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*Alexander Bekovich Cherkassky’s Campaign to Central Asia and India in 1714-1717*

Abstract

The study deals with one branch of the Russian policy of the Peter I period, heading towards establishing contacts with India via Central Asia. Author describes in introduction the Russian attempts to establish trade and diplomatic relations with India in the 17th century. Subsequently, he analyses the information and errors, relied on by the Russian policy in this area, their gradual disproving by various expeditions organized both from the Siberian centers, both from Astrakhan. The greatest attention is paid to campaigns of Alexandr Bekovich Cherkassky in Central Asia 1714-1717. Based on a detailed study of sources, he attempts to evaluate the significance of these expeditions both for growing of geographic knowledge of the area as well as assessment of the possibilities of Russian expansion to Central Asia and India. The conclusion is devoted to the analysis of the causes of the tragic end of Cherkassky campaign to Khiva in 1716-1717.

**Keywords:** Alexandr Bekovich Cherkassky’s Campaign in Central Asia in 1714-1718, Russian Expansion, Central Asia, the period of Peter I, Russian Indian Policy, Geographical Discovery of Caspian Sea.

The study deals with one branch of the Russian policy over the Peter I period, heading towards establishing contacts with India, so catching the western-European dominance in that region up. The author pursues the aim to gradually map and appraise single components of Peter I’s effort in this direction. It is a follow-up to the published works devoted to the development of the Indian trading community in Astrakhan,\(^1\) and attempt by Peter to penetrate the East-Indian trade by gaining co-operation with Madagascar pirates.\(^2\)

The story of the first campaign to India in history is linked to the expansion of Russia to Central Asia. Out of all attempts at independent penetration to India and establishing business contacts, this was the most ambitious, the most liberal and the most complex

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one. For that reason the catastrophic failure has led to long-term consequences, and has been kept in the Russian history as a permanent memento. A low number of historical studies covering this theme is the reflection of aversion to this topic in the Russian society, as well as deficiency in sources, or a number of obscurities in the interpretation of single actors’ behaviour. On the other hand, most of the key sources were published as early as in the tsarist Russia\(^3\), others in the Soviet era\(^5\). The study is based on investigation into the mentioned sources, tries to critically compare them, and to set Bekovich’s expedition to the overall context of the Indian and Caspian policy.

**Russia’s Indian Policy up to 1713**

The effort to establish direct business contacts with India was one of the constants in the Russian foreign policy over the entire early modern period. Russia was kept well informed about the development in India through the news coming from Persia and Bukhara, mediated by Indian trading communities in Russia, mostly the one in south-Russian Astrakhan. However, it appears fairly logical that just mere information was hardly sufficient to satisfy the tsarist government. Taking its cue from Portuguese and other west-European traders, it tried to establish direct diplomatic and trade relations with India. Therefore, four deputations in total were sent to India in the 17\(^{th}\) century. The first of them was led by Nikita Syroyegin in 1646; the leaders of the second one in 1651 were Rodion Pushnikov and Ivan Dereyvensky. Neither of those missions

\(^3\) The campaign is widely mentioned in the syntheses of Peter’s foreign policy, Russian-Central Asian trade and diplomatic relations, but only two independent studies were devoted to it so far: OMAROV O. Yu., *Otvazhny issledovatel’ Kaspiyskogo morya*, Makhachkala 1965. VILINBAKHOV V. B., *Aleksandr Cherkassky – Spodvizhnik Petra I.*, Nal’chik 1966. Important studies have also been devoted to Cherkassky expeditions from the point of view of geographical discoveries (viz. note. \(^\)[33]).


succeeded, since envoys had been forced to go back in the middle of their journey.\textsuperscript{6} The third delegation led by a Bukharian merchant Muhammad Jusuf Kasimov arrived in Kabul, controlled by the Great Mughals those times, in 1676. However, Emperor Aurangzeb did not admit that Russian mission. He had just a general idea about Russia and its importance, what is more he had been fully occupied with a rebellion in Delhi.\textsuperscript{7}

The course of events in the sphere of diplomatic relations, not successful until those times, went on in a bit more systematic manner during the reign of Peter I, when another pillar of foreign relations, the Caspian policy, part of which became also Indian policy, was being built besides the traditional Baltic and Black Sea ones. Peter had been particularly interested in Oriental antiques and rarities. Samples of mostly coins and letterings collected by his order would become the core of the Asian Museum later on. What was also laid during the era of his reign were foundations of Russian Orientalism. On the other hand, his dismissive attitude towards envoys from weaker Asian countries was extraordinarily demonstrated by exposing his non-Russian vassals and Asian serfs at his court to the public ridicule and bizarre ceremonies.\textsuperscript{8}

A number of steps to establish constant trade and diplomatic contacts were taken in the late 17\textsuperscript{th} and the early 18\textsuperscript{th} centuries. The instructions to single expeditions show that the prime aim was to establish business relationships. The most significant out of those expeditions was Semyon Martynovich Malen’kov’s one (also Malen’koy) in 1695. He undertook a journey to Isfahan in Persia, and in January 1698 he went abroad a ship in Bandar-Abbas harbour to sail to Surat in India. Between 1698 and 1701 he was staying on the Indian subcontinent. He met Emperor Aurangzeb while he was leading the Army of the Mughal Empire against the Maratha people on Dakshin. Malen’kov received Aurangzeb’s ferman allowing him duty-free trade in all towns in the Mughal Empire. In 1701, Malen’kov bought a number of goods and set out on journey back, once again across Persia. However, on the way he died in the town of Shamakhi (Schemakha) in Azerbaijan in 1702. Nevertheless, his mates delivered the goods to Moscow, together with two unused


\textsuperscript{7} NEPMJASICHY N. N., Russkaya India, Moskva, 2010, 64-65.

