

# Early medieval ethnic processes in Khorezm oasis in archaeological and written sources

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**Abstract:** The article analyzes the ethnic-cultural relations between the ancient ethnic groups living in the Khorezm oasis, including the Eastern Iranian-speaking Khorezms and the Turkic tribes, their formation and development based on historical sources. Also, the influence of political structures such as the Kushan state, the Kang state, and the Turkic khanate on these processes was studied. Written sources, archeological findings, and linguistic data are widely used to illuminate the ethnogenesis processes. This study serves as an important scientific basis for understanding the multi-layered ethnic composition of the Khorezm oasis.

**Keywords:** Khorezm, ethnogenesis, ethnic formation, ethnocultural processes, Eastern Iranian languages, Turkic peoples, Khorezms, Massaget, Dah, Kerder, Oghuz, Kangli, Pecheneg, Kipchak, Kushan, Kang state, Sugdian writing, Huns, Turkic khanate, Kabul Shahs, Shun-nu, Proto-Turks, Ossuary, Ethnic composition, Historical population, Cultural heritage.

**Introduction:** The Khorezm region is one of the regions with a complex ethnic composition formed as a result of the interaction of different ethnic groups and cultures. Historical sources and archeological findings show that people speaking ancient Iranian languages, Turkic tribes and many other ethnic groups lived in this area. In particular, such tribes as Massaget, Dah, Kerder, Oguz, Kangli, Pecheneg and Kipchak played an important role in the ethnic formation of Khorezm. This article analyzes the formation of the ethnic composition of Khorezm and its main factors, as well as the origin of the main ethnic groups that lived in the region and their place in the historical and cultural processes. In this study, scientific conclusions about the ethnic history of Khorezm are presented based on historical sources, archaeological evidence, and ethnographic research.

## METHOD

The ethnic formation of the indigenous population of the Khorezm oasis is a product of complex ethnocultural processes, which included several stages. Also, dozens of peoples and clans speaking different languages took part in the ethnocultural processes that took place in the oasis. Especially in the period between the last millennium BC and the first millennium AD, i.e.

in a period of almost two thousand years, the Eastern Iranian-speaking peoples took the lead in the political and ethno-cultural processes that took place in the Khorezm oasis. However, from the early Middle Ages to the late Middle Ages, the Turkic peoples in the oasis actively participated in such processes.

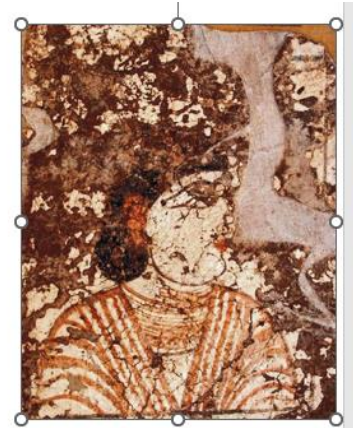
Eastern Iranian-speaking peoples are called "Khorasmians", "Khorazmians", "Khorazmliks" in written sources in different languages, and massaget, dah, kerder who lived in the areas adjacent to the oasis. As it is assumed that the nomadic peoples such as the Turks also spoke the Eastern Iranian language, the Turks who took an active part in the ethnogenesis of the inhabitants of the oasis also developed until the Middle Ages "Oguz", Written information about the division into clans and tribes such as "kojat", "bijanak" (Pecheneg) has been preserved. In the Classical Middle and Late Middle Ages, the weight of the Turkic population increased in the Khorezm oasis, "Kipchak", "Kangli" and several dozen other clans and tribes settled, and the native inhabitants of the oasis it will be known that it is part of it.

As a result of these processes, the Khorezm oasis gained importance as the center of historical formation of many ethnic groups. This means that the population

structure has developed while preserving the unique characteristics of cultural identity, lifestyle and economic system. Therefore, the native population of

the oasis is historically diverse and has a rich cultural heritage.

### Picture. Image of ancient Khorezms. Aqchakhan-castle wall paintings (IV-III centuries BC)



A number of other evidences confirm that there were Turkic ethnic elements, or rather, proto-Turkic peoples, in the Khorezm oasis and nearby areas long before and after the period of the Turkic khanate. In particular, in the last centuries of the millennium BC - at the beginning of AD, a certain influence of the people of the Kang state and the Kushan kingdom was observed, among them there were also proto-Turkic elements. is expected. In particular, it is known through Chinese chronicles that Khorezm was one of the 5 estates in the Kang State [1]. Copper coins with Sugdian inscriptions and various seals dating back to the 3rd-4th centuries AD have been found, confirming the existence of a unique writing culture within the Kang state. Recently, an inscription made of clay belonging to the same century was found in the Kultobe (Aris) monument, and it says in the Sugdian script, "The Chochliks built a city and forced the settlers to pay taxes." It was found that sentences about "connected" were written [2].

