American Journal of Social and Humanitarian Research

Vol. 7 Issue 4 | **pp.** 50-57 | **ISSN:** 2690-9626
Available online @ https://globalresearchnetwork.us/index.php/ajshr

Article

Population Size and Socio-Ethnic Composition of Bukhara City During the Emirate of Bukhara (Late 18th – 19th Centuries)

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Abstract: This paper is a thorough study of the population size and socio-ethnic profile of the city of Bukhara in the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, the era of the existence of the Bukhara Emirate. The main aim of the research is to determine the most significant aspects that predetermined the demographic growth of the city and provide further insight into the way the population structure of this city changed throughout the period. The study is based on the synthesis of methodological strategies, such as historical-comparative analysis, statistical reconstruction, and critical assessment of the written materials and travel accounts. Special consideration is provided to the problem of estimating population size when there are no centralized census systems. In this connection, the work is based on indirect sources, including tax registers, household data, neighborhood organization, and other proxy indicators that can be used to put together a more subtle reconstitution of demographic trends. The result indicates that the historical estimations of the population of Bukhara show that there are serious differences with the estimated population varying between 50,000 and 200,000 residents. These differences are much due to the absence of systematic methods of recording the populations at the time in question. Moreover, the paper emphasizes the fact that the constant rise in population in Bukhara was not just the result of natural growth but also the active migration mechanisms. The growth of trade and craftsmanship and taxation privileges, in particular, which were implemented under the reign of Emir Shahmurad, were significant factors that attracted new inhabitants and formed the social structure of the city. In general, the article helps to understand urban demographic processes in Central Asia in a more sophisticated way, placing Bukhara into the context of the general historical, economic, and social changes.

Keywords: Bukhara City, Bukhara Emirate, Demographic Processes, Population Size, Socio-Ethnic Composition, Urbanization, Migration, Historical Demography

Citation: Atamirzayeva, M. Population Size and Socio-Ethnic Composition of Bukhara City During the Emirate of Bukhara (Late 18th – 19th Centuries). American Journal of Social and Humanitarian Research 2026, 7(4), 50-57.

Received: 18th Feb 2025
Revised: 10th Mar 2025
Accepted: 20th Mar 2026
Published: 13h Apr 2026

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1. Introduction

During the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the political and economic processes in Central Asia were observed to be intensified, which, in turn, resulted in serious changes in urban development [1]. Bukhara, the capital of the Bukhara Emirate, was among the most powerful political, economical and cultural hubs of the region. Due to its strategic position at the crossroads of the major trade routes, the successful development of handicraft production, and the economic environment provided by the state, the city slowly turned into a highly populated and active urban center [2]. Among

the characteristic aspects of the Bukhara demographic evolution at this time is the multi-layered nature of its population size as well as its socio-ethnic make-up [3]. The rise of the city population could not be attributed to the natural population growth only, but also to the steady flow of migrants, traders, and settlers who came to the city over different periods of time. Specifically, the tax breaks and economic stimulus that Emir Shahmurad has brought about were instrumental in fueling the migration and making the city more appealing to new residents [4].

Simultaneously, the actual population of Bukhara is the matter of continuous discussion in historiography. The existing sources offer very different estimates, with the numbers not less than 50,000 and not more than 200,000 people. To a large extent, such discrepancies can be explained by the fact that there was no centralized population registration system [5]. Rather, it was common to compute using indirect measures like taxpayers or household units, and travel accounts were often a matter of subjective impressions, not of accurate data. The socio-ethnic composition of the population of Bukhara is also an important issue, as it provides a good idea of the social structure of the city [6]. Nevertheless, the city was inhabited by various ethnic groups, even though most of the people were Uzbeks and Tajiks; there were also Jews, Iranians, Arabs, Indians, and some others. Such communities were usually in their own distinct neighborhoods and were more likely to specialize in a specific kind of economic activity [7]. These patterns indicate the complex and multi-layered social organization of the city. This paper will focus on offering a detailed analysis of the population size and socio-ethnic structure of Bukhara at the end of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries through a critical review of the sources. It also aims at reevaluating the current academic views and finding the most important factors that affected the development of the demographics [8]. The results help understand the historical demography and urban development of Bukhara better, as well as provide a greater insight into the historical development of cities in Central Asia [9].