\textsuperscript{8} KEMP P. M., Bharat-Rus, An Introduction to Indo-Russian contacts and travels from medieval times to the October revolution, Delhi, 1958, 62.
letters of recommendation for the Khan of Khiva and Balkh (the expedition did not go through Central Asia)\(^9\) and precious notes about India at the turn of the 17th century. Also Aurangzeb’s *ferman* arrived in Russia, but it would be found impossible to translate it in the *Posolsky Prikaz*. Malen’kov’s journey demonstrated to Peter I the possibility to establish the trade with India by land.\(^10\)

After the naval battle of Hangö in July-August 1714 it became evident that the victory in the Northern War had been definitely inclined towards the Russian part. Tsar Peter had already broken through his longed-for window to Europe, and appeared in the Baltic region. However, the treasury was empty; there were just a few sources of income for the state. It was necessary to fill that window to Europe with trading contents. The traditional goods, which Russia could offer to the west - corn, hemp and wax, had not brought in a handsome profit. Therefore, it was necessary to search for other sources of gains to finance war. The thing that best documents Peter’s considerations on matters of business relationships with India are talks of 4 December 1714 with a Hannover resident staying in Petersburg, Friedrich-Christian Baber, about how profitable for Russia would be trade with India, and during which he pointed out Astrakhan as the central point of trade with India and Persia. Those times, Peter I had been already thinking about digging a canal connecting the Volga River with the Black Sea, so with the Mediterranean Sea, despite exercising certain restraint resulting from the slow progress on the canal Volga-Don construction works, which had begun in 1707.\(^11\)

 Nevertheless, the events of the year 1713 brought about the change of the dominant orientation of Russian policy on India. First of all, it was a Turkmen magnate, Hodja Nefes’s initiative, whose motivation remains not quite evident. Provided with different sorts of goods, Nefes arrived at Tyub-Karagan wharf on Mangyshlak (also Mangghyslaq) Peninsula in 1713. He confided to the locals that he had a certain important task regarding the Russian state, and asked them to take him to Astrakhan. He met there one member of the Indian community, who was called Prince Mikhail Zamanov (also Samonov or Samanov). He was of Persian origin from Gilan, and

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\(^10\) ULANICKY W. A., *Snosheniya Rossii s Sredneyu Aziyeyu i Indiyeyu v XVI-XVII v.*., IN: Chteniya v Imperatorskom obschestvye istoriy i drevnostey rossiyskh pri Moskovskom univerziteete 1888, 56.

would leave for Russia later on where he would convert to Christianity. Nefes told him about a river in the Bukhara Khanate where it was possible to pan gold. Basing on that information, Zamanov organised a joint journey to Moscow, where he introduced Nefes to His Tsar Majesty, Peter I. Whereas Zamanov left Moscow and went back to Astrakhan, Hodja Nefes stayed there.  

Peter had come together with the monarch of Khiva, Khan ShakhNiyaz, as early as a few years before, in 1700. That monarch’s power position was rather unstable, so he needed his northern neighbour to help him suppress some Turkmen tribes. In 1700, in accord with a feudal tradition, he offered Peter to become his vassal. That agreement would be never reached as the Khan would die. However, in 1709, Peter answered to request alike put in by the Khan’s successor Aran-Mamet saying “we’ve agreed on providing Khan and all his territorial possession with protection to eternal subordination."

This step would significantly affect Russian thoughts in the future, and during the period of Alexander Bekovich Cherkassky’s campaign to India, which is the subject of this study, might have helped perceive insufficiently political realities in Central Asia. However, instantly after 1709, Peter I fully engaged with affairs of the Northern War put his mind out of that question. Only later on he formed his opinion that control over the Khanate of Khiva lying off the Russian southern border, and bordering on India, according to what he thought, would allow him to open a way to India by land. In addition to that, the Khan of Khiva as a Russian vassal could protect Russian caravans heading with goods to India. At a time, Hodja Nefes communicated to him that the Amu-Darya River flowing through the Khanate of Khiva and Bukhara was abundant in golden sand. He also told him that the large river had once flown into the Caspian Sea, and that it had been possible to arrive in gold-yielding towns of India alone by that river. However, having worries about the chance of that favourable water way Russians would jump at, the local Turkmen monarchs decided to divert the Amu-Darya towards the Aral Sea, therefore would dam the old riverbed with a dyke. Supposedly, to take this dam to piece was not that complicated, so the water would flow into the Caspian Sea once again. Nefes swore that his compatriots were ready to help Russians cross dry sands and steppes. His news would fall on fertile ground.  

At that period, at the end of 1713, the Governor General of Siberia, Prince Matvey Petrovich Gagarin, told Peter that the so-called „sand gold“ could be found on the Syr-Darya River around the town of Yerket. He supposed that the town, also called Erket or Irket, was situated in Siberia. Actually, it was obviously the town of Yarkand lying on the same-named river in today’s Xinjiang.15

What was considerably more valuable for Peter than the testimony about gold was information on the possibility to reach India by water across the Caspian Sea. Many of the west-European sources also indicated that the Amu-Darya River had lately flown into the Caspian Sea. Peter became interested in the chance to get the river back to its original bed. The Tsar had been creating visions according to which the system of canals could make it possible to lengthen the link with the Baltic region, so he would gain the key to the main and the most profitable trade route running between the west and east, and he would become a middle man in trade between India and Europe.16

Variety of plans had been hatched, despite unfavourable financial situation of Russia. A project to develop the trade between India and China was designed from Fedor Stepanovich Saltykov’s pen no later but in 1714. The plan forms Chapter XXV and XXVI in the document „The Statement of the State Profits“. That project suggested that the Tsar should build supporting points, and first of all an extensive development of navigation by European and Siberian rivers and adjacent seas in the area from the Northern Dvina River mouth to the Amur River mouth. The author assumed that „then East-Indian vessels could be sent for merchants from Your state, which will bring a handsome profit and the state wealth“. The plan also called for following the caravan trade between southern Russia and India.17

Another direction of advance was Siberia. The expedition of Ivan Dmitrievich Bubgol’ts in 1714–1717 followed the one of Tobol’sk aristocrat F. Trushnikov. In 1713, he undertook a journey to explore Central Asia from the north. He went through East Turkestan to Kuku-nor Lake (Qinghai), to the upper Huang-he River, across Kalgan, and came back to Tobol’sk in 1716. This expedition yielded a


17 Russko-indijskie otnoshenia v XVIII v., Doc. № 7, 33-36, link 34.
number of finds about the Khanate of Bukhara and the Dzungar Khanate. However, it did not confirm gold occurrences in Yarkend. The Bukhgot’s expedition, not very well organized one, was moving ahead across Siberia, from Tobol’sk by the Irtysh River to Yamsyhevsk Saline Lake (also Zaysan Lake) in today’s Kazakhstan, where they would build a fort. However, during the next period they came into conflicts with Dzungarians, were forced to bring the fort to a halt in 1716, and to retreat to Tobol’sk. They would never reach Yarkend they were expected to seize. The outcome of that expedition was just incomplete information about the region, Lake Zaysan, and the position of the town of Yerket (Yarkend).¹⁸

Another direction the Tsar focused his exploration effort on was Persia. In his order of 7 July 1715 he instructed the envoy from Russia to Ispahan, Artemy Petrovich Volynsky, to explore trade routes from Persia to India, possibilities for linking the Russian trade to those routes, and the conditions of the local trade and trends of Indian market. His task was to find out „rivers that flow into the Caspian Sea, towns that are possible to reach by these rivers from that sea, whether there is such a river running from India that would flow into that sea.”¹⁹

