

# The Settlement Processes of The Dashti Qipchoq Population, Their Main Occupations, And Their Role in The Formation of The Uzbek Nation

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**Abstract:** This article describes the social, political and military conditions of the people of Dashti Kipchak mentioned in historical works. Also, a brief analysis of the main activities of Kipchaks will be given. Based on the analysis of sources, opinions about Shayban ulus and their transition to settlement are presented.

**Keywords:** Shayban, Jochi tribe, Movarounnahr, ethnic process, Uzbeks, formation of the Uzbek people, B. V. Lunin, toponym. "Ulug Khan", Javangor, Turko-Mongol.

**Introduction:** During the 1420s, historical sources and research indicate that in the eastern lands of the Dashti Qipchaq, where nomadic communities traditionally lived, the state of Abulkhayr Khan (1428–1468), which lasted for more than 40 years, was established. Along with this, the state of Muhammad Shaybani Khan (1451–1510), formed in Turkestan and Transoxiana, was also referred to as the state of the nomadic Uzbeks.

Before examining these states, let us address the name "nomadic Uzbeks" by considering three viewpoints:

Although the majority of the population in these states engaged in livestock herding, their composition also included tribes and clans involved in agriculture and handicrafts in the lower reaches of the Syr Darya and partially in the peripheries of the Khorezm oasis. Scholar B.V. Lunin emphasized this aspect, noting: "The Uzbeks did not consist solely of nomadic herders; among them were also peasants who lived in the lower Amu Darya region, settled periodically on farmlands, and owned their own plots of land." [1]

The primary population of these states was geographically identified as inhabitants of the Dashti Qipchaq.

The sedentary Turkic-Chagatai peoples of the interfluvium (between the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers) did not refer to them as nomads, but rather as 'steppe people'. This terminology is also found in early sources (for

instance: Dasht and Turkestan sipahi). [2]

For this reason, we believe that instead of the term "nomadic Uzbeks," the term "steppe Uzbeks" is more accurate and appropriate.

A deep understanding of the history of the Uzbek state and legal system is impossible without examining the socio-political structure of these historical states. Just as the Seljuk Empire, which was once established in Khorasan, held a significant position, these states played a crucial role in the history of Central Asia and Kazakhstan.

As previously discussed, at the beginning of the 14th century, the Ulus of Jochi had already split into two independent states — the Blue Horde (historically referred to as the Golden Horde) and the White Horde.

The Kipchak population that settled in the Zarafshan valley brought about notable administrative changes and influenced regional toponymy. Even today, place names in regions such as Qashqadaryya, Samarkand, and Bukhara bear traces of the Kipchak language, preserved up to the present. These references can be found in works such as Bahr al-Asrar, Abdullanoma, and Tarikh-i Muqimkhani.

The White Horde, which was referred to as the "Land of the Uzbeks," also included the Shaybanid Ulus. According to the historian Abulg'ozzi, Shayban acquired this ulus from Bogu Khan in 1238. [3] While the exact

borders are difficult to define, it is known that in summer, they migrated to the foothills of the Ural Mountains and the middle courses of the Tobol, Ural (Yaiq), and Ilek rivers, while in winter they moved to the lower Syr Darya, and the lower reaches of the Chu and Sarisuv rivers, and overwintered in the Karakum desert. Similar information about the Cumans is also found in Byzantine sources.

On the eve of the formation of the Steppe Uzbek state in the 15th century, the Shaybanid Ulus had fragmented into several small khanates. By the 1420s, several independent khanates existed. The Uzbeks consisted mainly of three groups: tribal unions, tribes included in the Shaybanid Ulus (the Shaybanids), Kazakhs, and Manghits. There was intense political struggle for power among them.

