



FEATURES OF TRADITIONAL ECONOMY IN THE ETHNOECONOMY OF SURKHAN-SHERABAD OASIS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE XX CENTURY

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Abstract

The article analyzes the concept of ethno-economics, the role and significance of traditional farming in the ethno-economic system of the Surkhan-Sherabad oasis at the beginning of the 20th century, using the example of livestock breeding, in particular, the peculiar functions of this type of farming in the lifestyle of the population, livestock products and methods of their preparation, and types of home crafts based on livestock raw materials.

Keywords: economic ethnology, ethno-economics, traditional economy, oasis beilyks, livestock breeding, livestock products, commodity direction, home crafts.

Introduction

To date, ethnological science is a rather complex and branched system of knowledge. One of the sections of this science is economic ethnology (the economic and economic activities of ethnic groups) [13, 15–16]. Ethno-economics is a branch of economic science that studies economic relations that arise within a regional economic system under the influence of the traditional economic structure of an autochthonous ethnic group [11]. According to many researchers, ethno-economics is a complex, multi-stage system. It has three levels: macro: the economy of ethnically homogeneous countries; meso: the economy of regions, territories, and regions (territories of compact residence of ethnic communities); and micro: the economy of individual production units [3].

By ethno-economy, we mean a territorially localized segment of the economy that has historically developed on the basis of the economic structure of an ethnic group, characterized by the dominance of traditional, predominantly agrarian forms of economic activity and natural and small-scale forms of production, with the dominance of manual labor, underdeveloped exchange, closed households, the use of handicrafts, home-based work and etc. [6: 19]. V.N. Ovchinnikov and Yu.S. Kolesnikov understand ethno-economics as a segment of economic activity at the





mesoeconomic level, which is largely not observed by statistical and tax authorities and is a typical economic structure of the traditional economy. One of the most significant features of ethno-economics is the use of methods of conducting production activities, such as personal farming and household farming, that are traditional for ethnically expressed regions [9: 119].

Economic ethnology (ethno-economics) has its own resources, is closely related to the traditional economy and way of life of ethnic groups, is more flexible in nature, and occupies an important place in the production of products in the agricultural sector of the economy. It is known that in all eras, products made from livestock have been of great importance in the lifestyle of ethnic groups, regardless of economic activity.

In the history of Uzbekistan, a number of studies have been conducted on such issues as economic relations, changes in the agricultural sector, the traditional economic system of the Uzbek people, and the dynamics of its development. However, little attention has been paid to the study of trends in economic development in different historical periods using the example of individual regions. In particular, identifying economic relations that occupy a special place in the history of Uzbek statehood based on historical and chronological sequence, a territorial problem approach, allows us to enrich the history of our country with new information.

The range of scientific works devoted to regional ethno-economic problems is rather narrow. Russian scientists turned to regional aspects of ethno-economics at the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st centuries. Its territorial features have been studied in most detail in the works of economists in the South of Russia, where two centers of ethno-economic research at the regional level have emerged within the framework of Rostov and Volgograd State Universities.

This article uses such scientific research methods as historical, cultural, and comparative analysis, comparative statistical comparison, ethnographic observation, interviews with respondents, conversation, and descriptive research, as well as the method of field ethnographic research.

The natural, geographical, and climatic conditions of the territory are important factors influencing the economic activities and lifestyle of the population. Also, the type and composition of livestock on farms largely depend on the natural conditions and environmental factors of the region. As a rule, each type of livestock is distributed in its own agro-ecological zone [8: 25]. The natural conditions of the Surkhan-Sherabad oasis were very favorable for livestock raising; the presence of rich seasonal pastures and a warm climate allowed most areas to keep livestock on pasture all year round.





At the beginning of the 20th century, the population of this oasis mainly led a complex economy, combining agriculture with cattle breeding and home crafts. The ratio of these industries and methods of farming was different, which was determined by the diversity of natural conditions, the ethnic composition of the population, and its cultural traditions. In particular, the methods of livestock farming were different [5: 45].

