

THE KONIMEX DISTRICT AND THE KARAKALPAKS IN THE BUKHARA EMIRATE, A VASSAL OF THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE (LATE 19TH - EARLY 20TH CENTURIES)

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The Kenimekh District of the Bukhara Emirate, a Vassal of the Russian Empire, and the Karakalpaks (Late 19th-Early 20th Centuries)

Abstract. This article comprehensively examines the historical development, governance, and political situation of the Kenimekh district within the Bukhara Emirate, which existed as a vassal state of the Russian Empire in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as well as the life and economic lifestyle of the Karakalpaks in this region. The article also extensively examines the processes of Karakalpak migration to the territory, auxiliary livestock farming, agriculture, and crafts related to their economic activities. Changes in the ethnic composition of the population, individual lifestyle, and social relations are shown based on historical sources.

Keywords: Emirate of Bukhara, Manghit dynasty, Karakalpaks, vassal, Komi Mig, Konimekh, Karmana, Nurata.

Introduction. The second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century represent a period of profound political-legal and socio-economic changes in the history of Central Asia. During this time, the geopolitical influence of the Russian Empire in the region increased sharply. Although the Emirate of Bukhara officially remained an independent state, it effectively became a vassal of the empire. This political situation directly influenced the social, economic, and cultural life of various ethnic groups within the administrative-territorial units of the Emirate of Bukhara, particularly the Karakalpaks living in the Konimekh district.

Geographically, the Konimekh district was located in the northwestern part of the Emirate of Bukhara and was historically considered one of the territories inhabited by nomadic and semi-nomadic populations. By the end of the 19th century, the Karakalpaks existed in this area as a well-established ethnic community, and the present study examines their economic activities, land-water relations, tax system, and administrative structure.

Methodology. The article extensively employs historical-comparative methods. This approach involves determining the situation of the Karakalpaks in the Konimekh district by comparing it with that of ethnic groups living in other territories of the Bukhara Emirate. As a result, the social obligations and economic activities of their communities were studied.

During the research process, methods of source studies and historical-critical analysis were utilized. In particular, administrative data of the Russian Empire, official materials on Bukhara, archives, regulatory rules, and the scholarly works of foreign historians were critically reconstructed.

Materials. The Bukhara Emirate was a state that held a special status and occupied vast territories. At the beginning of the 19th century, it was bordered by the territories of Iran and Afghanistan on one side, the Khiva Khanate on another, the Kazakh jüzs on a third, and the Kokand Khanate on a fourth. According to information from the last Emir of Bukhara, Sayyid Amir Alimkhan, dated 1927, by the beginning of the 20th century, "the country of Bukhara stretched from the eastern banks of the Amu Darya, that is, from the Russian Pamirs, to the borders of Khiva. Bukhara was bordered by the Kyzylkum desert to the north, by the Syrdarya



and the Kokand Khanate to the west, by Afghanistan to the south, and by the Turkmen region and the Khiva steppe to the east."

In the 1850s, the Emirate of Bukhara consisted of several provinces, of which Bukhara and Samarkand were, in turn, divided into districts. Provincial rulers were called *hokim*. Later, when *bekliks* (bekdoms) replaced the provinces, their rulers were called *beks*. According to sources, there were 27 provinces (*bekliks*) in the Emirate of Bukhara during this period. According to information in Mirza Badi Divan's work "Majma' al-Arqam," the emirate was divided into the following administrative-territorial units based on irrigated land: 100,000 *tanobs* was a *tuman*, 50,000 *tanobs* was a *hazora*, 25,000 *tanobs* was a *nimhazora*, 10,000-15,000 *tanobs* was an *obkho'ri*, 400 *tanobs* was a *qariya*, and 300 *tanobs* was a *ma'raza* (cropland). This system of division made it convenient to levy and collect *kharaj*, *zakat*, and other types of taxes.[1; pp. 292-293.]

Distribution of the population of the Emirate of Bukhara by lifestyle

| Lifestyle | Population | In Percent |
|-------------------------|------------|------------|
| Sedentary population | 1,399,606 | 65.0 |
| Semi-nomadic population | 322,986 | 15.0 |
| Nomadic population | 430,648 | 20.0 |
| Total | 2,153,240 | 100.0 |

Distribution of the population of the Emirate of Bukhara by economic activity

| Economic activity of the population | Population | In Percent |
|---|------------|------------|
| Agriculture and animal husbandry | 1,830,254 | 85.0 |
| Handicrafts and trade | 215,324 | 10.0 |
| Those without permanent economic activity | 107,662 | 5.0 |
| Total | 2,153,240 | 100.0 |

During the Manghit dynasty, the area of the present-day Navoi region and its adjacent territories consisted of the Karmana, Nurota, and Khatirchi provinces. The Karmana province was divided into the Komi Migh, Yangikurgan, Kharkana, Kasaba, Khanim, Chuli, and Turkistan amlokdoms. The Konimex district, which we are studying, was called the Komi Migh amlokdom and was governed by an Amlokdar. In some literature, the ruler of Komi Migh is referred to as a bek.[2]

