

# Ethnic Processes and Political Struggle of Turkic Tribes in Bukhara in the Early Middle Ages

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## Abstract

**Background:** This article analyzes the ethnic processes that took place in the Bukhara oasis during the early Middle Ages, based on historical sources. Special attention is paid to the political and economic interests of the Turkic tribes in the region, their rivalry for control over transit trade routes, and their attempts to establish political dominance. Intertribal conflicts, particularly between the Dulu and Nishi alliances, and their impact on local governance and the ethnic composition of the area are examined. Historical analysis is supported by sources such as Narshaxi's History of Bukhara, Chinese and Islamic chronicles, and modern scholarly interpretations.

**Keywords:** Bukhara; Early Middle Ages; Turkic tribes; Dulu; Nishu; Chumuqin

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## Introduction

The early Middle Ages in the history of Central Asia were a period of intense ethnic, political, and economic processes that significantly influenced both the socio-political life and the ethno-demographic composition of the region's territories. During this period, important cities and oases located in the region, especially Bukhara, were distinguished by their geostrategic position, economic potential, and cultural heritage. In particular, the Bukhara oasis, as one of the main crossroads on the Great Silk Road, played an important role in trade, economic, cultural, and political ties between East and West.

This article analyzes the ethnic processes that took place in the territory of Bukhara in the early Middle Ages, the claims of Turkic tribes to the region and their struggle for power based on historical sources and scientific research. In particular, the rivalry of the Dulu and Nishubi tribes within the Western Turkic Khaganate for Bukhara, and the influence of this rivalry on the local government structure and ethnic composition, are widely covered.

Also, the article highlights scientific conclusions about the position of Turkic tribes, the ranks and titles of leaders, and the influence of Turkic tribes on the formation of the population of Bukhara based on the analysis of information from Narshakhi's "History of Bukhara," Chinese and Islamic sources. Through ethnonyms and their semantic analysis, in particular, views on the origin of such terms as "jamuk," "chumukin," "yabgu," and

their place in the Turkic political system, an attempt is made to gain a deeper understanding of the ethno-political complexities in the region.

This research aims to comprehensively reveal the structural aspects of ethnic processes in Bukhara and its surrounding territories in the early Middle Ages, the influence of Turkic tribes on historical events reflected in local and foreign sources. These processes played an important role not only in the formation of the political and social image of the Bukhara oasis, but also in the origin and evolution of the local dynasties that later emerged in Central Asia.

### **Materials & Methods**

In this study, the historical-analytical method is chosen as the main method, and the political and economic processes in the Bukhara oasis during the period of the Turkic Khaganate are studied through the interaction and struggle of interests of the Turkic tribes. In the research process, a comparative analysis of historical sources was used, that is, the method of comparing information from Chinese, Islamic, and Byzantine sources. These methods allow for a comprehensive study of the strategic and political significance of the Bukhara oasis during the period of the Turkic Khaganate.

**Results.** In the early Middle Ages, the Bukhara oasis served as an important crossroads on the Great Silk Road to Iran and the southwestern regions. Information from historical literature confirms that during the existence of the Turkic Khaganate (553-659), there was fierce competition between Turkic tribes for the management of the Bukhara oasis, which was under the influence of the Khaganate, and for obtaining great profits in transit trade relations. One of the main goals of every political leader was to create a strong army at the expense of profits from trade with the West, to hold power longer, and to improve the material well-being of his fellow tribesmen. The Dulu and Nishubi, who constituted the military-political power of the Western Turkic Khaganate [5. 170]. We can see that opinions about the tribal union fighting for leadership in Bukhara for these very purposes are reflected in historical literature.

Having established control over transit trade in the Bukhara oasis and growing economic power, the Turkic tribes repeatedly revolted against the central government and attempted to seize supreme power. For example, information is provided that one of the uprisings of the Nishubi tribe, aimed at seizing central power (631), was led by Nish-u Kana Shad, his hereditary ulus was Paykent, and Bukhara was also subordinate to him, which serves as the basis for the above-mentioned opinions [4. 229]. According to historical literature devoted to the history of this uprising, the rebels, with the help of the Dulu tribe's soldiers, were directed against the uncle of Mohodu-hou (Bakhadur-bek), who killed Khan Tong Yabgu (603-619), and Kulug, who, upon ascending to the throne, received the title of Khan of Siberia. Because the main profit from trade relations with the West now fell into the hands of the Dulu tribe.

When referring to the sources of the early medieval Muslim period of Central Asia, one can obtain a lot of information about the repeated struggle of Turkic tribes for the territory of Bukhara, about the positions and titles of leaders. There is also a reference from Nishapuri in Narshakhi's work "History of Bukhara," according to which; "People began to come here from different directions... they liked this place (Bukhara) and decided to stay. Initially, they lived in yurts. Over time, they built houses for themselves. The number of people increased. They elected one of them as their leader. His name was Abruy... Over time, when Abruy became a great elder, he began to oppress people. People, unable to bear it, began to flee in different directions. Peasants and merchants fled the province, went to Turkestan, and founded the city of Taraz. They called this city Jamukat (Khamukat). In the Bukharan language, jamuk means precious stone... After Sheri Kishvar captured and punished Abruy, those who returned from Jamukat made the remaining population their servants. [1. 56]"- data may be encountered.

Research on the term "Hamuk" or "Jamuk" shows that it is associated with the name of the Chumukin tribe, which was part of the Dulu tribal union. There are also attempts to connect this term with one of the main titles of the Turkic tribes - Zhao-u (Yabgu). The mention of the tribal leaders of the Western Turkic Khaganate as zhao-u Sheli (in Chinese sources), siljibu (in Muslim sources), siljibul (in Byzantium, Greek sources), and in

turn, in Chinese sources about him "the ruler of (Bukhara) is called zhao-u... there is also a second name for him, he is also called Sheli [3. 272]" - serves as the basis for our opinion above.

The Iranian scholar R.N. Fray, in his research, attempts to connect the word gavhar (jemchug), borrowed from Sogdian through Turkish into Russian, with the ancient Turkic term yabgu. For this, it can be seen that he tried to use Beruni's mention of the Khwarazmshahs twice as askachamuk - that is, the great Chamuk - as the basis. In addition, in the works of V.V. Bartold, the chamuk are also mentioned as representatives of the ruling class. In Barthold's information, opinions are expressed about the participation of the Turkic Khagan, the Khan of the Kursul aljumukin clan, in the burial ceremony. Evaluating this opinion, he emphasized that there is an opinion about the Turkic Khagan Baga Tarkhan, stating that he was called Tabari kusul because he had the title of kul chur. The Jumukins, however, were described as one of the five tribes that were part of the Dulu tribal confederation and as an attempt to prove that the tribe, called Tch'ou-mou-roen k'in-lu tch'ou in Chinese, later adapted differently to different languages and that the local dynasties of Central Asia originated from representatives of this tribe[2. 239]. It can be concluded that this serves to justify the fact that the Chumukins ruled our country relatively longer during the period of the Western Turkic Khaganate.

### Conclusions

In conclusion, Bukhara, with its economic and financial power in the early Middle Ages, played a significant role in the political life of the Turkic Khaganate. Therefore, Turkic tribes showed great interest in this region, and the ruling tribes tried to turn this region into their ulus. In turn, this was one of the factors that influenced the ethnic processes of the region.

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