

# The Karaskan Sayyids Of Ferghana: An Archival Exploration Of A Sainly Family

Maftuna Mirzaeva

AL-Biruni Institute of Oriental Studies Institute, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

\* Corresponding author:

Email: [mirzayevamaftuna95@gmail.com](mailto:mirzayevamaftuna95@gmail.com)

## Abstract

*Sainly families played a crucial role in the socio-political life of Central Asia, making their study an innovative direction in family studies within the region. The archives of these saintly families have been explored through examples of some well-known families. The main problem in this study is exploration of Karaskan sayyids archive. This work focuses on the Karaskan sayyids, a prominent sayyid family in the Ferghana valley, with a particular emphasis on their family archive. At present, only a part of the family's documents, specifically copies, have been examined. My research aims to delve into the historical documents related to this family, which are dispersed across various locations. The fate of the Karaskan sayyids post-19th century remains largely unknown, a gap that has not been addressed in the limited studies available on this family. By meticulously analyzing these documents, my project seeks to reconstruct the family archive and illuminate the subsequent history of the Karaskan sayyids. This study not only contributes to our understanding of the socio-political dynamics of Central Asia but also highlights the significance of archival research in uncovering the histories of influential families. Finding of the research provide a clearer picture of the Karaskan sayyids' archive and their impact on the region.*

**Keywords:** Family archive, Ferghana valley, Karaskan, Karaskan sayyids and Royal Decrees.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The study of saintly families in Central Asia offers a unique lens through which to understand the socio-political, cultural, and economic dynamics of the region during the medieval period. These families, often revered for their spiritual and social influence, played pivotal roles in shaping the history and heritage of Central Asia. Among the various sources available for studying this period, family documents belonging to these sacred families provide invaluable insights that are often absent in official and narrative sources created by palace historians. Many studies have been carried out on the history of the medieval period of Central Asia, in which official and legal documents served as an important source along with manuscripts. Several hundred-year-old family documents belonging to famous persons, especially sacred families, provide information that cannot be found in the narrative sources created by palace historians or other genres in the study of the socio-economic, cultural and political life of the period in which they lived. As a result of the research carried out in this direction, the history of the families founded by famous Islamic mystics and ruling elites successfully revealed. Unfortunately, there are not many sacred families with such a status, and there are not many families where family documents covering the period of several centuries have been preserved. The issue of family archive research was studied by the example of Khwaja Ahrar (Chekhovich, 1974), Khwaja Saad Juybari (Ivanov, 1954; To'rayev, 2007) and Makhdumi Azam's (Kawahara, 2010; Kawahara, 2012; Sultonov, 2014; Sultonov, 2014) descendants.

However, the archive of "Karaskan sayyids", who left a deep mark on the history of the Ferghana Valley, has not been studied as an independent object of research. There is a gap studying famous family archives exemplary for families in the Ferghana Valley. My research will contribute to the fields of family history and family archival studies, revealing the role of sayyids in the social history of the Ferghana Valley. Initial information about the decrees given to sayyids can be found in the researches of V. Nalivkin. He said that he met with the last representative of the family, Sayyid Jalal al-Din-Khwaja, and that he had 144 documents (Nalivkin, 1886). Copies of a part of the documents relating to Karaskan sayyids are kept at the al-Biruni Institute of Oriental Studies by A. Juvonmardiyev in 1965 (Juvonmardiyev, 1965). On the basis of

these documents, Juvonmardiyev researched land and water issues in Ferghana in the 16<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries, in particular, water supply and existing taxes and obligations.

