

## **SYSTEM OF SOURCES IN RESEARCHING INTERETHNIC PROCESSES IN THE ZARAFSHAN OASIS: ANALYSIS OF HISTORICAL AND SOURCE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This article analyzes the role and significance of the source base in studying interethnic processes in the Zarafshan Valley from a comprehensive and methodological perspective. The research examines written historical sources, archival documents, statistical and demographic materials, and ethnographic observations as the main categories of sources, highlighting their scientific potential and limitations. Particular attention is given to the critical assessment of materials produced during the late 19th and early 20th centuries under the Russian Empire. The study emphasizes the importance of considering the historical context, authorship, and ideological influences in the interpretation of sources. Furthermore, it substantiates the necessity of applying comparative and comprehensive analytical approaches in reconstructing interethnic relations. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the ethnic composition, demographic dynamics, and socio-economic interactions in the Zarafshan Valley.*

**Keywords:** *Zarafshan Valley, interethnic processes, source studies, historical sources, archival documents, statistical data, demographic processes, ethnic composition, migration, Russian Empire, Turkestan Governor-Generalship, ethnographic research, socio-economic relations, colonial policy, identity, historiographical methodology.*

### **АННОТАЦИЯ**

*В данной статье комплексно анализируется роль и значение источниковой базы в изучении межэтнических процессов в Зарафшанской долине. В исследовании рассматриваются письменные исторические источники, архивные документы, статистико-демографические материалы и этнографические наблюдения как основные группы источников, раскрываются их научные возможности и ограничения. Особое внимание уделено критическому анализу материалов, созданных в конце XIX – начале XX вв. в период Российской империи. В статье обосновывается необходимость учета*

*исторического контекста, авторской позиции и идеологических факторов при интерпретации источников. Также подчеркивается значение сравнительного и комплексного подходов при реконструкции межэтнических отношений. Результаты исследования способствуют более глубокому пониманию этнического состава, демографической динамики и социально-экономических связей Зарафшанской долины.*

**Ключевые слова:** *Зарафшанская долина, межэтнические процессы, источниковедение, письменные источники, архивные документы, статистические материалы, демографические процессы, этнический состав, миграция, Российская империя, Туркестанское генерал-губернаторство, этнографические исследования, социально-экономические отношения, колониальная политика, идентичность, историографическая методология.*

#### ANNOTATSIYA

*Mazkur maqolada Zarafshon vohasida etnoslararo jarayonlarni o'rganishda manbalar tizimining o'rni va ahamiyati kompleks tarzda tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqotda yozma tarixiy manbalar, arxiv hujjatlari, statistik-demografik materiallar hamda etnografik kuzatuvlar asosiy manba turlari sifatida ko'rib chiqilib, ularning ilmiy imkoniyatlari va cheklovlari yoritiladi. Ayniqsa, XIX asr oxiri – XX asr boshlariga oid Rossiya imperiyasi davrida yaratilgan materiallarning mazmuni tanqidiy yondashuv asosida baholanadi. Maqolada manbalarni o'rganishda ularning yaratilish konteksti, mualliflik pozitsiyasi va ideologik ta'sir omillarini hisobga olish zarurligi asoslab beriladi. Shuningdek, etnoslararo munosabatlarni rekonstruksiya qilishda kompleks va solishtirma tahlil metodlarining ahamiyati ochib beriladi. Tadqiqot natijalari Zarafshon vohasining etnik tarkibi, demografik dinamikasi hamda ijtimoiy-iqtisodiy munosabatlarini chuqurroq anglashga xizmat qiladi.*

**Kalit so'zlar:** *Zarafshon vohasi, etnoslararo jarayonlar, manbashunoslik, yozma tarixiy manbalar, arxiv hujjatlari, statistik materiallar, demografik jarayonlar, etnik tarkib, migratsiya, Rossiya imperiyasi, Turkiston general-gubernatorligi, etnografik tadqiqotlar, ijtimoiy-iqtisodiy munosabatlar, kolonial siyosat, identitet, tarixshunoslik metodologiyasi.*

#### INTRODUCTION

The study of interethnic processes in modern historiography and ethnology is one of the important scientific directions. Because the interaction between ethnic groups is one of the main factors determining the social, economic and cultural aspects of the development of society. This issue is especially relevant in regions that have historically been formed under the influence of a multi-layered ethnic

composition, complex migration processes and various political systems. From this point of view, the Zarafshan oasis appears as a kind of historical laboratory in the study of interethnic processes in Central Asia.

