

# The Study and Development of the Foreign Policy of the Khiva Khanate During the Years of Independence

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**Abstract:** This article analyzes the historiography of the foreign policy of the Khiva Khanate during the Kongrat dynasty, drawing on scholarly works produced in the years of Uzbekistan's independence. Newly introduced archival materials, diplomatic correspondence, Khiva chronicles (Munis, Ogahiy, Bayani), and Russian–Iranian travel accounts have enabled a reassessment of the Khanate as an independent political actor with an active regional and international diplomatic presence.

**Keywords:** Uzbek statehood, maktubot, munshaot, manshurot, Russian Empire, Khiva chronicles, Khorezm, historiography, Ruznamayi Safar-i Khorezm.

**Introduction:** Today, New Uzbekistan—steadily advancing and maintaining equal cooperation with independent states—possesses a long and rich historical heritage. One of the central tasks of contemporary historiography is to study the origins of Uzbek statehood, determine the historical role of the states that emerged in this region, and analytically assess their contributions to world civilization.

Since independence, research on the foreign policy of the Khiva Khanate has expanded significantly in both scope and methodology. Newly accessible archival documents, interdisciplinary approaches, and comparative studies have enabled scholars to reassess the Khanate's diplomatic relations with neighboring powers. As a result, recent works have offered deeper insights into the political, economic, and cultural dimensions of Khiva's external relations and its place in regional and transregional diplomacy.

These studies help clarify the historical foundations of Uzbek statehood, restore historical memory, and reinforce national identity. From the early years of independence, examining Uzbekistan's foreign policy on a historical basis became an urgent scholarly priority, requiring objective, source-based research and a systematic analysis of the evolution of Uzbek diplomacy.

During the Russian Empire and Soviet eras, research on international relations remained limited, focusing

mainly on ties between the region and Russia. Consequently, the broader diplomatic activities of the Turkestan khanates were largely neglected. In contrast, the post-independence period has seen a steady rise in investigations into their foreign relations, grounded in historical sources. A key challenge today is the comprehensive, systematic study of Uzbek diplomacy and the identification of its stages of development.

Before analyzing the historiography of foreign relations during the Kongrat dynasty in the Khiva Khanate, it is necessary to first determine when research on the external political relations of the Turkestan khanates began as a whole, as well as the factors that influenced the formation of studies in this field. The historiographical examination of this issue—namely, analyzing how the very history of research on the khanates' foreign relations developed—makes it possible to accurately assess the scholarly investigations carried out in subsequent stages.

In this regard, the researcher B.S. Mannonov has presented several important scholarly observations in his article. He notes that diplomatic documents pertaining to the Turkestan khanates are preserved in the collections of the Institute of Oriental Studies named after Abu Rayhon Beruni and the Central State Archive of Uzbekistan, emphasizing that the study of

these materials serves as a crucial source for new academic research, analytical approaches, and historical conclusions.

The scholar also points out that the collection entitled 'Maktubot, Munshaot, Manshurot' contains copies of letters from the period of the Ashtarkhanid and Mangit dynasties of the Bukhara Emirate, including those sent by Amir Haydar to Muhammad Rahim Khan I of Khiva and to Amir Umar Khan of Kokand. These documents are recognized as significant primary sources for studying the history of diplomatic correspondence among the Turkestan khanates [4.120-131].

In addition, B. Mannonov emphasizes that the works of Munis, Ogahiy, and Bayani—collectively known as the 'Khiva Chronicles'—contain substantial information regarding the foreign policy and diplomatic relations of the Khiva Khanate. For instance, Ogahiy's *Riyoz ud-davla* and Muhammad Yusuf Bayani's *Shajarayi Khorezmshohi* provide detailed accounts of the visit of the British representative James Abbott to Khiva in the 1840s and his interactions with Alloqulikhan. The scholar notes that analyzing these written sources makes it possible to offer an objective and academically grounded assessment of historical events [4.127].

The scholar also notes that in 1993, a research group entitled 'The History of Central Asian Diplomacy (Sources and Studies)' was established at the Institute of Oriental Studies named after Abu Rayhon Beruni. This research group set for itself several objectives, one of which was to study the diplomatic relations maintained by the Bukhara, Khiva, and Kokand khanates with foreign states during the first half of the nineteenth century and to publish the scholarly findings in a collected volume.

