

**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

# Administrative Reforms in The Khanate of Khiva: Changes in The Central Administration System of The Khanate During the Period of Abulgazi Ikhon And After

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## Abstract

This article analyzes the administrative and political reforms implemented in the Khanate of Khiva during the 17th century, specifically focusing on the reign of Abulghazi Bahadur Khan and the subsequent period. The study examines the centralization of the khanate's administrative system, the enhancement of the state apparatus, and the correlation between the traditional and new governance methods introduced by Abulghazi Khan. Based on historical sources, the article explores changes in military-administrative positions, the devon (chancellery) system, and the evolving roles of tribal groups within the central government of the khanate. Furthermore, it provides a comparative analysis of the consolidation of the khan's authority and its interaction with local government bodies.

## KEYWORDS

Khanate of Khiva, Abulghazi Bahadur Khan, administrative reforms, central authority, governance system, devon, military-administrative structure, beklík, naiblík.

## INTRODUCTION

The Khanate of Khiva experienced complex political and social processes in the 17th century and in the subsequent periods. Particularly during the reign of Abu al-Ghazi Khan, important steps were taken to strengthen central authority, regulate state administration, and implement administrative reforms across the territory of the khanate. These reforms included achieving strict centralization in state governance, strengthening control over local rulers, and establishing systematic tax collection. Rulers who succeeded Abu al-Ghazi also continued this political course and sought to improve the central management system. By studying this subject, it is possible to draw important conclusions regarding the foundations of statehood in the Khanate of Khiva, the approaches to ensuring political stability, and the significant changes in the administrative system [13].

## METHODOLOGY

This study uses historical-comparative, systematic-structural, critical-analytical and source studies methods. When studying sources, the purposes of their writing, the worldview of their authors, and the political and social conditions of the era are taken into account. In the historical analysis, the evolution of assessments of the administrative and political reforms carried out during the reign of Abulgazi Bahodir Khan and subsequent periods in works written in different periods is determined, as well as their common and different aspects. The article also studies and summarizes the existing scientific literature, monographs and articles.

## RESULTS

The Khanate of Khiva was divided into provinces from a

territorial-administrative perspective during the 16th–18th centuries; however, by the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century, these areas were transformed into the primary administrative units known as bekliks (principalities). According to historical sources, there were a total of 16 bekliks and 2 noibliks (districts) operating within the khanate during this period. These included the bekliks of Hazarasp, Gurlan, Khonka, Kunya-Urgench, Kushkupir, Pitnak, Kiyat, Shahabbaz (Shobboz), Shavat, Tashauz, Ambarmanak, Urgench, Khujayli, Shumanay, and Kungrad, as well as the noibliks of Beshariq and Kiyat-Kungrad. These territories were directly governed by beks and noibs appointed by the khan. The city of Khiva itself remained under the control of the khan and high-ranking ministers. Throughout various historical stages, the capital city of the khanate included Vazir, Kat, Kunya-Urgench, and Khiva [1].

From the very first day he came to power, Abu al-Ghazi Khan, one of the Khiva khans, focused his main attention on strengthening the state. He removed the Turkmen nobility from state administration. He confiscated their wealth, property, land, and water rights, and expelled them from within the khanate. The Turkmens were forced to migrate to Khorasan, Southern Turkmenistan, Abulkhan, and Mangyshlak [2]. All high-ranking positions within the khanate were handed over to the Uzbek rulers.

According to the Khivan historian Munis, Abulghazi Bahadur Khan implemented administrative reforms that completely restructured the khanate's central government system. He appointed 360 people from the Uzbek nobility to various positions within the khanate. Among them, he gave 32 of the most influential individuals places by his side in the palace, and they became the Khan's close advisors. Furthermore, he established 32 central government positions within the palace, which were distributed as follows: 2 shayxulislom, 1 mutavalli, 1 noib, 4 otaliq, 4 inoq, 4 mirob, 4 biy, 1 parvonachi, 2 aka, 2 arbob, 4 chig'atoy-inoqi, 1 vazir (who was referred to as mehtar), and 1 qushbegi. In this way, by involving influential representatives of the Uzbeks and the local population in state affairs, Abulghazi Bahadur Khan achieved a certain stability between them. The strengthening of central authority enabled him to pursue domestic and foreign policy on a large scale.