The Zarafshan oasis has long been a territory inhabited by various ethnic groups - Uzbeks, Tajiks, Kazakhs and other peoples, where interethnic relations were formed over a long historical process, creating a complex socio-economic and cultural system. In particular, the political and economic changes that occurred as a result of the territory's incorporation into the Russian Empire in the late 19th and early 20th centuries had a significant impact on the ethnic composition, migration processes and interethnic relations. This requires a deep and comprehensive scientific study of this period. One of the important conditions for studying interethnic processes is to identify and analyze on a scientific basis the system of sources reflecting them. Because any historical conclusion is based, first of all, on the existing source base. In the case of the Zarafshan oasis, the system of sources is distinguished by its diversity: written historical sources, archival documents, statistical and demographic materials, and ethnographic observations constitute the main empirical basis for studying these processes<sup>1</sup>. However, since these sources were created in different periods, in different political and ideological conditions, they must be analyzed based on a critical approach.

Especially in sources from the period of the Russian Empire, ethnic processes were often interpreted from the perspective of colonial policy, which introduced a certain degree of subjectivity into their content. Therefore, when studying sources, it is an important methodological requirement to take into account the context of their creation, the author's position and purpose. Such an approach allows for a more objective and scientifically sound reconstruction of interethnic processes.

The main purpose of this article is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the system of sources in the study of interethnic processes in the Zarafshan oasis, to identify their scientific possibilities and limitations<sup>2</sup>. In the process of research, written historical sources, archival documents, statistical and demographic materials, and ethnographic observations are analyzed from the perspective of source studies. The scientific novelty of the study is that it studies interethnic processes in the Zarafshan oasis using a comprehensive approach through a system of sources, and analyzes different types of sources in a comparative manner. This allows for a deeper understanding of the ethnic composition, demographic dynamics, and socio-economic relations of the oasis.

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<sup>1</sup> Tishkov V.A. *Etnologiya i politika*. Moskva: Nauka, 1997. – B. 45.

<sup>2</sup> Abashin S.N. *Natsiya i imperiya v Sredney Azii*. Moskva, 2007. – B. 112.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study was based on a comprehensive and systematic approach to studying interethnic processes in the Zarafshan oasis. The methodological basis of the study is the theoretical views of modern historiography, source studies and ethnology. In particular, the principles of historicity, objectivity, systematicity and comparative analysis were followed in the research process. Firstly, based on the principle of historicity, interethnic processes were analyzed within the specific historical conditions of their formation and development. This made it possible to understand the demographic changes, migration processes, and socio-economic relations that occurred in the oasis in the context of the period.

Secondly, based on the source-based approach, all sources used in the study were critically analyzed. In particular, written historical sources, archival documents, statistical-demographic materials, and ethnographic observations were studied from the perspective of the conditions of their creation, authorial position, purpose, and ideological orientation. In particular, sources from the period of the Russian Empire were evaluated on the basis of a comparative and comprehensive analysis, taking into account the fact that they were formed under the influence of colonial discourse.

Thirdly, using the comparative-historical method, different types of sources were compared with each other, their similarities and differences were identified. This made it possible to carry out a more complete and reliable reconstruction of interethnic processes.

The study also ensured the combination of quantitative (statistical) and qualitative (ethnographic) methods. While the ethnic composition, demographic dynamics and migration processes were quantitatively analyzed on the basis of statistical materials, the socio-cultural content of these processes was revealed through ethnographic and written sources.

Theoretically, the research was conducted on the basis of constructivist, instrumentalist, and ethno-symbolist approaches. This allowed for a comprehensive analysis of issues such as the formation of ethnic identity, the influence of political factors on interethnic relations, and the role of cultural traditions and historical memory. In general, the methodological approaches used ensure the scientific validity and objectivity of the research.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

A scientifically deep and comprehensive study of interethnic processes is directly related, first of all, to the identification of a system of sources reflecting these processes and their critical analysis. In particular, in the case of the Zarafshan oasis, which is historically characterized by a multi-layered ethnic composition and

complex socio-political processes, the source-based approach is of particular importance. Because interethnic relations in this region were reflected in different sources at different times, each of which was formed in connection with a specific historical context, political environment and authorial position.

