

Reading Ethnic Change through Persian and Chaghatay Chronicles: Source Typology and Ethno-Political Transformation in Mawarannahr, Sixteenth-Seventeenth Centuries

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Abstract: This article examines how sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Persian and Chaghatay Turkic narrative sources record ethnic processes in Mawarannahr (Transoxiana). Instead of treating chronicles as direct ethnographic inventories, the study approaches them as genre-bound historical texts in which ethnonyms appear in connection with campaigns, political alliances, administrative appointments, urban settings and dynastic claims. The corpus includes Persian works such as Mulla Shadi's Fath-nama, Kamal al-Din Bina'i's Shaybani-nama, Fazlallah ibn Ruzbihan Isfahani's Mikhman-nama-yi Bukhara, Hafiz Tanish Bukhari's Abdulla-nama, Muhammadyar ibn Arab Qataghan's Musakhkhir al-bilad, Mahmud ibn Wali's Bahr al-asrar, Dastur al-muluk, Tarikh-i Muqimkhani and Muhit al-tawarikh. It also considers Chaghatay Turkic texts, including Tawarikh-i guzida - Nusrat-nama, Muhammad Salih's Shaybani-nama, Babur-nama, Shajara-yi Turk and Zubdat al-asar, together with broader regional histories such as Tarikh-i Abulkhayr-khani, Tarikh-i Rashidi and Habib al-siyar. Through comparative source criticism, the article argues that the sources reveal a gradual transformation: groups first described as military-political allies from Dasht-i Qipchaq were later represented as actors embedded in regional administration, fortress governance, court hierarchy and local socio-political life. The findings show that ethnic history in Mawarannahr must be reconstructed by comparing language, genre, narrative purpose and context rather than by mechanically extracting tribal names from isolated passages.

Keywords: Mawarannahr; Transoxiana; Shibanids; Ashtarkhanids; Chaghatay sources; Persian chronicles; ethnic processes; Dasht-i Qipchaq; source criticism.

INTRODUCTION

The ethnic history of Mawarannahr in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is difficult to reconstruct because the available written sources were not composed as neutral demographic surveys. They were chronicles, memoirs, genealogical narratives, political-didactic texts, tazkiras, geographic compilations and dynastic histories. Their authors mentioned ethnic groups only when those groups mattered to a campaign, a court faction, a regional appointment, a city, a fortress, a route, a genealogy or an act of political legitimation. Consequently, the same ethnonym may function differently across sources: in one text it marks a military unit, in another it identifies a ruling family, and in another it points to a social group already integrated into a local urban or agrarian environment.

The problem is especially important for the Shibanid and early Ashtarkhanid periods. The first decades of the sixteenth century witnessed the expansion of Muhammad Shaybani Khan's power from the Dasht-i Qipchaq environment into Mawarannahr. Later sources, especially those written in the second half of the sixteenth and during the seventeenth century, no longer present many groups only as external military forces. They show them as participants in the administrative,

military and regional order of Bukhara, Samarkand, Balkh, Nasaf, Qarshi, Karmina, Dabusiyya and other local centres.

This article asks three questions. First, which Persian and Chaghatay Turkic works are most useful for studying ethnic processes in Mawarannahr? Second, how do the language and genre of each source affect the way ethnic names are recorded? Third, what larger historical pattern becomes visible when early Shibanid narratives are compared with later Bukhara and Balkh chronicles? The aim is not to reproduce the dissertation section in another language, but to reorganise its source base into a research article built around a clear IMRAD structure and a comparative analytical argument.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The material consists of local Persian and Chaghatay Turkic written sources, supplemented by broader regional histories. The Persian group includes Fath-nama, Bina'i's Shaybani-nama, Mikhman-nama-yi Bukhara, Abdulla-nama, Musakhkhir al-bilad, Bahr al-asrar, Aja'ib al-tabaqat, Dastur al-muluk, Tarikh-i Muqimkhani, Muhit al-tawarikh, Muzakkir-i Ahbab, Jami' al-maqamat and Matlab al-talibin. These texts differ

in genre, but all contain data relevant to political events, administrative appointments, court relations, urban and oasis populations, military actions and tribal names.

