

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON MILITARY PREPAREDNESS AND ARMY STRUCTURE IN THE KHIVA KHANATE

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Abstract: This article examines the relations of the Khiva Khanate with neighboring states, its military strength, the procedures for assembling troops, military preparedness, army structure, and the state governance system.

Keywords: Khiva Khanate, Emirate of Bukhara, Kokand Khanate, Turkmens, Iranians, Amu Darya, Karakalpaks, army structure, military weapons, yasavulboshi.

The governance system of the Khiva Khanate was largely similar to that of Bukhara and Kokand, with the difference that from the early 19th century, a Council (Divan) was established under the Khan. The Council, composed of high-ranking officials, had limited authority, and major decisions were made by the Khan, although the officials held significant positions in the Khanate's administration. Titles and positions in the Khanate were divided into military-administrative, military, and religious categories. Titles such as Inoq, Ota-liq, Biy, Amir ul-Umara, Mehter, Qushbegi, Beklar Begi, Divanbegi, and others played important roles in the economic, political, financial, and military life of the Khanate.

Based on the analysis of sources, the following military-administrative officials existed in the Khiva Khanate:

- Inoq
- Amir ul-Umara
- Sarkarda
- Yasavulboshi (chief of the Khan's guards)
- Mingboshi
- Yuzboshi
- Beklar Begi
- Shigovul (chief of scouts)
- Qushbegi
- Udai-chi (Khudai-chi)
- Qutvol (fortress commander)
- Tugbegi

In addition to these, there were other military-related officials such as Panoh-boshi (ellikboshi), Dah-boshi (ong-boshi), Qorovul, Mahram, and Navkar.

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-Umara 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), Shigovul (scout), Qutvol (fortress commander), and Tugbegi held significant importance.

The army consisted of cavalry and infantry, with cavalry being the primary force during military campaigns, while infantry was used for defending cities and fortresses. The main offensive weapons were bows, swords, spears, and drums, while shields and armor were used for defense. The supply of firearms to the troops was limited. Cannons were also not widely used in the Khanate, which weakened the effectiveness of the regular army in military operations.

The Khiva Khanate's military forces were primarily composed of hired Turkmen soldiers and troops formed from various Uzbek tribes. Although the methods of warfare were based on the military laws of Genghis Khan and Amir Timur, these military traditions were not creatively developed.

If earlier the army consisted of the forces of individual vassal tribes, by the 19th century, the armed forces of the Khanate had become a centralized part of the state apparatus. As a result, by the 19th century, the Khanate had a regular army. This part of the Khiva army enjoyed significant privileges compared to other units. The Khan's soldiers were granted land and water near Khiva, where their units were stationed. They, like the officials, were regularly paid salaries.

In times of peace, the Khan's army performed various duties besides protecting the city. By the mid-19th century, the total number of the regular army was approximately 9-10 thousand people. Military personnel or officials were rewarded with money, land, livestock, or valuable items for their service.

The border troops of the Khanate were organized similarly to the Navkar troops, and the Navkars were granted land and water. The chief of the border service was called Qorovul Begi.

The supreme military authority, the Khan, issued orders directly or through the Amir ul-Umara. After the Amir ul-Umara, the official rank of Sarkarda was held by the Yasavulboshi. The Yasavulboshi was obeyed by the yasavuls, mirshabs, shotirs, and eshik ogas.

It is worth noting that the Yasavulboshis did not have permanent seats in the official reception ceremonies of the Khan, but they participated in the narrow council meetings alongside the Mehter, Qushbegi, and Divanbegi. After the Yasavulboshis came the Mingboshis.

In the Khiva Khanate, there were also officials called Saranglar, who were responsible for building defensive fortifications around fortresses. Additionally, there was the position of Qatovul, who was responsible for the breaches and damages in the fortress.

The position of Sarkarda was established during military campaigns. According to sources, Sarkardas were not appointed from their own tribes, which the Khans likely considered a precaution. Like the Mingboshis and Yuzboshis, Sarkardas were appointed directly by the Khan's decree.

Although the Khiva Khanate did not have a formal army headquarters, there was a position similar to that of a chief of staff, which was held by the Narb. The combat formations and methods of warfare of the Khiva army did not differ significantly from those of Amir Timur and the Timurid armies. In terms of military capability, the Khiva Khanate held a leading position in the Muslim East.

In Khiva, prisons and the protection of the Khan were under the control of the Yasavulboshi. Secret orders were also in his hands. He commanded military units composed of nomads. The Khan used these troops to suppress internal conflicts and raids.

The maintenance of order and discipline in Khiva was the responsibility of the Mirshabs. They were divided into several groups based on their duties:

1. Mirshabs stationed at the main gates of Khiva.
2. Mirshabs accompanying the Khan on journeys.

The military forces and weaponry of the Khanate were at a very low level of development. The army was largely composed of semi-nomadic Turkmens. The positive military experiences of earlier periods were not developed and were abandoned.

During the reigns of Allaqli Khan (1825-1842), Rahimqli Khan (1842-1845), and Muhammad Amin Khan (1845-1855), the Khiva army's campaigns to Khorasan increased, and frequent battles with the Emirate of Bukhara over the city of Merv took place. During this period, the Khiva Khans controlled territories from the point where the Syr Darya flows into the Aral Sea to Kushka in Turkmenistan.

During military campaigns to neighboring regions, the Khiva Khans personally led the troops and directly participated in military operations. In some cases, these campaigns ended in the death of the Khans. For example, in 1806, Eltuzar Khan drowned in the Amu Darya while on a campaign to Bukhara. In 1855, Muhammad Amin Khan was killed during the siege of Serakhs. Such events also caused significant disarray in the country.

In general, sources provide various information about the military structure, composition, management procedures, and traditions of the Khiva Khanate. Today, studying, analyzing, generalizing, and systematizing this information is one of the important tasks facing the field of history.

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