

# Establishment of the Khorezm People's Soviet Republic: Contemporary Attitudes Towards the Political Situation in the Country

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**Abstract:** It is worth analysing the memories and diaries of contemporaries to reveal the essence of the political, socio-economic, and cultural processes in the Khorezm People's Soviet Republic. Indeed, through these materials, one can observe the mood of the individuals of the time and their attitudes towards new processes. The study of memoirs from those involved in these processes, juxtaposed with the literature created in subsequent periods and the research conducted, plays a crucial role in wholly reflecting the history of that period. Such memoirs provide invaluable information about the role and position of national leaders in establishing the Khorezm People's Soviet Republic and its brief operations.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

According to the history of the Khorezm People's Soviet Republic (KRPS), the sources from 1920-1924 can be categorised into the following three groups:

The first group's sources are memoirs, wherein the author records the daily happenings around them. Here, the author's social standing, values, and profession play a significant role. Indeed, at one point, the author served as a representative of the Soviet regime in the country, which understandably had some influence on their appraisal of the process.

The second group comprises works that reflect the events that transpired in the KRPS between 1920 and 1924, recorded later. Although these sources were not generated during this period, they remain valuable since they were created based on accounts from people who participated in or witnessed the events.

The third group's sources are the normative legal documents organised by the government of the KRPS. These include: the Constitutions of the KRPS, government meeting minutes, and reports, which facilitate the analysis of the KRPS's political activity. It should be noted at this juncture that the resources belonging to this group are relatively poorly organised.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The Khorezm People's Soviet Republic (KRPS) was established as a result of the overthrow of the Khanate by Soviet troops, assisted by the Young Khiva movement, which was dissatisfied with the existing system of the Khiva Khanate (Yusupov X.P. (2000).. Kh. P. Yusupov. B. 24-26). The newly formed local government was primarily comprised of representatives of the "Young Khiva people". Upon the formation of the government, the majority wished to establish a modern form of government, respecting the values of the local population and implementing religious institution reforms while preserving the traditions of national statehood to some degree. However, the Bolsheviks, dispatched from the centre, aimed to eradicate the khanate system entirely and replace it with a government aligned with their ideology, devoid of national and religious values. Almost every day of the young republic's existence, which spanned nearly five years between 1920 and 1924, was marked by such problems and conflicts, with solutions, common ground, or compromises needing to be found.

Literature of the period dedicated to Khorezm's history paid considerable attention to the provisional government, the succeeding Council of People's Supervisors, and the administrative units of the Khorezm oasis, as well as the relationship between the local government and the Bolsheviks, personnel

matters, and management issues. One such source is Polvonniyaz Haji Yusupov's "Memoirs", written by hand in Arabic script, which detailed the historical events in Khorezm, Turkestan, in a unique style, in the Khorezm dialect of the Uzbek language, in an incredibly captivating way (Polvonniyoz Hoji Yusupov. (2000).).

What distinguishes his "Memoirs" from other historical accounts of that period is that the author, free from communist ideas and beliefs, provided an honest assessment of the historical events and occurrences he experienced, knew about, heard of, or directly participated in, conveying them truthfully. For instance, he managed to present each reality, both its negative and positive aspects.

Perhaps due to Polvonniyaz Haji Yusupov's memoir-style writing, the book was left untitled and was not segmented into topics or chapters. The work is mainly devoted to the democratic activities of the Young Khiva Party, its efforts to topple the Khan's tyranny, establish an independent people's republic in Khorezm, and consolidate it. In the work, the author made a special mention of the national leaders, giving an impartial evaluation of their activities. Bobohun Salimov, who contributed significantly to the formation of the Meeting and the Board of Supervisors of the KRPS, the organisation of its activities, and the issuance of documents based on Islamic Shari'a, was particularly highlighted. Polvonniyaz Haji Yusupov comments on this in his "Memoirs": "The People's Republic was established, after consulting with Bobohun Eshon, letters were dispatched to all the fortresses of Khorezm to elect representatives to the provinces of Turkmenistan, Kazakh, and Karakalpak" (Yusupov P.H.). After the people sent to the locales elected the people's representatives, Bobohun Salimov was chosen as the chairman of the meeting.