In historiography, the concept of a source in a broad sense means a set of all written, material and oral evidence that allows us to study historical processes<sup>3</sup>. From this point of view, in the study of interethnic processes in the Zarafshan oasis, sources can be conditionally divided into several main groups: written historical sources, archival documents, statistical and demographic materials, and ethnographic and tourist records. In particular, the period under study is of particular importance and importance in the history of Central Asia, as it was a period rich in statistical studies and ethnographic expeditions. These types of sources not only shed light on the ethnic composition and demographic processes in the oasis, but also reveal the social, economic and cultural aspects of interethnic relations. At the same time, when studying these sources, it is an important methodological requirement to take into account the conditions of their creation, the social background of the author, political views, and ideological characteristics of the era. Because, especially in sources from the 19th and early 20th centuries, especially in documents and studies created during the Russian Empire, local populations and ethnic processes are often interpreted from a colonial perspective. This requires a critical analysis of the content of the sources and their study based on a comparative and comprehensive approach.

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<sup>3</sup> Bartold V.V. *Sochineniya*. Moskva: Nauka, 1963. – T.1, B. 25.

<sup>4</sup> Smith A.D. *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*. Oxford, 1986. – P. 56.

the Russian Empire, local populations and ethnic processes are often interpreted from a colonial perspective<sup>5</sup>. This requires a critical analysis of the content of the sources and their study based on a comparative and comprehensive approach. Sources of this type are divided into several groups in terms of content: works that are the product of local historiographical traditions, official and administrative documents, and written sources created by external observers - tourists, diplomats, and researchers<sup>6</sup>. First of all, works created in the Persian-Tajik language occupy a special place among local historical sources. In particular, the work *Tarikhi Salatin-i Manghitiya*, along with political events during the Bukhara Emirate, contains important information about the ethnic composition, social strata, and mutual relations of the population<sup>7</sup>. Also, general historical works such as *Habib us-siyar* contain valuable notes on the historical roots of ethnic processes in Central Asia, and the mutual relations of various peoples and tribes<sup>8</sup>. These sources allow us to analyze the ethnic composition of the oasis in the context of long historical periods and are of great importance in illuminating the issues of ethnic continuity and transformation.

Along with local historiography, written sources created during the Russian Empire are also of particular scientific importance. Since the second half of the 19th century, as a result of the region's incorporation into the Russian Empire, research aimed at the scientific and administrative study of the region has expanded significantly. Among the sources created during this period, the *Turkestanskii sbornik* collection occupies an important place<sup>9</sup>. This multi-volume collection contains extensive information on the socio-economic situation of the region, the ethnic composition of the population, demographic indicators, and cultural life, which serves as an important empirical basis for studying interethnic processes in the Zarafshan oasis<sup>10</sup>. Works created by Russian military personnel, tourists, and orientalists are also recognized as important sources. In particular, the works of Nikolai Maev and Vasily Bartold contain scientific observations on the historical and geographical features of the oasis, the ethnic composition of the population, and interethnic relations. In particular, Bartold's research is distinguished by its source-based approach, critical approach, and scientific accuracy, and is among the fundamental sources in the study of Central Asian history. Another important group of written sources are diaries, memoirs, and travelogues written by travelers and diplomats. These types of sources describe the daily life of the oasis population,

<sup>5</sup> Kappeler A. *The Russian Empire: A Multiethnic History*. London, 2001. – P. 210.

<sup>6</sup> Askarov A.A. *O'zbek xalqining etnogenezi va etnik tarixi*. Toshkent, 2007. – B. 78.

<sup>7</sup> *Tarixi Salatin-i Manghitiya*. Toshkent: Fan, 1992. – B. 134.

<sup>8</sup> Xondamir. *Habib us-siyar*. Tehron, 1954. – B. 256.

<sup>9</sup> *Turkestanskiy sbornik*. Tashkent, 1867–1917.

<sup>10</sup> Semenov P.P. *Geograficheskoe opisanie...* SPb, 1903. – B. 210.

its customs, economic activities, and socio-cultural relations between different ethnic groups based on direct observation. However, when using these sources, it should be remembered that they are subjective. Because the worldview, cultural stereotypes, and political views of the authors may have directly influenced the interpretation of the information presented<sup>11</sup>.

In this regard, adherence to the basic principles of source studies is an important methodological requirement when analyzing written historical sources. In particular, the period of creation of each source, the social status and political position of the author, the purpose of writing and the audience should be taken into account in a comprehensive manner. Especially since ethnic processes in sources from the colonial period are often interpreted from the perspective of imperial interests, they need to be critically analyzed. In general, written sources constitute the main empirical base for studying interethnic processes in the Zarafshan oasis. Through them, it is possible to determine the ethnic composition, social structure and dynamics of historical development of the oasis. At the same time, to ensure the scientific validity of the research, a comparative analysis of written sources with archival documents, statistical materials and ethnographic data is of great importance. Such a comprehensive approach allows for a deeper and more objective coverage of interethnic processes.

