

The Development of Science in The Khiva Khanate

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Abstract: This article analyzes the development of science and scholarly culture in the Khiva Khanate. The study interprets science in its historical meaning as a broad system of knowledge that included religious studies, jurisprudence, historiography, philology, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, translation, manuscript culture and practical administrative knowledge. Special attention is paid to the role of madrasas, court patronage, waqf institutions, historiographical schools, the translation movement and the cultural policy of Muhammad Rahim Khan II.

Keywords: Khiva Khanate, Khorezm, science, madrasa, historiography, manuscript culture, translation.

Introduction: The Khiva Khanate occupies an important place in the intellectual history of Central Asia. The territory of Khorezm had been known since antiquity as one of the centers of agriculture, urban life, scholarship and cultural exchange. The medieval fame of Khorezm was associated with such figures as Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, al-Khwarizmi and other scholars whose works influenced mathematics, astronomy, geography and natural philosophy. In the period of the Khiva Khanate, this earlier intellectual heritage did not disappear, although the institutional and political conditions of knowledge production changed. Science was no longer concentrated only in great academies or large observatories; it developed through madrasas, libraries, manuscript copying, court patronage, historiography, legal scholarship and practical forms of education.

The term “science” in relation to the Khiva Khanate should be understood in the broader historical sense of “ilm”. In the Islamic scholarly tradition, “ilm” included Qur’anic studies, hadith, jurisprudence, Arabic grammar, logic, rhetoric, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, ethics, history and literature.

METHODS

The first foundation of scholarly development in the Khiva Khanate was the madrasa system. Madrasas were the main institutions of advanced learning and social reproduction of the educated elite. Their

curriculum was centered on Islamic sciences, especially jurisprudence, theology, Arabic grammar and logic, but it also included disciplines that had practical and intellectual significance for administration, calendrical calculation, architecture, commerce and legal reasoning. Arithmetic and elements of astronomy were necessary for inheritance law, timekeeping, religious calendars and the organization of social life. Thus, the madrasa should not be regarded as a narrow religious school only; it was a complex educational institution in which religious, linguistic and rational disciplines were interconnected.

The development of science in Khiva also depended on patronage. Khans, high officials, wealthy families and religious authorities supported scholars, poets, historians, calligraphers and teachers. Patronage did not always produce free scientific inquiry in the modern sense, but it created conditions for the preservation and circulation of knowledge. Libraries, madrasas, manuscript collections and literary circles could exist only when they had material support. Waqf endowments played a significant role in sustaining educational and religious institutions. Through waqf, property or income was dedicated to madrasas, mosques, students, teachers and charitable purposes. This financial mechanism helped to preserve continuity in education even during political instability.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

One of the strongest intellectual fields in the Khiva

Khanate was historiography. Khiva produced a remarkable school of historical writing, especially from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. Abulgazi Bahadur Khan, Shermuhammad Munis, Muhammad Riza Agahi and Muhammad Yusuf Bayani occupy a central place in this tradition. Their historical works did not merely record dynastic events; they preserved information about political institutions, diplomatic relations, social order, cultural life, education and the worldview of the Khivan elite. The translation and publication of "Firdaws al-Iqbal: History of Khorezm" by Munis and Agahi made one of the most important Khorezm historical sources available to international scholarship [4]. This work demonstrates that historical knowledge in Khiva was based on textual discipline, chronology, genealogy, political memory and literary expression.

The historical school of Khiva was closely connected with philology and literary culture. Persian, Arabic and Chaghatay Turkic were used in different spheres of scholarship and writing. Arabic remained important for religious and legal scholarship; Persian had long been a prestigious language of historiography, poetry and administration; Chaghatay Turkic became increasingly significant in Khivan literary and translation culture. This multilingual intellectual environment expanded access to texts and created conditions for translation. Translation was not a secondary activity; it was a form of knowledge transfer. Through translation, political histories, ethical works, literary texts and religious materials entered new linguistic and cultural contexts.

The nineteenth century, especially the reign of Muhammad Rahim Khan II, known by his poetic name Feruz, was particularly important for the development of literary and manuscript culture. Aftandil Erkinov's research shows that Muhammad Rahim Khan II cultivated his court library and supported translation and manuscript activity as a cultural response to the Russian imperial presence after 1873 [6]. The court became a center where poets, historians, scribes and translators worked. This cultural policy was not science in the narrow technical sense, but it was highly significant for the history of knowledge, because it stimulated textual production, preservation of manuscripts and the formation of a scholarly-literary environment.

The introduction of printing in Khiva also marked an important transition in the dissemination of knowledge. Manuscript culture continued to dominate, but printing gradually changed the speed and scale of textual reproduction. Printed works could circulate more widely than single manuscripts, although the process remained limited compared with modern publishing systems. The coexistence of manuscript and

print culture in late Khiva indicates a transitional intellectual environment: traditional calligraphy, court libraries and copying practices remained important, while new technical means began to influence knowledge transmission.

Jurisprudence was another major field of scholarly activity. The legal culture of the Khiva Khanate was shaped by Islamic law, local custom, administrative practice and court institutions. Jurists and qazis needed mastery of legal texts, Arabic terminology, logical reasoning and documentary practice. Their work influenced family relations, inheritance, trade, property, waqf administration and conflict resolution. Legal scholarship therefore functioned as a practical science of social regulation. Sartori and Abdurasulov's study of justice at the court of the Khans of Khiva shows that legal and documentary practices were central to the functioning of political and social order in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Khiva [5].

CONCLUSION

The development of science in the Khiva Khanate was a complex historical process rooted in the intellectual traditions of Khorezm and shaped by the political, religious and cultural institutions of the khanate. Science in this context should be understood broadly as a system of knowledge that included religious scholarship, jurisprudence, historiography, philology, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, translation and manuscript culture. The madrasa, waqf, court library, manuscript workshop and scholarly circle formed the main institutional foundations of this knowledge system.

The Khiva Khanate did not become a center of experimental science in the modern sense, but it played an important role in preserving, organizing and transmitting knowledge. Its strongest achievements were visible in historical writing, translation activity, manuscript culture, legal scholarship and educational continuity. The works of Munis, Agahi, Bayani and other Khivan intellectuals demonstrate that the khanate had a developed culture of textual memory and historical analysis. During the reign of Muhammad Rahim Khan II, the court library, translation movement and literary environment gained particular importance.

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