Bobohun Salimov also documented his activities. His memoirs have not reached us in their entirety. Polvonniyaz Haji Yusupov, in discussing the activities of the representatives who travelled to Moscow from Khorezm, referred to the recollections of Bobohun Salimov (Yusupov P.H.), quoting in his memoirs: "Let me keep it secret, the meeting will decide with the participation of Izmoilov. A representative is to be sent to Moscow to negotiate an agreement with the Russian Soviet Republic. Muzokaradin made Eshon Bobohun the chairman and decided to send him on a life mission" (Yusupov P.H.).

During the signing of "friendship", "economic", and "military agreements" between the Russian SFSSR and the KRPS, Lev Mikhailovich, the head of the People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs of the RSFSR, summoned Bobohun Salimov and other members of the delegation to his side and announced that the

bilateral agreements to be signed were more stringent than the terms of the agreement that subjugated the people of Khorezm to Tsarist Russia. In such circumstances, Bobohun Salimov proved himself a true patriot of his people. "I rejected each proposal with various arguments" (Yusupov P.H.), wrote Bobohun Salimov in his memoirs. The agreement signed on 13 September 1920 served to boost the reputation of the RSFSR among eastern nations. The Centre's recognition of Khorezm as independent – a region previously considered a colony of the Russian Empire – is deemed a significant breakthrough. In May-July 1920, the autonomous representative of the RSFSR in Khorezm, A. Izmailov, travelled to Moscow on the eve of the signing of the Union Treaty and met him, as recalled in P. Yusupov's memoirs. "...it is not necessary to grant them so many rights. Only in this way were a few representatives of Khorezm able to demand significant rights and aid" (Yusupov P.H.).

The memoirs of Polvonniyoz Haji Yusupov and Bobohun Salimov serve as an important source for studying relations with the KRPS, BPSR, TASSR, and other Eastern and Western countries. For instance, in P. Yusupov's diary, "We record the activities of the KRPS delegation's trip to Moscow from Baba Okhun's travelogue" (Yusupov P.H.), the entry begins.

This section provides information about the post-revolutionary relations of the KRPS with the BPSR and TASSR. Bobohun Salimov recounts his conversation with Lev Mikhailovich Korakhan, head of the People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs of the RSFSR: "...he enquires about our relationship with Bukhara before and after the revolution. Answer: Before the revolution, our relationship was very friendly. After the revolution, we have no relationship. I mentioned that we now regard each other as enemies" [9].

In Khiva, from 27 to 30 April 1920, the first congress of representatives of all the Khorezm people was held. Of the 200 representatives participating in this congress, 80 were representatives of the Turkmen population. At the congress, it was announced that the Republic of Khorezm People's Soviets (RKPS) had been established on the territory of the Khiva Khanate, and the Constitution of the People's Soviets Republic, the state coat of arms, and the flag of the Khiva Republic were approved [10]. Researchers studying this period of history note that one of the first constitutions among the Central Asian republics was adopted in the KRPS, a significant historical fact for that era. The Constitution of the KRPS was published in Uzbek using the Arabic alphabet in Khiva in 1920. On its cover, it read "The Basic Law of the Republic of Khorezm Shorars", with the sentence "approved by the First Congress of People's Representatives of

Khorezm on April 30, 1920" enclosed in parentheses. The Council of People's Inspectors is cited as the publisher of the Constitution, which consists of 14 pages and 37 articles, with a preamble made up of 3 articles [11, 1-14].

