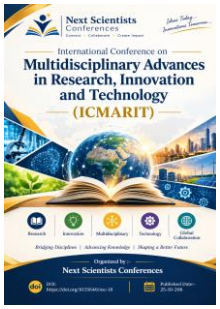
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Academician a. R. Muhammadjonov's contribution to the source studies of bukhara history

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the source-critical methods employed by Academician A. R. Muhammadjonov in his studies of the Bukhara Khanate, the Lower Zarafshan Valley, and the history of Paykend. It highlights the scholarly significance of his comparative approach to written, archaeological, cartographic, and toponymic evidence for reconstructing historical geography and urban history.

Keywords: A. R. Muhammadjonov, Bukhara, source studies, Zarafshan, Paykend, Karmina, historical geography, toponymy.

INTRODUCTION

The scholarly legacy of Academician Abdulahad Rahimjonovich Muhammadjonov occupies a distinctive place in Uzbek historiography. His research into historical geography, the history of irrigation, archaeology, and source studies broadened opportunities for investigating the ancient and medieval history of the Bukhara oasis. Academician Yahyo Ghulomov's academic mentorship played an important role in his development as a scholar. In 1955, Muhammadjonov defended his Candidate of Sciences dissertation on sources concerning relations between Bukhara and Russia [1, pp. 79–93]. This article aims to synthesize his approaches to historical sources through an examination of his principal works on Bukhara's history.

A defining feature of Muhammadjonov's methodology was the evaluation of historical sources in light of their circumstances of production, the author's perspective, textual versions, and consistency with other evidence. Rather than reconstructing historical events from a single account, he preferred to cross-check different categories of evidence. This approach made it possible to assess the reliability of written testimony, explain discrepancies, and formulate historical conclusions with appropriate caution.

In Some Sources on the History of Bukhara's and Khiva's Relations with Russia, co-authored with T. Nematov, Muhammadjonov compared local written materials concerning diplomatic and commercial relations in the 1820s–1850s with Russian sources. In particular, the authors examined letters sent by Bukhara's emirs to Russian emperors, diplomatic records, and official petitions preserved in the Munshaot va yorliqlar collection. This approach moved beyond exclusive reliance on Russian archives and travel accounts by also considering perspectives from the local political environment [2, p. 222].

In his monograph The History of Irrigation in the Lower Zarafshan Valley, Muhammadjonov jointly analyzed written sources, place names, maps, and evidence concerning irrigation structures. The section 'The Zarafshan in Historical Sources' compares accounts by Narshakhi,

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Hafiz-i Abru, Ibn Hawqal, al-Istakhri, and other authors. For example, while Narshakhi's descriptions of marshes and lakes around Bukhara are important for understanding the historical landscape, Muhammadjonov subjected them to critical evaluation [3, p. 32].

He was similarly cautious about the possibility that the Zarafshan once flowed into the Amu Darya. Comparing Hafiz-i Abru's statement that floodwaters reached the Amu Darya with Narshakhi's account, he did not rule out such a connection. However, he did not consider the written reports sufficient to establish its precise date or river channel [3, p. 37]. This example demonstrates his distinction between what a source reports and what it can actually prove.

Historical hydronyms also formed an important part of his research. Medieval sources refer to the Zarafshan as Nahr al-Sughd, Wadi al-Sughd, Nahr al-Bukhara, Haramkom, and Kuhak. By examining the chronological and geographical use of these names, he showed that different stretches of the same river may have borne different names. The reference to the waters of Kuhak in the Baburnama is particularly relevant [6, p. 145]. Likewise, the designation Govkhitfar for the Vobkentdarya helps reconstruct historical hydrography [4, p. 6].

In The Settlement of Paykend: Problems in the Study of the Medieval City of Central Asia, written with co-authors, Muhammadjonov connected scattered written accounts of the city with archaeological observations. To investigate Paykend's natural environment and its position along trade routes, the authors drew on ancient Greco-Roman writers, Narshakhi, Ibn Hawqal, al-Istakhri, al-Muqaddasi, and other sources [7].

Narshakhi described Paykend as a city older than Bukhara and as a 'city of merchants.' These statements were analyzed in relation to caravan routes, commercial activity, and irrigation systems. Reports of Qutayba ibn Muslim's campaign, meanwhile, illuminate the city's military and political importance. Comparing the defensive walls, rabats, and water networks mentioned in written sources with material evidence helped reconstruct the city's historical appearance [7].

In his article 'On the Etymology of the Toponym Karmina,' Muhammadjonov investigated the name Karmina and its medieval geographical setting through accounts by Narshakhi, al-Sam'ani, and Arab geographers. Narshakhi identifies Karmina as one of Bukhara's districts, while the sources vary in their descriptions of the city's distance and name. In interpreting the expression Bod ya khurdak, Muhammadjonov sought to relate its meaning to local physical geography [8, pp. 58–60]. Here, an etymological hypothesis was assessed against historical geography.

In 'On the Etymology of the Ethnotoponym Posira,' he consulted archival documents, dictionaries, and local terminology. Place names recorded in the documents of the Qushbegi chancellery, together with variants such as siroq, chiroq, and posira, were analyzed to clarify their socioeconomic meanings [11, pp. 72–74]. His toponymic studies thus extended beyond word origins to encompass settlement patterns, land use, and historical territorial relationships.

In studying the historical topography of Bukhara, Muhammadjonov paid particular attention to an 1858 map attributed to Ahmad Donish. He considered this cartographic material valuable for comparing the spatial arrangement of the city and its surroundings with written sources. His publications in this field contributed to the study of Bukhara's urban environment through historical maps [12; 13].

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Muhammadjonov's contribution to the source studies of Bukhara history is most clearly reflected in his methodology of comparing written, archaeological, toponymic, and cartographic evidence. His research on local documents concerning Bukhara–Russian diplomatic relations, the reconstruction of ancient water systems in the Lower Zarafshan, the history of Paykend, and the Karmina toponym represents interconnected lines of inquiry. He treated historical accounts not as unquestionable truths but as evidence requiring verification. His scholarly legacy remains an important methodological example for comprehensive source-based research on the Bukhara oasis and Central Asian history more broadly.

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