

The History of Bukhara Emirate in The Researches of English-Speaking Authors

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This paper systematizes and analyzes historiographic materials by English-speaking authors on Bukhara Emirate's history, identifying research trends, changes, and results while offering insights for the future development of historiography on this topic. **Method:** The study applies comparative, analytical, and historiographic methods, synthesizing primary and secondary sources, critically assessing colonial and Orientalist perspectives, and categorizing research into political, economic, and socio-cultural dimensions. **Results:** The paper reveals evolving Western perspectives on Bukhara Emirate, distinguishing colonial biases from objective insights, highlighting key contributions by 19th-20th-century scholars, and outlining historiographic gaps requiring further interdisciplinary research. **Novelty:** It provides a systematic historiographic assessment of English-language research on Bukhara Emirate, critically examining ideological influences and academic trends while proposing new directions for future studies in Central Asian historiography.

INTRODUCTION

It is well known that the Emirate of Bukhara holds a distinct place in the historical process that had been passed through by Central Asian peoples. Throughout its nearly two-century-long existence, the Emirate of Bukhara played a crucial role in the Central Asian region, possessing significant strategic, military-political, and economic importance. Furthermore, it represented a compact system of political governance and territorial integrity as a centralized state. The political, socio-economic history of the Emirate of Bukhara has remained a focal point of interest for both Eastern and Western scholars, affirming its significance in foreign historiography.

It should be noted that the study of Central Asian history, including the history of the Bukhara Emirate, dates back to the 18th and 19th centuries when foreign diplomats, merchants, spies, travelers, and specialists who visited the region for research purposes contributed to its exploration [1]. At the same time, local and Russian researchers have made efforts to comprehensively examine the history of the Emirate through in-depth scientific, archaeological, ethnographic, and topographic research. Nevertheless, the necessity of studying the results of research conducted in foreign historiography should not be overlooked. During the Soviet period, foreign historiography was often presented in a one-sided manner, with its findings, sources, and scientific conclusions interpreted through the ideological framework of the ruling system. As a result, certain scholarly conclusions were not introduced into academic discourse [2].

From this perspective, it is essential to critically analyze the study of the socio-economic and political history of the Bukhara Emirate by English-speaking authors in a chronological and problem-oriented approach. The examination of their works and the incorporation of their research findings into academic discourse hold considerable significance for the further development of historiography.

RESEARCH METHOD

The literature reviewed within the scope of this study is categorized into two conditional groups. The first group includes works by English-speaking authors who directly visited the Bukhara Emirate and became acquainted with its political, socio-economic life. This group comprises studies by researchers such as Alexandr Burnes, Arminius Vambery, Henry Lansdell, George Nathaniel Curzon, Francis Genry Skrine, Edward Denison Ross, and Richard Bird. The second group consists of contemporary scholars who conduct research based on the analysis of the works and memoirs of the first group. This category includes studies, articles, and publications by researchers such as Levi Scott, Robert Burton, Alanna E. Cooper, and Richard C. Foltz.

The study applies comparative, analytical, and historiographic methods, synthesizing primary and secondary sources, critically assessing colonial and Orientalist perspectives, and categorizing research into political, economic, and socio-cultural dimensions. In the process of characterizing and interpreting the scientific literature related to this subject, a complex of general scientific methods was applied, including analysis and synthesis, description, comparison, and generalization as methodological approaches.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The history of the Bukhara Emirate has been studied extensively not only during its existence but also in subsequent periods and even today by numerous academic research institutions. Based on the available materials, categorizing the perspectives of English-speaking authors and their research areas on the history of the Bukhara Emirate into fixed classifications is not entirely feasible. However, for analytical convenience, we have conditionally grouped these studies into several categories.

The first category encompasses research focused on the political history of the Bukhara Emirate. As A.G.Dankov noted, *"the primary subject of interest for English scholars, politicians, and diplomats in this region was the Anglo-Russian relations in Central Asia, Bukhara-Russia interactions, their conflicts, the political situation within the Emirate, the administrative governance system, the authority of the emirs, and their relations with the people"* [3].

