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ANCIENT FERGANA AND THE FERGANIANS
(historical and ethnographic information)

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the historical and ethnographic features of Ancient Fergana, scientific views on the origin of the toponym "Fergana," and the ethnic composition of the valley's population based on ancient written sources. Also, on the basis of Chinese, Greek and Arabic sources, the processes of formation of the population of Fergana, the interaction of different ethnic groups and their contribution to cultural and historical development are highlighted. Based on scientific sources, the author substantiates that the Fergana Valley has been formed since ancient times as a polyethnic region, with a diverse ethnic and linguistic composition of the population.

Keywords: Ancient Fergana, Fergana Valley, Pargana, Davan (Dayyuan), toponym, ethnogenesis, ethnic composition, historical ethnography, Sakas, Usuns, Yuezhi, Turkic peoples, Chinese sources, Central Asia, ancient history.

Introduction. In the scientific literature, there are opinions of a number of researchers about the origin of the term Fergana and its meaning. Most of them associate this term with the geographical location of the valley. However, the Fergana Valley differs from other historical and cultural regions of Central Asia in its geographical location.

Fergana is located among the mountains. Its territory is bounded to the northwest by the Kurama and Chatkal ranges, and to the northeast by the Fergana, Southern Alay, and partially the Turkestan ranges. Only in the west, from a low-lying part of the mountain range, one reaches the "Mirzachul." This intermediate territory with a width of 8–10 km is conventionally called the "Gateway of Khujand." The almond-shaped valley is nearly 300 km long and 170 km wide at its widest point.

When discussing the toponym "Fergana," the opinions of the following scholars deserve attention.

According to Sogdian scholar Mirsodiq Iskhakov, the term Fergana (Parkana) originates from the combination of the words "par" and "kan" in the Sogdian language. In the Sogdian language, the word "par" means a wall or a height in the form of a circle, and the word "kan" means a collection, a place of accumulation of some wealth [1,90].

According to Eduard Mirzayev, who dealt with place names and toponyms, the words "Parghona" or "barghona" in the Pamir languages are also used to mean a flat place surrounded by hills [2,128].

It is known that among the peoples of Central Asia, it is customary to use "F" and "P" as alternatives. An example of this is the pronunciation of the toponym "Fergana" as "Pargana" in some dialects (dialects) of the Uzbeks.

In several works dedicated to the history of Fergana, the Sinologist Ablat Khodjaev also expressed quite well-founded opinions regarding the term "Fergana." It should be noted that Ablat Khojayev translated from ancient and early medieval Chinese sources and introduced many new information about the history of Fergana into scientific discourse. In particular, his information about toponyms and ethnotoponyms found in Chinese written sources related to Fergana is valuable because it is based on original, primary sources [3].

Here are some thoughts related to the term "Fergana." The scholar dwells on the toponym "Deyyuan" (modern reading "Dovon"; in Russian transcription "Dovon"), which is found in Chinese written sources, and first cites the opinions of sources and literature of different periods on the emergence of this term. According to him, the toponym "Dayyuan" (Davan) is first found in the "Shiji" ("Historical Memoirs") by Sima Qian (Russian: СИМА СЯН), who studied it in 104–91 BC. As can be seen, the toponym "Dayyuan" (Davan) consists of two word combinations. This work was written in 138 BC on the basis of the report of the ambassador, traveler, diplomat Zhang Qian, sent by the Emperor Udi to the western countries. The first word in it "Day" (in modern reading "da") means great, big, and the second word "yuan" was used in relation to a bowl-shaped place surrounded by high or mountains [4,84]. Thus, according to Ablat Khojaev, Ancient Fergana ("Pargana") in Chinese sources is Dayyuan, and this toponym is a Chinese translation of the local term Pargana.

