

## THE ETHNIC FORMATION OF THE UZBEK PEOPLE

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**Abstract:** This article discusses the process of the ethnic formation of the Uzbek people, its main stages, and the historical factors that influenced its development. The article analyzes the scientific opinions of researchers regarding how the Uzbek people evolved into their present form as a result of the interaction between ancient Turkic tribes and other ethnic groups. It also examines the historical foundations of the Uzbek ethnic formation process, as well as the political, cultural, and social factors of ancient times and the Middle Ages.

**Keywords:** Uzbek people, ethnogenesis, ancient Turkic tribes, Mawarannahr, ethnic process, historical factors.

### INTRODUCTION

The Uzbek people are a nation with an ancient and rich historical tradition, formed in Central Asia. Their ethnic formation was a multi-stage and complex process that resulted from the interaction and blending of various tribes and peoples over thousands of years. To fully understand the ethnogenesis of the Uzbek people, it is necessary to thoroughly study the political, cultural, and economic relations from ancient times. Located at the geopolitical center of Central Asia, this region has long served as a crossroads for the interaction and synthesis of numerous Turkic, Iranian, and other ethnic groups.

The process of the Uzbek people's ethnic formation is mainly associated with ancient civilizations such as Bactria, Sogdiana, Khwarezm, and Fergana. Over time, this process was enriched and complicated by Turkification, the influence of Islamic culture, and political consolidations. Today, various one-sided and unscientific approaches are sometimes put forward regarding the origins of the Uzbek people. Therefore, studying the ethnogenesis of the Uzbek people remains a highly relevant topic.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

Many scholars have proposed different theories regarding the formation of the Uzbek people. In particular, A. Yu. Yakubovsky divided the process into two periods: the first up to the 10th–11th centuries, and the second covering the 11th–12th centuries. He suggested that by the later centuries, the formation of the Uzbek ethnic group had been largely completed.

Other researchers point out that during the Samanid period (9th–10th centuries), Turkic-speaking peoples already formed a significant part of the population in the oases of Central Asia. During the Karakhanid period (10th–12th centuries), the sedentization of Turkic tribes and the partial Turkification of the local Tajik-speaking population led to an increase in the Turkic ethnic presence. It was during this era that the ancestors of the Uzbeks completed the process of forming into a distinct ethnic group.

The political, social, and cultural development of the Karakhanid state greatly accelerated this process. Especially, the spread of Islam and the emergence of unified cultural and religious values played an important role in uniting the Uzbek people. Moreover, Uzbeks, along with the Tajiks and other peoples living in Central Asia, are considered the heirs of

ancient history and the cultural achievements created by their ancestors. Academician B. G. Gafurov emphasized the significant role of ancient Iranian-speaking peoples in the ethnogenesis of the Uzbek people, dating their formation to the 11th century.

According to researchers, the early ancestors of the Uzbeks inhabited the territory of the Kangju state, where diverse ethnic compositions and languages existed.

S. P. Tolstov estimated that the formation of Central Asian peoples (Tajiks, Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Karakalpaks) as distinct ethnic groups largely concluded between the 10th and 12th centuries within the Karakhanid state framework.

Some historical sources suggest that the Uzbek ethnogenesis traces back to the era of the Turkic Khaganate.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To define "ethnogenesis," it is the process by which a people originates, including their lineage and emergence as a distinct group. The history of every nation is closely intertwined with its ethnogenesis and ethnic history.

Ethnogenesis develops during specific stages of ethnic history and continues until the group consolidates as a nation. Without identifying the ethnic layers and composition of a people, it is impossible to create a scientifically accurate understanding of their history and statehood.

Key factors influencing ethnogenesis include territorial factors, linguistic unity, ethnocultural commonality, socioeconomic structures, ethnic identity (ethnonym), and a shared consciousness and traditions. It is important to note that even after an ethnic group forms, new elements may continue to join or split from it over time.

Specialists emphasize that studying the ethnogenesis of any people requires considering multiple aspects, such as cultural identity, social structure, biological characteristics, societal roles, and the development of ethnic consciousness.