The Turkic group includes *Tawarikh-i guzida* - *Nusrat-nama*, Muhammad Salih's *Shaybani-nama*, *Babur-nama*, *Shajara-yi Turk* and *Zubdat al-asar*. These works are particularly important for observing how Shibanid political memory, Chinggisid genealogy, military solidarity and the *Dasht-i Qipchaq* background were narrated in a Turkic literary and political register. The third group consists of special historical works that broaden the geographical perspective: *Tarikh-i Abulkhayr-khani*, *Tarikh-i Rashidi* and *Habib al-siyar*.

The method combines source typology, internal textual criticism and comparative contextual analysis. Each source was assessed according to five criteria: language, genre, date and political milieu of composition, type of information about ethnic groups, and the narrative situation in which ethnonyms appear. Ethnic names were not treated as self-explanatory evidence. They were read together with accompanying markers such as place names, military roles, offices, court service, seasonal movement, fortress command, regional rule or genealogical affiliation.

The study also applies a chronological comparison. Early sixteenth-century texts were analysed as evidence for the entry and consolidation of Shibanid forces, while later sixteenth- and seventeenth-century texts were used to trace how the same or related groups appear in administrative, military and territorial contexts. This approach reduces the risk of isolating tribal names from their historical setting and allows the sources to be read as layered evidence for changing social and political positions.

RESULTS

The first result concerns the early Shibanid narratives. *Bina'i's Shaybani-nama*, *Muhammad Salih's Shaybani-nama*, *Tawarikh-i guzida* - *Nusrat-nama* and *Mikhman-nama-yi Bukhara* show ethnic groups primarily through the political and military mobilisation surrounding Muhammad Shaybani Khan. In these texts, the *Dasht-i Qipchaq* background is not a secondary detail. It structures the description of military support, tribal alliances, political legitimacy and campaigns in *Mawarannahr*. Names such as *Qunghrat*, *Naiman*, *Manghit*, *Qipchaq*, *Qushchi*, *Durman*, *Keneges* and

others appear not as a static list of population groups, but as components of a shifting military-political coalition.

The second result is the change visible in later Persian chronicles. *Abdulla-nama*, *Musakhkhir al-bilad*, *Dastur al-muluk*, *Tarikh-i Muqimkhani* and *Muhit al-tawarikh* record tribal or ethnic names in relation to provincial governance, fortresses, court ranks, embassies, military commands and regional conflicts. This suggests that by the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries many groups that entered the historical narrative as allies of Shibanid conquest were being represented as part of the political structure of the khanate. The movement from campaign narrative to administrative narrative is one of the clearest patterns in the source corpus.

The third result concerns the geographic scope of the sources. *Mahmud ibn Wali's Bahr al-asrar* is particularly useful because it connects *Mawarannahr* with *Balkh*, *Khurasan*, *Dasht-i Qipchaq*, *Kashghar* and other neighbouring regions. The text combines geographic description with political and ethnic information. It therefore helps to avoid treating *Mawarannahr* as an isolated space. The same is true, in different ways, of *Tarikh-i Rashidi* and *Habib al-siyar*, which place the region within wider processes involving *Moghulistan*, *Kashghar*, *Farghana*, *Khurasan* and *Iran*.

The fourth result is that Chaghatay Turkic sources preserve a different layer of evidence. *Tawarikh-i guzida* - *Nusrat-nama* and *Zubdat al-asar* link Shibanid authority to genealogy, political memory and the remembered order of the steppe. *Muhammad Salih's Shaybani-nama* transforms the conquest of *Mawarannahr* into a literary-political account in which tribal solidarity and dynastic legitimacy are closely connected. *Babur-nama* offers a contrasting Timurid perspective: it describes Turkic and Tajik-speaking populations, urban centres, regional rivals and groups such as *Arghun*, *Qipchaq* and *Hazara* from the viewpoint of *Babur's* personal and political experience.

The fifth result concerns cultural and urban integration. *Tazkira* and *Sufi-biographical* materials, such as *Muzakkir-i Ahbab* and *Jami' al-maqamat*, do not provide the same type of tribal information as military chronicles. Their value lies in showing how *Bukhara* and *Samarkand* remained spaces of Persianate and Turkic literary, scholarly and religious interaction. These works therefore

complement political histories by revealing the cultural environment into which military and tribal

elites were gradually incorporated.