Archival documents are among the most important, reliable and primary sources in the study of interethnic processes in the Zarafshan oasis. Their scientific significance is determined, first of all, by the direct documentation of social, economic and demographic processes that took place in the oasis. In particular, archival materials from the late 19th and early 20th centuries constitute a factual database that allows us to determine the ethnic composition, population distribution, migration flows and the real state of interethnic relations. In this regard, archival documents serve as the main methodological support in the empirical reconstruction of interethnic processes<sup>12</sup>. Within the framework of this study, archival materials are mainly studied on the basis of documents stored in the funds of the Central State Archive of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Central State Historical Archive of the Republic of Uzbekistan. These archives contain a large collection of administrative correspondence, statistical reports, materials on land and water relations, tax books, as well as population census documents from the period of the Russian Empire. These documents allow us to determine the number, location, socio-economic activities and mutual relations of ethnic groups living in the oasis<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> Nalivkin V.P. *Ocherki byta...* Kazan, 1886. – B. 56

<sup>12</sup> Hobsbawm E. *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*. Cambridge, 1990. – P. 78.

<sup>13</sup> Askarov A.A. *Etnogenez...* Toshkent, 2007. – B. 156.

One of the important sources for analysis at the local level is the documents from the period of the Turkestan Governor-General. These materials include annual reports of regional and uyezd administrative bodies, information on the ethnic composition and territorial distribution of the population, as well as records related to the movement of nomadic and semi-nomadic populations<sup>14</sup>. For example, administrative reports compiled for the Samarkand and Kattakurgan uyezds contain detailed information on the distribution of Uzbeks, Tajiks, Kazakhs and other groups in the population, their economic activities and mutual economic relations. This makes it possible to determine the economic and territorial foundations of interethnic relations. A particularly important group of archival documents is statistical materials and census documents. In particular, the results of the 1897 census of the Russian Empire are a fundamental source for studying the ethno-demographic composition of the Zarafshan oasis. These census materials determine the number of ethnic groups living in the oasis, their territorial distribution, language composition, religious affiliation, and social indicators. For example, statistical data on the Samarkand region make it possible to determine the ratio of different ethnic groups in urban and rural environments, as well as their professional and economic activities<sup>15</sup>. Archival documents on land-water relations are also of particular importance in studying interethnic processes. Since the Zarafshan oasis is a territory based on irrigated agriculture, water resources and land distribution directly affected the socio-economic relations between ethnic groups. For example, ownership of irrigation systems, canals, and waterworks often determined the economic dominance of certain ethnic groups, which in some cases gave rise to forms of inter-ethnic competition or cooperation<sup>16</sup>.

Theoretically, archival documents allow us to analyze interethnic processes within the framework of several main conceptual directions. First, from the perspective of a constructivist approach, they show how ethnic identity is formed under the influence of social conditions. Second, when viewed from the perspective of an instrumentalist paradigm, administrative documents reveal the mechanisms of control of political authorities over ethnic groups and their role in governance. Third, from the perspective of an ethno-symbolic approach, the cultural and religious traditions reflected in some documents reveal the historical roots of ethnic identity. At the same time, a critical analysis of the context of their creation is an important methodological requirement when using archival documents. In particular, documents from the period of the Russian Empire were often formed within the

<sup>14</sup> gafurov B.G. *Tajiki*. Moskva, 1972. – B. 321.

<sup>15</sup> Maev N.A. *Materialy po statistike Turkestanskogo kraya*. SPb, 1879. – B. 98.