In research related to the history of the KRPS, the naming of the country is both a controversial and problematic issue. It should be noted that at the First All-Khorezm Congress of People's Representatives, which opened in Khiva on 27 April 1920 and continued until May, it was solemnly announced that the Khanate of Khiva had been abolished, and the country's old name, Khorezm, was restored in its place, being called the People's Soviet Republic of Khorezm (Boltaev A. (1920)). From 18 to 20 October 1923, at the IV Congress of All-Khorezm Soviets, considering the changes in the economic, political and social spheres of the country, it was determined that "the People's Soviet Republic of Khorezm had entered its new socialist era", and the state's official name became the Khorezm Soviet Socialist Republic (UzNA, R-80). According to the decision of the 5th Plenum of the Central Executive Committee of the KRPS held on 22 November 1924, it was incorporated into the Uzbekistan SSR with 23 districts.

In the literature devoted to the history of the KRPS and the Young Khiva people, the name Khorezm People's Soviet Republic, which was announced at the First Khorezm Congress on 27 April 1920, is frequently encountered. It should be mentioned that almost all the researchers who have studied these issues have approached the name of this country differently, often referring to it as the "Khorezm People's Soviet Republic", "Khorezm Soviet Socialist Republic" or "Khorezm Republic", a practice that continues to this day (Matkarimov M. (2012)).

The first reason for this is that, although the state's name was changed to the Khorezm Soviet Socialist Republic in October 1923, the decisions made at the IV Congress of All-Khorezm Soviets during its brief one-year existence remained theoretical and this change was barely felt in the everyday lives of ordinary people.

Moreover, the second reason is that several sources and literature related to the history of the KRPS are in Russian, and this is due to the fact that the name given to the new political structure by the centre is translated as "Khorazmskaya Narodnaya Sovetskaya Respublika".

However, in the first Constitution of the KRPS, written in the old Uzbek script (1920), the name of the state was recorded as the "Khorezm Soviet Republic". This Constitution was published in two languages, Uzbek and Russian, with the country's name in Russian as "Xorezmskoy Sovetskoy Respubliki". In

the Constitutions of the KRPS adopted on 23 May 1921 and 23 July 1922, it is referred to as "Khorazmskaya Narodnaya Sovetskaya Respublika". Additionally, in the Khorezm press of that time, the state is referred to as the Republic of Khorezm People's Councils. Specifically, in the 20 and 26 August 1920 issues of the newspaper 'Revolution Sun', a government publication that began in Khorezm on 7 March 1920, the phrase "Long live the educational leaders of the Republic of Khorezm People's Councils!" (The Sun of Revolution. 1920) can be found. Furthermore, the acronym of the republic, K.R.P.S., is printed beneath the newspaper title on the first page of each weekly issue. Beneath it, the phrase "Khorazm Central Executive Committee is also on behalf of the Ishtirakiy faction committee" (The Sun of Revolution. 1922,) appears. However, there are instances where this abbreviation is absent in some issues of the newspaper in subsequent years (The Sun of Revolution. 1923.).

A. Boltayev's manuscript "Materials on the history of Khorezm" also touches upon the issue of the state's nomenclature: "To those who discarded the former name of the Khiva Khanate and renamed their country the Khorezm Republic of People's Councils." The Russian Soviets took this into account and found it necessary to rename the Khiva Khanate as the Republic of Khorezm People's Soviets (Boltaev A.). Therefore, we encounter sentences written as such, and this state was colloquially called the Khorezm Republic of People's Soviets (KRPS) and was established on 27 April 1920. On 20 October 1923, the IV Congress of All-Khorezm People's Representatives decided to transform the Khorazm Soviet Socialist Republic into the Khorezm Soviet Socialist Republic.

Based on the aforementioned sources, we deem it appropriate to retain the name Khorezm Republic of People's Soviets (KRPS) for the state that existed in the territory of Khorezm from 1920 to 1924.

Ultimately, these issues are addressed in interviews and memoirs from individuals who directly participated or were involved in the processes that unfolded in Khorezm in the 1920s of the 20th century (19). These sources are also reflected in the works based on them. Primarily, it should be noted that these sources have not been sufficiently analysed in studies related to the history of the USSR. For instance, Abdulla Boltayev's manuscript "Materials related to the history of Khorezm", held in the manuscript fund of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan under the number 9320, depicts the realities that occurred from 1873 to the end of the 1920s, when the treaty between the Khiva Khanate and Tsarist Russia was concluded, based on accurate documents.

