

RESEARCH ARTICLE OPEN ACCESS

# Land, Waqf And Administrative Privilege: Documentary Evidence for Socio-Economic Dimensions of Ethnic Processes in Sixteenth-Seventeenth-Century Mawarannahr

 Akbar A. Idiev

Junior Research Fellow, Al-Biruni Institute of Oriental Studies, Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Received: 16 May 2026 Accepted: 12 June 2026 Published: 08 July 2026

## ABSTRACT

This article analyses archival-documentary evidence for the socio-economic dimensions of ethnic processes in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Mawarannahr. While chronicles usually mention ethnic groups during wars, dynastic struggles or appointments, documentary materials record landholding, waqf property, sale contracts, rental relations, commercial buildings, mills, caravanserais, tax privileges and service-based grants. The study focuses on four groups of documents: waqf deeds and waqf yarliks, land-sale and household-economic acts, in'am, suyurghal, tankha and administrative-legal grants, and the documentary complex connected with the Juybari sheikhs. Using comparative documentary analysis, the article argues that ethnic processes in Mawarannahr should not be interpreted only as migration or military incorporation. The documents reveal how military-political groups, ruling families, religious landholders and urban economic actors interacted through property, legal rights, waqf institutions and fiscal privileges. The 1514 Waqf-nama associated with the Shibanid madrasa, Juybari commercial and land records, and published Bukhara and Samarkand acts demonstrate that integration took place through land, trade infrastructure, agricultural production and urban property as well as through political service. Documentary sources therefore correct and supplement narrative chronicles: they show the economic foundations behind social incorporation and make visible forms of participation that political histories rarely describe in detail.

**Keywords:** Mawarannahr; waqf; Juybari sheikhs; suyurghal; tankha; landholding; Shibanids; documentary sources; ethnic processes; Bukhara Khanate.

## INTRODUCTION

Most narrative sources for sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Mawarannahr speak about ethnic groups when they appear in war, court politics, dynastic rivalry or provincial administration. Such sources are indispensable, but they rarely explain how new or politically active groups entered local economic life. The question remains: through what mechanisms did military-political actors become connected to land, trade, waqf, taxation, urban property and agricultural production? Archival-documentary

sources offer a different perspective because they preserve legal and economic transactions rather than only political events.

This article turns to waqf deeds, sale acts, agrarian documents, service grants and the Juybari archive to examine the material side of ethnic processes. The working hypothesis is that social integration in Mawarannahr occurred not only through conquest, migration or military service, but also through the acquisition and redistribution

of land, the legal protection of property, the endowment of religious institutions, the transfer of shops and commercial buildings, and the granting of fiscal or administrative privileges.

The article has three objectives. The first is to classify the documentary materials relevant to the study of ethnic processes. The second is to identify what these documents add to the evidence of chronicles. The third is to show that the economic and legal dimension of integration is essential for understanding the transformation of tribal-military groups into local social strata during the Shibanid and Ashtarkhanid periods.

## **METHODS**

The materials are divided into four documentary categories. The first category consists of waqf deeds and waqf yarliks. The most important example is the 1514 Waqf-nama connected with the Shibanid madrasa and the endowment of property associated with Mehr Sultan Khanim. According to the published analysis of R. G. Mukminova, this document formalised substantial movable and immovable property for the benefit of a madrasa and related religious institutions.

The second category includes land-sale, rental and household-economic documents. These are represented by the Juybari archive, Bukhara acts published by O. D. Chekhovich, and Samarkand documents concerning the property relations of the descendants of Khoja Ahrar. These acts record land, shops, agricultural tools, mills, trade facilities, crop-sharing arrangements and other economic details that are usually absent from chronicles.

The third category consists of in'am, suyurghal, tankha and administrative-legal yarliks. These documents are crucial for understanding how rulers transferred revenue rights, land income, tax privileges or conditional benefits to individuals and service groups. In this article, the term 'ruler's fiscal-land fund' is preferred to the modern expression 'state land', because the early modern Bukhara context cannot be equated with a modern bureaucratic state.

The fourth category is the documentary complex connected with the Juybari sheikhs. This material is particularly valuable because it links religious authority, landholding, trade, urban property and dependent populations. It shows how a religious-economic stratum accumulated and

managed property across Bukhara, Samarkand, Nasaf, Marv and other regions.