The emergence of this initiative was largely a response to tendencies in Western and former Soviet historiography, where the Central Asian khanates were often portrayed as 'feudal formations lacking state structure and diplomatic institutions', and their colonization was justified as a 'natural process.' Likewise, certain works published within Iranian historiography have interpreted the territories of the Khiva, Bukhara, and Kokand khanates as integral parts of the Iranian state.

For this reason, there arose a necessity to restore historical accuracy, to substantiate through primary sources that the Turkestan khanates conducted active diplomatic relations as independent political entities, and to present an objective portrayal of their position within the system of international relations.

As a result of these scholarly efforts, in 2003 a

collected volume entitled 'Pages from the History of Uzbek Diplomacy', edited by M. Khayrullaev, was published [6]. This edition provides information about significant written sources related to the history of Uzbek diplomacy, including correspondence between the rulers of Bukhara and Khiva extracted from the 'Letters of Amir Haydar', which reflect the foreign policy of the Bukhara Emirate, as well as passages concerning the international relations of the Khiva Khanate drawn from the 'Khiva Chronicles – "Xiva solnomalari" [6.333-341]. The historical sources included in the collection illuminate not only the political events of the period, but also the complex dynamics of the economic and cultural processes in the region.

The work emphasizes that the Turkestan khanates did not remain confined within regional boundaries, but rather functioned as independent states that maintained consistent diplomatic, commercial, and cultural relations with both neighboring and distant countries. It is also evident from the letters addressed by the Khivan rulers to the Russian Empire, Iran, and the Ottoman sultans that they adhered to the diplomatic norms and principles established in their era.

The scholarly publication further notes that in the 'Khiva Chronicles', the Khanate's foreign political–diplomatic, economic, and cultural relations are classified into three groups based on geographical criteria.

1. Relations with the states of the Turkestan region — interactions conducted with the Bukhara and Kokand khanates;
2. Diplomatic relations with the Near and Middle Eastern countries — including Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan;
3. Political, economic, and strategic relations established with the Russian Empire and British India.

This classification clearly demonstrates that the foreign policy of the Khiva Khanate operated not only at the regional level but also on an international scale, reflecting the high degree of development of diplomatic culture and political thought of the period [6.134].

In 2011, a methodological manual entitled 'Historiography of the Uzbek Khanates' was published by a group of scholars [2]. The work discusses the methodological foundations of studying the history of the khanates, the characteristics of historical writings, the authors' approaches to various issues, and the periodization of the historiography of the khanates. The manual also notes that the political, economic,

and other types of relations of the khanates—both among themselves and with external states—varied across different periods and became increasingly complex over time.

Additionally, the collection discusses the historiographical tradition of the Khiva Khanate and the significance of the works of Munis, Ogahiy, and Bayani in the study of Central Asian history, presenting Q. Munirov's reflections on the source value of these texts. The scholar enriches his analysis by drawing upon V.V. Bartold's views regarding the importance of Khorezmian historians' works for studying the history of trade and diplomatic relations between the Turkestan khanates and Russia, as well as P.P. Ivanov's contributions to the history of the Karakalpaks and the observations of A.K. Borovkov and P.P. Ivanov that reveal the scholarly significance of research on the history of the Turkmens [2.63].

In 2016, the Institute of History published the conference proceedings entitled "From the History of the Diplomatic Service in Uzbekistan: Interpretation and Analysis" [11]. This collection of articles encompasses studies on the history of Uzbek statehood, the evolution of diplomatic service, its major stages and procedural norms, as well as research on the diplomatic relations maintained by the states that emerged in the territory of present-day Uzbekistan with neighboring countries during the medieval and early modern periods. The volume includes several articles devoted specifically to the political and diplomatic relations of the Khiva Khanate with the Kokand Khanate, the Bukhara Emirate, and Afghanistan [5].

In addition, it features studies on the significance of the 'Khorezm Travelogues' in elucidating the history of diplomatic service and on the role of military representatives in diplomatic missions [1].

The organization of such conferences and the compilation of related studies into a single volume serve to introduce new perspectives and information on the foreign relations of the khanates into scholarly circulation. At the same time, these collections play an important role for researchers in conducting bibliographic searches and in presenting the historiographical background of the topic.

The book 'Khorezm History in Contemporary Research', published in 2018, brings together articles devoted to the political, economic, commercial, diplomatic, and cultural history of Khorezm from ancient times to the present day. The materials are organized into sections covering the history of Khorezm, its source studies, and its historiography [12].