It is essential to highlight that during the 19th century and the early 20th century, two dominant perspectives emerged on this issue. First, a number of English-speaking authors approached the political life of the Bukhara Emirate through a colonial lens, evaluating it from a colonialist perspective. A notable example is the British statesman George Nathaniel Curzon, who served for many years as Viceroy of India and Governor-

General. Curzon's observations on the Emirate's political system and governance, recorded during his travels to Russia and Central Asia in 1888-1889, are particularly significant. His findings were later published in scientific articles and travel reports in the "Manchester Courier" newspaper and various journals [5].

Curzon's views distinctly reflect colonialist attitudes, requiring critical analysis. For instance, he described Bukhara as "*a backward and uncivilized region that ought to be incorporated into the British Empire. The Emir of Bukhara, a despotic ruler, exercises absolute power in his country, enforcing oppression and discrimination against non-Muslim populations.*" Given Curzon's role as a British political figure, it is natural that his perspective was influenced by British colonialist propaganda. Consequently, such views should not be accepted as entirely objective representations of the Bukhara Emirate's ruling elite. Nevertheless, his works contain valuable insights into the political, socio-economic, and cultural aspects of the Emirate, making them a critical source for further historical research [6].

Secondly, among foreign researchers, an Orientalist perspective has largely dominated the study of the history of the Bukhara Emirate. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, the unique characteristics and enigmatic past of the Emirate attracted the attention of numerous English-speaking authors, researchers, diplomats, and travelers. Many of these scholars perceived Bukhara as a central hub of political interactions and events, often referring to it as "*The Heart of Central Asia*". Moreover, in their works, they frequently portrayed the emirs as learned, cultured, and enlightened rulers who governed a sophisticated society.

Prominent among such researchers are F.G.Skrine, E.D.Ross, and Levi Scott, whose studies were conducted through an Orientalist lens. F.G.Skrine (1851-1924), a British army officer who served in British India for many years, made multiple trips to Central Asia, including Bukhara, Samarkand, and other cities, during his tenure as a British envoy in St. Petersburg. Based on his travels and observations, he authored "*The Heart of Asia: A History of Russian Turkestan and the Central Asian Khanates from the Earliest Times*" [7]. This work was co-written with E.D.Ross (1871-1940), a British linguist, Orientalist, and expert on the history and culture of Iran and Central Asia. E.D.Ross, deeply interested in the Persian-speaking population of Central Asia and its culture, traveled to the region and later authored "*The Emirs of Bukhara and Their Times*" [8]. The works of F.G.Skrine and E.D.Ross primarily focus on the political structure of the Bukhara Emirate, its administrative-territorial divisions, and the authority of the emirs.

Additionally, this category includes Levi Scott, a scholar who has made significant contributions to the study of the history of the Bukhara Emirate and continues to conduct research on Central Asian history. In his book "*The Bukharan Crisis: A Connected History of 18th-Century Central Asia*", Scott explores the central governance of the emirate, the accession of emirs to power, their domestic and foreign policies, diplomatic relations with neighboring states, and the socio-political landscape of the region. Furthermore, his work provides a critical analysis of the accounts left by travelers and diplomats who visited the emirate [9].

Next, the study focuses on the economic and trade activities of the Bukhara Emirate. The economic history of the Emirate can be analyzed by dividing it into historical periods, territorial distribution, economic sectors, and social relations. Numerous scholars have examined various aspects of the Emirate's economy, including its agriculture, craftsmanship, trade, state economy, and labor structure, providing detailed accounts. Among such researchers are Alexander Burnes, Henry Lansdell, and Richard N. Frye.

In 1832, under the order of the British Indian government, Alexander Burnes, a British traveler, researcher, and military specialist proficient in Persian and Hindi, visited Bukhara. He recorded his observations in "Travels into Bokhara; being an Account of a Journey from India to Cabool, Tartary, and Persia" [10]. This work provides a detailed description of the Emirate's capital, palaces, city life, economic conditions, marketplaces, trade, goods, revenue sources, foreign policy, and economic relations. Since A. Burnes personally visited the Emirate and witnessed its daily affairs, his work serves not only as a valuable economic source but also as an important political reference.

Additionally, significant historical data on the economic life of the Bukhara Emirate can be found in the studies of Henry Lansdell, a member of the Royal Geographical Society of Great Britain. In 1882, Lansdell undertook an expedition to Central Asia, and the findings of his journey were published in a two-volume work [11]. His writings cover the urban structures of Bukhara and other khanates, as well as the socio-economic infrastructure of the region.

