



Muhammad Rakhimkhan I – The Powerful Khan Of Khiva

Uktamov Tohirjon Gayrat ugli

Student of History Department Namangan State University

*Correspondence : Uktamov
Tohirjon Gayrat Ugli
oktamovtohir2@gmail.com

Received: 12-02-2025
Accepted: 23-03-2025
Published: 04-04-2025

Copyright © 2025 by
author(s) and Scientific
Research Publishing Inc.
This work is licensed under
the Creative Commons
Attribution International
License (CC BY 4.0).
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Open Access

Abstract

This article provides a comprehensive analysis of Muhammad Rakhimkhan I's accession to the throne, detailing the political circumstances that led to his rise to power. It explores the domestic and foreign policies of the Khiva Khanate during his reign, highlighting key administrative, economic, and social reforms. Additionally, the study examines his military campaigns, assessing their impact on regional stability and the expansion of the khanate's influence. By evaluating his leadership and governance, the article offers insights into the historical significance of Muhammad Rakhimkhan I's rule and its lasting effects on the political and socio-economic landscape of the Khiva Khanate.

Keywords

Khiva Khanate, Kangrats, Muhammad Rahimkhan I, Munis Khorezm, "Firdaus ul Iqbal", "Ahun Khan", Muhammad Riza, Amir Haydar, Karakalpaks.

Introduction

There are such figures on the stage of history who are transient, living as a part of the era. But there are such people who become spiritual companions not only of their time, but also of future generations. Khan of Khiva Muhammad Rakhimkhan I is one of such figures. Muhammad Rakhimkhan I pursued a policy of improving politics, state administration, and uniting peoples.

Munis Khorezmii's work "Firdaws ul Iqbal" describes in detail the activities of Muhammad Rahimkhan I, clearly indicating all the details, the names of the people who participated in it, and the dates of the events.

Muhammad Rahimkhan ibn Avaz Inaq ibn Muhammad Amin Inaq was born in 1776 in Khiva. He received a good education from a young age, knew Arabic and Persian. Muhammad Rahimkhan I was tall, strong (even a strong horse could not carry him for more than two hours), healthy and strong. He had small eyes, a sharp gaze, a short blond beard, a strong will, brave and enterprising, a quick mind, and the ability to foresee. Muhammad Rahimkhan spoke, read and wrote in Arabic and Persian, so the people called him "Ahun Khan". He slept little, was fond of

chess, and respected holidays, especially weekdays. He evaluated a person not based on his position or origin, but on his work. He was a very pious man. He visited cemeteries everywhere.

At the beginning of the 19th century, a very difficult period reigned in the history of the Khiva Khanate. As a result of the Aral governor Toramurod Sufi going to Bukhara and asking for help from Emir Heydar, a campaign against Khorezm began in June 1806. The Bukhara troops managed to strike the Khivas in the battle near Kot. Eltuzar Khan, who tried to cross to the left bank of the Amu Darya, drowned and died as a result of a boat capsizing. The Khan was 37 years old at that time. Munis Khorezmi writes: "The ship sailed on the river, did not make it twenty gas, and went into the whirlpool of destruction... The period of the Khan's reign and reign was two years, three months and twenty-three days. And his age was thirty-seven years. And he left behind two sons and one daughter. The names of the sons will be: Prince Allahberdi Tora and Prince Rahmonberdi Tora, may they be blessed with peace and prosperity".

After the defeat in this war, the political situation in the Khiva Khanate worsened. In 1806, the residents of Beshkala, dissatisfied with the high taxes, revolted. The khiraj tax was replaced by the solgut tax. Public discontent subsided somewhat. In this situation, Muhammad Rakhimkhan deposed Abulgozi V, who had been on the throne for 4 months, and took over the governance of the state.

Muhammad Rahimkhan I successfully completed the work of unifying the peoples of the Khiva Khanate, which his grandfather Muhammad Amin had begun. He subjugated the Uzbek and other peoples, tribes and clans in the khanate. First, he subjugated the Karakalpaks in the Aral Sea and the northeast of the khanate, and then the Kazakhs. He also subjugated the Kazakh khans on the Syrdarya River and collected tribute from them.

