

THE SAROY CLAN AND THEIR SETTLEMENTS: A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS BASED ON THE EXAMPLE OF GUZOR

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Annotation: *This study analyzes the historical origin, social organization, and the settlement patterns of the Saroy clan within the territory of Guzor district, particularly in villages and amlaks associated with them. Based on historical and ethnographic sources, the paper examines the permanent settlements of the Saroy clan in Guzor, their role in local governance, and aspects of their cultural life. In addition, archival documents and oral historical data from the late 19th to early 20th centuries are used to explore the clan's position within the population, the development of settlement names, and administrative structures.*

Keywords: *Saroy clan, Guzor district, ethnic history, tribal structure, place names, amlak (administrative unit), ethnographic data, population composition, historical sources, Central Asia.*

During the late medieval period, the Qashqadaryo oasis played a distinct role in the socio-political processes occurring within the Bukhara Emirate. This is especially evident in the widespread sedentarization of the population in each of the oasis's beklik (districts) and in the involvement of nomadic or semi-nomadic groups in the Emirate's political and military affairs. These social dynamics can be clearly observed by studying specific Uzbek clans within the Guzor beklik. This article explores such processes through the example of the Saroy clan.

In almost all lists of Uzbek clans, the ethnonyms *Qirgiz* and *Saroy* are recorded separately, though in some cases they appear together as a compound ethnonym—*Qirgiz-Saroy*. This phenomenon needs to be interpreted, since in the medieval period each was a distinct tribal entity. By the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Saroy had become one of the most numerous Uzbek clans, particularly in the regions along the Qashqadaryo and Zarafshan rivers, while the Qirgiz clan resided mainly in the upper and middle reaches of the Qashqadaryo River and represented a moderately sized population group.

Members of the Saroy clan were widespread in the Emirate's districts, especially in Qarshi, Chirakchi, and Guzor beklıklar. Their settlements also

extended to neighboring areas—namely the northern Surkhan valley and the southern part of the Samarkand province. Moreover, they had numerous villages in other parts of the Emirate such as Jizzakh, Karmana, and Eastern Bukhara. Some of these settlements were recorded in the Emirate's documents with names such as *Saroy*, *Naiman-Saroy*, *Qirgiz-Saroy*, and *Qipchoq-Saroy*.

The occurrence of the Saroy ethnonym alongside other Uzbek clan names can be explained by a variety of factors. Historical sources suggest that these names indicate either joint settlement or geographic proximity between the Saroy and other clans. Oral ethnographic studies confirm the existence of several sub-clans or branches of the Saroy, including *Naiman-Saroy*, *Qipchoq-Saroy*, and *Qirgiz-Saroy*, which were among the more influential groups.

From this perspective, the *Qirgiz-Saroy* toponym in the Guzor beklik appears to have originated from a branch of the Saroy clan associated with the Qirgiz. Especially in the midstream area of the Qashqadaryo River, Saroy branches referred to as *Qirgiz-Saroy* became common, and one of the villages in the beklik bearing this name confirms this lineage. The *Qirgiz-Saroy* were not limited to the Guzor district; they also had settlements in neighboring Chirakchi and Yakkabog' districts, where village names like *Qirgiz-Saroy* and *Qirgiz* still exist today. Furthermore, in Qamashi district, a location called *Qirgizovul* is found, which is also likely associated with the Qirgiz-named branch of the Saroy clan⁵¹.

The presence of branch names such as *Naiman-Saroy* and *Qipchoq-Saroy* within the Saroy clan—each of which is also recognized as the name of large, independent Uzbek clans—requires further explanation. In fact, this type of branching was not typical for all Saroy clans living throughout the Bukhara Emirate. Divisions such as *Naiman-Saroy*, *Qipchoq-Saroy*, and *Qirgiz-Saroy* were mainly characteristic of the Qashqadaryo oasis and, to a lesser extent, neighboring regions. For example, the *Qipchoq-Saroy* group formed a significant portion of the Uzbek population in the Chirakchi beklik. They had dozens of villages and maintained close kinship and tribal ties with the population of the Jom amlak (land unit) in the Samarkand region.

