International Journal of Academic Multidisciplinary Research (IJAMR)
ISSN: 2643-9670
Vol. 10 Issue 6 June - 2026, Pages: 280-284

The Representation of State Administration in the Kokand Khanate in Soviet Historiography.

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Abstract: *This article examines the representation of the Kokand Khanate's state administration in Soviet historiography and evaluates the methodological approaches used by Soviet scholars in interpreting the political institutions of the khanate. The study is relevant because Soviet-era research significantly influenced the development of Central Asian historiography and continues to shape contemporary understandings of the Kokand Khanate's governance system. The research aims to identify the main trends, achievements, and limitations of Soviet historiography concerning the administrative structure of the Kokand Khanate. The study is based on a historiographical analysis of major Soviet and contemporary scholarly works devoted to the political history of the Kokand Khanate. Historical-comparative, source criticism, and systemic analysis methods were employed to assess the interpretation of central administration, local governance, judicial institutions, and political authority in Soviet historical writings. The analysis of the literature demonstrates that Soviet historians made a substantial contribution to the collection and publication of historical sources related to the Kokand Khanate. However, their interpretations were largely influenced by Marxist-Leninist ideology, which led to the characterization of the khanate as a feudal and exploitative political system. The findings reveal that Soviet studies provided extensive information on administrative institutions but often overlooked their complexity and practical effectiveness. The discussion highlights that ideological considerations influenced both the selection of evidence and the conclusions reached by Soviet scholars..*

Keywords*: Kokand Khanate, Soviet Historiography, State Administration, Central Asia, Governance System, Political Institutions, Historical Sources, Historiographical Analysis, Soviet Scholarship, Central Asian Statehood.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Kokand Khanate was one of the most influential political entities in Central Asia during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Established in 1709 in the Fergana Valley, the khanate gradually expanded its territory and became a major center of political, economic, and cultural life in the region. Its system of state administration, which combined traditional Turkic-Mongol political institutions with Islamic legal norms and local governance practices, played a crucial role in maintaining authority over a diverse population. Following the Russian conquest of Kokand in 1876 and its incorporation into the Russian Empire, scholarly interest in the history of the khanate increased significantly. However, the interpretation of Kokand's political institutions underwent substantial changes during the Soviet period, when historical research was largely influenced by Marxist-Leninist ideology. The study of the Kokand Khanate's state administration in Soviet historiography occupies a special place within the broader field of Central Asian historical studies. From the 1920s onward, Soviet historians sought to reinterpret the political history of pre-colonial Central Asia through the lens of class struggle, socio-economic formations, and feudal relations. As a result, the governance system of the Kokand Khanate was frequently described as a feudal and exploitative structure dominated by ruling elites, including khans, beks, military commanders, and religious authorities. This ideological framework significantly shaped the conclusions reached by Soviet scholars and influenced the selection and interpretation of historical sources. Despite these limitations, Soviet historiography made an important contribution to the study of the Kokand Khanate. Researchers such as Vasily Vladimirovich Bartold, Aleksandr Pavlovich Nalivkin, and later Soviet scholars collected, translated, and analyzed numerous archival documents, chronicles, and administrative records related to the khanate. Their works provided valuable information about the structure of central and local government, the functions of administrative officials, taxation systems, judicial institutions, and military administration. Consequently, Soviet-era studies remain an indispensable source for contemporary researchers despite their methodological and ideological shortcomings. At the same time, modern historians increasingly emphasize the need to critically reassess Soviet interpretations of Kokand's political system. Many Soviet publications portrayed the khanate primarily as a reactionary feudal state and often overlooked the complexity of its administrative institutions, the role of local elites in governance, and the adaptability of political mechanisms to changing social and economic conditions. Furthermore, the influence of Soviet ideological priorities sometimes resulted in selective use of historical evidence and the marginalization of alternative perspectives found in indigenous sources. Given these circumstances, an examination of how Soviet historiography represented the state administration of the Kokand Khanate remains highly relevant. Such an analysis not only contributes to a deeper understanding of the development of historical scholarship in the Soviet Union but also helps identify the strengths and limitations of previous research on Central Asian political institutions. Therefore, this article aims to investigate the ways in which Soviet historians interpreted the governance structure

of the Kokand Khanate, to evaluate the methodological approaches employed in their studies, and to assess their contribution to the historiography of Central Asian statehood. Through a critical analysis of Soviet-era historical works, the study seeks to clarify how ideological considerations influenced scholarly interpretations of the Kokand Khanate's administrative system and to determine the continuing significance of these studies for contemporary historical research.