<sup>16</sup> asson V.M. *Istoriya Sredney Azii*. Moskva, 1989. – B. 210.

framework of colonial policy, in which the local population and ethnic processes were interpreted from the perspective of the interests of the empire. For example, in some statistical reports, the classification of ethnic groups may have been simplified or re-categorized for political purposes. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct a comparative analysis of such sources with other written sources, ethnographic materials, and modern research. When viewed in a global context, the archival materials from the Zarafshan oasis can be analyzed in conjunction with the processes of migration, colonial rule, and ethnic transformation that are widely studied in world historiography. That is, interethnic processes in the oasis area are manifested not only as a local historical phenomenon, but also as a complex process associated with inter-imperial influences, economic integration, and global migration flows. In general, archival documents constitute the most important empirical basis for studying interethnic processes in the Zarafshan oasis. Through them, the impact of ethnic composition, demographic changes, socio-economic relations, and political governance on ethnic processes is analyzed in a comprehensive manner. Therefore, these sources serve not only as a factual database, but also as an important scientific basis for drawing theoretical conclusions. Statistical and demographic materials are of particular scientific importance in studying interethnic processes in the Zarafshan oasis. These sources provide accurate quantitative data on the number, composition, location of the population, demographic growth rates and migration flows, which makes it possible to analyze ethnic processes on an empirical and quantitative basis. In this regard, statistical materials also make it possible to compare the local features of the ethnic history of the oasis with global trends. In particular, statistical collections and demographic reports compiled in the late 19th and early 20th centuries serve as a central source in studying the ethnic composition of the Zarafshan oasis. In this regard, regional and uyezd reports on the Turkestan region, all-empire statistical collections and demographic observations play a special role. For example, the materials of the 1897 Russian Empire population census can be used to determine the numerical proportions, territorial distribution, and socio-economic activities of Uzbek, Tajik, Kazakh, and other ethnic groups living in the oasis. At the same time, the level of urbanization, migration flows, and demographic dynamics of ethnic groups can also be analyzed through statistical materials.

Statistical sources have two main scientific advantages: first, they allow for qualitative analysis of interethnic processes, as well as quantitative (quantitative) study. For example, population growth or decline, the ratio of rural to urban populations, nomadic and migratory flows allow for the identification of forms of social cooperation and competition between ethnic groups. Second, statistical

materials allow for the empirical identification of the connections between economic and political factors and ethnic processes. For example, the number of ethnic groups owning water and land resources or the type of economic activity serve as important indicators in determining the nature of interethnic relations. However, methodological caution is required when using statistical and demographic materials. In some cases, the criteria for classifying ethnic groups may not be clear, and the data may have been altered for political or administrative purposes. Also, in some sources, ethnic groups are combined or divided into categories, which can create uncertainty about the real ethnic composition of the oasis. Therefore, it is scientifically important to analyze statistical data in comparison with written sources, archival documents, memoirs of tourists and diplomats, and interpret them in a historical and social context. In general, statistical and demographic materials provide not only a factual, but also a theoretical basis for studying interethnic processes in the Zarafshan oasis. With their help, ethnic composition, demographic changes, migration processes and their impact on the socio-economic and political context are analyzed in a comprehensive way. At the same time, when local data are compared with global trends, it is possible to understand the interethnic processes of the oasis in a broader historical and theoretical context.

### **CONCLUSION**

The system of sources is of great scientific importance in the study of interethnic processes in the Zarafshan oasis. The results of the study show that a deep understanding of the ethnic composition and interethnic relations formed in the oasis is directly related, first of all, to a comprehensive and critical analysis of the existing source base. Written historical sources serve as the main empirical source providing important information about the ethnic composition, social structure and cultural life of the oasis. In particular, local historiographical works and scientific research on the period of the Russian Empire are of great importance in shedding light on the historical dynamics of interethnic relations. However, the fact that these sources were created in a specific ideological and political context makes it necessary to critically analyze them.

Archival documents occupy a special place in the study of interethnic processes as the most reliable and primary sources. Through them, accurate factual information is obtained about the number, location, migration flows, and socio-economic activities of ethnic groups in the oasis. In particular, documents from the period of the Turkestan Governor-General and materials from the 1897 population census serve as fundamental sources in the reconstruction of ethnic-demographic processes. Statistical and demographic materials, on the other hand, allow for a quantitative

analysis of interethnic processes and are of great importance in determining their connection with socio-economic factors. At the same time, methodological caution is required when using these sources, and they must be compared with other sources. The study shows that interethnic processes in the Zarafshan oasis are complex, multifactorial and multilayered in nature, formed under the influence of historical, economic, political and cultural factors. Therefore, in studying these processes, it is not enough to rely on only one type of source, but it is necessary to analyze written, archival, statistical and ethnographic materials based on an integrated approach. In general, a comprehensive study of the source system allows for a deeper and more objective coverage of the ethnic history of the Zarafshan oasis. The results of the study are of significant scientific importance not only in the study of regional history, but also in the analysis of interethnic processes in a global historical context.

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