But this is not all the documents related to the mentioned family. Most of the original copies of the documents (about 50) are kept in the National Archives of Uzbekistan, and they were not specifically used for research. U. Sultonov in his work dedicated to the waqf ownership of Tashkent expressed some opinions about the paleographic features of the historical documents related to Karaskan sayyids. Karaskan is a village in the Chortoq district of Namangan province. Chortoq district is bordered by Yangikurgan district in the west, Uychi district in the south and southeast, and the Kyrgyz Republic in the north and east. Karaskan village is located in the southern part of the district and borders with Uychi district. Chortoq district was founded in 1950, and the village of Karaskan was part of the district. In 2009, it was granted township status. The population is over 28 thousand. One of the famous sayyid family which Karaskan sayyids lived and got privilege from royal families for about 300 years. Documents related to this family are used to study etymology of the Karaskan village in this article. The archive of the family consist of more than 200 documents during XVI-XIX centuries. Major of these documents are royal decrees which were given by Shibanid, Ashtarkhanid and Ming. One of legends which we are going to write below points to the sayyids who were considered sacred family and their work was easy.

## II. METHODS

The primary sources for this research consist of official documents related to the royal office system, which are crucial for understanding the socio-political and cultural history of the Karaskan sayyids. The methodological framework of this study is grounded in Islamic diplomatics, paleography, and sphragistics, which are essential for the analysis of historical documents. This approach will be informed by the works of renowned specialists such as H. Busse, O.D. Chekhovich, L. Fekete, G. Hermann, and B. Kazakov. The initial phase of data collection involves gathering and reviewing scientific literature pertinent to the methodological aspects of the research. This includes a comprehensive analysis of existing studies on family archives, particularly those related to sacred families in Central Asia. The research will also involve the collection of documents specifically related to the Karaskan sayyids, which are dispersed across various archives.

The collected documents, which include over 200 items from the 16th to 19th centuries, will be meticulously examined. These documents primarily consist of royal decrees issued by the Shibanid, Ashtarkhanid, and Ming dynasties. The analysis will focus on the content, form, and context of these documents to reconstruct the historical narrative of the Karaskan sayyids. Special attention will be given to the paleographic and sphragistic features of the documents to ensure accurate interpretation. In addition to document analysis, the research will explore the etymology of the Karaskan village, utilizing the family documents as primary sources. This aspect of the study aims to provide insights into the historical and cultural significance of the village and its association with the Karaskan sayyids. By employing these methods, the research aims to fill the existing gap in the study of famous family archives in the Ferghana Valley and contribute to the broader fields of family history and archival studies.

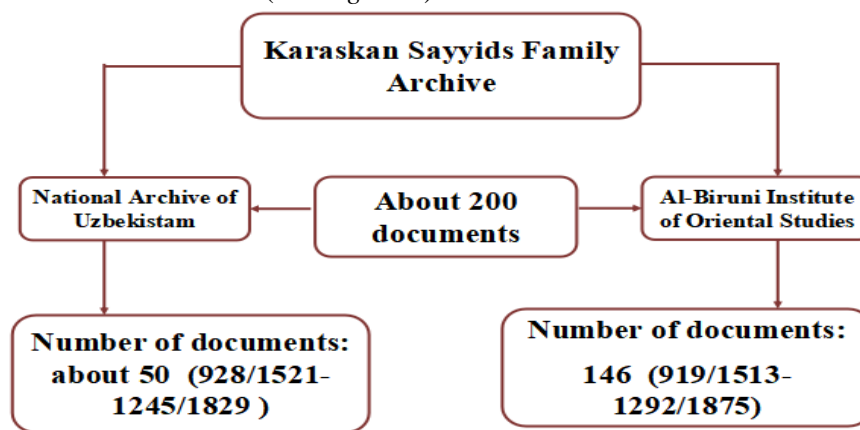
## III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Result

During the period under study, Karaskan was part of the Bukhara and Kokand khanates. During the reign of the Shaibanids and Ashtarkhanids despite the Fergana Valley was considered an administrative unit of the Bukhara Khanate, in the 18th century it was separated from Bukhara and formed as the Kokand Khanate. Karaskan was one of the administrative units of Akhsikent and Namangan region at this time. Political, social and economic processes were also connected with these khanates. The village of Karaskan, which served as their spiritual center, is related to this name. The founder of the family was Sultan Sayyid Auliya, who lived in the 14th century and was buried in Karaskan village, Namangan region of present day Republic of Uzbekistan. Since the 15th century, the representatives of the family owned fertile lands in numerous villages, including Karaskan and the adjacent villages of Kyzil-Rabot, Adak and Gow-Khana as

private and supra-generational waqf property. They had prominent positions and socio-economic benefits. The last privileged representative of the family was Sultan Sayyid Jalal al-Din-Khwaja, who lived during the Khoqand Khanate, 1860-70s.