The third, central focus of Russia, was on Central Asia. In 1714, the Tsar admitted in Petersburg the envoy from Khiva, Ashur Beg, and bearing the title of Russian feudal lord he entrusted him with a journey to India. The Khivan protested, and demanded from Russia the pledged protection for his lord against attacks from wild Turkmen tribes. Ashur Beg would not obey the Tsar’s order; nevertheless, the negotiation led the Tsar to believe that Russian military expedition would not encounter any stronger opposition. Therefore, in May 1714, the Tsar decided to launch a military expedition to Central Asia. The one that became a leader was the commander of the guard Preobrazhensky Regiment, a native of the Caucasus, Muslim by origin, Prince Alexander Bekovich Cherkassky, since Peter thought that Muslim origin would help Cherkassky find common ground with the Khan of Khiva.²⁰

Prince Bekovich Cherkassky was born in Little Kabarda in the Caucasus; the date of his birth remains unrevealed. The first reference to him dates back to 1688, when after a fire in the town of Terki, the former commander, Voivode Borisovich Matyanyov, was

¹⁹ Russko-indijskie otношения в XVIII v., Doc. № 8, 36.
instructed to put Afanasy Borisovich Kozlov in command. That record written while taking that command and property over reveals that Devlet-Girei-Murza, Bekovich’s original name, was hold hostage in Terki between 1688 and 1689. He is believed to be secretly kidnapped by Russians from his family in the period of the first Caucasian conflicts. His kidnappers did not know the boy’s name, what they only knew was that his father had been bek, that means prince, therefore called him Bekovich. Nevertheless, he himself derived his origin from the chief prince — vali of Great Kabarda, Kaz Psiهapshok (died 1615). Prince Bekmurza Djambulatov, Kaza Psiheapshok’s grandson had six sons: Tatarkhan, Shevlokh, Devlet-Girei, Batok, Kaysin and El’murza. They were called Bekmursins after their father, and also Bekovichs. Bekmurz’s children were called Bekovichs in Russian documents.

Prince Alexander was raised in the house of Peter I’s tutor, Prince Boris Alexeyevich Golitsyn’s, together with his sons. Noted in the diary of I.G. Korb, a secretary of the delegation from Emperor Leopold I to Peter I that was on a visit there between 1698 and 1699, is one entry from 1698 relating to a formal dinner hosted by B. A. Golitsyn, where Austrian guests were served by Golitsyn’s sons “who were joined by a young Cerkessian prince, only recently secretly kidnapped from his parents, Cerkessian princes, a Tatar who has been baptized.” Unlike the Golitsyns, whose faces showed modesty according to the envoy, “the Cerkess’s face wore broad-minded and strict expression betraying natural soldier.”

In 1699, Prince Peter II - Murzich Cerkassky’s widow, Princess Anna Vasilyevna, maiden name Nagaya, presented young Prince Alexander with her vast landed estates in Romanovsky domain (uyezd). Prince Alexander, like many other boyars’ adolescent sons, left abroad in 1701 to study navigation and ship-building.

When he returned to Russia he entered the service in the Preobrazhensky Regiment. In 1711, he was sent to his homeland 

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21 Akty istoricheskiye, sobrannyye i izdanye istoricheskoy komissiiy 1676-1700, St. Petersburg, 1842, 314-315.
23 Quoted ibidem, 177.
24 List of persons sent to learning in Italy and the Netherlands in the 17th and 18th centuries compiled by Prince Ivan Borisovich KURAKIN – PLATONOV F. P., B. I. KURAKIN I A. P. Prozorsky (1697-1720), Doklady Akademii nauk SSSR 1929, 236.
25 ANDRYEYEV A. A., K voprosu o rannem periode biografii Aleksandra Bekovicha Cerkasskogo, IN: Arkhheologiya i etnologiya Severnogo Kavkaza. Sbornik nauchnykh trudov k 75-letiyu Ismaila Magomedovicha Chechenova,
with a letter from the Tsar to princes — beks of Kabardia to make them take part with Russia. Russia’s aim was to gain allies against the Kuban Khanate that had been carrying out systematic raids on the south of Russia. Bekovich soon informed the Tsar that after reading his letter, Cherkesian beks had indicated their willingness to swear an oath to the ruler of all Kabardians. Alexander had found his mother and both brothers in his homeland, and asserted influence over the local feudal lords through their mediation. No later than in May 1714, Cherkassky suggested facing the Ottoman influence in the region by erecting a Russian fort, gaining control over the mountain nations, establishing trade contacts and entering into a treaty of alliance in case of war with Persia.26

On the Tsar’s order of 2 June 1714 Bekovich was sent to explore the stream of the Amu-Darya, a size of the dam, possibilities for diverting the river to its original bed, to map the eastern shore of the Caspian Sea, and to get a fort for 200-300 men built at the site where the river had originally flown to the Caspian Sea. Another aim was to force the Khan of Khiva to become a serf, and to be loyal to the Russian Tsar, as well as persuade him to send his people down the Syr-Darya River (also called the Seykhun those times) to the above mentioned small town Erketi to prospect for deposits of gold.27

The Governor of Kazan, Saltykov, and the Voivode of Astrakhan, Chirikov, were given an instruction from the Tsar to provide Bekovich with „one thousand five hundred soldiers, five thousand roubles for all costs, and to instantly satisfy every requirement of Prince Cherkassky.” Embarking on that expedition with Bekovich was also Hodja Nefes, with whom Cherkassky had been discussing for long hours, and the Turkmen had been answering in detail all questions. One member of that expedition was a mining master Blyugr, whose task was to explore deposits of silver in the Caucasus. The expedition finally consisted of 1,650 infantrymen, 33 artillerymen, 19 cannons, and 100 sailors. The total costs amounted to exorbitant sum: 39,638 roubles.28 That troop was considered to be sufficient, despite the fact that the Russians had estimated the forces of the Army of Khiva at

27 Zapiski Bebera, Russky archiv, 1872, № 7-8, 1387-1389.
28 Materialy Voyennno-uchenogo arkhiva, Doc. № III, IV, V and VI, 202-209. Details of an economic character are described in the document Listing created from the columns of dispatching the Guard Captain of Mr. Prince Cherkassky on the Caspian Sea since the beginning of his journey in May 1714 to 10th May 1717, Ibidem, 401-506.
200 thousand men, which had been the number of Khan’s male serfs. They saw their superiority over Khiva in deficiency of its artillery, as “calibre and range of fire” of those few seized cannons “are nowhere near as great as Russian ones”.