Table 1. Source groups and analytical value

Source group	Representative works	Analytical contribution
Early Shibanid narratives	Bina'i, Muhammad Salih, Tawarikh-i guzida - Nusrat-nama, Mikhman-nama-yi Bukhara	Identify military-political coalitions, Dasht-i Qipchaq background and conquest-era mobilisation.
Later Persian chronicles	Abdulla-nama, Musakhkhir al-bilad, Dastur al-muluk, Tarikh-i Muqimkhani, Muhit al-tawarikh	Show tribal and ethnic groups in provincial governance, fortresses, court ranks and military-administrative roles.
Geographic and regional histories	Bahr al-asrar, Tarikh-i Rashidi, Habib al-siyar, Tarikh-i Abulkhayr-khani	Connect Mawarannahr to Dasht-i Qipchaq, Khurasan, Moghulistan, Kashghar and broader regional change.
Cultural and biographical texts	Muzakkir-i Ahbab, Jami' al-maqamat, Matlab al-talibin	Reveal cultural integration, urban scholarly circles and religious networks that are less visible in campaign narratives.

DISCUSSION

The findings show that the ethnic processes of Mawarannahr cannot be reduced to a single migration episode. The chronicles suggest a multi-stage transformation. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, many groups are presented as military-political forces associated with the expansion of Shibanid power. In later texts, the same broad social world is represented through offices, fortress command, regional administration, court presence and participation in internal conflicts. This does not mean that the earlier identities disappeared. Rather, their narrative function changed as groups became embedded in local institutions.

A second implication concerns the use of ethnonyms. A tribal name in a chronicle is not always a direct marker of residence or demographic concentration. It may identify an amir, a military unit, a political faction, a genealogy, a court group or a regional ruling circle. For this reason, the most reliable reconstruction comes from repeated cross-reading: an ethnonym must be compared with place names, dates, offices and the political circumstances in which the source uses it.

A third implication is methodological. Persian and Chaghatay Turkic sources do not simply duplicate each other. Persian chronicles often provide dense accounts of court politics, campaigns, appointments and regional administration. Chaghatay works more frequently preserve the political memory and legitimising language of Shibanid authority. Broader regional histories then connect Mawarannahr with Dasht-i Qipchaq, Khurasan, Moghulistan and Kashghar. The

combined corpus therefore produces a fuller picture than any single source type.

The main limitation is that several references in the working dissertation section require final verification against the original manuscripts or printed editions before journal submission. Some notes in the source file also indicate places where wording, manuscript identification or page attribution must be clarified. The article therefore treats the cited page and folio references as a working scholarly apparatus inherited from the dissertation draft, not as newly rechecked archival verification.

CONCLUSION

Persian and Chaghatay Turkic sources make it possible to reconstruct ethnic processes in Mawarannahr only when their language, genre and political purpose are read critically. Early Shibanid texts emphasise military coalition, steppe affiliation and conquest. Later chronicles show tribal and ethnic groups as actors within provincial rule, fortress systems, court hierarchy and local political life. Geographic and regional histories broaden the field by connecting Mawarannahr to Dasht-i Qipchaq, Khurasan, Moghulistan and Kashghar, while cultural and Sufi-biographical sources reveal the urban and intellectual spaces in which social integration occurred.

The central conclusion is that sixteenth- and seventeenth-century ethnic processes in Mawarannahr were not a single-direction migration, but a layered historical transformation. Groups associated with the Shibanid military-political order gradually became part of local governance, regional society and urban culture. Future research should build a source-based

database of ethnonyms, locations, offices and narrative contexts, while verifying each page and folio reference directly against the relevant manuscript or edition.

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Source of support: Nil; **Conflict of interest:** Nil.

Cite this article as:

Idiev, A. "Reading Ethnic Change through Persian and Chaghatay Chronicles: Source Typology and Ethno-Political Transformation in Mawarannahr, Sixteenth-Seventeenth Centuries." *Sarcouncil Journal of Arts and Literature* 5.4 (2026): pp 1-4.