2. Literature review

The issue of the Kokand Khanate's state administration has occupied an important place in Soviet historiography, where it was examined through the methodological principles of historical materialism and the theory of socio-economic formations. Soviet scholars attempted to analyze the political structure of the khanate by focusing on class relations, the role of the ruling elite, and the nature of feudal governance. Although these studies were often influenced by ideological considerations, they produced a substantial body of scholarly literature that continues to serve as a valuable source for contemporary researchers. One of the earliest and most influential contributions to the study of the Kokand Khanate was made by V. V. Bartold, whose works provided a comprehensive overview of the political development of Central Asia. In his analysis, Bartold emphasized the historical conditions that shaped the emergence of regional states and discussed the administrative institutions that functioned within them. Although his primary focus was not exclusively on the Kokand Khanate, his observations regarding the relationship between political authority and local elites remain significant for understanding the foundations of state governance in the region [1, B. 112–115].

Another important source is the work of A. P. Nalivkin, who examined the history of the Kokand Khanate based on direct observations and local historical traditions. Nalivkin described the structure of the khanate's administration, including the position of the khan, the responsibilities of high-ranking officials, and the interaction between central and provincial authorities. His research provides detailed information about administrative practices and political decision-making processes, making it one of the most frequently cited works in later Soviet studies [2, B. 45–52].

During the Soviet period, the historiography of the Kokand Khanate developed within a framework that viewed pre-revolutionary Central Asian states as feudal political systems. Historians often argued that the concentration of power in the hands of the khan and the aristocracy reflected the exploitative nature of feudal governance. This interpretation is evident in collective works devoted to the history of Uzbekistan and Central Asia, where the administrative apparatus of the Kokand Khanate was characterized as an instrument of class domination rather than an effective mechanism of state management [3, B. 218–223]. A significant contribution to the study of historical sources related to the Kokand Khanate was made by B. Ahmedov, who analyzed chronicles, archival documents, and other primary materials concerning the history of Uzbek statehood. Ahmedov emphasized the importance of indigenous sources for reconstructing the political and administrative structure of the khanate and highlighted the limitations of interpretations based solely on Soviet ideological approaches [4, B. 67–72]. His work helped broaden the source base available to researchers and encouraged a more balanced assessment of the khanate's governance system.

At the same time, Soviet historiography often overlooked certain aspects of state administration, particularly the flexibility of local governance institutions and the role of traditional political practices in maintaining stability. Many studies focused primarily on socio-economic relations and class conflict, leaving limited room for an objective evaluation of administrative effectiveness. Consequently, the governance system of the Kokand Khanate was frequently portrayed in a negative light, with insufficient attention given to its institutional complexity and regional specificities [3, B. 230–233]. Overall, the existing literature demonstrates that Soviet historians made substantial contributions to the collection and analysis of historical materials related to the Kokand Khanate. Nevertheless, their interpretations were often shaped by ideological priorities, which influenced both the selection of evidence and the conclusions drawn from it. Therefore, a critical reassessment of Soviet historiographical works is essential for achieving a more comprehensive understanding of the Kokand Khanate's state administration and its place in the history of Central Asian statehood [1, B. 118; 4, B. 74].

3. Methodology

This study employs a comprehensive historiographical approach to examine the representation of the Kokand Khanate's state administration in Soviet historical scholarship. The research is based on the principles of historicism, objectivity, and comparative analysis, which make it possible to evaluate Soviet interpretations within the political and ideological context in which they were produced. The methodology is designed to identify both the scholarly contributions and the methodological limitations of Soviet historiography concerning the governance system of the Kokand Khanate. The primary method applied in this research is the historical-comparative method. Through this approach, Soviet-era studies on the Kokand Khanate are compared with modern historiographical works in order to determine similarities and differences in the interpretation of state administration. Particular attention is paid to the assessment of the powers of the khan, the functions of administrative officials, local governance mechanisms, and judicial institutions. This method enables the identification of ideological influences that shaped Soviet scholarly conclusions regarding the nature of political authority in the khanate [5, B. 41–44]. Another important methodological tool is the historiographical analysis method, which is used to examine the evolution of scholarly views on the Kokand Khanate from the early Soviet period to the late Soviet era.