Regarding the title of the Komi Migh ruler, local historian N. Khojakhmetov explained in a conversation that he used this term because, during his field research, elderly locals referred to the ruler by the term bek. Although researcher J. Nurullayev states in his treatise, "Due to the vastness of the Komi Migh amlokdom's territory, it was referred to as a district and was governed by a bek appointed by the Emir" [3; p. 15], the name Komi Migh is not mentioned in the list of the emirate's districts. In the course of research, descriptions of administrative units are provided in the book prepared based on the "Qushbegi Archive," which detailed the settlements of the Bukhara Emirate, titled "Naseleennie punkty Buxarskogo emirata" ("Settlements of the Bukhara Emirate") [4] under the editorship of Academician A. Muhammadjonov; in the monograph "History of Uzbek Statehood and Governance"[5; p. 292] by the prominent historian B. Eshov; and in Jurabek Shodiyev's book "Issues of Statehood in the Bukhara Emirate." [6]



For instance, in the Emirate of Bukhara, representatives of the local administration defined a "mavze" as a territorial division larger than a village or a mosque. For example, although the Karki province was divided into mavzes, these were, in turn, subdivided into bekchas, which consisted of villages. The administrative unit "bekcha" mentioned here, as indicated in the aforementioned literature, was not used in relation to Komi Mig at all.[7] The administrative districts of Roshan and Shughnan in the Pamir provinces were called oqsoqolliks. For the settlements around the capital, Bukhara, the administrative unit "tuman" (district) was used. For example, although districts such as Komi Abu Muslim (Vangozi), Kharqon Rud (Gijduvan), and Samdjon (Romitan) are mentioned, Komi Mig is not listed among them. In the materials of the Qushbegi archive, Komi Mig is cited as an amlokdorlik within the Karmana province, and it is noted as being divided into mavzes, dahas, and villages. For example, in 1914, the Somejon district was merged with the Khutfar district, and the Shofurkom district was merged with the Pirmast district. The lands of three amlokdorliks, which were considered separate administrative units - Komi Mig (Komi Mug), Yangi Qo'rg'on, and Karaman - became part of the province by the end of the 19th century.[8] By 1916, the amlok lands of Komi Mig and Yangi Qo'rg'on became subordinate to the governor of Karmana province.[9; pp. 55-56] In our opinion, because Komi Mig was a separate administrative unit, its Amlokdor was simultaneously referred to as "Amlokdor," "Bek," and "Qo'rg'on begi." This view is confirmed in the memoirs of Solih Karimov, who was born in 1921 in the center of the Konimex district. In his writings, which cover the period from the emirate to the end of his life, the ruler of Konimex is referred to by the terms "Bek" and "Qo'rg'on begi." [10; p. 274] It is known that during the emirate period, the Amlokdor was appointed by the state's Prime Minister, the Qushbegi. An Amlokdor (from the Arabic "amlok," plural of "mulk" meaning "property," and the Persian-Tajik "dor" meaning "possessor") was an official who managed the smallest administrative unit (amlokdorlik) under the bekliks of the Emirate of Bukhara. The amlokdor was from among the well-to-do representatives of the population, appointed by the bek, and had several large and small villages under his authority. He was responsible for tasks such as collecting the khiroj tax, keeping account of the harvest grown by peasants, punishing those who failed to pay taxes, and imposing fines. He administered the amlokdorlik with the help of a scribe (mirzo), a water master (mirob), an amin, and elders (oqsoqols).[11; pp. 434-435] The territory of the present-day Konimex district was part of the Karmana and Nurota provinces. Its agricultural part belonged to the Karmana province, while the Sarijal and Yangiqazg'on areas, which fall within the district's desert region, were under the jurisdiction of the Nurota beklik.[12; p. 10] The territories of Uchtepa, Preke, and Boymurat were considered lands directly subordinate to the emirate. The settlements within the Komi Mig amlokdorlik of the Karmana beklik included: Arabxona mavzei (the Arabxona mavzei was divided into two parts - the Komi Mig and Yangiqo'rg'on amlokdorliks), To'qqiztepa daha, Sho'rtepa daha, Shodibek daha, Sho'rko'l daha, Beshrabot daha, Tilmining daha, Kelachi daha, Chuyut daha, Misit daha, Mirzamo'min daha, Quramayi Bolo daha, Uchruq daha, as well as the villages of Komi Mig, Yabuva, Yangiobod, Qorovultepa, Qorajon, Kiskashirak (Keskanterak), Quramayi Dauri qo'rg'on, Qush Qochdi Bolo, Qush Qochdi Poyon, and To'q Mang'it.[13; p. 184] There was a single qozixona (courthouse) for the Komi Mig and Kharqona amlokdorliks, which was located in Yangiqo'rg'on. The territories of Uchtepa, Preke, and Baymurat were subordinate to the emirate. The settlements within the Komi Migh estate of the Karmaninsky principality were: the Arabkhona massif (the Arabkhona massif was divided into two - the Komi Migh and Yangikurgan estates), the Tokuztepa massif, the Shurtepa massif, the Shadibek massif, the Shorkul massif, the Beshrabat massif, the Tilminin massif, the Kelachi massif, the Chuyut massif, the Misit massif, the Mirzamumin massif, the Kuramay Bolo massif, the Uchruk massif, as well as the villages of Komi Migh, Yabuva, Yangiabad, Karavultepa, Karajan, Kiskashirak (Keskanterak), Kuramay Dauri kurgan, Kush Kochdi Bolo, Kush Kochdi Poyon, Tuk Mangit. P. 184.



