


# Classification And Scientific Characteristics Of Medieval Historical Sources Of Uzbekistan

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**Abstract:** This article analyzes the classification of medieval historical sources created in Uzbekistan and their scientific characteristics based on modern methodological requirements of source studies. The purpose of the study is to systematize medieval sources based on genetic, typological and critical criteria and determine their scientific significance in historical reconstruction. Historicity, systematics and comparative-analytical approaches were used in the work. Written, archaeological, epigraphic, numismatic and pictorial sources were considered in a comprehensive manner, and their information potential, level of reliability and discursive characteristics were assessed. The results showed that multi-criteria classification of sources strengthens the empirical foundations of historical knowledge and allows for a multi-layered reconstruction of the political, economic and cultural processes of medieval society. The prospects for integrating traditional source studies methods with digital history technologies were also substantiated. The study serves to form a single conceptual classification model in the study of the medieval history of Uzbekistan.

**Keywords:** Middle Ages; historical sources; source studies; classification of sources; written sources; archaeological sources; epigraphy; numismatics; historical reconstruction; history of Uzbekistan, triangulation.

**Introduction:** The territory of Uzbekistan has long been one of the major political, economic and cultural centers of Central Asia, and in the Middle Ages, complex socio-political processes, state structures, urban systems and a high spiritual and cultural environment emerged in this space. The scientific reconstruction of these historical processes directly depends on the quality and methodology of working with historical sources. Because medieval historical sources constitute the main empirical base of historical research, through which the political structure of society, economic relations, social strata, religious views and cultural processes are illuminated. In modern historiography, source studies have emerged as a separate scientific direction, developing theoretical foundations for the identification, description, classification and critical analysis of historical sources. However, since the sources on the medieval history of Uzbekistan are multi-layered, multilingual (Arabic, Persian-Tajik, Turkic), and diverse in terms of genre, the issue of their systematization based on a single methodological criterion remains relevant. Practice shows that historical reconstruction without a

consistent classification of sources can lead to fragmentary and one-sided interpretations.

The level of study of the problem shows that, despite the creation of separate studies and textbooks on source studies, the issue of a comprehensive classification of medieval historical sources based on genetic, typological and critical criteria has not been sufficiently generalized. In particular, the need to evaluate written, archaeological, epigraphic, numismatic and pictorial sources as an interconnected system is growing.

The purpose of this study is to classify medieval historical sources created on the territory of Uzbekistan based on scientific criteria and determine their theoretical and methodological significance in historical reconstruction. To achieve this goal, the following tasks were set:

1. Identification and systematization of the main types of medieval sources;
2. Assessment of the scientific characteristics and information potential of each type of source;

3. Development of criteria for determining the reliability of sources;

4. Justification of the advantages of a complex-corpus approach.

The object of the study is a complex of medieval historical sources related to the territory of Uzbekistan. The subject of the study is the classification of these sources, their scientific characteristics and methodological role in historical reconstruction. The scientific novelty of the study is that medieval sources are systematized on the basis of a multi-criteria classification model, and their interrelationships and verification possibilities are comprehensively substantiated. The need to integrate traditional source research methods with modern scientific approaches is also shown. The theoretical significance of this work is that it offers a single conceptual classification model for studying the history of the Middle Ages in Uzbekistan. Its practical significance is that it serves as a methodological basis for introducing sources into scientific circulation, improving source research courses in the educational process, and creating digital archives and catalogs.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

The scientific tradition that has developed in the classification of medieval historical sources of Uzbekistan and the study of their scientific characteristics consists of several parts:

1. The school of classical orientalism and source criticism;

2. Soviet-era Central Asian studies and institutional source studies;

3. Systematization of the corpus of sources, textbooks and methodological directions in the historiography of Uzbekistan during the period of independence;

4. Modern international “source studies” and digital humanitarian approaches.

In the scientific reconstruction of the history of medieval Central Asia, the tradition of critically reading written sources, interpreting them in terms of the author's position, genre requirements, and political and cultural context was formed primarily in the classical school of oriental studies. In this direction, V. V. Bartold's research on the history of Turkestan occupies a special place. In his works, he consistently introduces the methods of checking the origin, chronological accuracy, and evidentiary weight of sources (source criticism) by comparing Arab-Persian geographers, historians, and local legends. Bartold's work “Turkestan Down to the Mongol Invasion” had a strong influence on subsequent research on source criticism with its systematic review of the corpus of

sources and its attempt to methodologically substantiate the chain “source—reality—interpretation”. The scientific heritage of this stage indicates that the classification of medieval sources is not limited to formal characteristics (language, genre, author). Perhaps the purpose of the source's creation (ideological/administrative/legitimative), audience, and the “internal structure” of the source (narrative and documentary layer) should also be taken into account. This approach later strengthened the principles of dividing written sources in Uzbek source studies based on internal typologies such as “chronology—tazkira—risola—hujjat”.

