

ONE OF THE UZBEK CLANS: WHO ARE THE UZ?

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Annotation. *This article discusses the ethnic history of the Uz tribe, which played an important role in the formation of the Uzbek people, based on historical and ethnographic data.*

It provides information about the regions where this tribe lived, its relations with other clans and tribes, its occupations, political history, and economy.

Keywords: *clan, Uz, Kipchak, Alan, Az, Uz, Oghuz, tribe, Kashgari.*

In the process of formation of the Central Asian peoples, including the Uzbek people, the ancient Turkic tribe of the *Uz* actively participated. A significant portion of the *Uz* moved westward during the 10th–11th centuries and settled in Eastern Europe, with some groups reaching as far as Western Europe. Over time, they assimilated into the local populations. The part of the *Uz* that remained in Central Asia joined the Uzbek ethnic structure as early as the early Middle Ages, making the study of their ethnic history highly relevant.

Information about the ethnic history of the *Uz* tribe can be found in the works of the famous linguist Mahmud al-Kashgari (11th century), Arab historian al-Masudi (10th century), Byzantine historian Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (9th century), Armenian historian Matthew of Edessa (11th century), Attaliates (11th century), Skylitzes (11th century), and Anna Komnene (12th century). Additionally, various scholars such as G.Z. Bayer, D.A. Khvolson, F. Sum, S.M. Solovyov, N.M. Karamzin, M.P. Pogodin, F. Brun, P. Golubovsky, N.A. Aristov, V.V. Bartold, S.A. Pletneva, S. Ogajonov, D.A. Rasovsky, and R.A. Ageeva have also written about the *Uz*.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Russian ethnographer K.L. Zadykhina conducted special research on the ethnic history of the *Uz* and published an interesting article about the *Uz* of lower Kashkadarya based on ethnographic fieldwork. Between 1960 and 1990, the renowned ethnographer and academician K. Shoniyoov published several articles on the ethnic history of the *Uz*, which were also reflected in his major monograph. Prominent ethnogenesis researcher academician A. Asqarov included important information about the “*Uz*” and “*Az*” tribes in his monographs. In his "Brief Annotated Dictionary of Ethnography" and monograph, O. Buriyev also provided brief information about the *Uz*.

Researcher U. Nosirov discussed the ethnic history of the *Uz* tribe in his monograph.

Ethnologist A. Qayumov authored the article "*Uz and Az*" in the "Ethnic Atlas of Uzbekistan."

In their monographs, ancient historians O. Mavlonov and A. Raimqulov mentioned medieval trade centers such as Hazor Buqo and Qaratepa located in the Kokdala oasis. However, a comprehensive and holistic study of the ethnic history and ethnoculture of the *Uz* tribe has not yet been conducted.

Therefore, this pressing topic was chosen as the object of research, aiming to highlight the ethnic history of the *Uz* tribe through available sources, historical and ethnographic literature, fieldwork data, and other materials.

According to academician A. Asqarov, the *Uz* and *Az* tribes, which belong to Turkic ethnic groups, played a role in the formation of the Uzbek people. However, existing data about them are characterized by diverse interpretations and hypotheses. Historical-ethnographic works from the 1860s–1880s (by G.Z. Bayer, D.A. Khvolson, F. Sum, S.M. Solovyov, and others) mentioned the *Uz* as a branch of the Kipchaks. N.M. Karamzin, M.P. Pogodin, F. Brun, and P. Golubovsky considered them part of the Torks based on Russian chronicles. I.N. Zhitsky described the *Uz* as a community within the Pechenegs, while N.A. Aristov, V.V. Bartold, S.A. Pletneva, and S.G. Ogajonov considered them part of the Oghuz tribes. D.A. Rasovsky argued against this, claiming that the *Uz* were not Oghuz but a separate community among the Torks.

According to M.M. Ermatov, the ethnonyms “*Az*” and “*Uz*” refer to the same tribe, from which the word *Uzbek* originated. R.A. Ageeva also emphasized that the ethnonym *Uzbek* comes from the terms “*Az*” and “*Uz*.” According to academician K. Shoniyozov, however, “*Az*” and “*Uz*” were distinct tribes. He argued that it is incorrect to classify the *Uz* as subgroups of Torks, Kipchaks, Pechenegs, or Oghuz. Historical-ethnographic analysis suggests that the *Uz* were once an independent confederation of Turkic-speaking tribal communities.

Historical-ethnographic sources show that in the mid-8th century, the *Uz* lived in the middle and lower reaches of the Syr Darya. Starting from the 760s, most of them migrated to the northwestern regions of the Aral Sea. This may have been due to the Karluks’ conquest of the Semirechye region and the formation of the Oghuz tribal union in the middle and lower Syr Darya.

However, some *Uz* remained in their homelands and came under Oghuz influence, later under Kipchak influence from the early 11th century. The presence of the *Uz* ethnonym among the Kipchaks also supports this. Their presence is also confirmed by toponyms along the Syr Darya—there was a medieval town called *Uzgend* between the cities of Sighnaq and Barchinlikent.

From the mid-9th to the early 11th centuries, the *Uz* gained strength and became politically independent, not subordinate to any other group. They competed militarily with their western neighbors, the Pechenegs. Their rise is mentioned by Byzantine historians Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (9th century), Attaliates (11th century), Skylitzes, and Anna Komnene (12th century). Arab historian al-Masudi (10th century) and Armenian historian Matthew of Edessa (11th century) also recorded information about the *Uz*.

In the late 9th and early 10th centuries, the *Uz* allied with the Khazars against the Pechenegs and Kanglis, forcing the latter to abandon their lands and migrate to the right banks of the Volga and into southern Rus’ steppes. According to Constantine Porphyrogenitus, the Pechenegs initially lived between the Atel (Volga) and Geikha (Ural) rivers near the *Uz*, but were driven out by the *Uz*-Khazar alliance. After this, the *Uz* controlled these territories. By the early 10th century, the *Uz* dominated the lands between the Ural and Volga rivers and subordinated remaining Pecheneg and Kangli tribes.

However, the *Uz* were eventually weakened by the Kipchaks. In the mid-10th century, a large group of *Uz* crossed the Volga and settled on the right banks of the Don River. In 1034, they clashed again with the Pechenegs, driving them from the steppes between the Dnieper and

Danube and settling there themselves. Those remaining in the Volga-Ural region were pushed into southern Rus' by the Kipchaks in the early 11th century.

The Uz who had settled along the Dnieper, Danube, and Don rivers frequently raided neighboring Rus' principalities. In 1060, the Rus' states united and dealt a major blow to the Uz.

By 1064, about 600,000 Uz families were forced to cross the Danube and seek refuge in Byzantine lands. There, they submitted to Emperor Alexios and served in the Byzantine army.

Later, they merged with the Ottomans and contributed to the formation of modern Turkish identity. Ottoman archival documents from the 16th–18th centuries mention the ethnonym *Qarauch* (Karauz), indicating their continued presence.

In later centuries, many of the western Uz were assimilated into Danubian ethnic groups.

For example, the *Gagauz* people living in Moldova, Romania, Hungary, and the Balkans are considered descendants of these Uz.

In conclusion, the Uz (or Oghuz) are an ancient branch of the Turkic tribes. As a result of neighboring influences and political processes, they have historically lived in Central Asia, the Northern Caspian region, around the Volga River, and along the Black Sea coast. Today, they reside in the Zarafshan and Qashqadaryo valleys of Uzbekistan.