During the colonial period and the years of the Soviet regime, the majority of historical documents about the family history and land ownership of the Karaskan sayyids were lost. What remains is now kept in the National Archives of Uzbekistan and al-Biruni Institute of Oriental Studies relating to the 16<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The holdings consist of more than two hundred documents of three types: royal decrees, deeds and waqf-namas. Unfortunately, there is not any pedigree – *nasab-nama* of the family among them. Historical documents were written in Persian and Turkic languages. The colonial period under the Russian Empire had a negative impact on the future fate of the waqf lands. Without a doubt, this had an impact on the Karaskan sayyids and their waqf properties. In 1880, Jalal ad-Din-Khwaja, who was the last entitled representative of the family, submitted a copy of the documents to the governor general's office to confirm his ownership over the land. In 1886, a copy of the documents was submitted to the administration of the Turkestan region for drafting. After that, the fate of the family and its documents remained a mystery. The documents in the al-Biruni Institute of Oriental Studies are copies, and the documents in the the National Archive of Uzbekistan are original copies. This article is dedicated to researching archival materials related to the Karaskan Sayyids in the National Archives of Uzbekistan (See Figure 1).



**Fig 1.** Overview of the Karaskan Sayyids Archive: Document Quantities and Storage Locations

The National Archives of Uzbekistan houses approximately fifty documents related to the Karaskan Sayyids. These documents are in Turkic and Persian. The earliest decree was granted to Sayyid Fazil Ali in 928/1521 by Shaibanid Suyunch-Khwaja-Khan (r. 1512-1525), and the latest by Muhammad Ali-Khan (r. 1822-1841) in 1245/1829. An application from 1886 by Sayyid Jalal al-Din-Khwaja is also included. Below, we will provide a detailed description of these decrees.

### Discussion

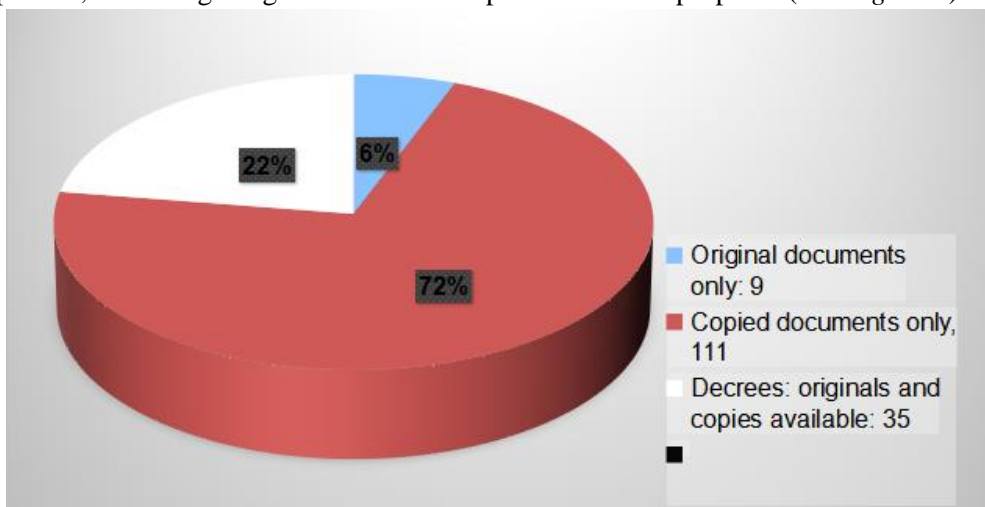
Decrees from the 16th to 19th centuries were issued by sultans and local rulers, including the supreme rulers of the Shaibanid, Ashtarkhanid and Ming dynasties. A. Juvonmardiyev categorized the documents into two types based on their nature and the issuing office: 1) documents from the central government offices of Bukhara, Kokand, and Akhsikent; 2) documents issued by sultans, governors, and local officials (Juvonmardiyev, 1965). Since Akhsikent was a province of the Bukhara Khanate, and it is unclear if all mentioned officials belonged to Akhsikent's government, we divided the documents into those issued by the supreme rulers of Bukhara and Kokand, as well as sultans, begs, and local governors. Decrees were issued by Suyunch-Khwaja-Khan (1503-1525), Abdullah-Khan II (1583-1598), Nauruz Ahmad-Khan<sup>1</sup>, Muhammad Darvish Bahadir<sup>2</sup>, Dust Muhammad Sultan<sup>3</sup>, Sultan Abul-Khair Bahadir during the Shaibanids period, Imam-Quli-Khan (1611-1642) during the Ashtarkhanids, Olim-Khan (1798-1810), Umar-Khan (1810-1822), Muhammad Ali-Khan, Khudayar-Khan (1831-1882), Muhammad Malla-Khan (1858-1862),