The method is comparative documentary analysis. Each document group was examined according to the type of transaction, the social actors involved, the property or right being transferred, the geographical reference, and the potential connection with ethnic or military-political groups. The analysis then compares these findings with the patterns visible in narrative sources.

## **RESULTS**

The waqf materials show that the Shibanid ruling environment became tied to local society through religious endowment and property management. The 1514 Waqf-nama associated with the Shibanid madrasa reportedly included more than 140 land plots, shops, caravanserais, mills, paper-production workshops, covered markets and other immovable properties around Samarkand, Qarshi and Shahrisabz. This evidence suggests that Shibanid power was not sustained only by military coercion. It was also institutionalised through endowed property, urban infrastructure and religious-educational patronage.

Land-sale and commercial documents reveal a second mechanism: the entry of military-political actors into urban and agrarian property relations. The Juybari materials mention cases in which amirzadas and biys appear among owners or sellers of economically valuable property. A particularly important case is the sale of thirty commercial premises by Dost-Muhammad-biy, the son of Janvafa-biy, to the Juybari sheikhs. Such evidence shows that military elites were not separate from the urban economy; they could own, transfer and monetise commercial buildings.

The household-economic details in sale documents also illuminate rural production. One document records the sale of a house and land in the village of Mudin together with two pairs of oxen and agricultural tools such as a plough and shovel. Although such details are not always common, they help reconstruct the material basis of agrarian life and show that property transactions could include both land and productive equipment.

The in'am, suyurghal, tankha and yarlik materials reveal how service, loyalty and political rank could be converted into economic rights. Earlier scholarship has interpreted suyurghal as a later development of the iqta' tradition, marked by fiscal, judicial or administrative privileges,

while tankha became more prominent as a conditional and often temporary grant in later periods. For the present topic, these grants are important because they demonstrate that military-administrative circles gained a material base through revenue rights and privileged access to land income.

The Juybari archive demonstrates the scale of religious-economic power. The working dissertation section notes data according to which Khoja Muhammad Islam

possessed a large agrarian and pastoral economy, while Khoja Sa'd's holdings included land, sheep, camels, horses, baths, sardabas, caravanserais and considerable annual revenue. These figures must be verified against the cited dissertation and its primary sources, but even as a working dataset they show the enormous economic reach of the Juybari household. This reach created spaces where different social and ethnic groups could be incorporated as tenants, dependants, sellers, buyers, servants, artisans, herders or rural producers.

**Table 1. Documentary categories and historical significance**

Document type	Examples in the corpus	Historical value for ethnic-process analysis
Waqf deeds and waqf yarliks	1514 Waqf-nama associated with the Shibanid madrasa and Mehr Sultan Khanim	Show dynastic and military-political integration through endowed land, shops, mills, markets and religious institutions.
Land-sale and household-economic acts	Juybari archive, Bukhara acts, Samarkand documents	Record property transfers, rural equipment, shops, trade facilities and urban-rural economic relations.
In'am, suyurghal, tankha and administrative yarliks	Service grants and revenue-right documents	Reveal how political service and loyalty were converted into land income, fiscal privilege and administrative rights.
Juybari documentary complex	Documents on land, trade buildings, livestock, caravanserais, sardabas and dependent populations	Expose the economic networks linking religious elites, military actors, rural producers and urban property.

**DISCUSSION**

The documentary evidence changes the interpretation of ethnic processes in Mawarannahr. If one relies only on chronicles, ethnic history appears mainly as a sequence of campaigns, alliances, rebellions, appointments and court rivalries. Documents show another layer: the same society was being organised through property rights, waqf administration, fiscal privilege, agricultural production and urban commerce. This means that incorporation into Mawarannahr society must be studied as a legal and economic process as well as a political one.

The waqf materials are especially important because they show how dynastic and military-political authority entered religious and urban institutions. Endowing land, shops, mills and caravanserais did more than support a madrasa. It created a durable legal framework that tied ruling families and their circles to local property, urban service networks, religious legitimacy and economic

redistribution. Such documents therefore help explain how externally mobile or newly dominant groups could become embedded in settled society.

The Juybari materials reveal a different but related process. The Juybari sheikhs were not simply religious figures; they controlled extensive economic resources. Their documents show interaction among religious elites, military elites, rural producers, merchants and dependent groups. This intersection is central for understanding ethnic processes because it shows how social boundaries were negotiated through property and labour arrangements rather than only through genealogy or military service.