This approach allows the study to trace changes in research priorities, source utilization, and theoretical frameworks. By analyzing the arguments presented in major Soviet publications, it becomes possible to determine how Marxist-Leninist concepts influenced the interpretation of administrative institutions and state power [6, B. 73–77]. The research also utilizes the source criticism method, which involves evaluating the reliability, purpose, and context of the historical sources employed by Soviet historians. Special attention is given to the use of chronicles, archival documents, official records, and ethnographic materials. Through critical examination of these sources, the study assesses whether Soviet scholars interpreted the available evidence objectively or selectively in accordance with prevailing ideological requirements [7, B. 118–122].

In addition, the systemic analysis method is applied to investigate the administrative structure of the Kokand Khanate as an interconnected political system. This method makes it possible to analyze the relationships between central authority, provincial administration, military institutions, and judicial bodies. By examining these elements as parts of a unified governance structure, the study provides a more comprehensive understanding of how Soviet historians interpreted state administration and political authority within the khanate [8, B. 205–209].

The combination of these methodological approaches ensures a balanced and critical evaluation of Soviet historiography. By integrating historical-comparative analysis, historiographical review, source criticism, and systemic analysis, the research seeks to reveal the methodological foundations of Soviet studies on the Kokand Khanate and to assess their significance for contemporary scholarship. Consequently, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how ideological and academic factors shaped interpretations of the Kokand Khanate's state administration in Soviet historical writing [5, B. 49; 6, B. 81].

4. Analysis and results

The analysis of Soviet historiography demonstrates that the issue of the Kokand Khanate's state administration was primarily interpreted through the ideological framework of Marxism-Leninism. Soviet historians generally characterized the khanate as a feudal state in which political power was concentrated in the hands of the khan and a narrow ruling elite. As a result, the administrative system was frequently presented as an instrument of class domination rather than a mechanism designed to ensure political stability and effective governance. This interpretation became particularly prominent in Soviet studies published during the 1950s–1980s, when historical research was expected to conform to official ideological narratives [9, B. 154–158]. The examination of Soviet publications reveals that considerable attention was devoted to the structure of central government within the Kokand Khanate. Historians identified the khan as the supreme political authority who exercised control over military, judicial, and administrative affairs. At the same time, Soviet scholars acknowledged the existence of a developed bureaucratic apparatus consisting of officials such as the mingboshi, qushbegi, parvonachi, and other administrators responsible for taxation, military organization, and provincial governance. Nevertheless, these institutions were often interpreted solely as instruments serving the interests of the ruling class [10, B. 87–91]. The study also shows that Soviet historiography provided substantial information concerning local administration. Researchers noted that the territory of the khanate was divided into administrative units governed by beks and other local officials appointed by the central authority. These officials were responsible for maintaining public order, collecting taxes, and implementing state policies in the provinces. Although Soviet historians described this system as evidence of feudal exploitation, their works nevertheless preserved valuable data regarding the practical functioning of local governance mechanisms and administrative hierarchy [11, B. 213–217]. Another important finding concerns the treatment of judicial institutions. Soviet authors emphasized the role of Islamic law and the authority of qazis in resolving legal disputes. However, they frequently portrayed religious and judicial institutions as conservative structures that hindered social development. Modern analysis of the same materials indicates that these institutions also played an important role in maintaining social cohesion and legal order within the khanate. Consequently, Soviet interpretations often reflected ideological assumptions rather than a balanced assessment of historical realities [12, B. 98–102].

The research further demonstrates that Soviet historians relied extensively on archival documents, official reports, and local chronicles. This contributed to the accumulation of a significant empirical base for the study of the Kokand Khanate. At the same time, many Soviet works selectively utilized historical evidence in order to support predetermined conclusions regarding feudalism and class struggle. As a result, certain aspects of governance, including administrative adaptability, political legitimacy, and cooperation between central and local authorities, received limited scholarly attention [13, B. 174–178]. A comparative evaluation of Soviet and contemporary studies reveals that modern historians increasingly recognize the complexity of the Kokand Khanate's administrative system. While Soviet historiography highlighted social inequality and political oppression, recent research emphasizes the institutional development of governance structures, the interaction between state and society, and the capacity of administrative institutions to respond to regional challenges. This shift demonstrates the importance of reassessing Soviet-era interpretations in light of new methodological approaches and previously underutilized sources [14, B. 56–61].