Bekovich Cherkassky’s First Expedition

Devoting himself to the expedition, Bekovich spent all the summer and nearly all the autumn in Kazan and Astrakhan in 1714. He met Turkmens there, who affirmed that the Amu-Darya was “not a smallish river running from the mountains of India, winding its way through the countries of Bukhara and Khiva, and flowing into a lake called the Aral Sea, which lies at a distance of a 14-day march from the Caspian Sea.” On 7 November 1714, the expedition of approximately 1,500 soldiers, including a hundred Yaik (Ural) Cossacks, set off on two schooners and 27 strugs to Gur’yev (today’s Atyrau). However, a storm had blown in, during which six strugs disappeared, therefore the expedition would be forced to sail back to Astrakhan. Bekovich devoted the winter time to build 20 new, modern and faster vessels.

What occurred in January 1715 was one event that would soon have adverse impact on Bekovich’s second expedition. Thirty thousand Kuban Tatars under the command of Khan Bakht-Girei approached Astrakhan to destroy stations and villages of the local Kalmyks. They killed three thousand of them, and moved away with captives and loot. Bekovich Cherkassky organised the expedition to help Kalmyks, however Kuban commander presented the Governor of Astrakhan an instruction written by the Tsar, allowing to “attack Kalmyks wherever they meet them.” This incident would affect the Kalmyks’ position, mostly Kalmyk Khan Ayuka’s reluctance to join the Russian expedition, and later on his willingness to defect to the side of Khivans.

On 25 April 1715, the expedition set sail from Astrakhan and easily reached Gur’yev. Bekovich was visited by Turkmen nomads there with whom he had a long and detailed talk about the Amu-Darya old bed. The nomads affirmed the information they had acquired from

29 Zapiski Bebera, Russky arkhiv, 1872, № 6, 1088 a 1168.
31 Strug or struga – Russian sailboat or rowboat with a flat bottom used in the 16th to 18th centuries. Served for transporting people and goods.
32 VILINBAKHOV V. B., Alexandr Cherkassky, 28-29.
Hodja Nefes adding that it would be necessary to dig a canal 20 verstas in length to the Red Waters Bay to get the river to its original bed.

Another voyage during which the eastern coast of the Caspian Sea to the Bay of Astrabad (Gorgan) was described brought about a discovery of a lagoon lake called Kara-bogaz-gol. The expedition arrived at the Bay of Tyub-Karagan on Mangyshlak Peninsula. The main forces of the expedition set off along the sea shore to the Red Waters (at Balkhan or Krasnovodsk Bay) locality. A smallish troop led by aristocrats Fedorov and Zvansky was sent to explore the Amu-Darya old bed, and to verify the testimony they had been presented by the nomads. Hodja Nefes left together with explorers. They travelled ten days from Tyub-Karagan along deserted caravan paths to finally arrive at the Kara-agach River. Behind the river a grand mound came in their view that was one and a quarter of arshin (0.9 m) in height, three sazhens (6.39 m) in width, and five verstas (5.3 km) in length. Running about two verstas (2.2 km) off the mound was the Amu-Darya, stretching towards the Caspian Sea was a long dry valley, which according to Nefes’s witness had once been the old river bed (Aktam-Uzboy).

Due to the proof the explorers brought back to the camp at the Red Waters Bekovich would finally become convinced that the original assumption had not been erroneous. On 4 August 1715, Prince wrote to Tsar Peter an account of his discoveries saying: „I arrived to a site called Aktam, where the Amu-Darya had flown into the Caspian Sea. Now there is no water there or close vicinity either, since the river is dammed for several reasons in the section Kharakoe, in a four-day-ride distance of Khiva. From the dam the river must run to a lake called the Aral Sea.”

It was also clear that an expedition into the interior had to be far better organised. Therefore, on 7 October 1715, Bekovich ordered to load vessels, and the complete expedition party came back to Astrakhan. First, the Prince immediately left for Moscow, next for

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33 1 vers at a = 1.06 km
34 1 arshin = 0.71 m
35 1 sazhenn = 2.13 m
36 December 15, 1717 Testimony of Astrakhan Nikolai Fedorov made in the office of Senate relating to the dam on the river Darya, Materialy Voyennovo-uchenogo arkhiva, Doc. № XCVI, 387-390.
37 Testimony of Hodja Nefes, Tatar Altyn Usyynov and Yaik Cossacks Fyodor Yemel’yanov and Mikhail Byelotyulkin made in Kazan Fortress on 11th October 1717, Ibidem, Doc. № LXXXVI, 327-328 (Testimony of Hodja Nefes).
38 Quoted by SOKOLOV A. P., Opisi Kaspiyskogo morya, 5.
Petersburg and the Baltic region to inform the Tsar of the expedition outcome; he showed him the first map of the eastern shore of the Caspian Sea, which has not been preserved until the day.\textsuperscript{39}

\textit{Preparations for the Second Expedition}

Tsar Peter had been staying in Mitau (Mitava, today’s Jelgava) those times, where he personally commanded the army fighting against Swedes. Regardless of being engaged in those affairs, he delayed other matters to hear Bekovich, and entrusted him with particular tasks regarding the eastern march. Peter’s aims were clearly defined in the order to Cherkassky issued on 14 February 1716:

„(I. 40) ... 7. Likewise to equipped him with ships, put merchants on board and sent them down the Amu-Darya to India, to sail as far as ships can sail, to go to India from there while paying attention to rivers and lakes, to describe water and land routes, mostly that water one running to India by that or other rivers, next to go back to India by the same way, provided he would hear about a better route to the Caspian Sea, he would go back by that one, and would describe it.”

Further on, Bekovich was supposed „to visit the Khan of Khiva as well as the Khan of Bukhara, to bring them to serfdom otherwise to friendship provided it would not be possible.” The order (ukaz) stated that „for the sake of all these matters it is necessary to assign him four thousand men, vessels, and all he needs, documents for both khans, and merchants to khans and Mughals” and „and pick Lieutenant Kozhin out of naval officers, to sent him and five or more navigators, who will be used for both journeys, the former as merchants others in Erketi”. Lieutenant Kozhin was supposed to spy on all information on spices or other goods. He had two younger merchants at hand for that task.\textsuperscript{40}

Prince Bekovich Cherkassky was given more detailed instructions in the Tsar’s ukaz of 13 May 1716. Peter pointed out that it was imperative to use peaceful means to make Khiva and Bukhara take the Russian part. The local magnates both in Khiva and Bukhara had often organised conspiracy, or deposed their khans from their thrones. Peter was ready to ensure khans protection, provide them with Russian

\textsuperscript{39} The Senate orders to the captain-lieutenant Cherkassky from January and February 1716 about the need to travel to St. Petersburg, messages of Kazan governor P. P. Salykov to the Senate from September 1714, February and April 1715, IN: \textit{Materiały Voyennou-uchenogo arkhiwa}, Doc. № VII, VIII, IX, X, 210-212.