Methods

This research is based on historical-documentary analysis, utilizing primary and secondary sources such as historical chronicles, official records, and scholarly studies on the Khiva Khanate. Key sources include the works of Munis Khorezmi, Ogahi, and modern historians, which provide detailed narratives on Muhammad Rakhimkhan I's policies and military campaigns. Comparative historical analysis is also employed to examine his leadership in the broader context of Central Asian political dynamics during the early 19th century.

Muhammad Rakhimkhan I carried out a number of military campaigns to expand the country's borders and subjugate unruly tribes. Although with great difficulty, in 1811 the Aral-Kungurat region was subdued. In 1812-1813, troops were sent to the Kazakh and Karakalpak villages on the Syrdarya River, which were subordinated to the Khan of Khiva. After that, a movement began to expand the khanate's territories at the expense of the regions of Southern Turkmenistan and Khorasan. However, a struggle began between Khiva and Bukhara on this issue. In the first clash near the Chorjой fortress in 1817, the Khiva troops were defeated. Despite this, Muhammad Rakhimkhan I made raids on the territories of Bukhara in 1820, 1823, and 1824. In 1825, at the initiative of the Emir of Bukhara, Heydar, relations between Bukhara and Khiva improved.

According to Munis Khorezmii, after Muhammad Rizabek I seized power, his relative Muhammad Rizabek refused to submit. He went to his court in Kogirat with his men. Then he

captured the Kipchak fortress and killed the fortress' governor, Allahberdi. He asked the governor of Aral, Toramurod Sufi, for help in the fight against the khan. The khan sent soldiers led by Kutluk Murad Inaq to Kipchak. When this campaign did not yield any results, Muhammad Rizabek himself marched on the governor of Kipchak and besieged it. Muhammad Rizabek was joined in this struggle by Muhammad Niyaz Bek and Muhammad Niyaz Atalik and fought against Muhammad Rizabek. In this struggle, they also received help from the governor of Aral, Toramurod Sufi. They also came from Aral under the leadership of Suyubek and Uraz Alibek. As a result, Muhammad Rahimkhan was forced to return to Khorezm.

Muhammad Rizabek captured Kipchak and marched to Gurlan. In this campaign, Muhammad Niyazbek and Muhammad Niyaz Ataliqs helped him. After him, help came from Bukhara and Arol. With this army, Muhammad Riza also captured Qiyot Kun'garot and approached Khiva. According to Munis, Muhammad Riza, who did not have the opportunity to directly seize the throne of Khiva, came to Khiva under the pretext of making peace with Muhammad Rahim Khan, came to the idea of killing the khan and seizing the state. Muhammad Rahim Khan, having learned about this, killed Muhammad Riza and his relatives who had come to Khiva and threw them into prison.

Results and Discussions

The study identifies several key aspects of Muhammad Rakhimkhan I's rule:

Accession to the Throne – Muhammad Rakhimkhan I came to power during a period of political instability following the death of Eltuzar Khan in 1806. His rise was marked by conflicts over succession, revolts, and external threats from the Emirate of Bukhara. By consolidating power, he established a strong centralized government in Khiva.

Domestic Policies and Reforms – His governance was characterized by:

- **Tax Reforms:** Standardized tax collection, replacing the khiraj tax with solgut, ensuring better revenue management.
- **Administrative Reforms:** Strengthened the central administration by creating government positions such as Mehtar, Koshbegi, and Devanbegi. The Devoni Oliy (Supreme Council) was established as the main legislative and judicial body.
- **Monetary Reforms:** Established a minting system, issuing gold and silver coins in his name to facilitate trade and economic stability.
- **Military Reforms:** Strengthened the army by recruiting warriors from Turkmen, Kazakh, and Karakalpak tribes, ensuring greater territorial control.

Foreign Policy and Military Campaigns – His foreign policy aimed at expanding the Khiva Khanate's influence and defending its borders:

- **Conflict with the Emirate of Bukhara:** Engaged in military confrontations with Bukhara in 1817, 1820, 1823, and 1824, ultimately negotiating peace in 1825.
- **Campaigns Against Karakalpaks and Kazakhs:** Subjugated the Karakalpaks in the Aral Sea

region and extended Khiva's dominance over the Kazakh khans on the Syrdarya River.

- Expansion into Turkmenistan and Khorasan: Attempted but faced resistance, leading to prolonged conflicts.