The evidence for suyurghal and tankha also requires conceptual caution. These terms should not be reduced to a simple category of 'landownership'. They could involve revenue rights, tax exemptions, administrative authority, service obligations and political loyalty. For this reason, they are best analysed as instruments through which the ruler redistributed access to resources and secured the

service of military-administrative actors. In the context of ethnic history, such instruments help explain how leading groups acquired a stable economic position.

A limitation of the present draft is that several details are taken from the dissertation section and its footnotes. Before submission to a journal, the exact page and folio references should be checked against the original editions, manuscripts or archival publications. The article also avoids claiming that every document explicitly names an ethnic group. Its argument is more precise: documentary sources reveal the economic and legal environment in which politically active groups were incorporated into local society.

## CONCLUSION

Archival-documentary sources are essential for reconstructing the socio-economic dimension of ethnic processes in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Mawarannahr. Waqf deeds, sale acts, agrarian documents, service grants and Juybari materials demonstrate that integration occurred through land, waqf, commerce, taxation, revenue rights and urban infrastructure. These mechanisms are largely invisible if ethnic history is reconstructed only from narrative chronicles.

The central finding is that groups associated with the Shibanid and Ashtarkhanid political order became part of local society through more than military service. They entered property relations, endowed religious institutions, held or transferred commercial assets, gained conditional fiscal rights and interacted with powerful religious-economic households. Therefore, ethnic processes in Mawarannahr should be understood as a combination of migration, military incorporation, administrative service and socio-economic integration. Future work should create a document-based database of names, offices, property types, locations and legal formulas, and each citation should be verified directly against the original publication or manuscript.

## REFERENCES

1. Abdurayimov, M. 'Pozdneishie upominaniia o soiurgale.' *Obshchestvennye nauki v Uzbekistane*, no. 2, 1961.
2. Chekhovich, O. D., ed. *Dokumenty k istorii agrarnykh otnoshenii v Bukharskom khanstve: Akty feodal'noi*

sobstvennosti na zemliu XVII-XIX vv. Tashkent, 1954.

3. Chekhovich, O. D. *Samarkandskie dokumenty XV-XVI vv.* Moscow: Nauka, 1974.
4. Fazlallah ibn Ruzbihan Isfahani. *Mikhman-name-yi Bukhara.* Moscow: Nauka, 1976.
5. Hafiz Tanish Bukhari. *Abdulla-nama.* Tashkent, 2000, vol. 2.
6. Ivanov, P. P. *Khoziaistvo dzhuybarskikh sheikhov.* Moscow-Leningrad, 1954.
7. *Iz arkhiva sheikhov Dzhuybari: Materialy po zemel'nyim i torgovym otnosheniam Srednei Azii XVI v.* Moscow-Leningrad: Academy of Sciences of the USSR, 1938.
8. Khoja Samandar Termezi. *Dastur al-muluk.* Tashkent, 1997.
9. Mahmud ibn Wali. *More tain otnositel'no doblestei blagorodnykh: Geografiia.* Tashkent: Fan, 1977.
10. Mukminova, R. G. *K istorii agrarnykh otnoshenii v Uzbekistane XVI v. Po materialam 'Vakf-name'.* Tashkent: Nauka, 1966.
11. Muhammad Amin Bukhari. *Muhit al-tawarikh.* Translated and annotated by D. Yusupova and U. Hamroev. Tashkent, 2020.
12. Muhammad Talib. *Matlab al-talibin.* Translated by Gh. Karimiy and E. Mirkomilov. Tashkent: Mawarannahr, 2016.
13. Muhammad Yusuf Munshi. *Mukim-khanskaia istoriia.* Tashkent, 1956.
14. Petrushevsky, I. P. 'K istorii instituta soiurgala.' *Sovetskoe vostokovedenie*, no. 6, 1949.
15. Tursunov, E. A. *Istoriia slozheniia i razvitiia feodal'nykh khoziaistv dzhuybarskikh sheikhov v XVI-XVII vv.* Candidate dissertation, Dushanbe, 2021.
16. *Waqf-nama-yi hazrat-i Shaybani Khan.* As discussed in R. G. Mukminova, *K istorii agrarnykh otnoshenii v*