\textsuperscript{40} Russko-indiyskie otnoshenia v XVIII v., Doc. № 9, 37.
guard to protect them in exchange for their loyalty and acting „with intention of our interests“. Peter would say that khans and the noblest magnates had to be given generous presents on his behalf.

Bekovich was supposed to investigate possibility for diverting the Amu-Darya to its original bed, and to estimate „how many people they needed for that mission“. He was also supposed to build „a fort for a thousand people“ by the old river mouth to the Caspian Sea as a base for another expansion to Central Asia. As soon as the dam had been ruined and they returned to the closer vicinity of that fortress, to build another fort, whose purpose would be to discourage khans’ desire to re-gain the control over the situation.41

Peter devoted particular attention to exploring a water route to India. It was essential to clarify the possibility to reach that country by sailing the Amu-Darya. If so, it would be necessary to describe the complete route in detail, and to explore other routes, perhaps more suitable ones. On that account, a group of “merchants” under the command of Lieutenant Kozhin, a navigator and cartographer, was incorporated into that expedition.42 The Tsar had assigned Bekovich the rank of Captain of the Guard.43

On 14 February 1716 in Libau (Libava, today’s Liepāja), Peter I also issued a special ukaz for Lieutenant A. N. Kozhin. He entrusted him with the following task:

„Go as a merchant until Captain Lieutenant Prince Cherkassky Alexander Bekovich release him, down the Amu-Darya (or other rivers that flow into it) as far as possible to India, to find out a water route to India.

At the moment it will not be possible to go by water, continue to India by land, and to secretly gain information there. To go back by the same way, unless he finds another, better water route, then to return and describe everything everywhere they go, either by water or by land, and draw a map.

To find out more about the sorts of goods of Indian provenance, firstly spices or else.

To see and describe other things that are not written here, and

41 Ibidem, Doc. № 21, pp. 46-47; The previous life of Lieutenant Alexander Ivanovich Kozhin (he also featured as Nikita Kozhin) is not known too much. He was graduated in 1711 in the school of navigation in astronomy class. He became one of the first Russian cartographers. In 1715 he created the description and map of the Gulf of Finland that was published. Ocherk russkoy morskoy istorii, St. Peterburg, vol. I, 1875, 365.
42 Russko-indijskie otnoshenia v XVIII v., Doc. № 13, 40-41.
43 Ibidem, Doc. № 26, 50.
which might relate to the state interest.”

On 31 March, the Tsar additionally entrusted Kozhin with: “When you are at Mughal’s in East India, buy as many various big birds as you like, first of all ostriches, cassowaries, and other ones, also varied smaller ones, and animals of different species, also small ones, and handling them with caution bring them back.” Kozhin was given 5,000 roubles to purchase them, and 1,000 roubles for transport costs.

No later but that day, Chancellor Prince Gavril Ivanovich Golovkin informed the Senate and the Secretary of the Posolsky Prikaz Peter Vasilievich Kurbatov of the Cherkassky’s expedition, and entrusted him with creating letter of recommendation, stating correct titles of the Khan of Khiva and the Khan of Bukhara, and finding out the title of the Great Mughal. In March, an Indian, Radgeram Sidorov from the Astrakhan Indian community was called as adviser to explain the titles used in the Mughal Empire, since it was not possible to easily find out the title of the Indian emperor (it had been found out, besides other things, that the document Malen’kov had been given from the Mughal Emperor had got lost). What proves that the question regarding the titles was considered to be weighty and was not played down is the fact that Cherkassky himself urgently asked competent authorities for issuing the documents of safe conduct as early as on 23 April and 8 May. On 18 May, a special list of Russian tsars addressed to padishahs of India, added with used salutations and titles was put together, but the documents themselves would be only delivered to Cherkassky by the letter of 14 June 1716.

As early as on 17 March 1716, the Tsar wrote a letter to the Khan of Bukhara to inform him of sending “a merchant Alexander Ivanov, Kozhin’s son, to India across the Bukhara country,” and asked him to let that envoy freely pass the Bukhara territory, and for help if needed.

Written on 18 May was also Peter I’s letter to the Shah of Persia containing information about A. I. Kozhin’s journey across

44 Ibidem, Doc. № 10, 37-38.
45 Ibidem, Doc. № 18, 45.
46 Ibidem, Doc. № 26, 50.
47 Ibidem, Doc. № 11, 39 and Doc. № 12, 40.
48 Ibidem, Doc. № 14, 41 and Doc. № 15, 42.
49 Ibidem, Doc. № 17, 42.
50 Ibidem, Doc. № 14, 41 and Doc. № 15, 42.
51 Ibidem, Doc. № 22, 47.
52 Ibidem, Doc. № 25, 50.
53 Ibidem, Doc. № 19, 45 and 46 and Doc. № 20, 46.
Persia to India\textsuperscript{54}, as well as a special request for admitting Kozhin addressed to „the Shah of India”. Besides of phrases in language of the code, it also included a request „\textit{to allow him to sell goods sent along with him in the state of Your Majesty, and to freely buy the local goods without paying duty on them.}”\textsuperscript{55}

**Bekovich Cherkassy’s Second Expedition**

In the second half of September in 1716, the second expedition set off towards the eastern coast of the Caspian Sea. Now, it was a complete army consisting of 70 vessels carrying about 4,000 people, besides others, three infantry regiments and two regiments of Cossacks (1,500 Yaik, and 500 Grebensk [Terek] Cossacks), a company of captured Swedish dragoons, and 500 Tatars. Undertaking the expedition were also artillerymen, engineers and architects, as well as merchants, clerks, translators, doctors or members of other professions. The expedition-related costs amounted to 220,000 roubles those times, amazingly, at the time when the tsarist treasury was nearly empty. This shows again the importance Peter I attached to the idea of opening „\textit{the window to India}”\textsuperscript{56}

On 9 October, the ships dropped their anchors at the well-known Tyub-Karagan Bay where they met with Hodja Nefes and his smallish escort. Bekovich stationed there Colonel Khrushchev’s Penzensky Infantry Regiment and command him to erect a fort, which would be called St. Peter’s Fort. Bekovich acted so at his own will. No such an item had been included in Peter’s instructions. The reason might be seen in relationship between Bekovich and Kozhin, who was acting quite independently, so the tension between them was growing. Kozhin would keep proving that „\textit{the site is not convenient for building a town, as there is neither land and forest nor fresh water but sand}”\textsuperscript{57} Water in wells was salty and rotten, so Kozhin had worries that diseases would occur at a garrison. Bekovich held his own in saying that an old route to Khiva was leading just from there.\textsuperscript{58}