Early mentions of the peoples inhabiting Central Asia are found in Eastern and Greco-Roman sources. Greek historians referred to various tribes inhabiting vast areas of Eurasia as "Scythians". Herodotus regarded these peoples as ancient as the Egyptians, while Pliny the Elder mentioned about 20 tribes in the region.

Among them, the Saka and Massagetae are frequently noted. In Achaemenid inscriptions, the Saka are categorized into three groups: Haumavarga, Tigraxauda, and the Tiay-Tara-Darayya.

Massagetae are generally described as nomadic pastoral warrior tribes.

Ancient Central Asia was home to various peoples, such as the Saka, Massagetae, Sogdians, Bactrians, and Khwarezmians, whose cultures and languages directly influenced the formation of the Uzbek people. The Turkic tribes that migrated to Central Asia gradually assimilated into the local populations, enriching the ethnogenesis of the Uzbek people, where Turkic elements became dominant.

When studying the ethnic history of any people, it is essential to examine not only the initial formation process but also the later stages, highlighting specific ethnic features and signs. Among these features, linguistic unity, ethnocultural unity, and the development of ethnic self-consciousness are particularly important.

Scholars who have explored the theoretical foundations of ethnogenesis emphasize the decisive role of language in the formation of ethnic identity. Language not only serves as an ethnic factor but also as a symbol of unity. Specifically, the early ancestors of the Uzbek people in the regions of Transoxiana and Khwarezm spoke both Turkic and Iranian languages. Through a prolonged process of interaction and assimilation, the Uzbek nation formed.

When discussing the Turkic language, it is important to mention Mahmud al-Kashgari's work *Dīwān Lughat at-Turk*, which offers invaluable insights into the history, geography, ethnogenesis, traditions, lifestyle, and culture of Turkic peoples across a vast region from Asia Minor to China.

The formation of ethnic features is a long historical process that culminates in the establishment of a distinct people, after which ethnic history begins.

### CONCLUSION

Studying the ethnic history of any nation requires examining the process of ethnic formation from its earliest stages. The emergence, development, and transformation of an ethnic group into a nation span an extensive historical process.

From the earliest stages of their ethnogenesis to the formation of a unified nation, the Uzbeks assimilated a variety of indigenous Sogdian-Khwarezmian and ancient Turkic ethnic elements, along with various groups that migrated into the region at different times.

Thus, between the 2nd century BCE and the 1st century CE, a new Turkic-speaking people — the Kangars — emerged through the intermixing of Iranian-speaking and Turkic-speaking tribes.

If we accept that ethnogenesis occurs under specific historical, ethnic, economic, and cultural conditions, it would not be entirely accurate to date the Uzbek ethnogenesis from the earliest periods. Rather, it is more appropriate to view it as a multi-stage process that began before the Common Era, specifically toward the end of the first millennium BCE.

It is important to distinguish between the deep roots of a people and the actual ethnogenetic process that leads to the formation of a distinct nation.

Following the Arab conquest of Transoxiana in the 8th century, efforts were made to limit further migration of Turkic tribes. Nevertheless, the already-settled Turkic populations began to establish a strong sedentary culture and linguistic environment.

In the 9th–10th centuries, Turkic sedentarization intensified. Although political authority remained in the hands of the Samanids, the Turkic ethnic foundation of Transoxiana and Khwarezm was firmly established.

During the Karakhanid period, with political power shifting to Turkic dynasties, the final phase of Uzbek ethnogenesis began. Based on the common Turkic language and especially the Karluk-Chigil dialects, the Old Uzbek language emerged.

By the 11th–12th centuries, the Uzbek ethnic group had fully formed, and the history of the Uzbek people as a distinct nation commenced. The Turkic elements, the process of sedentarization, linguistic development, and political factors all played significant roles in this formation.

In conclusion, the ethnogenesis of the Uzbek people was a long, complex, and continuous historical process, shaped through the interactions of numerous tribes and peoples.

Beginning in ancient times and continuing through the medieval period, it was enriched by political, cultural, and social factors, culminating in the formation of a unified Uzbek ethnic identity.

The harmonious blending of the ancient peoples of Transoxiana with Turkic tribes underpins the ethnic formation of the Uzbek nation. Deep study of this process is essential for a proper understanding of the historical development of the Uzbek people.

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