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**THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE VISIT OF RUSSIAN OFFICER N.N. MURAVYOV
IN KHIVA IN RESTORING RELATIONS BETWEEN THE KHANATE OF KHIVA
AND RUSSIA**

Saparbaev Bunyodbek

*Doctor of philosophy (PhD) in Historical sciences
Associate professor of the department of the "History"
of the Urgench State University
Urgench, Uzbekistan*

Abstract: *This article talks about the embassy visit of the Russian officer N.N. Muravyov to the Khanate of Khiva in 1819. It is shown that the mission of the officer and diplomat N.Muravyov played an important role in the restoration of diplomatic relations between the Khanate of Khiva and Russia.*

Key words: *Khanate of Khiva, Muhammad Rakhimkhan I, Russia, officer N.N.Muravyov.*

Khorezm, which occupies a vast territory and has traditions of ancient statehood, has been considered a center of education and culture since ancient times.

According to the scientist S.P.Tolstov, Khorezm is “a connecting link between the world of the North Eurasian steppes, the mountainous countries of the Anterior and Southern parts of Central Asia and the North Indian lowland, a junction of crossings of Eastern Mediterranean, Indian and North Eurasian ethnic elements” [1, P.341].

The Khorezm oasis is a source of culture for a number of related peoples such as Uzbeks, Turkmens, Tajiks, Karakalpaks and Kazakhs [2, P.216].

Over the centuries, Khorezm has experienced many wars and bloodshed. It was in a fragmented state as a result of Arab, Mongol, and Russian conquests.

Starting from the reign of Abulgazi, the region began to develop culturally and economically. The tradition of chronicle writing began from this period.

During the reign of Muhammad Rakhimkhan I, this tradition rose to a new level. The work we are considering, “Firdaus al-Iqbal,” is a product of the period of his stay on the khan’s throne.

Many opinions have been recorded about this historical work, its individual events, and about Muhammad Rakhimkhan I itself.

The Russian officer Nikolai Muravyov, who arrived in Khiva in 1818-1820, is one of the first foreign missionaries to provide information about the period of the reign of Muhammad Rakhimkhan I. About the khan, he writes: “Magmed Rahim is of gigantic stature, of health and strong build and is now about fifty years old, his appearance is quite attractive and does not have any traces of his brutal actions and disposition; his facial features are quite regular, his eyes are small but fiery and his gaze is penetrating, his beard is small and, moreover, light brown” [3, P.53-56, P.127].

Speaking about the khan, N.Muravyov mentions the gift he presented to Muhammad Rakhimkhan I. He quotes the words of the centurion that he heard before the audience: “Our khan takes everything that you give him. It's difficult to collect anything from him. Our glass is a rare thing, he will like your gift. Before entering, pay attention to the number of glass items, do not give ten pieces, we don't like this number. You can give nine, this number is considered lucky in our country [3, P.131].

Such a comment from a military commander about his ruler is very far from the truth. Apparently, these words were invented by the missionary himself.

During his stay in Khiva, N.Muravyov was also interested in culture, listening to songs performed by bakhshi. He also left valuable information about musical instruments: “Their musical instruments consist of a two-string balalaika, made in the likeness of a Russian one, except for a box that has the shape of a hemisphere. It is built into a quart and played with a feather or a piece of wood. Another instrument they use is a four-string whistle, which has an extremely unpleasant sound; it is played with a bow and held like a cello, resting it on the ground with a rod attached to the lower part of it ” [3, P.132].

Judging by the words of N.Muravyov, the first instrument is the tanbur, the second is the kobuz (a type of musical string instrument), since during this period bakhshis served at the khan's court and performed songs on the kobuz. In passing, the missionary gives a brief summary of the dastan “Ashik Kerib”.

The fifth chapter of the book, entitled “Morals, religion, customs and enlightenment of the Uzbeks,” talks about the character traits of the Khivans, clothing, dishes (palov, guzha, qovurdok, kabob), attitude to music, and also provides information about some bakhshis, singers and musicians. The author draws attention to the crops of the Sarts and Uzbeks. Despite the inconsistency of some information, N.Muravyov's disdainful attitude towards the people of the Khanate, his work is considered the most valuable source on ethnography and culture of that period. This requires a critical approach to his views, since they are permeated with a chauvinistic attitude.

