

# Socio-Political Situation on the Day of the Absolutization of the Russian Empire by Khan Xiva

*Kayumov Marufjon Usmanovich*<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

This article provides information about the social, economic and political life of the Khiva Khanate on the eve of the Russian Empire's colonization. It also discusses the structure and condition of the khanate's army, as well as the policy pursued by Khiva Khan Said Muhammad Rakhimkhan II on the eve of colonization.

**Keywords:** colonial policy, military army, socio-economic life of the khanate, Polvonyop, Gazovot, Yarmish, Kilich-Niyazbiy, Arna, Shurakhon, Khan, Suvvoli canals Said Muhammad Rakhimkhan II.

<sup>1</sup> *Associate Professor, Candidate of Historical Sciences, Namangan Institute of Engineering and Technology*

## Introduction

On the eve of the Russian invasion, the total land area of the khanate was 138,237 km<sup>2</sup>. Only 35.2% of this land area was cultivated, the remaining 64.8% was sandy [1]. Russian orientalist A.L. Kun reported that the Turkmen in the Khiva Khanate consisted of 40,000 families, with an average of 5 people per family, and a total population of 200,000 people [2]. About half of all Turkmen were Yavmuts. The population of the Khanate of Khiva consisted of settled and nomadic people, of which the settled population lived in villages, cities, and on the banks of many canals that flowed from the Amudarya. Some Turkmen, Kazakhs, and Karakalpaks, who have their own arable land, lead a semi-nomadic lifestyle. The Khanate of Khiva was a multi-ethnic state. Its population consisted of 51.4% Uzbeks, 21.3% Turkmen, 16.3% Karakalpaks, 9.6% Kazakhs, 0.7% Persians, 0.2% Arabs and other nationalities[3].

## Methods

The research on the socio-political situation of the Khiva Khanate under Russian absolutization applies a historical-analytical approach to examine the region's governance, military structure, and economic landscape. Despite existing studies on colonial policies, a gap remains in understanding the internal dynamics of Khiva's resistance and adaptation strategies. The study employs archival analysis, historical records, and comparative assessments to reconstruct the period's events. Findings highlight Khiva's feudal governance, its struggling military, and the socio-economic disruptions caused by colonial

pressures. The results contribute to a deeper comprehension of pre-colonial Central Asian governance and its implications for historical geopolitical shifts.

## **Result and discussion**

The main occupation of the Turkmen was cattle breeding and agriculture. The political system of the Khiva Khanate was a feudal monarchy, with a khan from the Uzbek Kungur clan at the head of the state. The khanate's administrative system consisted of administrative, financial, judicial, mirshablik, and military departments. Each of them was personally appointed by the khan. The highest positions in the Khiva Khanate were the positions of mekhtar, kushbegi and devanbegi. The position of this or that official in the government depended on the closeness of his relations with the khan. On the eve of the attack of Tsarist Russia on the Khiva Khanate, the most important state affairs and relations between Russia and the Khiva Khanate were concentrated in the hands of the devanbegi of Muhammad Murad, who was trusted by the khan. The mekhtar was practically considered the prime minister. He ruled the settled population living in the northern part of the khanate. He supervised tax affairs, the construction of irrigation facilities. The kushbegi ruled the settled population living in the southern part of the khanate. The mekhtar, kushbegi, devanbegi and some other officials also performed the functions of the head of military economic affairs and military commander during the war.

The economic basis of the Khiva Khanate was agriculture. There was a lot of land suitable for cultivation on the territory of the Khanate. However, due to the problem of irrigation, the possibility of using large areas of land was limited. Numerous canals and ditches taken from the Amu Darya played an important role in agriculture. The Polvonyop, Gazovot, Yarmish, Kilich-Niyazbiy, Arna, Shurakhon, Khan, Suvvoly canals were irrigation networks of state importance. A lot of money and effort was spent on the construction, annual cleaning and repair of these canals. The military army, which was the backbone of the Khanate's domestic and foreign policy, consisted of cavalry and infantry. Cavalry soldiers were called navkars, and infantry soldiers were called sarboz. According to information from the "Turkestan Collection", the soldiers had special military uniforms and lived in special buildings located in the Khiva fortress [4]. There were military units in the fortresses. Border troops were formed in the border areas of the khanate, and they were allocated land and water from there. The commander of the border troops was called a guard beg. The main part of the army was made up of Uzbek, Turkmen, and Karakalpak serfs. The serfs were recruited from the well-to-do and wealthy population. Each serf was given 20 tanobs of land in exchange for his services. Often, serfs leased this land. Serfs were exempt from taxes and obligations. If the serf himself or his horse was wounded during the war, he was given the necessary amount of money. The widow of a serf who died in the war was given a pension, and sometimes a slave instead of money [5]. On the eve of the Russian invasion, the regular army of the khanate numbered two thousand people.

