

# STUDY OF THE ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF THE POPULATION OF THE ZARAFSHAN OASIS IN THE 19TH AND FIRST QUARTER OF THE 20TH CENTURIES

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## **Abstract:**

This article examines the beginning of a new phase of ethnographic research on the population of Central Asia in the 1920s. The nature and significance of ethnographic research during this period are analyzed in historical studies.

**Keywords:** World civilizations, Turkic ethnic groups, Muslims, migration processes, "Jelovchi" dialect, divide and rule, historical sources, Greater Turkestan, archaeological materials, Afrosiab.

## **Introduction**

The Zarafshan oasis, which has been a place for mainly sedentary farmers and partly nomadic pastoralists since ancient times, has been a place at the crossroads of the Central Asian region since the millennium BC. There is important information about this in historical sources in various languages (Greek, Chinese, Arabic, Indian).

In fact, the first scientific research on the ethnic composition and toponyms of the population of the Zarafshan oasis began in the last quarter of the 19th century, when mainly Russian orientalists and ethnographers visited the oasis and expressed their initial opinions on this issue. A. D. Grebenkin continued this type of research, which was started much earlier by N. Khannikov. The famous Russian Turkologist V. V. Radlov, who visited the oasis, visited a number of regions and districts and covered the issues of the ethnic composition, language and dialect characteristics of the local population in great detail in his works.

At the beginning of the 20th century, research on the topic intensified, and in the 20s and 30s a number of scientific works were published. In the same years, local researchers, while collecting linguistic materials, also touched upon the ethnic composition of the oasis population and place names associated with ethnonyms. In particular, among linguists and literary critics, local intellectuals such as G. Olim Yusupov, H. Zarif, S. Ainiy expressed their views on the history and ethnic nature of the oasis.

A new stage in the ethnographic study of the population of Central Asia began in the 20s of the 20th century. During this period, the nature and significance of ethnographic research was analyzed in historical studies. These studies were based on the results of numerous studies conducted in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and great importance was attached to the collection of new scientific materials, mainly consisting of extensive studies related to the national-territorial delimitation of Turkestan, and also the statistical journal “Samarkand Region Information Book”, which began to be published in the second half of the 19th century, plays an important role as a separate source in the study of the Zarafshan oasis. This statistical journal reflects the research of many historical, ethnic and ethnographic researchers, including V.L. Vyatkin, the editor of the journal M.M. Virsky, and M. Andreev. V.L. Vyatkin translated Abu Tohir Khoja’s book “Samaria”, published a book entitled “Afrosiyob” during the study of the historical monuments of Samarkand, including the ancient city of “Afrosiyob”. In the 1920s, several ethnographic works appeared on the ethnogenesis and clan structure of the Uzbeks, their social and family life, economy, and other issues. Of the early publications, the works of Professor Ye.D. Polivanov and ethnographer A.P. Potapov are noteworthy. The statistical data of this period summarized information on the ethnic composition of the population, the number of various ethnoses and ethnic communities, location features, and the distribution of the population across all districts, uezds, volosts, and rural communities, collected not only from the Zarafshan oasis but also from all regions of the Turkestan region.

The studies of the ethnic situation in Turkestan at the beginning of the 20th century, including the ethnic composition, lifestyle, and economy of the Zarafshan oasis, by scientists such as M.S. Andreev, I.I. Zarubin, and I. Magidovich, are an important source for oasis historiography. In his book “The Population of the Samarkand Region,” I.I. Zarubin analyzed the number, ethnic

composition, and location of the population living in the region, while M.S. Andreev analyzed the ethnography of the population by studying the paintings and inscriptions on historical monuments in the region. I.P. Magidovich, on the other hand, compared the geographical map of not only the oasis but also the Central Asian region with historical sources, indicating their location and location of settlements.