In his research papers, the scholar X. Matyakubov notes that among the Khivan khans, Abulghazi Bahadur Khan was the only ruler who voluntarily and peacefully handed over the khanate's throne to his son, Anushaxon ibn Abulghazikhan, in

1663. He also provides evidence, based on certain information, that Abulghazikhan remains known as a great reformer, ruler, and scholar. In particular, if one looks at the history of the khanate's craftsmanship starting from the Khwarazmshah era, by this period, major centers of handicraft had emerged in the cities of Khwarezm. The production of thread, fabric, carpets, silk, copper and iron weaponry, knives, and glassware flourished. From this period onward, architecture and handicrafts in Khwarezm developed significantly, as fundamental changes began to occur in the cultural life of Khwarezm during these times. The appearance of cities changed: palaces, mosques, madrasas, mausoleums, and caravanserais were built. Especially in the construction of buildings and structures, carved pillars were widely used. "Abulghazikhan united the Uzbek tribes, calling them 'topa', and appointed inoqs as the heads of these 'topas'. There were four such 'topas' in Khiva, and now a new leader—the inoq—began to rule over the previous tribal heads (the biys) and tribal elders (the otaliqs). After the tribes were unified, the Uyghur-Nayman, Qungrat-Qiyat, Nukus-Manghit, and Kangli-Kipchak 'topas' emerged. Among these four 'topas', the strongest was the Qungrat tribe, and the influence of its leader, the inoq, on the khan and the country's politics was quite strong" [5].

## **DISCUSSION**

You can also learn about the administrative reforms of Abulghazi Bahadur Khan and the representatives of the dynasty before him in the Khiva Khanate from the research of the historian N. Allayeva. In particular, in the information provided by the scholar regarding the history of the Arabshahid dynasty, she emphasizes that the history of this dynasty has not been studied extensively by scholars to this day, and that such studies are currently few in number. In general, the rise to power of the Arabshahid dynasty should be viewed as a unique agreement between the Genghisids of the Dasht-i Qipchaq and the nobility of Khwarezm. Detailed information about this is provided in Abulghazi Bahadur Khan's work Shajarayi Turk [12].

It is known that in 1510, a conflict occurred between the armies of Muhammad Shaybanikhan and Ismail Safavi. It is worth noting that the Arabshahids, who established power in Bukhara, were the sons of the cousins of Muhammad Shaybanikhan and the Shaybanids. They are two branches of the same dynasty, which is why they gained fame as the Khiva Shaybanids and the Bukhara Shaybanids. They are one

dynasty, descendants of the same person; therefore, the arrival of the Arabshahids in Khiva and the Shaybanids in Bukhara occurred simultaneously.

However, this situation must be viewed from different perspectives, because Muhammad Shaybanikhan invaded Bukhara and Samarkand from the Dasht-i Qipchaq, and military conflicts took place there. But the situation in Khiva was completely different. There, in 1510, as I mentioned, a conflict occurred near the city of Merv between Muhammad Shaybanikhan and Ismail Safavi, and Shaybanikhan perished in the battle. Prior to that, in 1505, after Muhammad Shaybanikhan conquered Khwarezm, he had incorporated it into his state; therefore, the territory of Khwarezm subsequently passed automatically into the hands of the Safavids (Iran) and Shah Ismail.

However, in 1510, within a very short time—one might say about a year—an uprising was prepared, and the people of the city of Vazir, led by Qazi Umar, organized a revolt and expelled all the Qizilbash (the 12 red stripes on their headgear signified the 12 Shia Imams), i.e., the Iranian troops and the representatives of Shah Ismail, from the country. After that, they appealed to a famous and respected person—Hisomiddin Qittol, a descendant of Said Ota—and wanted him to take the throne and declare himself their king. He, however, spoke about the legitimacy of power [6].