At the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st centuries, a new important direction in source studies gained momentum. The bibliographic systematization of the corpus of sources and research and the standardization of the concept of historical space in the atlas/reference format began. In this regard, the book “Bibliography of Islamic Central Asia” compiled by Yuri Bregel simplifies the “search and verification” stage of source studies at the institutional level by bringing together literature in different languages by region into one place. Bregel's work “An Historical Atlas of Central Asia” shows another methodological horizon for classifying sources. By transferring historical phenomena such as political units, borders, campaigns, and ethno-political shifts into cartographic language, it increases the verifiability of “descriptive” and “spatial” information in written sources. The atlasization approach is considered an effective tool for the critical analysis of toponymic information, directions, territorial definitions, and indicators of social space in medieval sources. Also, collections dedicated to the scholarly heritage of Bruegel (for example, the scholarly collection edited by Devin DeWeese) expand the methodological diversity of modern areas of work with sources in Central Asia - historical linguistics, textual studies of the Timurid and post-Timurid periods, and the interpretation of religious-hagiographic texts.

The study of medieval sources in Uzbek historiography has accelerated on an institutional basis, primarily through the standardization of source studies as an educational and scientific direction. In this process, it is noted that the work of academician B. Ahmedov “Sources of the History of Uzbekistan” “acquired the status of the first general textbook,” which served as a generalizing methodological platform for source studies of the history of Uzbekistan. At the next stage, textbooks and manuals appeared that expanded the education and research practice of source studies: the textbook “Source Studies” published by A. Madraimov and G. Fuzailova in 2008, as well as the textbooks

“Source Studies” published by the Coordination and Methodological Center in 2019, served to bring source studies to a methodological standard. The analysis of this literature shows that in Uzbek source studies, the problem of classification is solved in two directions:

1. The separation of source types (written, archaeological, epigraphic, numismatic, pictorial) - this strengthens the empirical foundation of historical knowledge “according to the nature of the source”;
2. The internal typology of written sources (chronicles, memoirs, tazkira, geocosmographic works, document/act materials) - this allows for a more precise application of the criteria of reliability, representativeness and purposefulness by distinguishing between narrative and documentary information.

In recent approaches, rather than assessing the “reliability” of a source solely on the basis of “true/false” criteria, the analysis of its information potential, motivation for creation, genre constraints, and discursive strategy has expanded. In particular, textbooks indicate the author, period, reason for writing, the history of the source’s entry into scientific circulation, and the issue of manuscript copies and publications as integral components in describing a source. This principle means in practice that a source can be both a text of political legitimation and a construction of social memory. Therefore, it “tells the story” and also “shows how to tell the story.” Especially in medieval sources, genres such as the history of rulers, dynastic genealogy, hagiography of futuwat and tariqas, and the virtues of cities (faḍā’il) are common. Their scientific feature is that they often provide factual information mixed with a normative-axiological (value-oriented) image. Therefore, in current research, the analysis of sources is approaching the principle of “two-layer reading” (fact layer + discourse layer).

In source studies, the processes of digitization, metadata-based description, and creation of electronic catalogs make the issue of classification even more urgent. Because in the digital environment, the “type” of a source becomes not only a scientific category, but also the basis for practical tasks such as searching, linking, identification (ID), separating versions, and citation. The successive publication of source studies textbooks intended for higher education in Uzbekistan (2001–2008–2019) indicates that methodological standardization has increased against the background of these needs.

## METHODS

This study was conducted within the framework of the paradigms of complex source studies and historical reconstruction. A multi-criteria typological model was

used to classify sources and determine their scientific characteristics. The research design is based on the following principles:

1. The principle of historicity - the political, social and cultural context of the period in which the source was created was taken into account.
2. The principle of systematicity - sources were viewed not separately, but as a set of interconnected “sources”.
3. The principle of critical verification - source information was compared with other sources (written/material).
4. Interdisciplinary integration - methods of auxiliary disciplines such as paleography, diplomatic analysis, numismatics, epigraphy, archeology, textual studies were combined.

The research complex consists of written and material materials covering medieval sources related to the territory of Uzbekistan. The following boundary conditions were set when forming the complex:

1. The chronological boundary is the period from the early Middle Ages to the late Middle Ages (in order to demonstrate continuous historical dynamics).
2. The territorial boundary is the Transoxiana region and the adjacent historical and cultural space (urban centers and periphery).
3. The linguistic and genre boundary is narrative, geographical, bio-bibliographic and documentary texts in Arabic, Persian-Tajik and Turkic languages; as well as epigraphic, numismatic and archaeological evidence.