Soviet historian A. Yakubovsky, noting the distinct characteristics of Uzbek nobles compared to Iranian aristocrats, wrote:

"Certainly, he had achieved a number of accomplishments, he loved military affairs, fine horses, falconry, pigeon racing, goat and rooster fighting, quail breeding, and the like. Nevertheless, by the second half of the 15th century, he was not culturally more backward or savage than the Iranian nobility above him." [4]

The struggle for power initially erupted within the Manghit Ulus, between the Ural and Emba Rivers, where they engaged in conflict against the Jumaduq Khan Ulus (located between the northern Aral Sea, Sarisuv, and Emba Rivers). In this confrontation, the Manghits defeated a 17,000-strong army at a place called Joytor-Jolqin. These events were described by historian B. Akhmedov based on primary Arabic and Persian sources. During this battle, Abulkhayr Khan, who commanded the army's left wing (Javongari), was captured. Later, due to his descent from the Shaybanid lineage, he was released.

In the following year, over 200 tribal leaders from the Turkic-Mongol tribes of the Dasht-i Qipchaq declared Abulkhayr Khan the "Great Khan." As early as 1428–1429, the Steppe Uzbeks under his leadership seized the city of Tura in Western Siberia, which remained the capital of their state until 1446.

In a short span of time, Abulkhayr Khan succeeded in uniting a large portion of the fragmented Shaybanid Ulus and proclaimed his state independent from the Golden Horde. In 1431–1432, he conquered Khorezm and assumed the title "Great Khan." However, due to the outbreak of plague, they could not hold the territory for long and were forced to abandon it.

In 1446, he defeated his powerful rival Mustafakhan.

That same year, he captured the cities of Sighnaq, Oqqorgon, Arqoq, and Ozgan—located along the middle course of the Syr Darya and previously under Timurid control. The capital of the Steppe Uzbeks was moved from Tura to Sighnaq. This state came to encompass large parts of modern Kazakhstan, southwestern Siberia, and western-southern Khorezm.

From that point forward, the nomadic Uzbeks became neighbors to the Timurid state and began actively interfering in its political life by supporting different sides in the struggle for the Timurid throne.

In 1557, Khwaja Islam supported Abdullah Khan II in capturing Bukhara. As a result, the Juybari sheikhs became major landowners under the Shaybanids. For instance, Khwaja Islam possessed lands equivalent to 300 pairs of oxen's plowing capacity (according to P.P. Ivanov, one pair of oxen could plow 50 tanab, making the total around 15,000 tanab), along with 10,000 sheep, 700 horses, 500 camels, 7,000 gold ashrafis, 104 shops, workshops, and 7 mills.

The documents in this collection offer detailed insight into the legal formalization of immovable and movable property transactions of that era—sales, gifts, and their legal documentation. The collection includes decrees from Abdullah Khan II granting land, irrigation rights, houses, and gardens to Khwaja Islam's son, Khwaja Sa'd, along with "tax exemption" decrees (yarlik) concerning these properties. These sources provide valuable information on the tax system of the time, which included over 13 different taxes and levies. All gifted properties were declared exempt from these obligations.

"Let it be known that these lands are granted by legal authority and based on customary agreement, free from all taxes and obligations. Therefore, any encroachment or infringement upon them is strictly forbidden." [6]

These documents offer valuable insights into the legal relations of that period, the methods and means of their regulation, and the structure and legal sophistication of these normative acts.

Academic K. Shoniyozov argued that the formation of the Uzbek people as a distinct nation occurred during the 13th–14th centuries. He stated that: "Due to ethnic processes in the 13th–14th centuries, various Mongol and Turkic tribes living in the Dasht-i Qipchaq—primarily nomadic—began to interact closely. This led to a cultural and social synthesis, resulting in a Turkic-speaking ethno-cultural amalgam that would be identified under the collective name 'Uzbek.'" [7]

Based on Shoniyozov's perspective, it appears the Uzbek ethnogenesis occurred in two stages or regions:

In the 13th–14th centuries, a group of Uzbeks emerged from a Turkic-Mongol blend in the Dasht-i Qipchaq;

An earlier theory traces the origins to Iranian-speaking peoples of the Kang state who, through gradual integration with Turkic-speaking populations in Yettisuv, Eastern Turkestan, and the middle Syr Darya region, contributed to the formation of the proto-Uzbek ethnic identity—ultimately evolving into a new Turkic-speaking ethnos.

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