A. Boltayev's diary mentions the Treaty of Union, comprising 24 articles, signed between the RSFSR and the KRPS in Moscow on 13 September 1920. The treaty is in two languages: Uzbek and Russian, and they correspond to each other. The signatures of the signatories to this agreement are also displayed [20].

In his manuscript, A. Boltayev underscores certain articles of this agreement: Article 1 affirms that the Republic of Khorezm is an independent state, according to Article 2, the agreements between the Khanate of Khiva and the Tsarist government are annulled, and it is noted that land and water, cities, factories, and various enterprises were incorporated into the KRPS [21].

B. Safarov, who was a direct witness to the political processes in Khorezm and recorded these realities in 1957, addressed the key issues of the Khanate of Khiva and the KRPS in his work entitled 'History of Khorezm'. In this work, penned in Uzbek using Arabic script, an attempt was made to illuminate the political realities of Khorezm's history between 1864 and 1934. The 29th chapter of the work is titled 'The Construction of Khorezm Power', and the subsequent chapters are devoted to describing the realities that occurred between 1920 and 1925. In particular, the work concentrates on matters such as the composition and changes within the government during this period, the election of government members, congresses, conflicts between the members of the initial Shoro government and the representatives of the subsequent government, disagreements between the affluent officials in the government and the Bolsheviks, and the relations between the KRPS and the Soviet government [22-27].

Although the work was written considerably later, in the 1950s, it's worth noting that it was composed based on the memories of the author and his contemporaries who were direct witnesses to past realities in the KRPS, and it also provides information about the processes of that period.

### 3 DISCUSSIONS

During this period, an alternate history was formulated by representatives of the Soviet government, notably G. Broido. He characterised the realities of this era as a struggle for land and water between peasants and nomads, the dictatorship of the Khiva Khanate, and began to portray it as a long-standing conflict in the lives of the people of the Khanate of Khiva. According to him: "Turkmens with Kamson and Uzbeks with Kopson reluctantly made a minor contribution to the development of the social revolution in Khiva and the formation of the People's Republic." Furthermore, N. Chekalin wrote: "The Turkmens, who constituted the minority, were under

socio-economic oppression by the authoritarian Khiva administration, and this was a rebellion of the Turkmens against the injustice of the khanate."

This interpretation of the social history of the Khiva Khanate was seemingly the bedrock of the Soviet government's understanding of Khorezm Mountain, and it was presented as the primary factor legitimising the establishment of the Republic of Khorezm People's Councils.

In essence, the KRPS emerged as a highly complex political structure. It can succinctly be regarded as a republic established following the occupation of the territory of the Khiva Khanate by Soviet military forces and was favoured by the senior Soviet government. Conversely, the advent and subsequent disappearance of the KRPS from the historical stage remains in history as a product of the socio-political processes of that era - conflicts between advocates of the khanate system and republican modernists, progressives who became divided and ultimately turned into opponents, and representatives of the Soviet government. Furthermore, the KRPS can be viewed as a product of political ideas received from the West via an unconventional political system for the region - the Turkish progressives, the Ottoman state, and Russia. This situation was extensively discussed in the press of the time, and work was conducted on several national demarcation projects. Only those at the helm of the operation, and the implementers, as in other cases, were representatives of the Central Government in Moscow and its local branches. The Bolsheviks, who planned the disintegration of Turkestan and the establishment of new republics in its stead, began to determine the fate of other republics in Tashkent. At that time, one of the official publications of the Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (also known as the Republic of Turkestan Autonomous Councils or the Republic of Turkestan) was issued by O. Karkin in the July 28-29, 1924 issues 316-317 of the Turkestan newspaper. It featured a project of the RCP (Communist Party of Russia) titled "Principles for Lectors". In this project, there is an extensive discussion concerning the establishment of new republics, and below we will restrict ourselves to quoting some articles related to the KRPS: Turkmen and Uzbek resistance in Khorezm and Bukhara was a result of the inequality of these peoples in land and water affairs and therefore continues. The newly settled Turkmens found themselves in unirrigated and often saline lands. As for the better lands, they were occupied by the Uzbeks, who have been residents since time immemorial. The tyranny of the Tsarist regime and Khan Amir assisted the nomadic and semi-nomadic population to be oppressed by the somewhat advanced Uzbek trading capital.