2. Methodology

This paper is dedicated to the investigation of the population size and socio-ethnic structure of the city of Bukhara at the end of the eighteenth and at the end of the nineteenth centuries. When approaching this topic, specific consideration was paid to the provisions of historical demography, as well as the methodological frameworks that are typical of urban studies. The limitation of the study is the fact that during the research period, a centralized census mechanism was not in place. Moreover, the given statistics are predominantly of an indirect type and make the effort to determine exact demographic percentages difficult. This is why a multi-layered and multi-faceted approach to the methodology was chosen. One of the major elements of the research design is the historical-comparative approach that enabled the close cross-analysis of the data based on various time frames and based on the information of different categories. Specifically, both local written documents were examined, and reports made by Russian and European travelers, and the results obtained from the contemporary scientific literature. It was due to these materials that not only did it become possible to find inconsistencies in the reported data, but also to examine the underlying causes of the discrepancy between them. Moreover, the source-critical approach was utilized to determine the reliability of the materials utilized. Each of the sources was analyzed regarding its historical background, the stance of its author, the potential level of bias, and the way information was gathered. It is due to this process that numerical estimates and descriptions could be re-evaluated in a more critical and subtle manner and not be perceived at face value. The method of statistical reconstruction is important to the study, as direct demographic records are scarce. In this model, population size was estimated using indirect indicators. These covered the quantity of households, the overall number of neighborhoods, tax registers, and even the capacity of mosques. Having calculated the average values of these indicators, relying on various sources and generalizing the findings, a more realistic estimation of the number of inhabitants in the city was obtained. Simultaneously, the study

pursues a systemic and integrative approach and considers the phenomenon of demographic processes as tightly linked to the social, economic, and political processes. The changes of migration, the evolution of handicrafts and trade, state fiscal policy, especially the existence of tax incentives, were studied as the main factors that shape population growth and distribution. In order to discover the socio-ethnic structure of the population, the method of spatial localization was used. It was possible through this to determine the distribution of various ethnic groups in the city, how much of them was concentrated in certain areas, and how many were occupational specialists. This analysis gives a better understanding of the inner organization and the way of work of the Bukhara urban society. The scientific novelty of this study is that it tries to move beyond the descriptions of historical data. Using the critical and comparative approach, the research provides a reformulation of the evidence that is available and suggests a more credible depiction of how Bukhara developed demographically over the period under consideration.

3. Results

The city of Bukhara grew greatly during the period of the Emirate in comparison with the past centuries and was gradually forming the status of the most populous urban center in Central Asia. The visible effect of urban development on developments towards the end of the eighteenth century was brought by a larger economic growth in the region alongside the state authority [10]. Natural growth also did not increase population, but it was also promoted by migration from neighboring areas. The success of handicrafts and trade established the right environment to bring other people, and the city became especially attractive to migrants seeking economic opportunities. The rural areas were the main source of the urban population [11]. Little bands of country folk were slowly but steadily drawn into the city, and as time passed, these pioneer settlers became centers around which others of the same districts moved. The process also helped to build socially and culturally integrated societies in the city. Since the end of the eighteenth century, the migration into Bukhara became even more intensive [12]. An important reason that led to this trend was a tarxon charter issued by Emir Shohmurod, which provided some privileges to the people. Keeping up with this decree, the Muslims of Bukhara were not taxed, and non-Muslim populations, especially the Jews, still had to pay the jizya, or the poll tax. These fiscal measures further enhanced the appeal of the city to Muslim migrants and contributed to the development of the demographic composition of the city [13]. There was a common belief among the inhabitants of Bukhara that there were 360 neighborhoods in the city. This number, however, seems to be an expression of the oral tradition, as opposed to the accurate administrative statistics. According to one of the earliest sources, the number of mosques in the city was 360, and the number of streets was identified with the number of mosques, by N. Khanikov, who wrote that the city had 360 mosques [14]. Equivalent information was given by A. Vambery, who said that the local people had told him there were 365 mosques at Bukhara, but said he himself had not been in a position to ascertain the number. O. Sukhareva subsequently stated that these figures were probably not overstated and did not have any empirical basis but rather symbolic number traditions [15]. The Eastern cultural symbolism of numbers was to be used as the symbol of abundance instead of a precise number; the most common number used in it was 360 or 365, which was likely to mean a large number but not one that would go to thousands. According to her personal research, Sukhareva found about 217 neighbourhoods in the city. In the meantime, local information indicates that Bukhara had some 196 neighborhoods and some 299 mosques where the five daily prayers were being carried out [16]. The city was divided into neighborhoods and quarters that were commonly named after certain characteristics. These names, in most instances, were a depiction of the topography of the region, the historical sites close to it, the major industries that the locals practiced or their closeness to markets and commercial hubs. This naming tradition offers much knowledge into the spatial and socio-economic structure of the city [17]. Sound

