*) is used in the contemporary written sources in Persian and Chaghatay Turkic regarding the captives in Khiva. Semantically, this word does not convey the meaning of the word "slave."

58 B. A. Mirzai, *A History of Slavery and Emancipation in Iran, 1800–1929* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017), p. 135.

parts of the globe" and, referring to the example of Shakespear's involvement in the release of Russian captives (discussed below), expressed his confidence that negotiations during Muhammad 'Ali Khan's mission would be similarly successful.⁵⁹ In addition, in a letter to Allah Quli Khan, McNeill wrote that the British government had made the most persistent efforts to free "all captives and slaves."⁶⁰ It was in the context of the abolition of the slave trade that the British representative determined to act as an intermediary in the negotiations between the Qajars and the Qongrats for the release of the Shi'ite captives. This was before the 1846 request for the abolition of the slave trade in Iran by the British government and the issuance of a ban on the slave trade in Iranian ports by Muhammad Shah in June 1848.

2. The precedent of Shakespear's negotiations for the release of Russian captives

The British viewed Shakespear's 1840 success in securing the release of Russian captives as a precedent and so were hopeful for the release of the Shi'ite captives. The background to this was as follows. While demanding the release of Russian captives in Khiva, the Russian government had ordered to detain Khivan merchants along the southern borders of their empire in 1836. Vasilii Perovskii, military governor of Orenburg (in office 1833-1842, 1851-1857), resorted to tougher measures and organized a military expedition to Khiva between November 1839 and June 1840, which failed, hampered by severe winter weather. While this expedition was ongoing, the British political representative in Kabul, W. H. MacNaghten, attempted to subvert the Russians' excuse for the expedition by acting as an intermediary in negotiations over the release of Russian captives in Khiva. From Herat, he first sent James Abbott on December 24, 1839, followed by Shakespear on May 11, 1840, to Khiva. Shakespear's negotiations were successful and, on 4 Jumada al-thani 1256/ August 3, 1840, Allah Quli Khan sent his envoy, Atajan Akhund, to Russia with Shakespear and 416 released Russian captives.⁶¹ Shakespear and the others arrived in Orenburg on October 1, 1840. In his letter to Nesselrode dated September 26, 1840 (Julian calendar), Perovskii recommended that the Khivan merchants being held within the Russian empire should be released.⁶² As a result, 640 Khivan merchants were released.⁶³ The Qongrat chronicle reports that the merchants arrived in Khiva on 20 Ramadan 1256/November 15, 1840.⁶⁴ As mentioned in Section II regarding the discussions on the evening of April

59 L/PS/9/121, pp. 46-47, Memorandum, January, 8 1842.

60 L/PS/9/121, p. 129, McNeill to Allāh Qulī Khān, January 1842.

61 Muḥammad Riẓā Mīrāb: 733b-734a, 735a-736a; E. G. Browne, "How Sir Richmond Shakespear Set Free the Russian Slaves at Khiva," *Journal of the Central Asian Society* 8 (1921), pp. 121-124, here 123-124.

62 Serebrennikov 1912-1914: II, 209-211.

63 Browne, "How Sir Richmond Shakespear Set Free," p. 124.

64 Muḥammad Riẓā Mīrāb: 736a.

25, 1842, Thomson requested that the release of the captive Russians through the mediation of Shakespear be taken as a precedent and that Qajar captives should also be released. However, the Qongrats considered the release of the Russian captives to have been in exchange for the release of the detained Khivan merchants and so did not accept that the Qajar captives be released.