The Kangar or Kangui, whose ethnic origin has not yet been fully determined, lived between the middle basin of the Syrdarya and Yettisuv, and their next followers were "Kangar", "son of Kangar", They are known by ethnonyms such as "Kanga-kishi", "Kangli", and it is known that they all spoke Turkish [3].

The Kushans, who were mentioned in the Chinese chronicles as a clan of the Yuechi, who are considered to have ethnic affinity with the Kangs, founded their kingdom, and the northern borders reached the Khorezm oasis. The Kushan kingdom was a state that united nomadic and settled peoples speaking different languages, and although the upper basin of the Amudarya, which is its central region, was inhabited by more Eastern Iranian-speaking people, it is assumed that there were proto-Turkic elements

among the ruling clans of the Kushans, whose origin is connected with the Tokhars [5]. This situation is confirmed by the fact that several of the Kushan rulers had Turkic characters in their names, in particular, Kujula - Kuchli or Kachuvli, Kanishka - Kanik, Tokto - Tokhta, Geray - Girey, etc. was calculated [6]. It is interesting that Abu Rayhan Beruni in his work "India" writes that Barha-tegin, the ruler of the Turkish Kabul Shah dynasty (640-843), who ruled Kabul and its surroundings, is a descendant of Kanik (Kanishka) [7]. related to factors. It is also noteworthy that in early medieval Indian written sources, both the Kushans and the representatives of the Turkic Khanate were referred to under the term "turushka", i.e. "Turk" [8].

#### RESULTS

Y. Y. Nerazik, in the inscriptions found in the Khorezm ossuaries of the VII-VIII centuries, the term xwnnanyk means "son of the Hun" and this term is another important source of slaves who are prisoners of war. shows that the enslaved people have diverse origins, some of them are descendants of the Huns [9]. In the last centuries of the first millennium BC - the first half of the first millennium AD, the term "Hun" is considered to mean Turkic-speaking peoples, but this term found in Khorezm ossuaries is Turkic. it turns out to represent people. In particular, it is known that in some of the Mugh mountain Sogdian documents of the VII-VIII centuries, the word xwn was used in relation to the representatives of the Turkish khanate, especially the representatives of the ruling class of the khanate [10]. It follows from this that in Khorezm, as in the Sughd oasis, the local population had a tradition of referring to representatives of the ruling clan of the Khaganate, in general, the Ashina Turks under the term "Hun".

It should be mentioned here that some researchers try not to associate the Huns or clans and peoples close to them with the Turks. In the 70s of the 20th century, O. Munchen-Helfen noted that there was no clear information about the connection between the Asian Hun Empire and the European Hun Empire (IV-V centuries), as well as in Chinese chronicles He emphasized that the question of whether the Asian Huns referred to as "syun-nu" (old reading "hun-nu") called themselves "Hun" is unclear, and a number of researchers followed him, began to doubt that the Huns were Turkic. In recent years, the French researcher, Sugiologist E. de la Vessier has shown that both kingdoms have the same foundation, which is mentioned in the Chinese chronicles - in 370 years, a part of the Shun-nu went to the west. wrote a confirmation of his migration, asserting that the views of Menchen-Helfen and his followers had now been dismissed.

According to this French researcher, the Sogdian "Old Letters" of the 3rd century AD, found in the Dunhuang region in the northwest of China, mention the "Huns" and they are mentioned in the annals. There was one nation with the "syun-nu" [11]. This opinion of the researcher is supported by a number of written sources in different languages of the "Xun-nu" who traveled from the north-west of China to the south - towards the upper reaches of the Amudarya in the 370s, including In Pahlavi and Bactrian written monuments of Iranian language, "khyun", "xion", "hun", "un", "al-hun", in ancient Indian inscriptions "huna", "sveta-huna", "hara-huna", in Greek, Armenian, Syriac sources "hun", It is also confirmed by its occurrence in the forms "khon" and "un". It can be seen that the ancient Khorezm people also mentioned the Turkic peoples in the early Middle Ages, in particular their leading categories, in particular the Ashina Turks, under the ethnonym "Hun".