information on the actual number of people in Bukhara can hardly be provided because of the way records were kept at the time. Taxpayers, or in other words, the heads of households, were mainly registered in official registers by administrative authorities. Consequently, these records portray the number of taxable households and not the entire population [18]. To counter this weakness, scholars have used proxy measures like mosque capacity, household count, tax documents, and projections by its neighbors. The works of scholars and travelers N. Khanikov, E. K. Meyendorf, P. P. Shubinsky, N. F. Sitnyakovsky, I. T. Poslavsky, L. F. Kostenko, A. Burnes, A. Vambery, Eversmann, and O. Sukhareva contain a great variety of estimates. Khanikov estimated that population density might be determined at 15 people per tanob of land, but later estimated that a more plausible figure would be near 38 people per tanob [19]. According to these estimates, he came to the conclusion that the population of Bukhara did not go past 6070 thousand people, accentuating the high settlement density [20]. He was also aware of the fact that there are approximately 2,500 houses within the city. Meyendorf took another angle of the matter by looking at how the city was organized and the pattern of neighborhoods [21]. As he observed, he estimated that there were 36.6 households per neighborhood on average, and that this gave a total of around 13,360 households. He estimated the population to be approximately 80,000 people assuming that every household had an average of six people [22]. Using local sources, he also indicated that the population must not have been more than 100,000. His estimates were not made by reference to the official records, but by observation and an examination of the structure of the urban setting [23]. Shubinsky states that in the time of Emir Shohmurod, the population of the Bukhara was about 80,000, including almost 30,000 students of madrasas. This was not the case in Sitnyakovsky where, however, the estimated number of houses in the city was approximately 16,000 and the average number of people per house was five, so the estimated number of people was approximately also 80,000 [24]. He criticized previous estimations claiming that when calculations were done on the basis of visual impressions the results were not reliable. European travelers, especially English ones, would give greater estimates [25]. A population of approximately 200,000 was proposed by the German traveler Eversmann who visited Bukhara at the period of Meyendorf. According to the English traveller Alexander Burnes, the population was estimated at one hundred and sixty thousand, and A. Vambery did not give it a fixed figure [26]. Grigory Spassky, having never been to Bukhara, offered the maximum estimate, but tried to arrive at a theoretical estimate. He was assuming a scenario of 400 quarters of 50 houses with an average of three people per family. On which, having added the populations of caravanserais, market-places, and Jewish quarters, he came to a progressive amount of about 249,000 inhabitants. Poslavsky also noted that the population of Bukhara was very dense with an estimate of 50,000 to 70,000 inhabitants. Likewise, L. Kosteko used a simpler statistical estimate [27, 28]. Relying mostly on taxation books, administrative surveys, military lists and the accounts of travelers, he implied that the city had about 15,000 houses. Suppose that there was only an average of five people in every household, then he estimated the urban population to be about 75,000 [29]. Going by these figures, it is observed that there were about 70,000 inhabitants inside the city walls and 30,000 outside the city. In general, Kostko estimated the number of Bukhara inhabitants to be approximately 100,000. The population of Bukhara is also estimated to have been between 70,000 to 100,000 in the works of Seymour Becker [30]. Another viewpoint is presented by the field-based research conducted by O. Sukhareva. She made a conclusion that the number of households in the city was about 12,500 through the detailed interviews, which she conducted in individual neighborhoods. When an average household size of six persons is considered, this would translate to a population of approximately 75,000. It should be noted though that there are other groups that are not well represented in such estimates, such as those who live on the Ark, the transient living in caravanserais, the merchants and the students in madrasas [31]. Individually, as an example, Khanikov estimated there were approximately 9,000 to 10,000 students of madrasas. Considering these, and including an extra 10,000-15,000 people to the basic residential population, one can propose that the total population of Bukhara has