Until 1920, the Karakalpaks, who were under the oppression of the Emir of Bukhara, endured a very difficult situation. They lived in the western part of the Zarafshan Valley and to its north, in the deserts on the southern edge of the Kyzylkum, along the borders of the Bukhara Khanate with the Nurata and Karmana bekdoms and the Konimex district. Although the Bukhara Emirate, a state of relatively high standing, was a vassal of Russia, its internal structure remained almost unchanged during the period under discussion. This did not conflict with the interests of the Russian Tsardom in any way. Tsarism created the conditions for preserving the autocratic regime and feudal relations in Bukhara and Khiva. The Tsarist army defended the boundless oppression and atrocities of the emirs and khans, and their regimes which were hostile to medieval culture.[14] The tyrannical oppression of the Bukharan emirs, who imposed very harsh punishments on the guilty and sometimes even the innocent (such as being thrown from a minaret, life imprisonment, and whipping); the imposition of heavy taxes, compounded by the oppression of the local administration; numerous forms of forced labor, as well as military obligations; continuous internal strife and feuds; and the pervasive, strong influence of the reactionary Muslim clergy on all aspects of the people's lives, especially in agriculture, all contributed to the ruin of the poor. All of these factors severely worsened the people's condition. According to our informants, many Karakalpaks migrated from the vicinity of Bukhara and the neighboring Samarkand region to the Jizzakh uyezd of that province. [15]

In the Khanate of Bukhara, feudal relations remained firmly in place, while patriarchal-feudal relations persisted among the semi-nomadic and nomadic peoples. However, capitalist relations developed there much more slowly than in the Turkestan region. In the Bukhara part of the Zarafshan Valley, where cotton cultivation was expanding, the main methods of exploiting the Karakalpak laborers were land leasing and usurious lending, which led to the peasants' loss of land.

The majority of poor peasants had no livestock and owned 3-6 tanobs of land, which was also often taken away to settle debts, while land plots became concentrated in the hands of the wealthy. The rich owned 50-60 tanobs or more of land and several hundred head of livestock. Major landowners such as Jorbek-boy, Taspolat-boy, and Koken-boy had thousands of livestock in the steppes.

Patriarchal-feudal relations predominated in the steppes, persisting to a much greater extent there than among the agricultural Karakalpaks right up until the October Revolution. Wealthy Karakalpaks, who owned hundreds or even thousands of livestock, controlled the best wells and pastures. In exchange for using these wells and pastures, the poor of the clan performed various tasks for the wealthy households, such as herding livestock, milking cows, and shearing sheep. In contrast to the wealthy, poor herders owned only a few animals - perhaps two or three sheep or four or five camels. They were unable to manage their own livestock independently and earned their living through various crafts, primarily by producing charcoal. Left with no other choice, they would go to the wealthy man's estate and become shepherds or day laborers. Kazakh and Karakalpak herders were exploited not only by "their own" wealthy class but also by the rich from Bukhara and Gijduvan who drove their herds to graze in the steppes, as well as by merchants and livestock buyers from Nurata.

The people of the Turkestan region, including the Karakalpaks, responded with discontent to the reactionary colonial policy of the Tsarist regime and the exploitation by local wealthy feudal clan leaders. This discontent led to several open uprisings against the exploiters. Especially during the 1905 revolution and the 1916 uprising, peasants in various districts of Turkestan engaged in mass movements. This was caused by the deteriorating situation of the working peasants, a condition that became widespread during the First World War throughout the entire Turkestan General-Governorship, particularly in the Ferghana province. The strong class contradictions here were one of the primary reasons for the uprising in these main regions. Mass



movements and uprisings also occurred in the Syrdarya and Samarkand provinces, and peasant movements emerged in a number of beyliks of the Khanate of Bukhara. [16; 322-323,383-400-B.]

Conclusion. The extent to which certain groups of Karakalpaks participated in these movements and the uprising, like many other issues in their history, still requires study by historians. Although the 1916 uprising ended in defeat, it was of great significance.

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, the socio-political processes that occurred in the Konimekh district - which was part of the Emirate of Bukhara, then under the political protectorate of the Russian Empire - constituted a stage of development in the life of the Karakalpaks.

Although the governance of the Karakalpaks in the Konimekh district supported their ethno-social structure, clan-tribal relations, and other aspects to a certain extent, it was nevertheless integrated into the centralized administrative system of the Emirate. Concurrently, the geopolitical strategy of the Russian Empire, driven by its own interests, influenced the internal life of the Bukhara Emirate, leading to changes in forms of economic management, trade relations, and the processes of social stratification.

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