By publicising such projects in the press, the aim was to portray the numerous Turkmen, Kazakh and Karakalpak peoples residing in the KRPS as communities who had been landless and oppressed for years, and concurrently, to promote the notion that demarcation from the nation's perspective is the correct policy.

In O. Karkin's article, several priority tasks linked to the administrative reforms intended for implementation in the KRPS were outlined, including: the detachment of Turkestan, Bukhara and the Turkmen parts of Khorezm to establish an independent Turkmen republic; the separation of the Turkmen whilst maintaining the Republic of Khorezm in its current state; and decision-making regarding how the Turkmen will split from Khorezm, especially when delineating the borders of the newly formed republics. The Central Asian branch organisation (the Central Asian Bureau of the RKF Central Committee), along with Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and autonomous Tajik and Karakyrghyz regions, and the organisation of the Republic of Khorezm, should be preserved in a unified form. In order to highlight these events, they should be called upon at the All-Bukhara and Khorezm congresses in September.

This newspaper article was designed to provoke disagreements and conflicts between the Uzbek and Turkmen, Uzbek and Kazakh peoples within the KRPS. This manoeuvre had unintended consequences for the KRPS. Representatives of various ethnic groups who had lived in the Khorezm oasis for centuries were divided into the newly formed national republics: Uzbekistan SSR, Turkmenistan SSR and Karakalpakstan AS. In the subsequent years, economic life and the growth of the national economy in these regions would be noticeable. However, cultural values were harmed by the division into newly established national republics. It should be mentioned here that despite the efforts of the Central government, a number of local figures who established the Uzbekistan SSR under the foundations of the Turkestan ASSR, the KRPS and the BPSR, particularly political figures of Uzbek nationality, government representatives and intellectuals, held firm in their stance on this issue and initiated the process of new statehood. When the representatives of the local government operating in Tashkent, the centre of the Turkestan ASSR, became aware of the Bolsheviks' plan in the Centre to partition the KRPS, they immediately took action, dispatched their representatives and intellectuals to this young republic, consulted with the representatives of the local government in Khiva, and commenced propaganda work among the local population on this matter.

The Bolshevik government became the main implementers in this matter as well. Despite proclaiming that each nation determines its own destiny and on paper, it executed the division of the KRPS into new republics based on orders from the Centre. This is substantiated by the following lines from the memoirs of P. Yusupov: "Let's not keep it a secret, these national divisions are easily decided in Moscow. At the 5th congress, without a word, they simply confirmed the assignment from Moscow and dissolved the congress... It was decided to divide the property into 50% for the Uzbeks, 50% for the Turkmen, Kazakhs and Karakalpaks."

Evidence related to political changes presented in such memoirs refuted conclusions such as some independent activity in management, reciprocal equal relations between the KRPS, a warm attitude of the local population to the national territorial demarcation, published in the press of the time and presented in later studies, because the authors of these memoirs and diaries attempted to provide an impartial assessment of the political processes that they had directly witnessed. As a result, they were dismissed from their positions by the Soviet government and were constantly harassed and persecuted.

## 4 CONCLUSION

Upon examining the aforementioned sources, it was determined that the government of the KRPS encountered two significant challenges. The first involved changing the administrative traditions that had existed during the era of the former Khiva Khanate and instituting a new system in lieu of the administrative, judicial, and bureaucratic structures. It is crucial to comprehend and contrast the range of perspectives in these primary sources when assessing their causes and effects.

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