Sultan Sayyid-Khan (1863-1865), Nasriddin-Khan (1875), and officials Irisquli-bek, Muhammad Sayyidquli, and Musulmanqul Mingbashi during the Mings.Nine original documents, for which no copies exist, were identified. Unfortunately, some documents are in such poor condition that comparison with copies is impossible. For instance, in document I-323, list 2 of the fund, within the 74th folder, only a few lines of text have been preserved. In another case, we encountered difficulties in identifying the copies of decrees issued to Sayyid Abd as-Sani. Several decrees addressed to this Sayyid are found in the ‘Collection of Decrees’ and in the National Archives Fund. While we identified some as copies, one document mentioned the Sayyid’s name but lacked sufficient preservation to determine the exact copy, as even the date was missing (*see Table 1*) (Juvonmardiyev, 1965).

Original documents only	Decrees: originals and copies available	Deteriorated historical documents
9	34	2

**Table 1.** Comparison Quantity Index of Documents

The next figure illustrates the distribution of family documents, categorizing them into originals and copies. The data reveals a significant disparity between the two categories. Original documents constitute a smaller proportion, indicating a higher reliance on copies for various purposes (*See Figure 2*).



**Fig 2.** Distribution of Copies and Original Family Documents

When evaluating the status of documents, we categorized them into three groups: well-preserved, moderately preserved, and poorly preserved. Some documents have complete text, but the inscriptions on the seals are illegible. In other cases, parts of the document, such as the addressee’s name, are torn. For instance, in the 40th folder, it is impossible to read the names of the addressee and the addresser. In the 64th folder, only the invocation and intitulation parts of the text are present. Due to damage on the left side of the document in the 66th folder, we could not determine some sentences and the date of issue. In the 71st folder, the paper is damaged, and we could not fully restore the text. The seals are also not completely preserved. These issues complicate the identification of the names of the representatives or related persons, the determination of the document’s period, and the analysis of the benefits granted. The documents are written in Turkic and Persian. During the Shibanid period, particularly in the Tashkent estate founded by Suyunch-Khwaja-Khan, the Turkic language was given more importance than in other Shibanid regions. Consequently, many decrees from this period are in Turkic. The Akhsikent province, ruled by Suyunch-Khwaja-Khan’s descendants, was part of the Tashkent estate. During the Ashtarkhanid and Ming periods, decrees were often written in Persian. Examples include decrees from the reigns of Imam-Quli-Khan, El-Muhammad Sultan, Narbutabi (1770-1798), and Muhammad Rahim (NAUz) (*See Figure 3*).