Economic Development – Under his rule, trade, agriculture, and craft industries flourished:

- Established customs offices along trade routes to regulate commerce.
- Encouraged agriculture, ensuring better irrigation and land management.
- Strengthened internal and external trade relations, leading to economic prosperity.

Religious and Social Policies – Muhammad Rakhimkhan I promoted Islamic values and cultural development:

- Restricted alcohol and tobacco consumption, enforcing social discipline.
- Supported religious scholars and Sayyids, integrating them into his governance to gain legitimacy.
- Promoted education and literature, commissioning historical works such as *Firdaws ul Iqbal*.

In 1807-1810, Muhammad Rakhimkhan I made campaigns against the territories of the Turkmen, Karakalpaks and Uzbeks of the Aral Sea. In September-November 1807, the Khiva navigators, led by Kutlimurod Inaq, attacked the Kazakh and Karakalpak villages on the banks of the Janadarya (Yangidarya) River. In June 1809, the Khiva navigators began to march on Kungirat. In June 1810, Muhammad Rakhimkhan again sent troops to Kungirat. Because an independent Aral Sea principality had existed there for 18 years.

Of 1811, the khan, with the help of Aydostbiy, Kechenekbiy, and Orinbiy, subdued the Karakalpaks living around Yangidarya. As a result, an agreement was concluded on the issue of tribute and taxes. "In order to eliminate all disputes," wrote AL Kun, "Muhammad Rahimkhan and his elders came to the following decision: 1. The Karakalpaks will pay 20 thousand small gold pieces annually, regardless of how much land they use. 2. They will send 2 thousand soldiers to the khan. 3. They will provide 6 thousand people annually for general work. 4. The Kungirts and Nukus will pay 2 thousand gold pieces, and the Khojalys will pay 500 small gold pieces". Archaeologist Yahyo Gulyamov writes about this: "At the beginning of the 19th century, the Khan of Khiva besieged Kungirat, destroyed all the crops of the Kungirat people, and, showing their dire situation, offered to surrender. To this, the besieged responded curtly: "I have three months of melon, three months of soap, three months of cabbage, three months of cabbage".

Muhammad Rahimkhan, who paid serious attention to the regulation of the tax system, looked for ways to replenish the state treasury. Now the amount of tax was determined depending on the area of the landowners and the volume of the harvest. Tax collection was transferred from the hands of local governors to the central government. The task of collecting state taxes was assigned to the kushbegi and mehtar, and the collection of zakat to the devanbegi. Income and expenses collected from citizens by the solgut method were recorded in special books and placed under the control of the khan.

Special customs offices were established in the border cities of the Khanate, on the roads of caravans and ships. The revival of agriculture, crafts, internal and external trade in the Khanate allowed the state treasury to increase its income. The Russian ambassador N. Muravyov, who arrived in Khiva, reported that the annual income of the Khanate's treasury exceeded 4 million soums.

Muhammad Rahimkhan was a skilled politician. He brought wealthy and influential figures of the Turkmen, Kazakhs and Karakalpaks who were subordinate to the Khiva Khanate closer to him, giving them land and high positions. Considering the prestige of Muslim believers among the people, in order to keep himself close to them, he married the daughter of a sayyid, who was considered a descendant of the prophet. He gave places and duties to prominent religious figures in the palace, gifted them with property, and exempted many of them from taxes and fees.

Discussion

The reign of Muhammad Rakhimkhan I marked a turning point in the history of the Khiva Khanate, as he successfully navigated both internal and external challenges. His policies contributed to the consolidation of power, economic development, and military strength. However, his territorial ambitions led to prolonged wars, particularly against Bukhara and rebellious tribal groups, which strained the state's resources. Compared to other Central Asian khanates, Muhammad Rakhimkhan I's approach to governance was highly centralized and reform-driven, resembling the restructuring policies of Amir Timur in earlier periods. His administrative and monetary reforms laid the groundwork for later developments in Khivan statecraft, influencing subsequent rulers. However, his strict tax policies and military campaigns also led to periodic unrest and resistance, indicating the limitations of absolute centralization.