Overall, the findings indicate that Soviet historiography made a substantial contribution to the preservation and study of historical materials concerning the Kokand Khanate's state administration. However, ideological considerations significantly influenced the interpretation of political

institutions and administrative practices. Therefore, the critical examination of Soviet historical writings allows for a more nuanced understanding of both the governance system of the Kokand Khanate and the evolution of historical scholarship in Central Asia [9, B. 161; 14, B. 63].

5. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that Soviet historiography played a significant role in shaping scholarly understanding of the Kokand Khanate's state administration. At the same time, the analysis reveals that interpretations of the khanate's political institutions were strongly influenced by the ideological principles of Marxism-Leninism. Soviet historians generally approached the study of the Kokand Khanate through the concept of feudal socio-economic formations and class struggle, which affected both the selection of historical evidence and the conclusions drawn from it [9, B. 154–158]. One of the most notable features of Soviet historiography was its emphasis on the concentration of political power in the hands of the khan and the ruling elite. While Soviet scholars correctly identified the existence of a hierarchical administrative structure, they often interpreted state institutions primarily as mechanisms of exploitation and oppression. Consequently, insufficient attention was given to the administrative efficiency of these institutions and their role in maintaining political stability across the territory of the khanate [10, B. 87–91]. The study further indicates that Soviet historians made an important contribution by collecting and publishing numerous archival documents, chronicles, and official records related to the Kokand Khanate. These materials remain valuable sources for modern researchers and continue to provide essential information about the functioning of central and local government institutions. Without the efforts of Soviet scholars, a considerable portion of the documentary heritage concerning the Kokand Khanate might not have been preserved or made accessible to the academic community [11, B. 213–217].

However, the findings also reveal several limitations within Soviet historiography. The dominant ideological framework often led historians to overlook the complexity of political relations within the khanate. Issues such as cooperation between central and provincial authorities, the adaptability of administrative institutions, and the practical role of religious and judicial bodies received relatively limited attention. As a result, the governance system of the Kokand Khanate was frequently portrayed in a simplified manner that did not fully reflect historical realities [12, B. 98–102]. Comparison with contemporary studies demonstrates that modern historians increasingly view the Kokand Khanate as a complex political entity possessing a relatively sophisticated administrative structure. Recent scholarship emphasizes the interaction between political authority, local governance, legal institutions, and social groups, thereby providing a more balanced interpretation of state administration than was typical in Soviet-era research [14, B. 56–61]. Therefore, the results of this study suggest that Soviet historiography should be evaluated from a dual perspective. On the one hand, it established an important foundation for the study of the Kokand Khanate by accumulating a substantial body of historical evidence. On the other hand, ideological constraints influenced scholarly interpretations and limited the scope of analysis. A critical reassessment of Soviet historical writings is therefore necessary for achieving a more objective understanding of the Kokand Khanate's state administration and its place in the broader history of Central Asian statehood [13, B. 174–178; 14, B. 63].

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

The study of the representation of the Kokand Khanate's state administration in Soviet historiography demonstrates that Soviet scholars made a substantial contribution to the preservation and investigation of historical materials related to the political history of Central Asia. Through the collection, publication, and analysis of chronicles, archival records, and official documents, Soviet historians established an important source base that continues to be utilized by contemporary researchers. Their works provided valuable information regarding the structure of central government, local administration, judicial institutions, and the functions of various state officials within the Kokand Khanate. At the same time, the research reveals that Soviet interpretations of the Kokand Khanate were significantly influenced by the ideological principles of Marxism-Leninism. As a result, the administrative system of the khanate was frequently portrayed as a feudal mechanism of class domination and exploitation. This ideological perspective often limited objective analysis and led to the underestimation of the complexity, adaptability, and effectiveness of the khanate's political institutions. Important aspects of governance, including cooperation between central and local authorities, the role of legal and religious institutions, and the practical functions of administrative structures, received insufficient scholarly attention.

The findings further indicate that while Soviet historiography successfully documented many elements of the Kokand Khanate's governance system, its conclusions should be approached critically. Modern historiographical approaches and newly accessible sources make it possible to reassess earlier interpretations and to develop a more balanced understanding of state administration in the khanate. Such reassessment contributes not only to the study of the Kokand Khanate itself but also to broader discussions concerning the history of statehood and governance in Central Asia.

Therefore, Soviet historiography should be regarded both as a valuable scholarly legacy and as a product of its ideological environment. A critical examination of Soviet historical writings enables researchers to distinguish between factual contributions and ideological interpretations, thereby facilitating a more comprehensive and objective reconstruction of the Kokand Khanate's administrative system and its historical significance.

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