However, it is worth noting that we know that the studies conducted on the basis of the colonial policy and the subsequent "divide and rule" system of governance of the Soviet state were one-sided in studying the ethnic status of the people, their customs, and place names. While these studies only touched on the population size, the development of new lands, the resettlement of the population, and the occupations of foreign peoples, now the study of population growth, the dynamics of their assimilation with the local population, the process of formation of clans and tribes that were our ancestors in the past, and the scientific clarification of the reasons for the emergence of each ethnic group are urgent issues.

In short, the research of foreign researchers, in particular Russian military personnel, orientalists, geographers and other professionals, who tried to shed light on the ethnic composition of the population of the Zarafshan oasis in the first quarter of the 20th century on the basis of ethnic groups and ethnotoponyms existing in the oasis, is important both as a scientific source and as a scientific study. Because these studies used new scientific methods that were quite alien to regional science at that time, but were used in Western research, and they are distinguished by their consistency and accuracy. Also, customs and ethnographic materials that seemed ordinary and ordinary to local authors were considered interesting and important for Russian authors belonging to a completely different culture. Therefore, they approached issues such as the language, ethnic composition, demographic situation, household and everyday lifestyle, and economic life of the local population in any region of Turkestan in a fairly consistent manner. At the same time, there are some errors and shortcomings in the research of these researchers. In particular, it is noticeable that the local form of ethnonyms and toponyms is given in a somewhat distorted form, ethnolinguistic laws are not followed, the authors cover some issues differently based on their worldview, national and religious affiliation, and sometimes allow one-sidedness and bias without making deep observations.

This is mainly seen in cases such as exaggeration or exaggeration when describing one ethnos of the region, and the opposite is done in relation to another. In particular, most Russian researchers who have collected materials on the peoples of the Turkestan region, when analyzing the ethnic composition of the peoples of the region, it is clearly noticeable that some of the local population is more ancient and local, and some are the opposite. That is, at a time when written sources and ethnographic materials on the history of the peoples of the region have not been studied in depth and the general history of the peoples of the region has not been scientifically covered, there is a strong tendency to consider the Turkic peoples as nomads and immigrants, and the Iranian (Tajik) population as the ancient indigenous population of this land, the creators of the existing culture in the region, and to approach the issue in this way. However, at that time, a large part of the population of Min-Taqa, in particular, the majority of the settled population, was Turkic.

In the 1920s, political processes that took place in many parts of the world, in particular in Russia and the Turkestan region within it, led to changes in all aspects of the life of the region. This process was also reflected in the study of the Zarafshan oasis and its demographic situation. Extensive studies of the ethnic composition of the population of Central Asia, including Uzbekistan, were carried out, most of which were associated with the disintegration of Turkestan in 1924 and the policy of national delimitation in the region. At the same time, this policy, also known as "regionalization", was implemented in the Zarafshan oasis, as in almost all regions of Central Asia, and the upper part of the Zarafshan River was first included in the Tajik Soviet Socialist Autonomous Republic within the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic in 1924, and later, on the basis of this autonomous republic, in the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic within the Union of Soviets. It was during this period that the Samarkand and Bukhara regions in the middle and lower basins of the Zarafshan River were included in the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic. In this way, the Soviet authorities, trying to pursue a policy of national delimitation, mainly proceed from the national composition of the peoples of the region, declare which nationalities will be the majority in which regions, and implement a number of measures for this purpose. In particular, determine the ethnic affiliation of the population, conduct surveys on the ground, collect documents and statistical data, etc. In the process of carrying out such measures, such as registering each city, village, aul, conducting censuses,

determining the national affiliation of the local population, even to which clan or ethnos they belong.

In the first quarter of the 20th century, the upper and middle basins of the Zarafshan oasis (Panjikent district and Samarkand region) were considered the territories of the Turkestan General Governorate within the Russian Empire, and later the Samarkand region within the Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (TSSR), and the majority of the local population consisted mainly of Uzbeks and partly Tajiks. This situation was also noticeable in the Bukhara region in the lower basin of the oasis, and during the national delimitation carried out in 1924, it is understood that during the formation of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic, a significant part of the BSR and TASSR was transferred to one or another republic based on an order from the Center, due to insufficient survey work among the population.