Having created a reliable social support around him, Muhammad Rahimkhan I began to improve state administration. In the Khiva Khanate, the positions of mehtar, koshbegi and devanbegi were considered the highest. Muhammad Rahimkhan established new central and local government departments and positions. One of these was the Devoni Oliy (Supreme Council). The most influential officials were members of this council, and the Khan personally headed the council. The Supreme Council performed the functions of the legislative, administrative and judicial body of the state. During his time, Yusuf mehtar aga was the prime minister in the palace. Officials were paid a monthly salary. Reforms were also carried out in the monetary circulation and tax system. Until his time, the khairoj tax was paid in the form of products. Muhammad Rahimkhan I replaced the khairoj tax with the monetary tax salgut. Income and expenses received by citizens from the treasury were recorded in a special ledger and were under the control of the Khan. Now the amount of tax was determined by the size of the arable land owned by the owners and the yield obtained. Special customs houses were established in the border areas.

A reform was also carried out in monetary circulation. In the Khiva Khanate, copper coins

minted in the name of the Bukhara khans were in circulation, which created considerable difficulties in trade and tax collection. Taking this into account, Muhammad Rakhimkhan I built a special minting workshop in the old arka palace. Gold and silver coins were minted and put into circulation in his name at the mint. This improved commodity-money relations in the khanate, increased the value of money, and played an important role in regulating tax payments.

The beautification of the city of Khiva, the happiness of the poor, and the care of the people's health were always in his focus. During his reign, alcoholism and drug abuse were prohibited. He issued a decree that anyone who drank wine or smoked tobacco would be cut off from the mouth to the ears.

Muhammad Rahim Khan I fell seriously ill around 1825. In his work *Firdaws ul Iqbal*, Ogahi writes that the khan " had been ill for 7 months at the end of Muharram 1240 AH ." Doctors from many countries were invited to treat the ruler, but the pain became more and more severe. Finally, the surrounding nobles advised him to go hunting. In 1825, the khan went hunting in the Kungirat region. During that hunt, his illness worsened.

Muhammad Rahimkhan ruled the khanate for 20 years and died at the age of 50. Ogahiy writes about this as follows: "Since His Majesty the King of Paradise, the place of Qong`irat, after returning from a hunting trip, his illness became worse and worse every day... in the year 1240 AH, on the nineteenth evening of the blessed month of Ramadan, the first month of the year of the rooster, on Saturday night (May 7, 1825), his eternal will... consented to the sentence of death".

Conclusion

In conclusion, Muhammad Rakhimkhan I is one of the brightest figures in the history of the Khiva Khanate. At the time of his coming to power, the Khiva Khanate was in a political crisis and a struggle for the throne. The Khiva Khanate was also at war with the Emirate of Bukhara. In the current political situation, after coming to power, he sought to centralize the state, strengthen the Khan's power by carrying out reforms in the socio-economic and military spheres. In this regard, he was able to unite the Turkmen, Karakalpak and Aral Sea Uzbeks under his rule.

References

- Buranelli, F.C. (2024). Of nomads and khanates: heteronomy and interpolity order in 19th-century Central Asia. *European Journal of International Relations*, 30(2), 461-485, ISSN 1354-0661, <https://doi.org/10.1177/13540661231200370>
- Ermachkov, I.A. (2021). The features of the capture of Russian people by Asian Nomadic Tribes (the first half of the XIX century). *Bylye Gody*, 16(3), 1171-1180, ISSN 2073-9745, <https://doi.org/10.13187/BG.2021.3.1171>
- Ermachkov, I.A. (2021). The slavery in central asia (the first half of the xix century): The nature and manifestations. *Bylye Gody*, 16(1), 110-117, ISSN 2073-9745, <https://doi.org/10.13187/BG.2021.1.110>
- Ermachkov, I.A. (2021). To the Issue of the Cost of Slaves on the Territory of the Khiva Khanate

