

**SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE STATE GOVERNANCE
SYSTEM IN THE KHIVA KHANATE**

Ibadullaeva Oymarjon

Ma'mun University Department of History

Student of the 1st Stage

Abstract: *This article provides information on the state governance system in the Khiva Khanate, the structure of the divan (council), positions and titles, and their respective duties, based on historical materials.*

Keywords: *Khiva Khanate, state structure, governance system, divan members, central governance, local governance, administrative structure, beklik, beylik, mehtar, otaliq, qushbegi, devonbegi, mirshab, naib.*

The Khiva Khanate was governed by the Khan with the assistance of court officials, based on autocratic rule, and its governance system was almost identical to that of the Bukhara and Kokand Khanates. The highest title in the Khanate was the Khan, who held political, military, and religious authority. Unlike Bukhara and Kokand, by the early 19th century, the Khiva Khanate had a permanent Council (Divan) operating under the Khan. The Council, composed of high-ranking officials, had limited authority, and all decisions were effectively made by the Khan.

All positions and titles in the Khanate can be divided into three categories: military-administrative, military, and religious. Among the court titles, after the Khan, the most influential were the inoq, otaliq, and biy. These were the Khan's closest advisors, overseeing the political, economic, financial, and military life of the state. In addition to them, other important officials in the political and economic life of the Khanate included the naqib, amir ul-umaro, mehtar, qushbegi, beklar begi, devonbegi, parvonachi, dasturkhonchi, eshik og'asi, yasavulboshi, udaychi, mingboshi, mirobboshi, and others. Religious authority was in the hands of the shaykh ul-Islam and religious leaders. Local shaykhs, such as the descendants of Said Ota Shaykh and Darvish shaykhs, were influential religious officials, and all religious positions were given to their representatives.

Administratively, the Khiva Khanate was divided into provinces (viloyats) during the 16th-18th centuries, but from the late 18th to the early 19th century, the basic administrative units became known as beklis. During this period, there were 16 beklis and 2 naiblis in the Khanate. These included Hazorasp, Gurlan, Khanqa, Kohna Urganch, Qo'shko'prik, Pitnak, G'azovot, Qiyat, Shobboz (Shohabboz), Shovot, Toshhovuz, Ambarmanak, Urganch, Khujayli, Shumanoy, and Qo'ng'iro'rot beklis, as well as Beshariq and Qiyat-Qo'ng'iro'rot naiblis. These beklis and naiblis were governed by

beks and naibs appointed by the Khan. The city of Khiva was under the direct control of the Khan and the chief vizier (inoq).

The supreme commander in the Khanate was the Khan. The inoq, a high-ranking noble, held the second-highest position after the Khan and led the military-administrative officials. The amir ul-umaro was the next highest military rank, and the commander of the troops was called sarkarda. The chief of the Khan's personal guard was given the title of yasavulboshi, responsible for protecting the Khan and maintaining order. Among the military-administrative officials, mingboshi, yuzboshi (commanders of military units), shig'ovul (scout), qutvol (fortress commander), and tugbegi held significant importance.

The main judicial bodies were the qozilik courts. These courts were organized into several levels. The Khan, as the supreme legislative and executive authority, personally handled serious criminal cases and issued verdicts. Below the Khan was the chief judge, the qozi kalon. Each province, district, guild, and city had qozis appointed by the Khan, who, with the assistance of their deputies (muftis), resolved property disputes, investigated minor crimes, and handled similar matters.

One of the highest courts established by the Qonghirat dynasty was the Supreme Council (Oliy Kengash). The Supreme Council served as the legislative, administrative, and supreme judicial body at the time. The Khan personally presided over the Council. The Council met daily, and decisions on state policy were made there.

The highest-ranking officials in the Khan's circle (naqib, amir ul-umaro, chief inoq, mutavalli, shaykh ul-Islam, otaliq, inoq, biy, mirob, darg'a, arbob, aqo, merchants) were seated on the Khan's left side, demonstrating their closeness to the Khan's heart. On the Khan's right side were the qozi kalon, qozi askar, a'lam, mufti, and others.

The highest positions in the Khanate, such as mehtar, qushbegi, and devonbegi, were equivalent to the position of chief vizier in the court, and their powers were almost equal. They were granted significant authority. The Khan himself determined the salaries of the higher-ranking officials, while the mehtar, qushbegi, and devonbegi set the salaries of the lower-ranking officials. The financial administration held a special place in the governance of the Khiva Khanate. The mehtar, qushbegi, and devonbegi oversaw finance, taxation, and revenue collection. The mehtar served as the chief vizier, managing finance, taxation, corvée labor, and the state's foreign affairs. The mehtar was one of the Khan's most trusted advisors in state governance. Therefore, he was responsible for drafting laws and regulations, organizing taxes, and managing state revenues.

After the mehtar, the qushbegi also dealt with finance and taxation and was a member of the Supreme Council. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, qushbegis such as Ibrahim qushbegi, Hasanmurod qushbegi, Khudoyor qushbegi, and Muhammadiyoz qushbegi played significant roles in state governance and military recruitment alongside the Khan. By the time of Asfandiyor Khan's reign, the positions of

qushbegi and mehtar were abolished, and the new position of vazir-i akbar was introduced.

The position of devonbegi was also significant in the Khanate. During the reign of Said Muhammad Rahim Khan II Feruz, Khudoynazar devonbegi, Muhammad Murad devonbegi, and his son Husayn devonbegi served in this position.

There was also a special divan in the Khan's court, which served as the Khan's official secretary and was known as the mirzaboshi. After the death of the famous mirzaboshi Kamil Khorezmi in 1899, Muhammad Rasul was appointed mirzaboshi. They primarily handled the divankhona (chancery) work in the Khan's court. The Khanate also had the position of mirob. The famous historian, translator, and poet Munis and the Agahiy family performed the duties of mirob by the Khan's order.

The military leadership system in the Khiva Khanate was also unique. Military titles were distributed from top to bottom, including naqib, amir ul-umaro, yasavulboshi, mingboshi, naib, bukhriy, and navkar. The naqib was appointed by the Khan's special decree and served as the chief commander. The amir ul-umaro was one of the highest positions in the Khanate, leading the troops guarding the Khanate's borders and providing them with weapons. However, this position was abolished after the Russian invasion. The yasavulboshi led the troops into battle by the Khan's order. The mingboshi and yuzboshi oversaw military affairs. The mirshab maintained order and discipline in cities and villages. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, while the supreme judicial authority was in the hands of the Khan, religious laws were administered through the shaykh ul-Islam and qozi kalon. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the shaykh ul-Islam in the Khiva Khanate oversaw religious ceremonies and guided the activities of the clergy. The qozi kalon, the next highest religious position after the shaykh ul-Islam, handled citizens' petitions, complaints, and disputes. Additionally, other religious positions included a'lam, mufti, mudarris, ulama, imam, and mullahs, each with their respective duties. The information provided above is evidence of the unique and advanced state governance system in the Khanate.

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