3. *The relationship with Britain's Afghan occupation policy*

The participation of the British in Muhammad 'Ali Khan's mission was linked to the occupation of Afghanistan by the Anglo-Indian army. Specifically, the British aimed to establish a mutual agreement between the Qongrats and the Qajars to prevent Muhammad Shah from changing the target of his expedition from Khiva to Herat and to prevent the Qongrats' involvement in its affairs. On December 10, 1838, after Muhammad Shah's siege of Herat, the British administration in India deployed soldiers to Afghanistan, marking the beginning of the First Anglo-Afghan War. The Anglo-Indian army occupied Kabul on August 7, 1839, and Shah Shuja' (in office 1803–1809, 1839–1842) was reinstated as Amir. However, there was strong resistance among local leaders to the rule of Shah Shuja', and he was killed on the outskirts of Kabul on April 5, 1842. The Anglo-Indian army was forced to withdraw from Kabul on October 12 of the same year.⁶⁵ During that period (from 6 Shavval 1257/ November 21, 1841, to 28 Safar 1258/ April 19, 1842), Allah Quli Khan's son, Rahim Quli Tora, embarked on a military expedition, turning from Merv to Herat and relocating around 7,000 Jamshidi households from the upper basin of the Murghab River to Khorazm.⁶⁶ MacNeill had already warned Foreign Secretary Lord Aberdeen (periods in office include 1841–1846) in December 1841 that the target of Muhammad Shah's Khivan expedition could change to Herat again instead of Khiva.⁶⁷ In addition, in a letter to Allah Quli Khan, Thomson wrote that the Herat government would seek an alliance with the Qajars to retaliate the Khivan migration of Jamshidis, whom the Herat government saw as his subjects, to Khiva.⁶⁸ In either case, the British wanted to avoid the formation of the Qajar-led alliance power with Herat in the eastern part of Afghanistan against Khiva as a result of the Qajar's military conquest of or negotiation with Herat.

Thus, the abolitionist logic that the British were pursuing at the time in negotiations with European powers was used to justify British mediation in the negotiation between the Qongrats in Khiva and Qajars in Iran as they regarded the Shi'ite captives in Khiva as slaves. This mediation followed the precedent of the release of Russian captives through the offices of Shakespear in 1840.

65 Komaki, "Herāto No Yāru Mohanmado Hān," p. 85.

66 Shioya, *Chūōajia Kangai-Shi*, p. 75.

67 FO 248/102, No 50, McNeill to Aberdeen, Tehran, December 31, 1841.

68 FO 60/89, No 24, Enclosures 12 and 15, Thomson to [Allah Quli] Khān-i Ḥaẓrat, Khiva, no dates.

In doing so, the British representative presented himself as solely an intermediary in the negotiations between the Qongrats and Qajars and never openly mentioned the benefits for his own country. However, that mediation itself did serve some of Britain's own interests in Central Asia and surrounding areas, namely having Muhammad Shah abandon his plans to invade Khiva (such an invasion would complicate the stalled policy of occupation of Afghanistan) and aiding the Qongrats and Qajars to establish an alliance. The ultimate goal of the British in their intervention in the negotiation was to prevent new military endeavors by the local powers (the Qongrats and the Qajars) and to stabilize the political situation in neighboring regions of Afghanistan, which was under the occupation of the Anglo-Indian army.

V RUSSIA AND MUHAMMAD 'ALI KHAN'S MISSION

1. *Russia's choice between cooperation and competition with Britain*

Why did Russia cooperate in the negotiations of Muhammad 'Ali Khan's mission? Both Britain and Russia were among the five major European powers who supported the Vienna System at that time. Recent research has suggested that the foreign policy of Nicholas I (r. 1825–1855) revolved around the Concert of Europe and striving to balance power within Europe.⁶⁹ In addition, Ingle suggests that against a background of hostilities between the Ottomans and Egypt in 1839–1841, the intervention of western European powers and the process leading up to the conclusion of the Convention of London, Foreign Minister Nesselrode pursued a strategy of promoting harmony between Britain and Russia in Europe, establishing zones of influence for Britain and Russia in Asia, and promoting free trade in buffer zones.⁷⁰ Russia was also a signatory to the five-power treaty in which Britain promoted the abolishment of slave trade. Thus, cooperation was the linchpin of Russian's diplomatic relations with Britain before and after the dispatch of Muhammad 'Ali Khan's mission.