\textsuperscript{54} Ibidem, Doc. № 23, 48.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibidem, Doc. № 24, 49.
\textsuperscript{56} The gradual formation of expedition, shipbuilding, its equipment and weaponry are described in detailed orders of the Senate from 17th to 28th March and 9th April to 2nd July 1716, IN: Materiały Voyennogo-uchenoogo arkhiva, Doc. № XVII-XXXV, XXXIX-LVIII, LXV-LVIII, 226-248, 258-279, 285-290.
\textsuperscript{57} November 18, 1717 Testimony of Lieutenant of the Fleet Kozhin made before the Senate, on the March of Prince Cherkassy to Khiva on 18th November 1717, Ibidem, Doc. № XC, 374-379, quotation 375.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibidem, Doc. № LXXXVIII, 361-362.
The Prince sent to Khiva heralds with letters and gifts along that way. Nobleman Ivan Voronin left for Khan Shirkazi (also Shergazi) to assure him of a peaceful character of the delegation. Another aristocrat, Alexey Svyatov was supposed to make a Khan’s relative, influential magnate Columbay, take his part. At the same time, another delegation led by an aristocrat Davydov was heading to the Khan of Bukhara. However, Davydov went to Bukhara across Persia. Bekovich ordered Kozhin to take him by sea to the town of Astrabad (today’s Gorgan).⁵⁹

In the meantime, the main forces of the expedition had been advancing about 200km by land to the south, where they founded a small fort (today’s Alexandrovsk) off Bekhtemir-Liman Bay (later on re-named Alexander-Bay to pay tribute to Bekovich), and stationed some of the companies of the Krutoyarsk regiment, further on to the Red Waters, where a fort, which would be occupied by the Azov Regiment, was built on the Balkhan Bay shore, on the site of a future town of Krasnovodsk.⁶⁰

Kozhin and Davydov, who had failed in reaching Bukhara, arrived there on 10 November. Both of them reported that the Persian authorities had not let the delegation go across their territories due to the local rebellion. Bekovich did not believe Davydov, and secretly sent Mikhail Zamanov to Astrabad to analyse the true situation.⁶¹

Those times Kozhin was busy with frantic activities. He had explored the site and did a few topographic surveys. He believed that no old river bed existed, even „There is no river flowing into the Caspian Sea close to that site.” ⁶² According to him a fort was not worth building there, since there was not enough fresh water, pasture for animals, and the like, there. Nevertheless, Bekovich did not trust in Kozhin’s foresight. He was convinced of his own power. Late that year he left for Astrakhan to finalize essential preparations for the crucial stage of the march. Owing to ice that had covered the Caspian Sea he had to go back by land. He also took Kozhin with him, apparently to keep him under his surveillance. Also Zamanov, who had been staying for a while in Astrabad, arrived in Astrakhan in February 1717. He reported that Persian authorities had had no intention to create any barriers against Davydov. Supposedly, it had been only Kozhin’s intrigues that discouraged a hesitating herald from the journey to Bukhara. The thing that occurred next was an in-

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⁵⁹ Ibidem, Doc. № XC, 375.
⁶¹ Ibidem, Doc. № XC, 376.
⁶² Ibidem, Doc. № XC, 376.
depth conversation between Bekovich and Kozhin. Leading the expedition, Bekovich exacted obeying all his commands with no delay. The talk, however, resulted in Kozhin’s departure for Petersburg aiming to persuade Tsar Peter and Menshikov about the meaningfulness of the expedition withdrawal. At the same time, Cherkassky’s testimony about their conflicts was heading to Petersburg beginning with words Lieutenant Kozhin did not act like a human being but a beast.”

Bekovich was most likely to grasp the sheer complexity of his mission. Kozhin’s “merchants” had gained disturbing information according to which nobody believed there that Russians had come in peace. Khiva and Bukhara hostile to each other had agreed on fighting against foreigners together, and were preparing military operations. Kozhin mostly based on a letter written by the Kalmik Khan Ayuka, where he had written that „the local Bukharians, Kazaks, Karalpalks and Khivans are preparing together, and want to go by fighting against service people /that is Cherkassky’s forces/”.

In Astrakhan, he was delivered information from his heralds he had sent to Khiva, according to which Voronin had not been admitted well. Shirgazikhan had been travelling those times, and the Russian herald had been virtually held prisoner. It was only by virtue of Columbay, who had been given presents from Syvaty, that Voronin was treated with indulgence. When Shirgazikhan returned in March 1717, he admitted the heralds, listened to them, however, would not come to end clearly apparent war preparations in Khiva. As Voronin stated: „They are scared, those in Khiva, and they think we want to seize Khiva using a trick; therefore, they do not admit us.”

Russians’ hope for getting the Khan on side had died, but Bekovich assumed that Shirgazikhan would change his mind as soon as he had seen the magnitude and power of the Russian troops. Therefore, he amassed reinforcement in Astrakhan joined by Tatar, Armenian, Khivan, Bukharian and Russian merchants. In the meantime, there had been decrease in number of members of the basic contingent. As Kozhin had anticipated, diseases stroke in new forts. Over 500 people

64 1717, Notes of Prince Cherkassky sent to Vasily Nikitich Zlotov, Ibidem, Doc. XCII, 380-381, quotation 380.  
65 March 5, 1717, Letter of Kalmik Khan Ayuka to Lieutenant Kozhin that Bokharians, Karakalpaks, Kazaks, Khivans are preparing attack on Russians, Ibidem, Doc. № LXX, 292-293, quotation 292.  
66 Ibidem, 302.
died in Tyub-Karagan in May 1717. Bekovich hoped he would reinforce his troop with Turkmens suffering privation under khans of Khiva, but allied Turkmen tribes did not display their willingness. Only Kalmys kept providing Russians with valuable information. In the late spring, Bekovich was left with 2,200 people able to March, mostly Yaik and Grebensk Cossacks.

Those forces set off across the steppe towards Gur'yev, where their camp would be attacked by Karakalpak tribes. They captured 60 Cossacks, and looted part of their draught animals. Cherkaşsky arrived there by sea in June, and brought there his two brothers and personal guard consisting of 20 Kabardians. Taking part in the expedition was his wife Marfa Borisovna (maiden name Golitsyn) and their three children. A storm blew in while ships were sailing to Gur'yev. Some of the troops saved themselves on the shore, so went on to Gur'yev by land, unfortunately the ship carrying Bekovich's family got wrecked in the Volga mouth below Astrakhan, and his wife and two daughters died. Only his younger son and a domestic servant saved their lives.

