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THE IMPACT OF SCHOLARS ON SPIRITUAL AND EDUCATIONAL LIFE IN THE SHERABAD OASIS FROM THE 16th TO THE EARLY 20th CENTURY

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Abstract. *In the historical memory of the Sherabad oasis, the activities of scholars are often interpreted within the framework of individual biographies, while their systematic nature—combining education, ethics, and cultural exchange—has not been sufficiently revealed. The purpose of the study is to determine the mechanisms of influence exerted by ulama, madrasa teachers, scribes, and representatives of Sufi traditions on spiritual and educational life from the 16th to the early 20th century. Based on source criticism, historical-comparative analysis, and a hermeneutic approach, chronological data, waqf records, manuscript traditions, and archival materials were compared. As a result of the analysis, four main directions of scholarly activity were identified: organizing education, strengthening ethical norms, producing and distributing manuscripts, and developing interregional scholarly ties. Comparison showed that traditional education around madrasas and mosques predominated in the 16th–18th centuries, whereas private schools, reading practices, and new forms of communication expanded in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The heritage of scholars was not limited to religious knowledge; it also served to preserve social solidarity and historical memory. The scientific contribution of the study lies in proposing a model that interprets educational processes in the history of the oasis not as individual figures, but as a complex of interconnected institutions and practices.*

Keywords: *archival materials, historical-comparative analysis, manuscript tradition, scholarly-educational institutions, Sherabad oasis, source criticism, ulama.*

Аннотация. *Историческая память Шерабадского оазиса нередко связывает деятельность учёных преимущественно с биографиями отдельных лиц, оставляя в стороне её системное воздействие на образование, нравственные нормы и культурный обмен. Цель работы — выявить механизмы влияния улемов, преподавателей медресе, переписчиков и представителей суфийской традиции на духовно-просветительскую жизнь в XVI — начале XX века. Сочетание источниковедческого, историко-сравнительного и герменевтического подходов позволило сопоставить хроники, вакуфные записи, рукописную традицию и архивные материалы. Анализ выделил 4 направления деятельности: организацию обучения, укрепление нравственных норм, создание и распространение рукописей, развитие межрегиональных научных связей. Сравнение показало преобладание традиционного образования при медресе и мечетях в XVI–XVIII веках и расширение частных школ,*

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чтения и новых форм общения в XIX — начале XX века. Наследие учёных способствовало не только передаче религиозных знаний, но и общественной солидарности, сохранению исторической памяти. Научный вклад состоит в объяснении просветительских процессов оазиса как взаимосвязанной системы институтов и практик, а не как совокупности отдельных биографий.

Ключевые слова: архивные материалы, историко-сравнительный анализ, источниковедение, научно-просветительские институты, рукописная традиция, улемы, Шерабадский оазис.

INTRODUCTION

In the 16th to early 20th century, the impact of scholarly activity on the spiritual and educational life of the Sherabad oasis remains an insufficiently highlighted problem in historical continuity; the historical geography and chronological sources of the oasis require a reassessment of this issue [1]. Studies on education, religious institutions, and social relations in the territories of the Bukhara Khanate indicate the necessity of studying the Sherabad oasis based on separate source criticism [2]. This study examines the scholars and the process of spiritual and educational life in the Sherabad oasis, focusing on the interrelation of education, ethical views, and educational traditions. The purpose of the study is to determine the historical mechanisms of influence of scholars; the tasks are: 1) to classify sources; 2) to determine periodization; 3) to compare educational activities; 4) to interpret the continuity of spiritual views. Based on prosopography, source studies, historical-comparative analysis, and hermeneutics, at least 12 sources, including archival documents of the National Archive of Uzbekistan (UzMA), written and literary texts, are analyzed as primary and secondary sources [3]. By comparing the historiography of the independence period with Soviet-era interpretations, concrete evidence of the activity of scholars is revealed in subsequent analyses [4].

RESEARCH RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The historical-comparative approach outlined in the previous section made it possible to determine the activity of scholars in the Sherabad oasis in inter-period continuity. Document-based analysis using at least 12 sources, including primary sources (archives), written sources, and literary texts, showed that the dissemination of knowledge took place in mosque, madrasa, and neighborhood (mahalla) environments. Comparing chronological sources and secondary sources, it was observed that in the 16th–18th centuries, scholars connected religious knowledge with ethical norms, while in the 19th and early 20th centuries, the content of education expanded with social needs [5]. This periodization implies that spiritual and educational life in the Sherabad oasis was continuous, while its forms changed depending on historical conditions.

In literary texts read based on the criteria of manuscript studies (codicology), couplets (bayts) concerning teacher-student relations, honesty, labor, and collective responsibility were singled out as a separate semantic layer. When interpreting the figurative meaning of the bayts, scholars appear not merely as disseminators of knowledge, but as social mediators



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setting ethical guidelines [1]. Such an interpretation of manuscript traditions, harmonized with textology and source criticism, demonstrates that oral and written forms of enlightenment complemented one another [3].

Epigraphic analysis and historical-geographical data revealed that the activity of scholars was linked to cultural exchange within the oasis. Inscriptions formed around mosques, madrasas, and shrines combined religious knowledge with local memory, genealogy, and community values; this process conceptually matches observations on the urban-cultural environment in the territory of the Bukhara Khanate [2]. While religious and educational activities were depicted within ideological limitations in Soviet-era documents, the historiography of the independence period focuses on restoring manuscript and local memory layers [6]. Therefore, the heritage of scholars in the Sherabad oasis is evaluated as a historical phenomenon combining education, ethical views, and cultural exchange, and its content is interpreted in continuous connection with modern approaches aimed at preserving national culture [7].

CONCLUSION

Source studies, prosopography, and codicological observations made it possible to classify the activities of scholars in the Sherabad oasis through a complex of chronological sources, archival documents, and manuscripts. As a result of periodization, educational activity in the 16th to early 20th centuries was explained by changing forms of school, madrasa, and teacher-student relations, and historical-comparative analysis determined their integral role in spiritual and educational life. The heritage of scholars is assessed as a historical factor ensuring the continuity of ethical views, knowledge transmission, and local memory in the Sherabad oasis. In the next stage, it is advisable to compare the funds of UzMA with regional state archives in terms of collections (fond), inventories (opis), files (delo), and sheets (varaq), deepening the interpretation of women's education and interregional scholarly ties in the historiography of the independence period.

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