However, there was increasingly vocal concern within the Russian imperial government about the expansion of British influence in Central Asia, as a result of the aforementioned reasons beginning with the First Anglo-Afghan War, Perovskii's failed expedition to Khiva, and the success of Anglo-Indian army officer Shakespear in securing the release of the Russian captives in Khiva. According to Morrison, Nesselrode and Perovskii were upset that the release of the captives had been achieved single-handedly by Shakespear rather than by the Russian military expedition. Concern was also expressed within the government about the possibility of growing British influence: to extending

69 H. Yaguchi, "Yōroppa Kyōchō to Nikorai Issei No Gaikō Seisaku: Berugī Dokuritsu Mondai He No Taiou Kara (The Concert of Europe and the Foreign Policy of Nicholas I: In the Light of Reaction to the Belgian Independence)," *Northeast Asian Studies* 21 (2017), pp. 45–70.

70 H. N. Ingle, *Nesselrode and the Russian Rapprochement with Britain, 1836–1844* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), pp. 147–156.

from Afghanistan to Bukhara and the Caspian Sea.⁷¹ This period marked the juncture when competition began between Russia and Britain in the export of manufactured goods to Asian markets, especially cotton textiles. Britain pursued free trade, signing trade agreements with the Ottoman Empire in 1838 and the Qajars in 1841 and expanding its cotton textile exports. Meanwhile, as a result of the Treaty of Turkmenchay (1828) with the Qajars after the Russian victory in the second Russo-Persian War (1826–1828) and the Treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi (1833) with the Ottoman Empire, Russia obtained the right to export its manufactured goods, in particular, thick woollen cloth and cotton textiles, to the Iranian and Turkish markets at a lower tariff than the British goods. Despite this advantage, the local Russian consular report says that Russian-made textiles failed to compete with British goods, and by the 1840s, Russian sales routes in those markets were lost.⁷²

While maintaining cooperation with Britain in Europe, the Russian government feared the expansion of British influence in Central Asia and sent Nikiforov (from May to December 1841) and Colonel Danilevskii (from August 1842 to February 1843) to Khiva to negotiate: 1) the security of the persons and assets of subjects of the Russian Empire within Khivan territory and an end to the trading of captives; 2) the demarcation of boundaries in the Kazakh Steppe between the two countries; and 3) the reduction in tariffs on trade between the two countries (setting them at a maximum of 5% of the price of the merchandise). Also included in the negotiations was the acceptance of a permanent Russian representative in Khiva.⁷³ Nikiforov was the first such permanent representative but he failed in his negotiations in Khiva and, on October 27, 1841 (Julian calendar), he left the area before the decision had been made to dispatch Muhammad ‘Ali Khan’s mission.⁷⁴ The subsequent Danilevskii mission arrived in Khiva on October 17, 1842, and on December 27 (both in Julian calendar) in the same year succeeded in the signing of a treaty (*obiazatel’nyi akt*) with Rahim Quli Khan, who had recently ascended to the throne, a treaty that was more or less in line with the instructions given to Danilevskii regarding trade.⁷⁵

71 A. Morrison, “Twin Imperial Disasters: The Invasions of Khiva and Afghanistan in the Russian and British Official Mind, 1839–1842,” *Modern Asian Studies* 48:1 (2013), pp. 1–48, here 45–46.

72 E. P. Kudriavtseva, *Russkie na Bosfore: Rossiiskoe posol’stvo v Konstantinopole v pervoi polovine XIX veka* (Moscow: Nauka, 2010), p. 184.

73 Serebrennikov 1912–1914: III, 10–44; IV, 31–42.

74 S. V. Zhukovskii, *Snosheniia Rossii s Bukharoi i Khivoi za poslednee trekhletie* (Petrograd: [No Publisher], 1915), p. 128. This fact had not been communicated to the British when Muhammad ‘Ali Khan’s mission departed from Tehran.

75 Serebrennikov 1912–1914: IV, 141–142. See also Zhukovskii (1915: 122–141) for a Russian interpretation of the negotiations during these missions.