The main place in the livestock farming of the oasis belonged to sheep breeding. The development of sheep farming was driven not only by the need for meat and milk but also by the need to obtain valuable raw materials such as wool and leather. Since ancient times, sheep breeding has also had a commercial direction. There was also great demand in the markets of Central Asia for live sheep, which were bought and fattened for meat and lard. Sheep of the Hisori breed were bred in the Denaus and Baysun beilyks by Uzbeks, who classified themselves as belonging to the Kungrad, Karluk, Turkic, Lakai, etc. tribal groups [23: 189]. A significant part of sheep wool, as well as products made from it (felts, rugs, carpets, saddle bags, bags of various sizes, etc.), went to the market, and the rest was used for the domestic needs of each family [22: 87, 90].

Analysis of the collected data shows that in the Surkhan-Sherabad oasis, livestock farming played an important role in the lifestyle of the population, more precisely in its economic and social life. The tasks of this type of traditional farming can be roughly divided into two categories: main tasks and additional tasks. The main tasks included a source of income, transportation, draft animals, food products, raw materials, and fertilizers, and additional tasks included a dowry (kalym), a wedding gift, a deposit, a donation, a sacrificial animal, and others. Livestock farming provided the population with transport, draft animals (horses, donkeys, oxen, and camels), food (meat, milk, and dairy products), raw materials for household crafts (leather, wool), and manure to increase crop yields. This type of traditional economy also fulfilled the specific task of accumulating funds in families and increasing them.

Livestock farming was widely developed, mainly on the mountain slopes and steppe areas of the Surkhan-Sherabad oasis. Livestock, especially sheep and goats, were bred relatively more frequently in the Babatag and Gissar ranges and in the central part of the steppe regions of the oasis. Before Soviet times, agriculture occupied the leading place in the economy of the Sherabad, Denau, and Baysun beilyks in the oasis, and they were considered relatively developed beilyks in the emirate. The sources note that the number of sheep and goats among some rich people in the beilyks exceeded 2 thousand [2: 778].





On the mountain pastures of the Surkhan-Sherabad oasis, there were many types of grasses and plants for grazing sheep, which was considered one of the main factors in the development of sheep farming in the oasis. Also, the fact that the population of the oasis consumes mainly lamb and there is a constant need for live sheep (for fattening, as fodder, and for other family, seasonal events, and rituals) also ensured the relative superiority of sheep farming in livestock production. Elderly informants report that in the village of Machay, Baysun district, they did not eat beef at all until the 1960s of the 20th century [12]. The reason is that for many years, some ethnographic groups in the oasis did not consider cattle to be livestock. In addition to wool, meat, and leather, other products were also obtained from sheep farming, especially a lot of milk obtained from sheep whose lambs were slaughtered for leather. Sheep milk contains 7–10% fat, which is twice the fat content of cow's milk [7: 11].

Previously, the only type of livestock farming that attracted the main attention of entrepreneurs was sheep farming. Because, as we mentioned above, sheep farming had a commodity direction, they received great profit from it. In the Zeravshan Valley, among the shepherds, there were also partners of large, wealthy merchants, who were called sheep fighters [16:104]. Both rich people in the city and butchers in the countryside benefited from sheep farming. In the oasis, livestock, especially sheep, were raised not only for food but also played an important role in the region's internal and external trade. Livestock fully satisfied the needs of the population, so the surplus was exported to different areas of the emirate, including sheep and goats to the markets of Karshi and Guzar and camels and horses to the markets of Karshi, Karki, and Kalif [10: 104].

Sheep were bred mainly for sale. Every year, merchants-buyers (“*gusfand-jallob*”) came for them, who bought entire flocks and sent them to Samarkand, Bukhara, Afghanistan, and other countries. In addition to astrakhan skins, which are popular in the markets of Central Asia, live sheep were also in great demand. During this period, livestock farming was widely developed in the oasis, and prices for livestock and livestock products were not very high. For this reason, traders came to the oasis not only from Bukhara but also from other cities in Central Asia [14: 142].

In the oasis, household crafts such as carpet weaving and felting were widely developed, and the main raw materials for them were sheep wool and leather. The most interesting thing is that leather processing, carding, straightening (combing), spinning, felting, carpet weaving, and wool sewing were mainly done by women. Sheepskin rugs were widely used as bedding inside huts. By processing the skins, that is, soaking them for a long time in sour milk and its whey (yellow water), sometimes with milk mixed with barley flour, household items such as felts (felt carpets), carpets





made from dyed skins (*hasali pustak*), and rugs [1: 93]. Wool is spun on a loom, and gauze and carpets are woven from the spun thread into a long skein.