Among the articles are studies on the foreign relations of the Khiva Khanate, which present new information regarding the Khanate's diplomatic and commercial ties with the Bukhara Emirate, the Kokand Khanate, the Russian Empire, the Iranian state, and other regions [3]. These studies demonstrate the necessity of examining the foreign policy of the Khiva Khanate and the system of international relations during the Kongrat dynasty on a rigorous scholarly basis.

In 2019, the six-volume work 'A History of Uzbek Diplomacy (From Ancient Times to the Present)' was published [8].

This publication provides a systematic account of the formation and development of Uzbek diplomacy from antiquity to the modern era. Chapter 4, entitled 'Diplomacy of the Central Asian Khanates in the 16th – First Half of the 19th Centuries,' discusses the foreign relations and their characteristics during the periods of the Shaybanid, Ashtarkhanid, Arabshahid, Ming, Mangit, and Kongrat dynasties that ruled in the region. The chapter is further divided into the following sections:

1. Institutional aspects of the foreign relations of the Central Asian khanates: diplomatic protocol and its main forms;
2. Interrelations among the Central Asian khanates;
3. Historical relations between Central Asia and the Dasht-i Qipchaq;
4. Mutual relations between the Central Asian khanates and the Iranian state;
5. Relations between the Central Asian khanates and the Ottoman Empire;
6. Central Asia and India;
7. Diplomatic relations of Central Asia with Eastern Turkestan and China;
8. Trade and diplomatic relations between Central Asia and Russia.

These topics are presented on the basis of historical works and archival documents. Among them are examples illustrating the foreign relations of the Khiva Khanate and its diplomatic interactions with foreign states [8.205-283].

In the 2022 monograph entitled 'Sources and Studies on the History of Uzbekistan (19th – Early 20th Centuries)', information is provided on local and foreign works written in Eastern and Western languages during the 19th and early 20th centuries, which contain material on the history and culture of the Uzbek people, including historical manuscripts,

specialized studies, expedition reports, periodicals, and travel accounts [9].

Chapter 2, Section 5 of the monograph, titled 'Works Related to the History of the Khanates', presents information concerning the foreign relations of the khanates.

Among these works, it is noted that in V. Grigoriev's study devoted to describing the routes leading to the Khiva Khanate, primary attention is given to issues such as the trade routes connecting Central Asia with Russia, the Orenburg–Khiva route, and the significance of the Aral and Caspian Seas in commercial exchange [10].

Likewise, in the section on 'Persian Travelogues and Memoirs,' information is provided from Muhammad Alikhon Ghaffur's 'Ruznamayi Safar-i Khorezm' (Diary of the Khorezm Embassy) concerning the purpose of the embassy and details of its mission [9. 439-442].

The works mentioned above constitute important examples that substantiate the necessity of studying the foreign relations of the khanate period and demonstrate the effectiveness of the scholarly research conducted in this field. At this stage, it is therefore appropriate to proceed to an analysis of the historiography of the foreign relations during the Kongrat dynasty.

The foreign political relations of the Khiva Khanate from the late eighteenth century to the early twentieth century were multifaceted and conducted across various domains. In particular, these relations encompassed such areas as 'exchange of embassies,' 'commercial interactions,' 'alliances formed in the face of external threats,' and 'social and cultural cooperation'.

These foreign relations did not take shape uniformly with all states; rather, they developed in accordance with the specific political, economic, and cultural factors relevant to each country. Consequently, the foreign policy of the Khiva Khanate during the Kongrat dynasty evolved through a combination of broader regional trends and distinctive national characteristics.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, it may be stated that during the years of independence, the historiography of the foreign political relations of the Turkestan khanates has expanded substantially, with new sources being introduced into scholarly circulation. It is noteworthy that contemporary research rejects the one-sided interpretations characteristic of the Soviet period and instead approaches the khanates as independent political entities. A new scholarly school has emerged

focusing on the study of the foreign policy of the Khiva Khanate during the Kongrat dynasty. Sources such as the chronicles of Munis, Ogahiy, and Bayani, diplomatic correspondence, and travel accounts from Russia and Iran constitute the primary research base for these studies.

Recent analyses demonstrate that the Khiva Khanate was active not merely within a regional framework but within a broader international diplomatic arena, and that it possessed a highly developed diplomatic culture.

Thus, the research conducted during the years of independence has elevated the study of the foreign policy of the Turkestan khanates to a new stage and has contributed to the formation of contemporary methodological foundations for the scholarly discipline of the history of Uzbek diplomacy."

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