

Tracing The Origins of Qoqishtuvon Turkmens: An Ethnographic and Historical Investigation of Chandir Tribal Migration

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Abstract

This article examines how and why certain groups of Turkmen tribes settled and migrated in the Bukharian Emirates in the 16th to 18th centuries. This essay is based on data which are political, economic, and natural. This Turkmen migration is examined with the help of historical documents and modern field data to provide new insights. This study analysed the village of Qoqishtuvon to explore the historical memories, dialects, and ethnolinguistic features to understand the origins of the Turkmen tribes and their historical ties to the modern territory of Turkmenistan. These results demonstrate the socio-economic and cultural relations of the Turkmen with the local populace, and the breadth of the relationship illustrates the ethnic intermingling in the Emirate of Bukhara. Also, the Turkmen settlement is strategically placed in the important policies of the Emirate of Bukhara to ensure the ethnic and cultural equilibrium of the region.

Keywords: Turkmen tribes, Bukhara Emirate, Qoqishtuvon village, Chandir, nomadism, sedentarisation, ethnic processes, historical sources, ethnolinguistics, cultural integration, Merv population, Amir Shohmurod, ethnic memory.

1. Introduction

The history of Central Asia is profoundly intertwined with diverse ethnic and cultural processes, including the arrival of The Central Asia region's unique mixture of cultures thrives as a result of numerous different groups integrating into and transforming the region and the conflicts that may at times arise. This complex of problems is crying out for research. In particular, the emigration and settling down of Turkmen tribes to the area of the Bukhara Emirate during the 16th - 19th centuries is most important considering the socio-political, ethnic, and cultural factors[1]. The military-political, natural, and economic factors, along with the khanate's political strategies, directly dictated the movement of Turkmen tribes into Bukhara[2]. This, therefore, needs to be addressed not only from an ethnographic viewpoint but from a historical-political viewpoint as well. As V. V. Barthold notes, *"The history of the peoples of Central Asia cannot be fully understood without comprehending the complex relationship between nomadism and sedentary life."* [3].

2. Research Method

This study applies a comprehensive historical-ethnographic approach. First, through the historical-comparative method, information about the migration of Turkmen tribes to the Bukhara Emirate was analysed in relation to various primary sources[4].

Second, using ethnolinguistic analysis, dialectal features, speech patterns, and lexical data of the Qoqishtuvon population were examined to identify linguistic commonalities with Turkmen tribal groups[5]. Additionally, the historical-geographical method was employed to analyse cartographic data on Turkmen migration routes and settlement areas. The research utilises the works of Barthold, Magidovich, Ataniyazov, Mahmud al-Kashgari, and Abulghazi Bahadir Khan[6]. Fieldwork methods were also applied: oral histories, local narratives, and dialect material were collected from village elders,

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serving as key ethnographic data. Methodologically, the study relies on an interdisciplinary approach that integrates history, ethnography, sociolinguistics, and cultural anthropology[7].

3. Result

President Analysis of the initial data reveals that the ancestors of Chorikulboy lived along the banks of the Tejen River, within present-day Turkmenistan, until the mid-16th century. Their livelihood was closely associated with river transport, particularly ferrying trade caravan goods across the river for payment[8].

Some sources report that approximately 40,000 inhabitants were relocated to Bukhara and its surrounding area during the reign of Amir Shohmurod. This relocation, according to the same sources, was motivated by political considerations—specifically, to neutralise potential threats posed by the Merv population during anticipated conflicts in Southern Turkestan (present-day northern Afghanistan). Amir Shohmurod resettled the migrants in small, dispersed groups across the southwestern and northwestern regions of Bukhara to prevent their consolidation[9].

Other researchers link the arrival of Turkmens in Bukhara to the reign of Amir Haydar (1800–1825). When his brother, Dinnosirbek, governor of Merv, led a rebellion in 1804, Amir Haydar dispatched Parvonachi Niyozbek to suppress it. The emirate's forces destroyed Sultanbent - the main irrigation dam of the Merv oasis - causing severe water shortages and ultimately forcing the population to migrate[10].

However, based on our field research, the inhabitants of Qoqishtuvon village are not descendants of those relocated from Merv. According to elderly residents—including Mulla Muhammad Rozikov and Yaxshimurot Umedov—the village's population originated from the “Kuklang Chandir” area of present-day Ilonli district in Dashoguz Province, Turkmenistan. Even today, some families in Qoqishtuvon maintain close kinship ties and regular contact with relatives living in Ilonli[11].

Moreover, the dialects spoken in the Tejen River area and in Dashoguz Province strongly resemble the speech of residents in Qoqishtuvon and the surrounding Chandir villages. This linguistic evidence reinforces our findings. At this point, it is necessary to examine research relating specifically to the Chandir tribes and settlements.