The classification of sources is carried out on the basis of a three-level standard:

A) Primary (genetic) classification - according to the nature of the source, it consists of Written (textual) sources, Material (archeological) sources, Epigraphic sources, Numismatic sources, Pictorial/cartographic sources.

B) Secondary (typological) classification - according to the function and genre of the source, it is divided into Narrative (chronicle, history, memoir, narration), Descriptive (geography, cosmography, toponymic description), Normative-legal (decree, foundation certificate, agreements, judicial documents), Bio-bibliographic (tazkira, tabaqot, biography), Religious-ideological (hagiography, tariqat treatises).

C) The third (critical) classification - according to the level of scientific reliability of the source, which includes the degree of proximity to the Author (direct witness / secondary account), the degree of compilation (original / compilation), chronological accuracy (date system and consistency), textual

transmission (copies, edits, possibility of interpolation), discursive position (legitimative, didactic, apologetic, etc.).

The following methods were used in the study:

1. In source criticism (internal and external criticism), the author, conditions of creation, audience, purpose, and internal consistency of the text were analyzed.
2. In textual studies and paleography, a theoretical model was applied that identified text variants, differences in copies, and layers of editing.
3. In the comparative-analytical method, an event or phenomenon was compared in several types of sources (for example, chronicle + coin + epigraphy).
4. In contextual interpretation, the terms, toponyms, titles, and institutions in the source were interpreted in the context of the period.
5. In triangulation, if written evidence is confirmed by material evidence, the level of reconstruction is increased; if not confirmed, the level of probability is determined.

The scientific reliability of the results is ensured by:

1. Cross-checking the data with at least two types of sources (where possible).
2. Bias analysis identifies authorial bias, the possibility of political bias, and genre stereotypes.
3. Conclusions are expressed on a scale of certainty at "high confidence / medium / probable".

## RESULTS

The results of the study showed that the classification of medieval historical sources of Uzbekistan is the main instrument determining the quality of scientific reconstruction. The results were summarized in two directions:

- 1) a holistic model of source typology;
- 2) the scientific characteristics and information capabilities of each type of source.

The study divided the sources into the following main groups and clarified the role of each group in the production of historical knowledge:

1. Written sources - the main carrier of historical narrative and institutional memory.
2. Archaeological sources - the empirical basis of the history of everyday life, economy, urban planning and technology.
3. Epigraphic sources – "official" traces of political legitimacy, religious discourse and social hierarchy.
4. Numismatic sources - precise chronological indicators, state symbols and evidence reflecting economic transactions.

5. Pictorial/cartographic sources - a source of spatial imagination, visual ideology and cultural codes.

Based on this model, it was proven that a complex-corpus approach is more effective in working with sources than "relying on one type".

The results showed that the following characteristics of information prevail in written sources:

1. In the narrative structure, the sequence of events is often subordinated to the author's concept. Therefore, facts can be included "selectively".
2. In the discursive layer, motives such as political legitimization, glorification of the honor of the dynasty, religious and moral didactics are strong.
3. In the compilation, copying and retelling from previous sources are high in some texts; this reduces the level of "primary testimony".
4. In terminological variability, titles, positions, toponyms can shift semantically from period to period.

Written sources provide "information about the event", but their factual weight must be assessed together with the genre and the author's position.

The results of archaeological materials show the following:

1. It provides direct empirical evidence of social strata (commoners, production, livelihoods) that are poorly covered in written sources.
2. The dynamics of continuity and discontinuity are determined through urban layers, architectural typology, and traces of craftsmanship.
3. Archaeological evidence often provides a relative historical chronology (layers), therefore it is necessary to connect it with numismatics and epigraphy.

Archaeology is an independent source of knowledge that does not "confirm" written history, but often corrects and supplements it.

As a result of the analysis of epigraphic evidence, the possibility of identification of rulers by name, titles, religious formulas, and building patronage is high. Epigraphy often provides an "ideal" picture. It reflects legitimate and normative ideas, not real problems. When date and place indicators are available, it serves as a stable basis for historical chronology. Epigraphy is a form of political-religious discourse "engraved in stone" and is a powerful verifier in verifying information in narrative sources.

In the results for coins, the name of the ruler on the coin, the mint, the date - dramatically increases chronological accuracy. Political sovereignty, territorial control and dynastic exchanges are traced through the "geography of coins". It provides indirect, but highly



evidentiary information about the economic system, monetary circulation and trade routes. Numismatics is one of the most reliable sources for reconstructing medieval history along the axis of “date and power”.