The name of one of the representatives of Khorezmshah-Afrighi dynasty is mentioned as Kanik in Abu Rayhan Beruni's work "Asor ul-Baqiyya", and this name is the same as Kanik, who is mentioned as the founder of the Turkic dynasty in Kabul in another work of Allama. Interestingly, Kanik, who is shown as the first king of the Turkic Barhatekin dynasty [13] in Kabul, appears as Kanishka in epigraphic works and coins with Bactrian writing [14]. In short, based on such information, the similarity of the name of a famous ruler during the Kushan period with the name of one of the later governors of Khorezm indicates that there were ethno-cultural contacts between the inhabitants of both regions.

## DISCUSSION

Shortly before the Turkic khanate, the Ephtalian state (450-565) existed in the central and southern regions of Central Asia, and it is assumed that this state had its political influence in the Khorezm oasis. It has been suggested by some researchers that there was some kind of ethnic affinity between the ruling dynasty of the Ephthalites and the ruling dynasty of Khorezm, the Africans. In particular, in the first half of the 20th century, I. Marquardt and Z.V. Togon identified themselves with the ancient Iranian dynasty, and the origin of the Khorezmshah dynasty, which ruled in pre-Islamic times, is actually the Abdals. They wrote that he was from (Ephthalites) [15].

Relying on the fact that the governors of the Hosityn (Khorazm) region are from the Zhaowu dynasty [16], some scholars differ somewhat about their ethnicity. they promote views. Although Abu Rayhan Beruni cited a list of 22 rulers of Khorezm and emphasized that their lineage was connected to Siyavush, the son of Kaykhusrav, one of the kings of Iran [17], some researchers there are also opinions that all the rulers in the list did not belong to the same dynasty. The names of two Khorezm rulers in the list cited by Beruni are given in the form of Aska Jamuk, which suggests that the origin of the Khorezm rulers should be related to Central Asians, not Iran. This term can be equated with "Jamuk", the dynastic name of the rulers of Samarkand and its surroundings in Chinese chronicles [18]. There are views that the local form of this term, which the Chinese brought as "Zhaowu", was "Jamuk".

Zhjaovu or Jamuks migrated from Yettisuv and its surroundings to the areas between Amudarya and Syrdarya in the IV-V centuries and formed their own administrative system in a number of Sughd principalities centered on Choch, Fergana and Samarkand. Thus, it can be concluded that the name of the ruling house Zhaovu, to which the rulers of Khorezm belonged, is presented in Arabic sources in a form close to its original form, Jamuk style. Connecting these rulers with the rulers of Samarkand, and, in turn, makes it possible to equate them to a certain extent with the Yettisuv and Eastern Turkestan regions of Central Asia [19].

These data are important as an important source in the study of ethnic and political processes in the history of Khorezm, and they are important in illuminating the processes of the emergence and spread of the ruling elites in the region.

Even after the Turkish khanate, the proportion of Turkic people in Khorezm increased. Mahmud Kashghari wrote in his work "Devonu Lugatit Turk" (11th century) that Khorezm Turks are from the "Kojat" clan [20], this ethnonym is also found in other sources. The question

of where this clan originally lived, that is, whether it lived in the Khorezm oasis from ancient times, or whether it migrated later from some region of Central Asia, has not yet been determined. Based on the fact that they were first mentioned in the written sources of the developed Middle Ages, it can be assumed that they lived in the oasis for many centuries, probably in the early Middle Ages. According to the researcher A. Matniyazov, it is necessary to equate the "Kochat" or "Kojat" Turks with the "Kushites", who were known as a major political power in Ancient Asia in ancient times, and who moved them from Khorezm. can be considered an ancient Turkic people [21]. According to him, the Kushites, as S.P.Tolstov has repeatedly emphasized, the state of Khorezm and Mitanni, as well as Khorezm's interaction with the Hittite, Hurrian and Kassite peoples of Ancient Asia, moreover, it is possible that they went to Mesopotamia as a result of migration processes. A. Matniyazov emphatically writes: "If our hypothesis is correct, this millennium BC. It confirms that representatives of the Altai language, a Turkic-speaking ethnic group, lived in Khorezm at the beginning of the 1st millennium. As Q. Sadikov noted, "historical-cultural processes and the social situation in some mixed regions in the following periods brought forth the Turkic-Tokharian, Turkic-Sughd and Turkic-Khorazmian forms of bilingualism [22]. In some cases, this has led to a sudden change in the state of the language and ethnic relations in some regions. For example, complete Turkicization of the language of the population living in the Khorezm oasis, etc. [23].