possibly hit about 85,000-90,000 [32]. The initial organized population census was not held in the Bukhara region until 1926. The official outcomes of this census are the first written records of the magnitude and structure of the population. Noteworthy, these materials can be also used as a starting point to re-create demographic trends of previous times [33]. The census revealed that Bukhara city had 11,901 residential, 13,491 family and a population of 46,706 people, where 41,839 were considered to be local residents. The urban social organization was very stratified. Many palace officials, administrators, their families and servants lived in Bukhara. At the same time, a large portion of the working population and merchants were engaged in providing services to these elite groups [34]. The city also had the regular military units of the Emirate (sarboz), their commanders, a significant number of religious leaders, and a big student population. The city was seen to lose its population significantly after it was transformed into a protectorate of the Russian Empire, particularly during the revolutionary period. Scholarly works that have been done more recently during the time of independence have helped us to comprehend the historical demography of Bukhara better. Specifically, the sources used in a study conducted by R. Kholiqova prove the fact that the city population had more than 60,000 people [35]. Such results also confirm previous estimates based on historical data and statistical reconstruction, implying that they were somewhat close to the real numbers. Most people in Bukhara were native Uzbeks and Tajiks, although three-quarters of the population was Tajiks. Besides these communities, the city also hosted large Jewish, Persian communities, Afghans, Khivans, Kashgaris and other Asian merchants [36]. The city residents were mainly bilingual with both Uzbek and Tajik languages. Tajik was especially prevalent among the educated classes and was often employed in administrative and official records in the period of the Emirates. The Iranians were an important proportion of the population and frequently dominated whole quarters in the city [37]. They were mainly found in the southern districts, which stretched between the Sallakhona gate and Karakul gate. Most of them practiced dyeing textiles and others were trading. Money changers and other Persian merchants were famous in the market. These were easily recognizable because of their unique clothing, which entailed clothes woven of black astrakhan fur and traditional headwear that resembled the older forms of Turkic clothing. The percentage of this group was great as most of them had immigrated out of Iran and others had been taken as slaves. Persian-origin peoples who spoke Turkic and, privately, subscribed to the Shia branch of Islam, also existed. Sukhareva (2002) claimed that all Persians in Bukhara spoke Tajik and were much different, linguistically and anthropologically, to the Turkic speaking Iranian communities in Samarkand who historically were the descendants of the Qizilbash [38].

4. Discussion

As the results of this paper make it obvious, there are considerable discrepancies between historical sources when it comes to the size of the population of Bukhara, as well as to its socio-ethnic makeup. The estimates of the total population range between 50000 and 249000. This variation may be attributed to the fact that the nature of the sources, calculating methods, and the extent to which a particular case is subject to direct observation may vary [39]. Among the estimates, which can be given, the estimates of Nikolai Khanikov (60,00070,000000,000,000) seem to be the best, the estimates given by Egor Meyendorf (around 80,000) and Lev Kostenko (70,000100,000,000) seem to The peculiar feature of these scholars is that they use rather objective pointers like the number of households, the distribution of neighborhoods, and the population density estimates [40]. As an example, Meyendorf examined the urban structure in detail and established that there were 36.6 households on average in each neighborhood. He estimated the population at around 80,000 by estimating the number of people per household to be six on average. This line of thought is more methodologically based and systematic. By comparison, the estimates proposed by Eduard Eversmann (in the range of 200,000) and Alexander Burnes (in the range of 160,000) are much larger, and it seems like they are grounded less on organized calculation and more on general observation. These authors