Another researcher, Sh.S. Kamoliddin, etymologizes the word "Davon" as "great river valley." He likely meant that the Naryn and Karadarya rivers would merge in the valley to form the Syr Darya. It should be noted that the term "Davon" is found in Turkic literature until the 3rd century AD. Subsequently, this term was recorded as "Lona" or "Polana" in the 5th century AD, "Bokhan" in the 6th–7th centuries, and "Ninyuan" in the 7th–8th centuries [3,126-127].

After the Arabs arrived in this country, the toponym Pargana was replaced by the term Fergana.

Thus, as we saw above, researchers have put forward several opinions regarding the origin of the term Fergana to date. Most researchers have expressed their opinions based on the geographical location of the valley.

Even in those ancient times, the Fergana Valley had a polyethnic character. In that ancient period, part of the valley's population lived sedentary lives and engaged in agriculture, crafts, and trade, while another part maintained a nomadic livestock economy.

In scientific literature, the ethnonyms parikanians (parikans), davanlians (dayyuan people) are used in relation to the main population of the valley. Part of the population of this territory consisted of Saka tribes. The Russian researcher B.A. Litvinsky, in his work "The Sakas Beyond Sogdia," provides precise information that the Sakas living in the Fergana region belonged to the "Saka-Khaumavorka" tribal unit [6, 95-98].

It is known that in the middle of the 1st millennium BC, an ethnos known as the Elei lived on the left bank of the Syr Darya. The main part of the settlement is located in the present-day Khujand district.

Furthermore, along the Syr Darya, near the western lands of Fergana, lived an ethnos known as the Obi Scythians or Apasiaks [5,7].

In the second half of the 2nd century BC, some parts of the tribes known as usun (ushun), who occupied Dzungaria, the western part of the Tien Shan mountains, and Eastern Turkestan, gradually settled in the mountainous regions of Fergana. The peoples mentioned above formed the basis of the ethnic composition of the population of ancient Fergana.

What can be said about the language of the inhabitants of ancient Fergana? Chinese written sources are useful for clarifying this issue. In particular, the Shiji chronicle states that the population of the territories from Fergana (Davon) to the west to the state of Ansi (i.e., Parthia) understood each other's words. What kind of language was that? Unfortunately, until recently, this question was answered one-sidedly. That is, most researchers emphasize that the peoples who lived in the territory of Central Asia in ancient times were ethnic groups speaking only the Iranian-Persian language. However, as a result of research conducted in recent years, particularly the study and analysis of Eastern and especially Chinese sources, it has become clear that Turkic-speaking ethnic groups also lived in Central Asia, including the Fergana region, during this period. In our view, Iranian researchers, while asserting that the peoples who lived in the territory of Central Asia in antiquity were Iranian-speaking ethnic groups, are based only on ancient Greek and Iranian sources. However, in ancient Greek and Iranian sources, Turkic-speaking peoples were also recorded as Saka-Massagetae, along with Iranian-speaking tribes [7, 80]. Consequently, there is no doubt that a significant portion of the population of the Fergana Valley spoke various dialects of the Turkic language as early as ancient times.

History shows that in 150 BC, the Usun tribes dealt a severe blow to the Yuechji tribes settled in the foothills of the Tian Shan mountains. As a result, a large part of the Yuezhi tribes moved westward. According to Chinese sources, the westward movement of the Yuechji tribes occurred through Fergana, and for a certain period, this territory was also under their control. They then continued their advance westward. It should be noted that according to the same Chinese written sources, the total number of Yuezhi moving westward amounted to 100,000 families or 400,000 people, and the number of soldiers ranged from 100,000 to 200,000. There is no doubt that the passage of such a large number of people through Fergana undoubtedly left its mark on the ethnic composition of the valley's population. In our opinion, some of them remained in these places, partly settled, and mixed with the indigenous peoples.

During the 2nd–4th centuries AD, several tribes from Southern Siberia, Dzungaria, and Eastern Turkestan began to settle in the territories of Central Asia, specifically in Mawarannahr, including the Chionites, Kidarites, and Hephthalites, who by the 4th–6th centuries C.E. constituted a significant portion of the population of the Amu Darya and Syr Darya interfluvium.

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