However, the probability of this view is not very high, because it is difficult to come to such a conclusion based only on some similarities between ethnic terms and some aspects. Thus, the issues related to the "Kojat" Turks and the ethnic processes related to them require deep scientific research in the future.

As mentioned above, the linguistic information related to the language of the "ancient Khorezmites", who are one of the East Iranian-speaking peoples and are considered one of the first indigenous inhabitants of the oasis, is expressed, albeit partially, in written sources in ancient Persian, Greek, Arabic and other languages, as well as in epigraphic findings from the remains of the ancient city of the oasis. It is important that the ancient Khorezm language was one of the peoples with a script specific to the Central Asian region, which was based on the Aramaic alphabet. The entry of this writing into the Khorezm oasis is connected with a number of political and ethno-cultural processes. After the Persians conquered Babylon in the 6th century BC, they adopted a number of cultural elements characteristic of Central Asians. At the same time - between 545-539 BC, Khorezm passed

into the hands of the Achaemenids, and in the Behustun stone inscriptions written in 517, Khorezm is listed among the countries paying tribute to the Iranian king Darius.

According to the researchers, the ancient Khorezms with Aramaic script were written in 1000 BC. They may have met in the 5th century, probably even earlier. In the Aramaic documents of those times, it is mentioned that a soldier named Dargman from Khorezm served in the Persian army. BC In the 4th century, the Khorezm oasis was a principality with its own administration, and it is not clear whether the Achaemenid kingdom remained in the oasis during this period. In written sources BC. In 328, it is mentioned that Farasman, the king of Khorezm, made a treaty with Alexander of Macedonia. Based on this information, A. Matniyazov believes that Khorezm writing based on Aramaic was formed in those years. Before that, the Aramaic script used in the Achaemenid kingdom was in circulation, After the establishment of the independent state of Khorezm in the second half of the IV century, business and correspondence began to be conducted in the Khorezm script based on the Aramaic alphabet[24].

According to A. Yazberdiyev, who conducted research on the Khorezm language and writing, the official Aramaic language and the Devankhana script were introduced to the ancient Khorezm people in 1000 BC. Although it was already known in the 5th century, a century later, with the establishment of the independent state of Khorezm, the Aramaic language ceased to be used in local government offices, and its it is replaced by the Khorezm language, which adapted the Aramaic alphabet to its own language. In this regard, the ancient Khorezm script is more than 1500 years old - BC. IV - mile. It is used as an official writing between the 11th century [25].

In addition, a number of other views on the appearance of the Khorezm script have been put forward. M.Mahmudov and M.Abdullayev emphasize that the period of formation of this writing went through the following stages:

- 1) BC VIII - IV centuries (the period of the emergence of the Khorezm state and its dependence on the Assyrian, Median, and Achaemenid states);
- 2) BC IV - mile. III centuries (restoration of the independence of Khorezm and its inclusion in the Kang and Kushan kingdoms);
- 3) 3rd - 8th centuries (Khorazmshah's reign of the Africans);
- 4) VIII-XI centuries (the period of subjugation of Khorezm to the Arab caliphate and restoration of independence) [26].

In the early Middle Ages, especially the period of the Turkish Khaganate, the third phase of this period coincided with the language and writing of the ancient Khorezm people in the Khorezm oasis, as in the previous stages. will be preserved. Despite the fact that this language is one of the eastern Iranian languages, like the Sugdian language, it was not understood by the people of the surrounding areas. Although the Sugdian, Pahlavi, and Old Khorezm scripts are from the same base, and most of the letters in both scripts have a close resemblance to each other, these scripts were created when comparing the inscriptions, it is understood that they are very different from each other [27]. In particular, the comparison of Sugdian and Khorezm texts shows that they are closer than others, but the texts of both languages are far from each other. observed. If it is noticeable that the letters were written without connecting each other in the Khorezm script of the early middle ages and the features of the ancient Aramaic script were preserved, by this time the letters in the Sugdian script it becomes clear that they are connected to each other and have a complex appearance.