There are several scholarly views on the spread of the Saroy clan in the Qashqadaryo oasis. Some researchers believe that the Saroy people migrated here from the Zarafshan valley, while others argue they came from the Balkh province of the Bukhara Emirate (present-day northern Afghanistan). Both groups, however, associate the migration of the Saroy to Qashqadaryo with the

⁵¹ Нафасов Т. Қашқадарё қишлоқномаси. — Тошкент: Мухаррир, 2009. — Б. 375.

period of the Shaybanids, the Ashtarkhanids, and the Uzbek khanates that followed them. According to a widely accepted view, the *Saroy* ethnonym is connected to the political and social events that took place in the Dasht-i Qipchoq region, particularly within the Golden Horde. It is believed that the name *Saroy* first appeared in historical records in the 14th century as part of the army of Tokhtamysh Khan, one of the rulers of the Golden Horde⁵².

At that time, during the process of forming a unified political alliance among the nomadic Uzbeks in the Volga–Ural regions and the middle reaches of the Syr Darya, the *Saroy* clan began to take an active part in this union of allied tribes. Later, under the leadership of Abulkhair Khan (1412–1468), who led the nomadic Uzbeks, and subsequently during the reign of Muhammad Shaybani Khan, the *Saroy*—along with other Uzbek tribes—migrated en masse to the lands between the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers.

In waqf (endowment) documents created during the Shaybanid period in the 15th and 16th centuries in Bukhara and Samarkand, the *Saroy* clan is mentioned as part of the Uzbek population living in the Zarafshan valley, especially in the city of Samarkand⁵³. In historical works from the Ashtarkhanid period—particularly in the treatise *Dastur al-Mulk* ("The Manual of Governance")—it is mentioned that during the reign of Ashtarkhanid ruler Subhonquli Khan, members of the *Saroy* clan such as Allohyorbiy-Saroy and Ghoibnazarbiy-Saroy held high-ranking positions, serving as *atalik* (royal guardian or mentor) and commanders of the khan's army. During the reign of Muhammad Rahim Khan, the first ruler of the Bukhara Khanate, a figure named Jahongirbiy-Saroy from the *Saroy* clan held the titles of *jibachi* (chief of armory or weapons master) and *uroqi buzurg* (chief of protocol or high-ranking court official)⁵⁴.

From this, it becomes evident that representatives of the *Saroy* clan held a prominent position among the leading Uzbek tribes within the Bukhara government. During the periods of the Shaybanids, Ashtarkhanids, and Manghits, in order for nomadic Uzbek clans to secure influential roles in governance, they generally had to meet certain criteria: Belonging to a large tribe capable of mobilizing a significant military force; Being part of a major Uzbek tribe that held territorial influence or land rights; Being allied with or related to other highly respected and powerful nomadic Uzbek tribes.

⁵² Тизенгаузен В.Г. Сборник материалов, относящихся к истории Золотой Орды. – М.-Л., 1941. – С. 168.

⁵³ Вяткин В.Л. Вакуфный документ Ишратхана. Масон М.Е., Пугаченкова Г.А., Засыпкин Б.Н., Вяткин В.Л., Кононов В.Н., Кудрина С.А. Мавзолей Ишратхана. – Т., 1958. – С. 130.

⁵⁴ Ахмедов Б.А. Историко-географическая литература Средней Азии XVI-XVIII вв. (письменные памятники). Т., 1985. – С. 82, 118.

In the late medieval period, the Saroy began to be seen as one of the semi-settled Uzbek tribes residing in the middle and lower Zarafshan Valley. At the same time, parts of the clan retained their nomadic and semi-nomadic way of life, continuing to dwell in the steppe areas of the Samarkand province and the Qashqadaryo oasis that were suitable for livestock herding. Particularly in the southeastern part of the Bukhara oasis, the southern Samarkand region, and the northern part of the Qashqadaryo oasis—specifically the steppe area known as *Ortachol* (Central Steppe), which lies between the three regions—members of the Saroy clan began seasonal migrations toward the pasturelands along the midstream section of the Qashqadaryo River. While documents from the late 17th century refer to Saroy clan members residing in the Samarkand region, by the 1730s (18th century), sources mention Saroy groups actively migrating along the Samarkand–Qarshi routes⁵⁵.