In his works, researcher T. Khudoykulov emphasizes that no single dynasty held stable power in the city of Khiva during the 17th century. In his view, although certain individuals from the Genghisid lineage were invited to Khiva and placed on the khan's throne, practical power actually remained in the hands of the Inaq nobility from the Qungrat clan. The author notes that from 1804 onwards, only representatives of the Qungrat dynasty ruled in Khiva. Indeed, during the reign of Khiva Khan Muhammad Rahim Khan I (1806–1825), serious changes were implemented in the khanate's administrative system. Given that the "bekliks" (provinces) did not submit to central authority, he abolished the division of the khanate's territory into "kents". According to historical sources, initially 15 and later another 11 governorships were established. These consisted of: Hazarasp, Astana, Urgench, Kat, Dashoguz, Kushkupir, Akdarband, Gurlan, Kok Kashka, Qungrat, Konya-Urgench, Ilonli, Takhta, Khanka, Shahboz, Manak, Ghaziabad, Shaykh, Mangit, Khujayli, Shumanay, Turchi, Aktepa, Karagon, and Khitoy. These governorships, in turn, were divided into "masjid-qavms" (large local units). According to

historical documents, there were a total of 1537 "masjid-qavms" in the khanate. Provincial governors were appointed directly by the khan, while the "qazis" (judges) and "aqsaqals" (elders) of the "masjid-qavms" were appointed by the provincial leaders [7].

In general, the administrative reforms in the Khiva Khanate reflected all the features of the Eastern states of that time, reminiscent of the system of states based on absolute sole rule, based on the Islamic religion. These reforms were aimed at strengthening the central power of the khanate and regulating administrative administration, and were similar to the systems of administration in many eastern monarchies. Although its state organizations and departments, their names, did not differ much from those of the Dashti-Kipchak Uzbeks, Bukhara, and later the Kokand Khanates, there were some specific aspects in terms of the status of this or that state office, the order of its possession.

Researcher Z. Muqimov also analyzes specific data regarding administrative reforms in the Khanate of Khiva in his scientific works, which confirms the information provided by other scholars. Specifically, during the reign of Abu al-Ghazi Khan (1645–1663), the steppe Uzbeks in Khorezm united into tribal confederations such as the Qiyot-Qongirat, Uyghur-Nayman, and Kangli-Kipchak, with the remaining tribes joining these alliances. These four groups were led by tribal chiefs known as inoqs, who were often unwilling to submit even to the Khans. When the power of the inoqs grew, the Khans reigned only in name. As a result of the weakening of the Khan's authority and the increasing influence of the tribal nobility in Khorezm, the practice of installing "puppet" Khans became common.

This was a natural phenomenon in the Uzbek Khanates of that period. Since a state is a political organization based on a specific stratum, the army, which was primarily in the hands of the tribal nobility, constituted its military power. Society at that time lived under a system based on the Uzbek tribal military nobility. The Khans could not rule without the support of the inoqs, biys, beks, and the beklar begi, who controlled the military forces, their sources, and their supplies. The upper stratum of the Uzbek tribes consisted of large landowners who held positions as military-civil leaders, drawn from the tribal chiefs. The highest state officials were selected from among the inoqs, otaliqs, and beks. The vizier or mehtar, as well as the qushbegi, appointed by the Khan, were also tribal chiefs residing in Khiva, among whom five were appointed as the

Khan's advisors. In addition, two or more otaliqs, mingboshis, and yasovuls were appointed [10].

The Khan, who was the head of state, held hereditary power that was officially absolute in nature. In his memoirs, traveler N. Muravyov, reflecting on the authority of the Khan of Khiva, describes it as follows: "At present, there is arbitrary rule in Khiva, which is not limited by any law or public consensus. Therefore, it depends on the whim of the sole ruler. He views the Khanate as his own property and governs it for the sake of his own interests and enrichment" [8].

The reign of Shergazi Khan (1715–1728) in the country was rich in political events. His rule was primarily marked by a struggle against the arbitrary actions of the Uzbek, Turkmen, and Karakalpak nobility. During this period, the political situation among the Uzbeks in the Aral region intensified. The main reason for this was the struggle for independence by the population belonging to the Kungrat, Mangit, Khodjayli, and Kipchak tribes living in the Aral region. Sheralibiy, one of the Mangit biys (chiefs) leading these struggles, refused to submit to the Khanate of Khiva and declared the Aral region an independent principality. Although Shergazi Khan attempted to suppress the movements that occurred there, he could not do so completely.

