



## KHATLON

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**KHATLON** (Katlān), one of the three provinces of Tajikistan, located in the southwestern part of the country.

Khatlon Province was created in 1988, and, after a short period of suspension, was reestablished in 1992. Khatlon consolidates the former provinces of **Kulāb** and **Kurgan Tepe**, which remain topographically separated by a mountain ridge. Accordingly, the new province is also referred to as eastern and western Khatlon, corresponding, respectively, to its constituent parts, Kulāb and Kurgan Tepe. Occupying an area of 24,800 km<sup>2</sup> or 9,600 square miles (constituting 17 percent of Tajikistan's territory), Khatlon is bounded by Afghanistan on the south and southeast, Uzbekistan on the west, the Districts of Republican Subordination (centered at **Dushanbe**) on the north, and Badaḵšān Province on the northeast. The latter two plus Sughd Province and Khatlon Province constitute the four first-level administrative units of Tajikistan Republic.

The population of Khatlon Province, according to an estimate, was 2.6 million in 2008, or 36 percent of Tajikistan's total. The province's major urban centers were Kulab with 97,000 and Kurgan Tepe with 72,000 inhabitants. As Khatlon's administrative center, the city of Kurgan Tepe (Qūrḡonteppa in Tajik, Kurgan-Tyube in Russian) is strategically and economically important owing to its location at the crossroads of highways and railroads that connect it to Dushanbe, **Kabul**, and Termez (in Uzbekistan). Khatlon plays a vital role in nation's economy through its cotton plantations and hydropower stations on the Vaḵš River (see more in **ECONOMY vii. IN TAJIKISTAN**; **KULĀB**; **KURGAN**



TEPE).

Unlike the more stable position of Sughd (former [Khujand](#) and Leninabad) and [Badaḡšān](#) Provinces, southern-central Tajikistan has been subject to several administrative changes ever since Tajikistan was founded. The province of Khatlon has no antecedence in the history of Tajikistan as a single territorial unit embracing both Kulāb and Kurgan Tepe. Newfangled is the very toponym “Khatlon” as well: it alludes to the medieval province known variously as [Ḳatlān](#), [Ḳotlān](#), [Ḳottal](#) or [Ḳottalān](#), which corresponds geographically to modern Kulab, lying between the [Vaḡš](#) and Panj Rivers; on the other hand, modern Kurgan Tepe corresponds to medieval [Vaḡš](#) and [Čaḡāniān](#) Provinces.

Within the province Khatlon, internal administrative divisions ([Figure 1](#)) have been growing to a finer mosaic of districts (*nohiyas*, *nāḥias*), up to 24 districts in 2013, each divided into smaller units called *jamoats* (*jamā'ats*), which correspond roughly to the “counties” in the United States, although the role that the Tajik administrative units play in budgetary and electoral politics is probably not as prominent as of those in the West. Even so, district name changes do reflect the government’s efforts in nation building and in enhancing Tajik national identity since the independence of Tajikistan from the Soviet Union in 1991. Thus, in Khatlon Province, the former district of Moskva (Moscow) was renamed after [Sayyed ‘Ali Hamadāni](#), the patron saint of the independent republic, and Sovet (Soviet) was renamed [Timurmalek](#), that is [Timur Malek Ḳojandi](#), who is venerated for having led the people of [Ḳojand](#) in their struggle against the invading [Mongols](#) in 1220. Similarly, the district of [Kuībyshev](#), having been renamed [Ḳājamastān](#) for a brief time period after the independence, was named after [‘Abd-al-Raḡmān Jāmi](#), one of the major figures in Persian classical poetry. In the choice of new names, [Jalāl-al-Dīn Rūmī](#) was won by the former [Kolḡozābād](#), a humble Soviet Tajik toponym for communal cotton farms (*kolkhoz*). The urge for the splendid early days did not even spare such an authentic toponym as [Bēškand](#), which was renamed after the celebrated Persian poet [Nāṣer Ḳosrow Qobādiāni](#), owing to a local tradition that lay claim to his birthplace. The new designation [Bāḡtar](#) (for former [Oktyabr](#) district) is a modern reconstruction of the Old Persian form [Bāxtriš](#) or Greek [Bactria](#), which otherwise survives in New Persian as [Balk](#). Likewise, [Qāzi-Malek](#) was deemed expendable in favor of [Ḳorāsān](#), the medieval super-province, which has gained considerable weight in modern Tajik historiography.

For geography, economy, and history of Khatlon, see [KULĀB](#) and [KURGAN](#)

TEPE. See also ECONOMY vii. IN TAJIKISTAN; EDUCATION xxviii. IN TAJIKISTAN.

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