**Fig 3.** Categorization of Historical Documents by Language

The documents discussed above, which include royal decrees, date from the 16th to the 19th centuries and originate from various khanates in Central Asia. These documents, often referred to as *manshūr, farmān, hukm, yarlıq, nishān, parwāna, ināyat-nāma, amān-nāma, marḥamat-nāma* were numerous and circulated widely. It is important to note that the names of individuals mentioned in these documents are not always reflected in the text. The entitlement part of these documents typically concludes with the Turkic phrases *sūzum, sūzumīz*. Some types of legislative acts begin the invocation part with the phrase *dar in valā* (i.e., *in time*). Specialists have proposed distinguishing between major and minor decrees based on the presence of the phrases *sūzum, sūzumīz* and *dar in valā* in the documents (Sultonov, 2021). However, there are instances where documents that start with “my word” or “our word” also contain the phrases *dar in valā* or *chun dar in valā* (*in time*). Below is the document’s text (NAUz):

- (1) ابو الفتح محمد ... بهادر سوزومیز
- (2) چون در بنولا حکام و ع...؟
- (3) و رعایاء قلمرو ولایت...؟
- (4) ...؟ پاد...؟ و ...؟ خسروانه خود...؟
- (5) و مودة اکتساب کمال الدین سید فضلالله ارزانی داشته...؟
- (6) درو بست بدوستور قدیم...؟ خان شفقت نمودیم باید که مقرر و مسلم مشارالیه دانسته
- (7) ...؟
- (8) و شاهان مذکور از امر و فرمان مشارالیه نبرایند سجاده نشینی و مق...؟
- (9) و خصوصاً مرزعه گاوخانه را درو بست مخصوص مشارالیه دانند...؟
- (10) ...؟
- (11) محمد یار سلطان بن پاینده محمد سلطان

The majority of documents related to the Sayyids of Karaskan consist of legislative acts. These documents, housed in the National Archive, primarily address the following issues:

- Career appointments
- Granting of rights and benefits
- Exemption from taxes and obligations
- Imposition of punishments
- Sale of state lands

The decrees issued to the Sayyids of Karaskan often conferred rights and benefits, including tax exemptions and career appointments. Notable figures such as Muhammad Sultan, Dust Muhammad Sultan, Imam-Quli-Khan, Nizamiddin *ātaliq*, Muhammad Mamaybi, Shukur Muhammad Sultan, and Ata Muhammad issued these decrees. These decrees granted to the Sayyids Karaskan, Adak, Gow-Khana, and Kyzilrabort the right to their lands without the need for confession, exemption from various taxes and obligations, and protection from interference. A decree issued by Muhammad Ali-Khan exempted the Sayyids from taxes such as *ghalla, kharāj, and ṭanābūna*, and recognized them as *marfū‘ al-qalam*. It emphasized the importance of prayer during the ruler’s tenure. Additionally, a decree by Suyunch-Khwaja-Khan granted Sayyid Fazil Ali the privilege of hunting, a right not commonly extended to other Sayyids. The document reads as follows (NAUz):

- (1) ...ی
- (2) ابو لمنصوراتا محمد بهادرخان سوزومیز
- (3) امراء کردون اقتدار و وزراء کف...؟
- (4) امین و ارباب و کلانتران و رعایاء ولایت اخسک [نت]...؟
- (5) بدانند که چون موضع کرسکان و مرزعه آدک از قدیم الایام حسب...؟
- (6) سلاطین کرام بجناب سیادتمایی ز هادت اثراری ولایت پناه هدایت دستگاه کما...؟
- (7) و الدینا و الدین مولانا سید زاهد شیخ درو بست متعلق بوده است چون...؟
- (8) سادات کثیر البرکات بر ذمت همت واجب و لازم است بنابر ان عنایت پادشاهانه...؟
- (9) شامل حال جناب مشارالیه ارزانی داشته بطریق درو بست عنایت نمودیم باید...؟
- (10) مقرر مسلم جناب مشارالیه درو بست دانسته مال غلات مقرر و اخراجات و سایر اوارضات و الغات
- (11) و عملات خودها را از قرار راستی جواب گویند چیزی پوشیده ندارند چادر پولی...؟