Following the death of Shergazi Khan, the Kazakh sultan Eltzer Khan (r. 1728–1740) ascended to the throne. During his reign, internal conflicts persisted, and numerous predatory raids were launched against neighboring territories, leading to a decline in the military might of the Khanate of Khiva. Taking advantage of this situation, the Persian ruler Nader Shah launched an attack on the Khanate of Khiva in 1740. Initially, a fierce battle took place between the Khivan forces and the Iranians near Khazarasp. In this engagement, the Khivan troops were defeated and forced to retreat to the Khazarasp fortress. The Iranians besieged the Khazarasp fortress for a long time but were unable to capture it; subsequently, they attacked the Khonka fortress. At that moment, the situation changed, and the Manghit beks, who had been supporting Eltzer Khan, defected to the side of Nader Shah. As a result, Eltzer Khan was defeated, taken prisoner, and executed by Nader Shah [9].

Information regarding the governance of Central Asian states (analyzed through historical sources) is frequently found in the works of researcher Sh. Vohidov. In particular, the author's book, *Markaziy Osiyodagi davlat boshqaruvi tarixidan* (From the History of State Administration in Central Asia),

emphasizes that the highest title in the Khanate was that of the Khan, who possessed administrative, political, and military (and sometimes religious) authority and power. In general, starting from 1804, only representatives of the Kungrat dynasty served as Khans of Khiva. Unlike the Emirate of Bukhara and the Khanate of Kokand, the Khanate of Khiva had a Council that operated in the palace, under the Khan. The powers of this Council were very limited, and it functioned primarily as an advisory body. The members of the Council were high-ranking officials, among whom the inoq, shaykh-ul-islam, devon, and yasovulboshi held decisive votes compared to others. Council meetings were usually held at the will of the Khan, and matters were resolved with his consent.

Although this narrow secret council was not officially designated in the state structure, its decisions were effectively considered equivalent to those of the Khan. In practice, however, this council performed high-level legislative, administrative, and judicial functions. Its members made decisions on all matters concerning the internal affairs of the Khanate and also resolved issues related to the Khanate's relationships with other states. This situation is confirmed by the memoirs of foreign envoys who visited Khiva in the 19th century. These envoys were received by the Khan in the throne room in the presence of high-ranking officials [5].

Within the Khanate's palace, titles and positions were distributed as follows. Among the titles, the highest status belonged to the inoq. Usually, inoqs were appointed from powerful Uzbek tribes and served as the Khan's close advisors.

As high-ranking officials, inoqs served as tribal leaders. Abu al-Ghazi Khan reserved four seats beside him for inoqs during ceremonial events. Inoqs also held titles such as biy, sultan, and mingboshi. By the beginning of the 20th century, the status of inoqs had declined to that of a bek, and they functioned as administrative officials among the high-ranking palace staff [11].

At this point, we find it necessary to provide brief information about the main titles and positions in the central administration of the Khanate.

The otaliq was the elder of a tribe. The inoq, on the other hand, was the leader of a tribe united under a supreme lord. He was one of the Khan's closest advisors. The otaliq was always on the move, armed with weapons and a knife.

The biy was a title bestowed at court. It was a rank that followed the inoq and otaliq. The biy was the administrator of

a tribe or clan; the title was granted to clan elders among nomadic and semi-nomadic Turkic peoples, including the Uzbeks. In the 18th and 19th centuries, biys led large Uzbek tribes and clans and were subordinate only to the central authority. The title of biy was inherited from generation to generation.

The amir ul-umaro (Commander of Commanders) was established in the Khiva Khanate in the mid-19th century. However, the local historian Munis notes that the title of "amir" existed even before the mid-19th century. Yet, such a title and position are not mentioned in the works of Abu al-Ghazi Bahadur Khan, nor in later sources or studies (such as the "list of salaried statesmen" in the 19th and early 20th centuries). Perhaps the word "amir" was used by authors in reference to this or that lord. The author of the work "Dili g'aroyib", while calling Rahmonquli, the inoq of Hazorasp to whom the work is dedicated, an "amir", actually had in mind Rahmonquli's position as "amir ul-umaro". In fact, during this period, this inoq served as amir ul-umaro in the army of his brother, Olloqulixon, who ruled the Khanate [7].

## CONCLUSION

Thus, the Khiva Khanate existed in the 16th-19th centuries through a unique administrative system, reforms implemented by powerful khans, and a complex system of relations with tribal nobility. Especially during the reign of Abulgozi Bakhodir Khan, deep reforms were implemented aimed at strengthening central power, regulating administrative positions, and stabilizing the state; officials such as inoq, otalik, and biy played an important role in this process, but later, especially after becoming a Russian protectorate at the end of the 19th century, political independence in the khanate was limited, and the traditional system of governance gradually changed.

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