It will not be wrong to say that among foreign travelers only Nikolai Muravyov left detailed information about the period of the reign of Muhammad Rakhimkhan I. He comprehensively characterizes the personality of the khan: “Magmed Rahim loves moderation and simplicity in everything; his attire consists of several robes of Bukhara silk fabric sewn on cotton wool; he wears a turban or a white bandage over his hat.

It is also moderate in dishes; its meal consists of two or three dishes: pilaf, fatty stew with saffron and roast without oil. He leads a more nomadic life; lives at all times of the year in a tent, although he has houses in which he places only his wives. He spends most of his time in the steppe hunting, chasing wild animals with his favorites, the defeat of which he is famous for, sees himself on campaigns and notices the equestrian prowess of the crowd around him. He also catches wild goats and kyshkaldaks with hawks. During these frequent absences, he usually entrusts the administration of the Khanate to his brother, inak Kutlugmurad [3, P. 55].

Muhammad Rakhimkhan I was well versed in politics, government, relationships with people, improvement and strengthening of power. He pursued a policy of uniting peoples. To resolve complex issues, he convened a council and chaired it himself.

The council consisted of the following members: Yusuf Mekhtar - the first vizier, strict and distrustful by nature; Muhammadiyor kushbegi - a supportive, courageous person; Kutlugmurad inak is the brother of the khan. In addition to them, other prominent representatives of the khanate who were not members also participated in the council: Khojesh makhram - a close person of the khan who distinguished himself in battles, elders of Uzbek clans, as well as a qazi.

According to N.Muravyov, Tangrikuli, a representative of Russian nationality who converted to Islam, was considered another confidant of the khan.

Here the author dwelled on the question of Russian prisoners and their pitiful situation. Next he provides information about the monetary system of the Khanate: “Since the reign of Magmed Rakhimkhan, a mint has been established in Khiva, in which coins are struck under the Owner’s own mintage. The most noble of these is the golden Tilla, this coin is round and of good quality and is quite clearly minted. On one side it is depicted in letters in Turkish, the name Magmed Rakhimkhan, and on the other in Arabic numerals, the year, place of minting and prayer in Arabic [3, P.76].

N.Muravyov also draws attention to the state of the lands, the situation of agriculture in the Khanate: “the inhabitants of this region, since ancient times, turned their efforts to cultivating the lands and irrigating them with water carried through many water pipes from the Amu-derya. With their incredible efforts, they finally achieved to turn the barren steppes into a fertile region, now abounding in all kinds of grain. In these gardens also grow a variety of different kinds of apples, bergamots, almonds, dulis, pears, cherries, mulberries or here, partly pomegranates, and many other fruits” [3, P.85-86].

These words of the missionary confirm the diligence of our farmers, their tireless work aimed at increasing productivity. All of the above fruits were the result of work to improve agricultural culture, as well as the peacekeeping policy of Muhammad Rakhimkhan I within the khanate.

During the period under study, cattle breeding also brought the main part of the khanate’s income. Herds of sheep, cattle, and camels grazed on spacious pastures. Sericulture was developed, among the Turkmens - carpet weaving, and in the cities - handicrafts.

By collecting taxes on domestic and foreign trade, government revenues increased. The bulk of goods were exported to the Caucasus and Russia, and necessary goods were brought from there. Relationships with cities such as Orenburg and Astrakhan were strengthened [3, P.90-93].

The main purpose of N.Muravyov’s visit to Khiva was not so much a journey, but rather drawing up a plan for the seizure of the Khanate by Russia. This idea is confirmed by his following words: “If Khiva were in our hands (which is not very difficult to achieve), then the nomadic peoples of Central Asia would fear our power, and trade routes would be established through the Hindu, Amu-derya, to Russia, then all the treasures of Central and South Asia would turn to our fatherland, and thus the glorious enterprise of the Great Peter would be fulfilled” [3, P.102].

We know that his plans came true after 50 years.



A Russian traveler (or rather a spy) in his book gives sufficient information about the Khan from his physical appearance to his behavior and all his activities. Although his correspondence is of a chauvinistic nature, it can provide important information about the political, economic and cultural life of the Khanate at that time.

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