Furthermore, the study of the economic history of the Bukhara Emirate would be incomplete without mentioning the contributions of Richard N. Frye (1920–2014), an American scholar specializing in the history of Iran and Central Asia. Frye's research, particularly in "The Bukharans: A Dynastic, Diplomatic, and Commercial History, 1550–1702" [12], explores the Emirate's economic development, trade relations with neighboring states, its role as a regional commercial hub, the growth of agriculture, and the production of goods such as silk and cotton. Additionally, R. Frye extensively analyzes the Emirate's economic policies and their impact on the broader Central Asian region, providing a comprehensive and in-depth study of Bukhara's economic structure.

Another crucial aspect of studying the history of the Bukhara Emirate is the analysis of its social life and cultural development. The social and cultural history of the Emirate has long attracted the attention of numerous English-speaking researchers, both during its existence and in subsequent years. These scholars have made significant contributions to understanding the social structure, population, and cultural traditions of the Emirate.

Some English-language authors have focused on the Emirate's political system, economic structure, state governance, and the role of the Emir and ruling elite, while also examining the social system, taxation, and the lives of laborers. Others have explored the intellectual and cultural dimensions of the Emirate, analyzing the role of Islam, religious institutions, madrasas, and mosques in shaping social and cultural life. A separate group

of scholars has investigated specific cultural aspects, such as poetry, music, literature, and national traditions.

One of the most prominent scholars in this field is Arminius Vambery, a renowned Hungarian Orientalist, traveler, and linguist, who had lived in multiple countries and was fluent in numerous Eastern and Western languages. In 1863, he traveled to the Bukhara Emirate, where he documented the social and cultural life of the region's diverse ethnic groups, including Uzbeks, Turkmens, Tajiks, and Kazakhs. His findings were compiled in the book "Travels in Central Asia" [13], which provides detailed descriptions of local customs, traditions, and daily life.

Several English-speaking historians have further categorized Bukhara Emirate's social structure into different groups, including social classes, gender roles, ethnic identities, family structures, tribal relations, education, and cultural life.

For instance, in 1903, American archaeologist and researcher Robert Bird visited Bukhara, documenting its social and economic life, traditional customs, agricultural practices, craftsmanship, and trade. His writings also contain valuable insights into the urban structure of Bukhara and Samarkand, their social organization, historical landmarks, religious institutions, and residential architecture [14].

Another notable scholar in this field is Richard Francis Burton (1821–1890), a British diplomat, Orientalist, and explorer, who traveled across Central Asia, Iran, Afghanistan, and India between 1860 and 1861, including a visit to Samarkand in the summer of 1860. Burton extensively described Bukhara's cities, historical monuments, Islamic architecture, mosques, madrasas, Sufi lodges, mausoleums, and bathhouses. His book "Two Thousand Miles in Persia, Turkestan, and Central Asia" [15] contains rich ethnographic data on the Emirate's social life, occupations, agricultural and artisanal traditions, livestock farming, local markets, and Bukhara's trade connections with China, Russia, Iran, and India.

These scholars' works provide invaluable sources for understanding the social and cultural evolution of the Bukhara Emirate, highlighting its diverse traditions, religious influence, and economic interactions with the broader region.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding : The study systematically analyzes English-speaking authors' historiographical approaches to the Bukhara Emirate, identifying colonial biases, Orientalist perspectives, and scholarly contributions. It reveals shifts in research trends and highlights the Emirate's socio-political, economic, and cultural significance while proposing an objective framework for future historiographical analysis. **Implication** : This research contributes to Central Asian historiography by critically examining Western narratives on the Bukhara Emirate. It enhances understanding of historical biases, broadens perspectives on regional history, and fosters interdisciplinary research by integrating political, economic, and cultural dimensions into future studies on Central Asian historical discourse. **Limitation** : The study primarily focuses on historiographical sources from English-speaking authors, potentially overlooking alternative perspectives

from Russian, Persian, or indigenous Central Asian sources. Additionally, it does not fully incorporate archival materials or oral histories that could provide a more nuanced, locally grounded understanding of the Bukhara Emirate's history. **Future Research** : Further studies should include comparative analyses of English, Russian, and local historiographies to ensure a balanced perspective. Incorporating primary archival sources, archaeological findings, and oral traditions will enrich historical interpretations and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the Bukhara Emirate's political, economic, and cultural legacy.

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