2. The attitude of the Russian government toward Muhammad

'Ali Khan's mission

The dispatch of Muhammad 'Ali Khan's mission occurred during a gap between negotiations by the two missions sent to Khiva by the Russian government during the period 1841–1843. As a result, while exercising caution to not damage cooperation between Russia and Britain in Europe, the Russian government acted in a way intended to avoid the intervention of Britain in its relations with Khiva. In a letter to Allah Quli Khan, the Russian plenipotentiary in Tehran, Medem, said that the Qongrats ought to take the advice of Russia and Britain and release the captives and that, if they did not do so, confrontation would be unavoidable, not only with the Qajars but also with Russia and Britain.⁷⁶ In his instructions to Danilevskii, Nesselrode also indicated that, if he met Muhammad 'Ali Khan or Thomson in Khiva, he should participate in their negotiations.⁷⁷ This instruction underlines Russia's cooperative stance with regard to Muhammad 'Ali Khan's mission and to Britain. However, the Russian government had already completed a captive exchange involving Russian captives and Khivan merchants held within Russian territory; thus, they did not see a captive exchange involving the Shi'ite captives as an important issue. Nesselrode stressed in his instructions to Danilevskii – while Muhammad 'Ali Khan's mission was in Khiva – that he should complete the treaty negotiations that Nikiforov had started, prioritizing tariff reduction in particular over the establishment of borders and, at all costs, avoid intervention by the British representative in Russia's negotiations with Khiva.⁷⁸ Russia, while being unswervingly cooperative in the negotiations of Muhammad 'Ali Khan's mission led by the Qajars and the British, at all times prioritized the trade treaty negotiations with Khiva conducted by their own missions.

CONCLUSION

In the 1810s and 1820s, the Qongrats from Khorazm advanced into the northern foothills of the Kopet Dagħ Mountains where the Turkmen had settled by the middle of the eighteenth century, and the Qajar Iran had established control of Khorasan by the beginning of the 1830s. Thus, in the Kopet Dagħ Mountains, the territory claimed by the Qongrats came to be directly adjacent to the territory claimed by the Qajars, and the two dynasties engaged in negotiations regarding the release of sedentary Shi'ite people taken as captives by the Turkmen during raids and sold as slaves in Bukhara and Khiva.

The 1842 mission of Muhammad 'Ali Khan represents one set of captive release negotiations, but it differs from other negotiations in that the

76 L/PS/9/121, pp. 121–125, Alexandr Medem to Allāh Qulī Khān, French Translation, January 1842.

77 Serebrennikov 1912–1914: IV, 42.

78 Ibid., 31–42.

mission was accompanied by British and Russian representatives. This article investigated the reasons for the failure of the negotiations of the Muhammad 'Ali Khan mission in the context of the history of the relationship between the Qongrat and Qajar dynasties and also clarifies the intentions of the British and the Russians in joining the negotiations.

First, the Muhammad 'Ali Khan mission negotiations were positioned within the context of the relationship between the Qongrats and the Qajars. The Qajars demanded the unconditional release of the Shi'ite captives and the ban of sale of captives. In contrast, the Qongrats insisted on one-for-one captive exchange and payment for extra captives. However, it was difficult to resolve the captive release issue through repeated negotiations between the two courts alone. It is true that the Qongrats had more effective means of controlling the Turkmens than the Qajars, such as incorporating the Turkmen raids into the Khorasan expeditions carried out by the ruling Khans and putting in place a system that afforded the Turkmens special rights (allocation of land to relocated people, as well as exemption from tax and from providing compulsory labor for irrigation works) in return for military service. However, apart from Merv, the Qongrats had no stronghold in the Kopet Dagh Mountains from which to control the Turkmens. In addition, captives were widely traded in places other than cities, such as on the steppe and at caravansaries, and they were also sometimes resold. Therefore, neither the Qongrats nor the Qajars had the means to stop the mutual generation of captives or their trade.