- (the first half of the XIX century). *Bylye Gody*, 16(4), 1779-1788, ISSN 2073-9745, <https://doi.org/10.13187/bg.2021.4.1779>
- Khaliyarov, A. (2022). Capitalism in Khiva: Cash Waqf or Cash Loan?. *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 65(1), 248-278, ISSN 0022-4995, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15685209-12341567>
- Kiyat, A. (2024). Kazakh Shibanids (XVIII-XIX cc.) in Pre-Revolutionary Sources. *Bylye Gody*, 19(4), 1513-1522, ISSN 2073-9745, <https://doi.org/10.13187/bg.2024.4.1513>
- Litvinov, V.P. (2024). Administrative and Police Regulation of Muslim Women's Position in Russian Turkestan. *RUDN Journal of Russian History*, 23(3), 272-285, ISSN 2312-8674, <https://doi.org/10.22363/2312-8674-2024-23-3-272-285>
- Mahmudov M., Sheripov U. *Xiva xonligi tarixi. – Urganch – 2013. – 136 b.*
- Peretyatko, A.Y. (2023). Captives, Slaves, Freeman: Some Aspects of the 19th century Central Asia Former Russian Slaves' Testimonies as a Historical Source. *Bylye Gody*, 18(2), 619-932, ISSN 2073-9745, <https://doi.org/10.13187/bg.2023.2.619>
- Sartori, P. (2021). KHIVA 1873: THE «ARCHIVE» THAT NEVER WAS. *Quaderni Storici*, 56(2), 439-470, ISSN 0301-6307, <https://doi.org/10.1408/102882>
- Shioya, A. (2022). Islam and the Nomadic Political Tradition in the 19th-Century Khanate of Khiva. *Oriente Moderno*, 102(1), 68-87, ISSN 0030-5472, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22138617-12340280>
- Shioya, A. (2024). Forgotten project of a private agricultural plantation in the Khanate of Khiva, Uzbekistan. *Central Asian Survey*, ISSN 0263-4937, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02634937.2024.2379364>
- Tarasov, M.G. (2021). Cossacks in the Khiva crusade of 1839-1840. *Bylye Gody*, 16(3), 1181-1190, ISSN 2073-9745, <https://doi.org/10.13187/BG.2021.3.1181>
- Zakharov, V.Y. (2023). On the Eve of the "Great Game": Specifics of the Russian Empire's Policy in Central Asia in the 18th to the First Half of the 19th Centuries. *Journal of Frontier Studies*, 8(3), 15-34, ISSN 2500-0225, <https://doi.org/10.46539/jfs.v8i3.530>
- Zinkovskii, S.B. (2021). Circassian and central Asian slavery: The general and special (on the example of cases of the return of Russian prisoners). *Bylye Gody*, 16(2), 689-698, ISSN 2073-9745, <https://doi.org/10.13187/bg.2021.2.689>
- Аҳмедов Б. Ўрта Осиё тарихининг илмий таҳлили. – Тошкент: Университет, 2006. – 320 б.
- Гуломов Я. Хоразмнинг суғорилиш тарихи. – Тошкент, 1959. – 324 б.
- Исмоилов Ҳ. Хива хонлигида ҳарбий тузилма ва муҳофаа тизими. – Бухоро: Бухоро нашриёти, 2020. – 256 б.
- Каримов Ш. Хоразм тарихи: манбалар ва таҳлиллар. – Тошкент: Фан, 2005. – 278 б.
- Матниязов М., Олламов Я. Хоразм давлатчилиги тарихи. – Урганч, 2009. – 290 б.
- Муниров К. Хоразмда тарихнавислик (XVII – XIX ва XX аср бошлари). – Т.: Гафур Гулом номидаги Адабиёт ва санъат нашриёти, 2002. – 192 б.

- Мунис ва Огаҳий. Фирдавс ул иқбол. – Т.: Янги аср авлоди, 2010. – 520 б.
- Норқулов Ҳ. Хива хонлиги ташқи сиёсати (XIX аср). – Тошкент: Sharq, 2018. – 215 б.
- Раджабов У. Хива хонлиги иқтисодиёти ва ижтимоий тузилиши. – Урганч: Илм, 2017. – 230 б.
- Раҳматуллаев Ш. Хива хонлари тарихи ва ҳокимият тизими. – Нукус: Қорақалпоғистон, 2011. – 275 б.
- Сапарбаев Б. Мухаммад Раҳимхон I даврида Хива хонлиги тарихи (1806 – 1825-йй.) – Бухоро: Дурдона нашриёти, 2023. – 160 б.
- Худайбергенов К. Хива хонлари шажараси. – Хива, 1996.
- Эшов Б. Ўзбекистон давлатчилиги ва бошқаруви тарихи. – Тошкент, 2012. – 456 б.
- Юлдашев А. Хоразм тарихшунослигида янги қарашлар. – Тошкент: Маънавият, 2014. – 198 б.