In the advanced Middle Ages, especially in the Khorezm oasis and many other regions of Central Asia, most Arab and Persian geographers paid special attention to the ethnic characteristics of the oasis population, especially the local population. In their works, these geographers tried to provide information not only about Khorezm's natural resources and economic situation, but also about its various ethnic groups, their lifestyle, cultural and social structures. Such an approach increases the historical-geographical importance of Khorezm and becomes important in illuminating its interactions and integration with other regions of that period. It should be mentioned here that although the information provided by them mostly refers to the 9th-12th centuries, some of the information refers to the realities of the early Middle Ages, in particular, during the rule of the Turkish khanate. is observed to be related to According to them, Khorezm people are the most widespread among the "people of Khurasan", i.e., the population of the western and southwestern parts of Central Asia and have a different language, customs and character. were people, that is, "Among the people of Khurasan, they are the most scattered [to different lands] and travel [the most]. There is not a single big city in Khorasan without a large community of Khorezm people. The language of its inhabitants is unique. There is no [other] language in Khurasan similar to theirs. Their clothes are [short] jackets and hooded hats, and their tailoring has a unique tradition and style. Their behavior is not like the people of Khurasan [in other lands]. They have [qualities] of fortitude and courage to

resist the Ghuz (Oghuz Turks). There are no [mines] of gold, silver, or [any other] underground [subterranean] wealth in their country. All their wealth is due to trade with the Turks and raising livestock [28].

It can be seen that the language of the indigenous people of the Khorezm oasis, despite being one of the eastern Iranian languages, was quite different from the Iranian languages of Khurasan and its neighboring regions. Also, this language is completely different from the Turkish language, and since they belong to a separate language group, Arab and Persian geographers emphasized that they are different. Although representatives of the Oghuz tribe of Turks made up the majority of the nomadic peoples of the Khorezm oasis and its surroundings, their influence on the Khorezm people was much later. happened. This process, as a result of historical and cultural changes, led to the formation of the ethnic composition of Khorezm at different stages.

The influence of Iranian peoples from the south - Khorasan was strong in the ethnic formation of the Khorezm oasis population, while the participation of Turks and even Slavs from the north and northeast was noticeable. According to Arab geographers, to Khorezm: "most of the slaves are [brought] from the Khabar (Slavic), Khazar and neighboring lands, as well as [they have] Turkish slaves, al-fanak, suvsar, foxes, ad-dalak [furs] and the furs of other animals, all these are brought to them and remain there.'

The northern regions of Khorezm are relatively close to the Volga-Ural River, and during the period of the Turkic Khaganate, as well as much earlier and later, there was a majority of nomadic Turkic population in these areas. Slavic tribes lived far north and northwest of them, and they were brought to Khorezm by the Turks as slaves. The Khazar tribes, who live in close proximity to the Slavs, are a population that speaks a very different dialect of Turkic, and they live in the lower Volga, North Caucasus, north of the Black Sea, and South Russia. have been politically dominant.

The works of Arab-Persian geographers contain a number of legendary information, some of which are mentioned as the inhabitants who established contact with the Khorezm oasis: "They have rabbits and furs. there are merchants who go to the lands of Gog and Magog to bring. Very few bearded people dare to go to their [country], [because] most of them [face] hair and mustache are [very] sparse. The older men of Gog and Magog [tribe] are beardless and hairless. When a bald man comes to their [land], the king of Gog and Magog orders his beard to be pulled out. Then he does favors to the shaved merchant and gives him gifts. These were the provinces [located] around the Jayhun [river]"[29].

Although legends and narratives are mixed in this information, some details of the information help to shed some light on the ethnic characteristics of the people of the region at that time. Most of the medieval authors understood the people of Gog and Magog as the people who live in distant lands, far away from the Turks and Chinese, and described their appearance as Mongolian. Those who describe in the above information, "beardless or sparsely bearded people" and "bald people", that is, people from the eastern countries and Khorezm people (or their neighboring peoples) can give some idea about the ethnic differences between them.

## CONCLUSION

So, the ethnocultural processes that took place during the Khaganate period in the Khorezm oasis, which was one of the dozens of oases in Central Asia, during the rule of the Turkish Khaganate, before and after the Khaganate. It was a certain continuation of the close relations between the settled and nomadic population of the region, which has been somewhat integrated with the political and ethnic processes of the period. In the millennia BC, there was a process of interaction between the settled population known as "Khorasmians" or "Khorasmians" along with nomadic peoples such as Massaget and Dah in the oasis. If given, the processes of settlement of nomadic peoples such as "Kang" and "Khun" (Eftali, Kidari) in the oasis increased a little before the Khaganate period.

During the period of the Turkic khanate, the Ashina clan and related Turkic clans, particularly the Oguz tribes, entered the interior of Central Asia in the region. A little later, in the middle and lower reaches of the Syr Darya, during the rule of the Oguz Yabgu (VIII-IX centuries), Arolboyi, the Lower Amudarya basin, in general, the desert and the Khorezm oasis the migration of dozens of Oguz clans to the parts adjacent to the steppes is observed.

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