This situation caused discontent among the population during this period, and therefore several commissions were formed to review measures related to national demarcation. Since the meetings held by the commissions were required to take into account the demands and wishes of the population, and to conduct explanatory work on national demarcation in the areas, the information collected during this period plays an important role in studying the ethnic composition and ethnotoponyms of the population of the Zarafshan oasis at the beginning of the 20th century. At the same time, it should be noted that due to the above-mentioned reasons: different interpretations of the issue of ethnicity by the local population, bilingualism, and irresponsibility of the commissions established in some places, the collected information sometimes does not coincide with one another, or even completely contradicts itself. For example, in some places, when asked “what is your nationality,” residents often answer “Muslim,” while in other places they answer such a question with the name of the place they live, such as “Samarkand,” “Bukhara,” and sometimes they acknowledge their ethnic affiliation based on the name given to them by the residents of neighboring settlements based on their profession (e.g., “Tajik”).

Therefore, at the beginning of the 20th century, a number of problems arose regarding the ethnic composition of the population of the Zarafshan oasis. This is mainly manifested in the fact that in the studies conducted in the last century, there were differences and even contradictory opinions, and even in the scientific research conducted in recent years, diverse and contradictory interpretations and



opinions were expressed. For example, if we look at the studies written by the Russian S. Abashin and the American scientist A. Khalid, who are seriously engaged in the history of Uzbekistan of this period, this situation becomes even more obvious. In particular, S. Abashin, who conducted research based on numerous archival documents, highlighted the fact that during the implementation of the national demarcation policy, many mistakes were made by local authorities, and the fate of settlements in the border areas of neighboring republics was often decided not according to the demands and wishes of the local population, but according to plans previously ordered by the Center, including the Zarafshan oasis.

A. Khalid, who paid attention to the issue of the disintegration of Turkestan and the formation of various “Soviet nations”, highly appreciated the national policy pursued by the Jadids during this period and recognized the successful completion of the work of forming a single nation in several regions with different economic and cultural levels, such as Fergana, Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara, Khorezm, etc. According to him, at the beginning of the 20th century, local intellectuals - Jadids, who intended to implement the idea of “Greater Turkestan”, when they encountered Soviet opposition, played a positive role in the establishment of “Little Turkestan”, that is, Uzbekistan. In particular, the contribution of Bukhara progressives, together with the Jadids of Fergana and Tashkent, was great in this. The Bukhara Jadids, who relied on the fact that the majority of the local population of the Zarafshan oasis spoke the Uzbek (Turkic) language and called themselves mainly “Uzbeks”, eventually played one of the main roles in the establishment of the state called “Uzbekistan” and the widespread spread of this ethnic name throughout the country. According to the researcher, in those years, the efforts of public and state figures such as M. Behbudiy, A. Fitrat, F. Khojaev played a major role in naming the state and the nation that made up its majority, and in some places, ethnonyms proposed and promoted by some influential groups (for example, “Sart”) were rejected, and the opinion of the “Bukhara group” prevailed. A. Khalid emphasizes that on this basis, the local Uzbek intellectuals, who laid the foundation of a single Uzbek nation, used various propaganda activities to achieve their goals during the nearly seventy years of the Soviet regime. In particular, the Uzbek intellectuals, united through the press, education, scientific and literary literature, and radio broadcasts (later also television programs), ensured the stability of the nation.



In short, having examined the issue of the ethnic composition of the region's population at the beginning of the 20th century, to some extent, using the example of the Zarafshan oasis, we can conclude that this period proved to be an extremely contradictory and problematic period in our history. During this period, along with many achievements in the social and cultural spheres, certain mistakes and biases were made.