During the mobilization, the number of troops reached 15-20 thousand people. During the war, peasants were also mobilized, and the army formed from them was called karacherik [6].

The level of provision of the military army of the Khiva Khanate with modern weapons was very low, and it was mainly armed with machine guns, swords, shields, cannons and several other cold weapons.

In general, in the early 70s of the 19th century, the military army of the Khiva Khanate was quite backward in terms of structure, military tactics and weapons. As a result of this backwardness, despite the bravery and bravery of the khanate soldiers, it could not withstand the onslaught of the modernly armed troops of Tsarist Russia and was defeated.

On the eve of the Russian invasion, Said Muhammad Rakhimkhan II was at the head of the state in Khiva. He ascended the throne in 1864 at the age of 19 after the death of his father, Said Muhammad Khan [7]. The period of Said Muhammad Rakhim Khan's rule was a very complex period, rich in socio-political events. The Turkmen and Karakalpak rebellions that had previously occurred in the Khanate continued unabated during this period. These rebellions had a negative impact on the socio-economic life of the country. Often, during the rebellions, agriculture was disrupted, crops were not planted, and

infectious diseases increased [8]. The rebel Turkmen attacked towns and villages inhabited by the settled population, demanding their property and taking women and children captive. The Khiva government suppressed these rebellions with great difficulty. For example, in 1866, the Yavmut tribe of Turkmen rebelled. They attacked the areas around Khiva, Ioli, Ghaziabad, and Tashkhavuz. To suppress the uprising, Said Muhammad Rahimkhan sent a large army under the leadership of Muhammad Murad devanbeg, Muhammad Niyaz devanbeg, and Muhammad Yakub mekhtar [9]. The Khiva troops brutally suppressed the Yavmut uprising. The Yavmut elders consulted and asked Muhammad Murad devanbeg to conclude a peace treaty. A peace treaty was concluded between Muhammad Murad devanbeg and the Muhrdars led by the Yavmut commander Sari Sardar. The Yavmuts promised not to rebel again, returned the things taken from the civilian population, livestock, and prisoners, and paid 20,000 manats for the Khiva troops' travel expenses. Despite the peace treaty, the Turkmen rebellions continued. Said Muhammad Rakhim Khan II ordered the closure of the canals that brought water to the Turkmen lands in order to subdue them.

Said Muhammad Rakhim Khan II tried to establish peace and tranquility in the country and put an end to the ongoing rebellions. Because at that time, Russia had launched conquest campaigns against the khanates of Central Asia. Russian troops attacked the Kokand Khanate and occupied its large territories. In 1867, the Turkestan Governor-General was established to administer the conquered territories, with Tashkent as its center. Adjutant General K.P. Kaufman, who was appointed as Governor-General, continued the conquest campaigns and defeated the Emirate of Bukhara in 1868. A peace treaty was concluded between the two, and the Emirate of Bukhara became a dependent state of Russia. In 1869, the Caucasian troops under the command of Colonel N.G. Stoletov occupied the Krasnovodsk Strait on the eastern coast of the Caspian Sea [10]. A military fortification was built here and the city of Krasnovodsk was founded. With the capture of the Krasnovodsk Strait, the Khiva Khanate was surrounded by Russian lands on three sides. In a letter to Said Muhammad Rakhim Khan, von Kaufman reported that Krasnovodsk was a warehouse for Russian merchants and demanded that they be allowed to trade freely within the territory of the khanate. Seeing the growing threat from Russia, Said Muhammad Rakhim Khan began to take measures to counter the threat. Initially, peace negotiations were held with the rebellious Yavmut chieftains and Karakalpak beys. Those who stopped the rebellion were given various concessions. They were provided with land and water. The Khan ordered the Turkmen to be given land around the place called Aibugir [11]. A strong military fortress was built on the northern borders of the country at the place where the Amu Darya flows into the sea, called Aqqala [12].

In the second half of the 1860s and early 1870s, tensions between the Khiva Khanate and Russia grew. The territory of the Khiva Khanate had become a refuge for people fleeing from the Kazakh juz, the Kokand Khanate, and the Bukhara Emirate, who were dissatisfied with the Russian occupation.

## Conclusion

The socio-political landscape of the Khiva Khanate on the eve of its colonization by the Russian Empire highlights a critical historical juncture marked by administrative, military, and economic challenges. Despite its structured governance and efforts to maintain sovereignty, the khanate faced internal unrest and external pressure due to its outdated military capabilities and fragmented political environment. This study, through historical analysis and archival research, finds that the Khiva Khanate's weakened defense mechanisms and socio-political instability facilitated its eventual subjugation. The results underscore the broader implications of colonial expansion and the necessity for resilient governance structures to withstand external threats.

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