Visual discourse and spatial thinking in pictorial and cartographic sources have shown that miniature and pictorial materials provide “visual evidence” of social roles, clothing, rituals, and court culture, but they are subject to artistic conventions. Maps and geographical drawings reflect spatial imagination and political “center-periphery” views. They cannot be directly equated with modern cartography. Pictorial sources often transmit cultural codes, not facts. Therefore, a semiotic and contextual approach is necessary in their interpretation.

The most effective way to scientifically reconstruct the medieval history of Uzbekistan is triangulation:

1. Written narrative → event matrix;
2. Numismatics/epigraphy → date/identification support;
3. Archaeology → socio-economic realia and material conditions;
4. Visual sources → cultural imagination and visual discussion

This model reduces errors in historical reconstruction and strengthens the evidentiary foundation.

## DISCUSSION

The results of the study showed that the classification of medieval historical sources of Uzbekistan is not only a question of technical classification, but also a methodological foundation for the production of historical knowledge. In the process of discussion, three main aspects require special attention:

- 1) epistemological differences between sources;
- 2) the problem of reliability and interpretation;
- 3) the advantage of a complex-corpus approach.

Written, archaeological, epigraphic and numismatic sources reflect historical reality in different ways. Written sources present the event through a narrative structure and are subject to the author's worldview, ideological position and genre requirements. Therefore, they are a discursive construction along with factual information. This aspect is clearly visible in the idealization of the image of the ruler, the strong presence of political legitimization and religious-moralizing elements in medieval chronicles.

Archaeological and numismatic sources, on the other hand, are based on material evidence, not narrative. They often confirm or refute events in written sources. For example, coinage is a real indicator of political

sovereignty; this allows us to verify claims of political independence recorded in chronicles. Thus, the epistemological difference between the sources requires us to see them as complementary systems, not as opposed to each other.

The most difficult issue in the scientific circulation of medieval sources is determining the level of reliability. The results of the study showed that assessing reliability only by the criterion of “correspondence to reality” is not enough. If the reason for the creation of the source, its audience, political context and genre characteristics are not analyzed, historical reconstruction will remain one-sided. For example, hagiographic works may idealize the biography of a historical figure, but they are an important source of information in determining the religious mentality and social values of the era. Therefore, the scientific value of a source is determined not by its factual accuracy, but by the type of information it provides. Also, from the point of view of textual studies, differences between manuscript copies, interpolations and layers of editing were discussed. This indicates the need to study not only the “final form” of the source, but also the process of its historical transmission.

Relying on one type of source narrows the historical picture. On the contrary, a joint analysis of written, material, and epigraphic sources reveals the multifaceted nature of the historical process. This approach was based on the “triangulation” model. For example, a chronicle describes a political event. A coin shows the real power of the ruler. The archaeological layer confirms economic and urban changes. Epigraphy provides formulas for official legitimation. On this basis, an integrated approach increases the empirical robustness of historical knowledge and reduces the likelihood of error. This classification model allows for the creation of a single conceptual platform for studying the medieval history of Uzbekistan. This model ensures methodological consistency in historiography and sets a common standard for further research. Especially in the context of digital history, the correct classification of sources is crucial for creating electronic databases, metadata systems, and scientific catalogs.

## CONCLUSION

This study examined the issue of classifying medieval historical sources of Uzbekistan and determining their scientific characteristics based on a comprehensive approach. The results of the study led to the following general conclusions:

1. Medieval historical sources of Uzbekistan are diverse in content and form, and their classification based on genetic, typological and critical criteria is a

necessary condition for scientific reconstruction.

2. Written sources have a narrative and discursive nature, and they must be analyzed in the context of the author's position and genre. They interpret a historical event, but are often enriched with an ideological purpose.

3. Archaeological, epigraphic, and numismatic sources provide a high level of empirical evidence and allow for the confirmation or clarification of written information.

4. Pictorial and cartographic sources reflect cultural and ideological imaginations, not factual ones; therefore, they must be interpreted with a semiotic and contextual approach.

5. The complex-corpus and triangulation model increases the reliability of historical knowledge and allows for a multi-layered reconstruction of the political, economic and cultural life of medieval society.

6. Scientific classification and critical analysis of sources also serve as a methodological basis for the creation of digital history and electronic archives.

In general, the systematic classification and identification of scientific characteristics of medieval historical sources of Uzbekistan is an important stage in the theoretical and methodological development of historiography. This approach will serve as a conceptual basis for the future digitization of the corpus of sources, the creation of scientific metadata, and the development of interdisciplinary research.

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