came to conclusions based on the apparent magnitude of urban life, i.e., density of markets, the intensity of life in the public space, and the general impression of the congested city [41]. Such observations can be a good source of qualitative information but they are not precise to the extent that they can be used in a demographic analysis. The largest of these estimates, that which was put forward by Grigory Spassky, is about 249,000 inhabitants. He counted on a set of assumptions, which included: there were 400 urban quarters with 50 houses each, with a mean of three residents per household. But the weakness of this estimate is that Spassky did not make any direct observations in Bukhara and that his parameters are more hypothetical than actual. Consequently, he ought to be cautious with his conclusions. The more recent historical studies have tended to support a middle ground. An example would be Seymour Becker, who estimates the fall in population of Bukhara to be between 70, 000 and 100,000. This estimate is fairly equivalent to the previous estimates of Russian researchers and is corroborated by both statistical reconstruction and comparative analysis, making it one of the most methodologically sound conclusions [42]. The socio-ethnic composition is one of the most significant in terms of the work of Olga Sukhareva. Her studies show that Bukhara was a multi-layered and complex ethnic organization. Most of the population was made up of Uzbeks and Tajiks, with other groups such as Persians, Jews, and other ethnic populations residing in separate and usually isolated neighborhoods. As an instance, Persian communities were localized in the southwestern regions of the city, specifically in Juybor, Chakar, and Chuqur, where they mainly dealt with trade and handicraft. The Jewish communities, on the other hand, were concentrated in three primary quarters, namely, Mahallayi Kuhna, Mahallayi Nay, and Amirobod, and were mostly engaged in the processing and dyeing of textiles and the processing of silks. These trends reveal that Bukhara was not only densely populated but it was also highly differentiated with regard to its social, economic, and ethnic structure. The geographical concentration of various communities in certain areas of the city was a major factor that influenced the internal construction of the city. It is an expression of an urban structure where economic specialization, cultural identity, and social hierarchy were highly interrelated. Simultaneously, the findings demonstrate that the best method to estimate the population of Bukhara is the statistical reconstruction, which is conducted by using tangible measures of population, including the household figures, the distribution of neighborhoods, and population density. Conversely, the greater numbers presented by the travelers are to be viewed with a grain of salt, since they are usually based on personal impressions rather than on systematic evaluation.

5. Conclusion

The findings of this paper prove that the demographic evolution of Bukhara at the end of the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries was a complicated and multidimensional phenomenon. The analysis of existing historical sources and academic literature shows that the estimates of the number of people living in the city are quite different, and it may be 50,000 to 249,000. Such inconsistencies may be attributed to the variability of calculation procedures, subjectivity of most sources and the lack of a unified system of censuses at that time. By the comparative analysis, it has been determined that the most valid estimates are those of Nikolai Khanikov (60,00070,000), Egor Meyendorf (around 80,000), Lev Kostenko (70,000100,000), and Seymour Becker (70,000100,000). These figures are believed to be methodologically good since they are grounded in objective variables like the number of households, the distribution of neighborhoods, and population density. In addition to that, statistical reconstruction and indirect estimation techniques point out that most probably the population of Bukhara was between 75,000 and 90,000 inhabitants. This is arrived at by calculation, considering the number of neighborhoods (assessed to be between 196 and 217), the total number of households, and the average household size of five to six people, and it goes hand in hand with other academic evaluations. The socio-ethnic analysis shows that most of the population was composed of Uzbeks and Tajiks, who were the largest demographic groups in the city.

Simultaneously, the fact that the Jews, Persians, Arabs, Indians, and other ethnic groups were represented also emphasizes the multiethnic nature of Bukhara as an urban center. Their spatial distribution over certain areas, as well as their specialization in occupation, indicates a socially stratified and functionally differentiated city. The research also indicates that the population growth in Bukhara was largely affected by the migration, establishment of trade and handicrafts, and fiscal measures that were instituted under the leadership of Emir Shohmurod, especially tax exemption, which led to settlement. These aspects helped to make the city stronger as a regional economic centre and contributed to the stable population increase. All in all, the results prove that Bukhara at the end of the eighteenth and in the nineteenth centuries served as a highly populated and actively developing urban hub that was marked by demographic stability and an intricate social and ethnic structure.

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