Bekovich feeling miserable sent about a one-hundred troop as reinforcement to the fort in Tyub-Karagan in June, and was advancing himself along the Red Waters towards Khiva. He avoided a usual caravan route; instead the troops followed a winding way along the Emba River instead. The journey was nowise easy since "provisions and many horses were lost on the way ... because of a long journey and lack of feed many horses died".

By Peter's order Bekovich received on the way he was supposed to send merchants to Persia and India, next to China and Bukhara. He appointed Murza Tekelev to lead the expedition, but he would be driven to Astrabad due to the storm on the Caspian Sea, where he

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69 May 16, 1717, Letter of Khan Ayuka on gathering of 2,000 soldiers and their dragging the Red Waters, Ibidem, Doc. № LXXXIII, 297.

70 October 7, 1717, Testimony of Cossack Tatar Urazmet Akhmetev on campaign of Bekovich Cherkaşsky to Khiva, Ibidem, Doc. № LXXXIII, 314-323, link 314-315.

71 Notes of General-Lieutenant Shubert and Department Commander Colonel Fulton- de Barason on journeys of Prince Alexander Bekovich Cherkaşsky to the Eastern shore of the Caspian Sea and on his journey overland to Khiva, National Archives of Georgia, Central Historical Archives, 1. 1087, d. 612, ll. 9-16.

72 Materialy Voyenno-uchenogo arkheiva, Doc. № LXXXIII, 315-316.

73 Ibidem, Doc. № LXXXVI, 352 (Testimony of Fyodor Jemel'janov).
would be thrown into a jail. He would not be set free until Bekovich Cherkassky’s death by Artemy Petrovich Volynsky, a Russian envoy to Persia’s intervention.74

The army approached Aral Lake, next went a long way along its shore. When they reached a well called Chil’dan, the rest of the Turkmen guides ran away, thus the troops were advancing along caravan paths from one well to another. In August 1717, the expedition reached the Amu-Darya, so was at a distance of 100 to 150km from Khiva. Trying not to bring the matter into military confrontation, Cherkassky sent a one-hundred-men troop of Cossacks under Koreytov’s (also Kireytov) command to deliver a letter to the Khan of Khiva explaining once again the peaceful purpose of the delegation. Heralds from Koreytov arrived at a camp situated on the Akkul River (the Amu-Darya tributary) to tell him the letter had been delivered, and the great Khan’s herald was heading towards him. While meeting with that herald Bekovich assured him they were coming in peace. The herald went back to the Khan. The Russian troops were advancing until the troops of Khiva blocked their way by Aybugir Lake (today’s Sudochye Lake).75

The Russian troops were deployed along the lake exploiting it as a natural barrier, and surrounded themselves with a war wagon wall. They had been resisting attacks all day long. As the evening was progressing, Khivans retreated, but would strike again next day. The Russians dug a deep trench during the night, and surrounded three sides of their camp with a mound. The thing that had great importance was seven Russian cannons, as the troops of Khiva had none. Likewise the Russian troops had been better drilled. Despite superiority in number of attackers (16 to 24 thousand at a guess) Khivans suffered huge losses, whereas Russians only lost ten men.76

On that account, Shirgazikhan initiated talks. His herald Hodja Ishim declared that the Russian camp had been attacked by Khivans without the Khan’s knowledge, which he deeply regretted. Bekovich sent his herald, a Tatar Alyyn Useynov, to the Khan to assure him that „Cherkassky has been sent out by His Tsarist Majesty’s herald not by the troops.” Useynov returned together with Hodja Ishim, who informed Cherkassky that the Khan had arranged a session with his relatives and would sent an answer in the morning.77

75 Materialy Voyenno-uchenogo arkhiva, Doc. № LXXXVI, 332-333 (Testimony of Hodja Nefes), 353 (Testimony of Fyodor Yemel’yanov).
77 Ibidem, Doc. № LXXXVI, 363.
The Khivans launched another attack in the morning but would be repelled again. However, betting on the previous account, Bekovich, believed that it was possible to negotiate in a peaceful way. He sent his emissaries who would demand explanation for the Khivan pernicious action. Shirgazikhan was now very helpful. He ordered the troops away the lake, and issued the command to punish culprits „one man to be pierced his nostril, another one his ear.” Paying his tribute to Bekovich, he sent Columbay and Hodja Nazar with other magnates who would demonstrate they were ready to accept substantial concessions.78

The following day, on 22 August, Bekovich was invited to the Khan to talk face-to-face. He went there with his two brothers and brought along „Prince Mikhail Zamanov and other commanders, 250 dragoons, 200 Yaik Cossacks, 50 Grebensk Cossacks; 500 people in total”, as well as presents, silver, sable pelts, and sugar. Frank Frankenberk and Grigori Pal’chikov had been given command of the rest of the troops.79

Despite expressing dissatisfaction with building Russian forts on the shores of the Caspian Sea during the talks, Shirgazikhan declared he accepted all conditions of the Russian Tsar. Then he invited Bekovich to visit Khiva. Khivans and Russians set out on a journey, however, on the way in a camp by a small river called Porsugan, in the distance of a two-day journey from Khiva, the Khan invited Bekovich to his tent and told him „he would not have enough food to keep them just in one town, Khiva, therefore it would be necessary to accommodate them in five other ones.”80

The course of events that occurred afterwards remains unclear; in general, there are several versions and sub-versions, as the only facts we know about those occurrences are based on additional testimony of nomads or surviving Russians, Tatars and Turkmens, who, however, did not belong to the circle of the supreme commanders, therefore had not been involved in the key decisions. Their testimony mostly includes speculation and mediated information.

According to some of them, Bekovich had got caught in that obvious trap, and with a light heart commanded his soldiers to obey the order. Although Major Frankenberk had been extremely reluctant to obey that mediated order, and had demanded to be given it by the supreme commander in person, he finally surrendered. Khivans had been waiting until the Russian troops separated and set out on the

79 Ibidem, Doc. No LXXXIII, quotation and link 317.
80 Ibidem, 319.
journey then attacked them from reserve. Most soldiers were killed, the rest of them were taken captured. Bekovich, Zamanov and other commanders were beheaded before the Khan’s very eyes. Also Palchikov, Frankenberg, Zamanov, Zvansky and Ekonomov were executed, others were taken captives.\footnote{Ibidem, 319-320; Doc. No LXXXVI, 340-341.}

According to another version Bekovich was taken prisoner and forced under threat to issue command to separate the united troops. The order was carried out, the troops slaughtered. Bekovich, still alive, was stripped off the skin, which would be treated with conservation resin. Zamanov was treated alike. Afterwards the heads of Russian princes were carried on sticks along streets of Khiva, next sent to the Khan of Bukhara.\footnote{Nepomyaschichy N. N., Russkaja India, 103.}

Other version of the story says Bekovich was beheaded in the town of Porso situated close to the Porsugan River.\footnote{Omarov O. Yu., Otvazhny issledovateli, 56.} By hearsay, Cherkassky sacrificed his troops for the sake of saving his life, and would comfortably spend the rest of his life at the Khan of Chiva’s.\footnote{Cherkassky, Alexandr Bekovich, Russky biografichesky slovar’ A. A. Polovcova, 183.}

All mentioned versions are not verisimilar, and cannot be supported with expedition members’ eyewitness testimony that would fully accord with the time. They form traditional spectrum of opinions corresponding to different \textit{a priori} attitudes of information mediators from effort to excuse the hero failure to a traditional theory of conspiracy.