According to researchers who believe that the Saroy clan migrated to the Zarafshan valley from the Balkh province, representatives of this tribe initially lived in the vast pastures of northern Afghanistan alongside dozens of other nomadic Uzbek tribes during the early periods of Shaybanid, Ashtarkhanid, and Manghit rule. As a result of various developments in the region, they eventually crossed the Amu Darya River and migrated through the Surkhan valley to settle in the Qashqadaryo and Zarafshan oases. At the same time, a significant portion of the Saroy clan continued to reside in their native villages in northern Afghanistan, particularly in the Balkh province and surrounding areas⁵⁶.

The Saroy clan lived in the vast pastures between the Jom area and Kattakurgan district in the Samarkand region, where they established close ties with the local Naiman population. By the 1870s, the number of Saroy clan members living in this part of the Samarkand region exceeded 2,000, and they were settled across 13 villages. Among them was a group known as “Balkhi,” which indicates that a portion of the Saroy clan had roots in northern Afghanistan⁵⁷.

In fact, written sources and ethnographic materials suggest that several other Uzbek tribes—such as the *Ming*, *Yuz* (Juz), and *Dorman*—also lived in northern Afghanistan before establishing villages in the Samarkand, Jizzakh, and surrounding regions. The question of whether Uzbek tribes migrated from northern Afghanistan to the Qashqadaryo–Zarafshan oases or vice versa—from

⁵⁵ Ханыков Н. Описание Бухарского ханства. – Санкт-Петербург, 1843. – С. 64.

⁵⁶ Jarring G. On the distribution of Turk tribes in Afghanistan an attempt at a preliminary classification. – Lund, Leipzig, 1939. – P. 62.

⁵⁷ Гребенкин А.Д. Узбеки. Русский Туркестан. Вып.2. – СПб., 1872. 6. – С. 89.

these oases to northern Afghanistan—is not unresolvable. Over the past four to five centuries, it was common for Uzbek tribal groups to acquire settlements across regions ruled by Uzbek dynasties. Due to the absence of significant political barriers, Uzbek tribes—and the broader population—moved freely across territories.

During the Shaybanid era, when Uzbek tribes that supported the dynasty closely crossed the Syr Darya and began moving southward, they first settled in the Zarafshan valley, later in the Qashqa and Surkhan oases, and eventually in northern Afghanistan. Notably, in northern Afghanistan and Khorasan, nomadic Uzbek tribes such as *Ming*, *Yuz*, *Naiman*, and many others—who formed the backbone of the Shaybanid state's military—began to settle in the Balkh region and its surroundings. As previously mentioned, after several centuries and due to various political developments, a significant portion of these tribes migrated from northern Afghanistan to the southern and central parts of the Amu Darya–Syr Darya interfluve.

On one hand, internal political changes within the Uzbek khanates, including the rise of new khanates, and on the other hand, the growing influence of Afghan tribes and their pressure on Uzbeks living in northern Afghanistan, caused part of the population to cross the Amu Darya and move via the Surkhan valley to settle in the central provinces of the Bukhara Emirate.

During the Bukhara Emirate period, the Saroy clan retained its influence in the political life of the state. This is confirmed by the fact that the Emirate's military system relied on the *elnavkar* tradition, in which tribal representatives served as the core of military units, and the Saroy were actively involved in this structure. Furthermore, high-ranking figures and elders from the Saroy clan held the privilege of participating in the *khan elevation* ceremony held in the city of Bukhara, during which a member of the Manghit dynasty was officially enthroned as Emir⁵⁸.

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⁵⁸ Андреев М.С. Чехович О.Д. Арк (кремль) Бухары в конце XIX – начале XX вв. Д., 1972. – С. 46.

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