The Chandir, one of the Oghuz tribal groups, are of Turkmen origin and represent one of the ancient Turkic tribes known historically as *Chandir* or *Chovindir*. Today, representatives of this tribe are found in Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, and other Turkic regions. More than 100,000 Chandir reside in Uzbekistan- primarily in Kashkadarya Region - where, unlike some other regions, they self-identify as Turkmen, a designation that is also reflected in official documents[12].

At present, villages named *Chandir* are located in Turkmenistan (Ilonli and Dashoguz districts), Lebap Province (Darganata, Denau, Charju), and throughout Uzbekistan, including Tashkent Region (Boka), Samarkand Region (Pastdargom, Chelak), Kashkadarya Region (Karshi, Beshkent, Talimarjan, Nishon), Bukhara Region (Alat, Karakul, Jondor, Ramitan, Shafirkan), as well as several districts in Khorezm[13].

The *National Encyclopedia of Uzbekistan* provides the following description of the Chandir tribe:

“A Turkic tribe. In the 8th–9th centuries, they lived among the Oghuz in the middle and lower reaches of the Syr Darya and in the deserts south of the Aral Sea. Some later migrated into Transoxiana, where they assimilated with Uzbeks and Turkmens. Others remained with the Oghuz groups in Azerbaijan. By the late 19th–early 20th centuries, some Chandir groups had adopted a sedentary life, engaging primarily in pastoralism and agriculture. According to data from 1924, they numbered 3,425 individuals.” [14].

Between the late 9th and mid-10th centuries, an Oghuz tribal confederation formed around the Aral and Caspian regions. In the 11th century, the Oghuz State was established with its capital in Yangikent along the Syr Darya. After adopting Islam and intermingling with local populations, Oghuz descendants came to be known as Turkmens.

From the 13th century onward, the term *Oghuz* was gradually replaced by *Turkmen*. Mahmud al-Kashgari (11th c.) and Abulghazi Bahadir Khan (17th c.) record that the Oghuz consisted of twenty-two or twenty-four tribes, including Yemreli, Igdir, Chovdir, Yazir, Salir, Karadashli, Bayat, Kayi, Tuturga, and several others [3].

The origins of the Chandir tribe are connected to the Chovdir clan. In *Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk*, Mahmud al-Kashgari records *chovdir* as “juvoldor,” noting: “*Juvoldor is one of the Oghuz tribes. I have provided detailed explanations because people need to know these tribal names.*” [15].

According to Rashid al-Din, Chovdir was the son of Kok Khan, the third son of Oghuz Khan. Rashid al-Din refers to the term as *jauldur*, meaning “renowned” or “loud-voiced.” In the 15th century, Yaziji-oghli Ali recorded the variant *Chavindir*, meaning “truthful” or “sharp-voiced.” Abulghazi Bahadir Khan used the form *Chavuldur*, interpreting it as “honourable”.

According to the information provided by S. Ataniyazov, a researcher at the Magtymguly Institute of Language and Literature of the Academy of Sciences of Turkmenistan, that in the 10th–11th centuries, a group of Chovdir around the Mangyshlak region came to be known as *Chandir* (*Chovindir*) [5]. These groups later migrated to regions in the Middle East, the Near East, and Asia Minor. Some lived along the Chandir River in the present-day Karikala district. References to the Etrek and Chandir Rivers are also found in the poetry of Magtymguly, who grew up in this area.

In the 16th–17th centuries, segments of the Chandir tribe moved to Turkmenistan and Mangyshlak, while others were relocated to the Khiva and Bukhara khanates. Due to the tribe’s strong military reputation, khanate authorities settled them in small, dispersed groups to avoid creating a unified force.

In *A Dictionary of Turkmen Ethnonyms*, S. Otaniyozov interprets the term *chandir* dialectally as meaning “flexible,” “skilful,” or “capable”. I. P. Magidovich similarly describes the Chandir as a Turkmen group that partially assimilated with Uzbeks.

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

The many facets of the migration of Turkmen tribes to the Bukhara Emirate cannot be captured by a single moment or ruler’s policy; the movements were years in the making, influenced by the conflicts and competition over land and water. Ethnically, the residents of Qoqishtuvon in the Ilonli district are joined by a large portion of the historical Swedes, but collectively, the Chandir and other

Turkmen tribes were also settled in Bukhara. The Turkmen first settled and became part of the Bourka dominant pastoral, agrarian economy and the military, and were economically and culturally assimilated to the sedentary population of the region. This phenomenon also mirrors the deeply planned political policy of the Bukhara Emirate. The political relocation of Turkmen tribes in small and dispersed groups was to quell any unified political movements. The Turkmen population of the Emirate owned pastoral land, constructed a military, and settled the region, adding to the diversity of the population and encouraging the political consolidation of the region. This is a source of both historical and ethnological research. Future studies should further explore Turkmen settlement patterns in regions such as Kashkadarya, Khorezm, and Samarkand, investigate their influence on local dialects and cultural practices, and analyse archaeological and genealogical data to deepen our understanding of regional ethnic dynamics. Such research will enhance our understanding not only of Turkmen history but also of the broader processes of ethnic integration in Bukhara and across Uzbekistan.

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