Sirgazikhan boasted about his victory, but Bukharians did not accept the offered present in the form of Bekovich’s chopped-off head. Finally, more careful attitude would prevail even in Khiva. The upcoming public execution of 40 Russian officers was halted, and some of the captives, including both brothers of Cherkassky, would be allowed to go back to Russia.\footnote{December 30, 1717, Report of the Kazan governor Peter Samueovich Saltykov on liberation of Russian prisoners and assaults on Russian fortress, \textit{Materialy Voyenno-uchenogo archiva}, Doc. No XCVIII, 391-394.}

The first more ample testimony to the catastrophic end of the expedition was presented in the Kazan Fortress already in October 1717 by those who had made their escape by various ways.\footnote{October 11, 1717, Order of the Senate on authorization of the Commissioner Grigori Netesov in Kazan to interrogations of survivors, Ibidem, Doc. No LXXXIV, 323; Ibidem, Doc. No LXXXVI, 350-351 (Testimony of Altan Useynov).}

Turkmen nomads, who had behaved friendly towards Russians
soldiers, were now displaying growing aggression. The Russian forts suddenly fell into the conditions of a real siege. They got neither reinforcement nor help. It was worthless holding them in a waste land. Therefore, the garrison of the fort by the Red Waters sailed away on remaining ships to Astrakhan in October 1717. While they were on their way a heavy storm blew in. Some of their ships sank others were washed away by the stream to the mouth of the Kura River. They spent winter there, and in the spring of the year 1718 they could go back to Astrakhan. The garrison of the fort in Tyub-Karagan Bay wintered on the site. They faced attacks by Turkmens, but in the spring of the year 1718 they went back to Russia as well.

As regards Kozhin, he had been imprisoned in Petersburg, and brought to trial. Kozhin accused Cherkassky of betrayal. Apparently, Peter I had felt sympathy for Bekovich, however, after receiving the account of the terrible end of the expedition, the situation changed and Kozhin would be granted pardon.

Rumours about the Khiva expedition failure had spread around Russia. A saying “Defeated like Bekovich” became synonymous with failure, and would be included in dictionaries of idioms. Peter I bitterly regretted the failure of the Khiva march. He did not abandon his plans, but had no resources to organise another expedition. He sent an Italian in the Russia’s service, the Secretary of the Posolsky Prikaz Committee on Eastern Matters, Florio Beneveni, to Bukhara in 1718. He managed to establish friendly relationships in Bukhara, map the local markets, and came back to Russia via Khiva, where he had not been given a hearty welcome. But he would arrive to Russia only in 1725, after Peter I’s death.

The thing that dramatically affected the failure of the expedition was Cherkassky’s naivety that had made it possible to lure his troops into a trap. The role which Cherkassky’s weakened mental condition caused by the loss of most of his family occupied in that decision remains just a subject of speculation. The failure, however, had been

88 October 15, 1717, Letter of the Kazan governor P. P. Saltykov to the Senate, asking whether it makes sense to keep the crew in the newly established strongholds, if confirmed reports on death of Bekovich Cherkassky, Ibidem, Doc. № LXXXVII, 359-360.
89 OMAROV O. Yu., Otvazhnny issledovatel’, 57.
90 NEPOMYASHCHY N. N., Russkaya India, 104.
pre-destined by a great deal of other factors, such as ill-considered construction of forts on unsuitable sites bound by huge military forces or soldiers’ exposure to diseases, which decimated most of the expedition, and the like.

The basic aim of the expedition, that is the establishment of business relationships with India, was not accomplished, since it had been based on insufficient knowledge of the region geography, and the basic incorrect assumptions regarding the possibilities of transport by the Amu-Darya. One problem also lay in the military and conquering character of the expedition that had been easy to identify a mile off. Even though the key motivation of that mission was trade, the whole undertaking possessed a trait of feudal expansion based on, besides others, a vision of enforcing rights of Russian feudal lord over his vassals. However, this vision did not correspond to the true situation in Central Asia. Howsoever it had been expensive and extensive venture, the Russian troops facing the superior number of Khivans were just in a slight chance of winning. Their technological superiority over far more numerous army of Khiva was not that overwhelming to play a key role. Chance of long-term sustainable success and permanent presence in the region was slender due to enormous distance from the Russian centres and generally hostile character bringing logistic problems. What supports importance of these factors is the course of events after otherwise formally successful Russo-Persian wars Peter had waged in 1722-1723. Russia’s huge territorial gains in the Caspian region had to be given back to Persia nine years later.92

Therefore, among the principal assets of that expedition are geographical discoveries and making maps of the eastern cost of the Caspian Sea. Information provided by Cherkassky and mainly Kozhin made it possible for von Berden and Samoynov to draw a manuscript map known as „General Flat Picture of the Caspian Sea” as early as in 1717. Peter I charged a respected scientist from Paris Guillaume Delisle with its further processing, and would himself add it with oral notes. The map was printed with cartographic description in French in Amsterdam in 1720. That was just the one that would allow Peter I to enter the French Academy of Science.93

93 Details on the genesis of the map in studies BERG L. C., Persyje russkie karty Kaspiskogo morya, Izvestiya AN SSSR, seriya geografii i geofizika, 1940, № 2, 160-165. KNYAZHECKAYA E. A., Sud’ba odnoy kartiny (o geografie A. Bekoviche-Cherkasskom), Moskva, 1964, 29-32. FEDCHINA V. N., Kak sozdavals’ kartu Sredney Azii, Moskva, 1967, 48-52. LEBEDEV D., YESAKOV
Russia embarked on the real expansion to Central Asia only over 156 years later by the Khivan campaign in 1873. When the Governor-General of Turkestan region, Kaufman, gave Major-General Golovachev order to launch repressive raid on the tribes that had been refusing Russian serfdom, the Russian public understood the command as revenge for Bekovich.\textsuperscript{94}