- (12) او حاضر کرديده خلاف نورزند ديوان و ضابط و ارباب و غيره جهت اخراجات و مردکار ...؟  
 (13) و جوازخانه شکورچی و بورچی بده چی و توشکچی و چراچی و کارناچی و ایتارچی و مرابانه و قروقبانی و باتوت ...؟  
 (14) و درالتای و خانه چین و غيره اصلا مزاحم نشوند چیری حواله ندارند از کل تکالیف مرفوع القلم داند  
 (15) چون بتوقع وقع اصح اشرف اعلى رسد اعتماد نمایند خلاف نورزند در این امر تقصر ننمایند ... ذ... قعه ۱۰۲۱  
 مهر: اتا محمد بهادرخان

In the year 982/1574, a decree was issued by Sultan Dost Muhammad Bahadir, son of Navruz Ahmad Baraq Khan. This decree addressed the claim made by Faqir Shah's Sayyid Zahid regarding his sister. The claim was ultimately rejected, emphasizing that Sayyid Zahid's involvement concerning his sister was not substantiated.

The document reads as follows (NAUz):

- (1) هو الملك المنان  
 (2) ابوافتح سلطان دوست محمد بهادر سوزوميز  
 (3) فقر شاه قه بو اوچوردا ...؟ ع همایون  
 (4) عرضمزه یتي کیم سین سین سیادتکاب شاه  
 (5) زاهدید نینگ همشیره سی نی اتانگز منگا باغیشلاغاندور دیب دعوا قیلور ایترمیش سین  
 (6) بسیار عیت تورور ایمی دی بو نشان کورگاچ مشارالیه نینگ همشیره سی نینگ  
 (7) دعواسی نی برطرف قیل غیل کشارالیه نینگ هکشیره سی غه دخل قیلماغیل هر کیمارسه گه همسر  
 (8) بولسه اختیاری بار سین خرخشه قیلماغیل بو بابدا خلاف حکم ایتما غیل اوسال تقصر ...؟  
 (9) بولماسون دیب مهر لیغ نشان جماد الاول آیندا بتلدی ۹۳۸

The decree further clarified that Sayyid Zahid, an ascetic, had petitioned Sultan Dost Muhammad Khan regarding his sister's claim. In response, the Sultan issued a decree that not only exempted the representatives of the apartment from taxes and obligations but also granted them certain rights and benefits.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the comprehensive analysis of the Karaskan Sayyids' archive, it can be concluded that this collection encompasses legislative documents spanning from the 16th to the 19th centuries. Notably, the archive contains a higher proportion of copies than original documents. Despite the incomplete preservation of the entire collection, the extant documents provide invaluable insights into the legal and administrative frameworks of the respective periods. The earliest records, dating back to the 16th century, are predominantly written in Turkic and pertain to land ownership in the Ferghana Valley. These documents highlight the significant role of the Turkic language in administrative affairs during this era, reflecting the linguistic and cultural milieu of the region. The prominence of Turkic in these records underscores its importance as a medium of official communication and legal documentation. Furthermore, the archive includes documents issued by the central governments of the Shibanids, Ashtarkhanids, and the Kokand Khanate, primarily composed in Persian. These documents are distinguished by their unique paleographic and diplomatic characteristics, which are emblematic of the Central Asian khanates.

The distinct tabular format observed in these documents is indicative of the administrative and legal norms prevalent during the respective periods. This format not only facilitated the organization and management of information but also reflected the bureaucratic sophistication of the time. The Karaskan Sayyids' documents serve as a crucial window into the legislative and administrative history of Central Asia. They illustrate the evolution of legal practices and the interplay between Turkic and Persian languages in official records. The bilingual nature of the archive underscores the linguistic diversity and administrative complexity of the region. By examining these documents, scholars can gain a deeper understanding of the socio-political dynamics, legal traditions, and administrative structures that shaped the history of Central Asia. In essence, the Karaskan Sayyids' archive offers a rich repository of historical data that enhances our comprehension of the legal and administrative developments in Central Asia from the 16th to the 19th centuries. This study not only contributes to the fields of family history and archival studies but also provides a foundational basis for future research on the legislative and administrative history of the region.

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