Next, this article explored the intentions and expectations of the British and Russian representatives in joining Muhammad 'Ali Khan's mission. Some previous studies in the context of the Great Game have emphasized the conflict between Britain and Russia regarding Central Asian policy, while some have positively noted the search for cooperation by the two countries during the 1840s. Important examples of studies in the former group, by Khalfin and Niiazmatov, stress the historical links between Russia and Central Asia, the spike in the tension between the two sides caused by Perovskii's expedition to Khiva, and the existence of an underlying British stratagem.⁷⁹ Contrarily, other important studies in the latter group, by Ingle and Yapp, appreciated the mutual search for a cooperative relationship by the leadership of British-ruled India on the British side and Foreign Minister Nesselrode on the Russian side.⁸⁰ However, these studies, although based on analysis of the foreign policies of Britain and Russia, did not amount to comparative investigations of the two strategies. Morrison transcended this dichotomy and, based on primary sources, clarified the common elements in the Central Asian policies of Britain and Russia, namely a focus on prestige as a powerful

79 N. A. Khalfin, *Rossiia i khanstva Srednei Azii: Pervaia polovina XIX veka* (Moscow: Nauka, 1974); M. Niiazmatov, *Poisk konsensusa: Rossiisko-khivinskie geopoliticheskie otnosheniia v XVI-nachale XX v.* (St. Petersburg: Peterburgskoe vostokovedenie, 2010).

80 Ingle, Nesselrode; M. E. Yapp, *Strategies of British India: Britain, Iran and Afghanistan, 1798–1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

nation, personal ambition, European prejudice with regard to Asia, the mission to civilize, and ignorance of the opinions of local people.⁸¹ However, we still need to consider the competition between Britain and Russia in Asia or the relevance of relationships between local powers, such as that between the Qongrats and Qajars, which is dealt with in this article. The analysis in this article of the background to the participation of British and Russian representatives in Muhammad 'Ali Khan's mission allows the new findings below to be included in a comparison of the Central Asian policies of Britain and Russia. The participation of the British in Muhammad 'Ali Khan's mission was connected to the policy of occupying Afghanistan by the Anglo-Indian army. Specifically, the British aimed to establish a mutual agreement between the Qongrats and the Qajars to prevent Muhammad Shah from changing the target of his planned expedition, Khiva to Herat and to prevent the Qongrats' involvement in its affairs. At the same time, the British attempted to prevent both a new Qajar military expedition to Herat, which threatened the British strategy of occupying Afghanistan, and the Qongrat Khorasan military expedition. These actions represented mediation diplomacy methods that sought to justify the pursuit of Britain's own benefit in Central Asia and the surrounding areas by projecting it as the drive for the abolition of the slave trade (which the British were pursuing at the time in negotiations with powerful parties in Europe) and also employing this strategy in the Atlantic and in Asian and African maritime areas. In short, the abolitionist logic which the British were pursuing at the time in negotiations with European powers was used to justify British mediation in the negotiations as they regarded the Shi'ite captives in Khiva as slaves. The ultimate goal of the British here was to prevent new military endeavors by the local powers (the Qongrats and the Qajars) and to stabilize the political situation in neighboring region of Afghanistan which was under the occupation of the Anglo-Indian army. In contrast, the Russians had two aims, namely to maintain cooperation with Britain in Europe and to resist the expansion of British influence in Central Asia. They attempted to realize the former aim by cooperating with Muhammad 'Ali Khan's mission and the latter by concluding a trade treaty after two missions sent independently of Muhammad 'Ali Khan's mission. In practice, the latter aim was prioritized. This negotiating stance by the Russian government was similar to its stance, as discussed by Shioya, in the negotiations leading to the conclusion of the 1851 Sino-Russian Kulja Treaty, which sought to acquire equal rights as the British in the Qing territories without damaging cooperation with Britain in Europe.⁸²

81 Morrison, "Twin Imperial Disasters."

82 A. Shioya, "The Treaty of Ghulja Reconsidered: Imperial Russian Diplomacy Toward Qing China in 1851," *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 10:2 (2019), pp. 147-158.