An important part of the carpet production at the oasis were small household carpet products: *ishlik-khalta* and *koshik-khalta* (carpet bags for kitchen utensils), *bugjoma* (woven cloth for wrapping household belongings), *khurjins* (saddlebags), *napramachi* (woven chests), and *dastarkhans* (tablecloths). The preservation of carpet weaving traditions is facilitated by living conditions, the way of farming, and the abundance of raw materials – wool. Carpets are woven on a narrow-wire loom called *dukon* (urmak). Such a machine is typical for a nomadic culture; it is convenient in conditions of constant travel, does not require stationary conditions, and is easy to install and assemble [12].

In the oasis, sour milk, cottage cheese (*chakka*), butter (yellow butter), *kurut*, and *ayran* are prepared from cow and sheep milk. Milking and preparation of dairy products were mainly done by women. The collected milk was boiled in a cauldron and poured into pots (*xurma*). When the milk cooled, one or two spoons of sour milk were added for fermentation and allowed to settle.

The sour milk was poured into a bag called “*kasma*” made of woolen cloth (*shol*). In *Kasma*, sour milk was made thick and hard, reminiscent of cottage cheese; the flowing liquid (whey) was called “*zardob*” and the thickened milk itself was called *chakka*.

When the *kasma* was filled to the brim, the *chakka* was transferred to a cauldron or other container, diluted with water. A certain amount of it was poured into a butter churn (*guppy*), and the butter was churned using a churner. The churning was carried out for 30–40 minutes. First, foam appeared; gradually, it turned into a layer of fat, called “*mask*,” which was caught by hand and transferred to a separate container. The milk (*ayran*) that remained after the separation of the oil was boiled and, diluted with salt, poured back into the *kasma* so that the water would flow out. A few days after condensation, it was transferred to a container. The women made small balls from the thickened *ayran* and then left it to dry, thus creating “*kurut*” (dried sour-salty cheese) [4: 75].

From the milk of the first lambled sheep or cow, they prepared a dish called “*qaganok*” (*ogiz*), and from subsequent milk yields (within 2-3 days), they made “*dalama*”. The preparation of sour milk is interesting. Raw milk was poured into a small bag made from the stomach of a sheep or goat and called “*korin-khalta*”. The sack was suspended from the saddle of a walking donkey. Under the influence of the sun's heat as well as from pumping, fermentation occurred in the bag, and after a day or two, the milk turned sour [13].



To this day, the inhabitants of the oasis have preserved the custom of adding several sheep and goats (ibex) to the dowry sent to the bride. The Durmen of Babatag gave 100 sheep, 10 heads of cattle, and 4 horses as dowries. This is why some men belonging to the Durmen tribe rarely married before the age of 40 because they could not afford to pay a dowry [4: 83]. Guests, especially close relatives, gave sheep, goats, oxen, horses, and camels as gifts during wedding ceremonies [13]. In the oasis, sheep are still slaughtered primarily as sacrificial animals in seasonal, religious, and family ceremonies. Horses, camels, oxen, and sheep were given to winners at weddings, seasonal ceremonies (Navruz, harvest), and wrestling competitions [12].

Horse breeding also played an important role in the economy of the Oasis residents. Among the semi-nomadic Uzbeks, the horse, as a riding and pack animal, served for migration when grazing livestock; in agriculture, it was used for transporting crops, threshing, delivering food to the market, and rarely for plowing. Horses were harnessed to wheeled vehicles (carts), and with their help, they set in motion mills (*kash-kash*) and butter churns (*zhuvoz*). They were also used for folk equestrian games (*kupkori* or *ulok*) and horse racing (*poiga*) [23: 190]. From the above, it is clear that the horse played an important role in all sectors of the economy and in the social life of the population. In the oasis, parents and close relatives mostly gave horses to the boys whenever possible.

The maintenance of horses, cattle, and donkeys was of purely economic importance and was no different from the maintenance of the surrounding Uzbek and Tajik populations. Donkeys were present in almost every household; they were used for various household jobs.

In the past, cattle breeding was carried out by both semi-sedentary and sedentary agricultural populations living in the foothills, in the zone of rain-fed farming. The natural conditions here were especially favorable for this branch of livestock farming. The cattle were grazed almost all year round: in spring and summer they were kept on foothills and mountain pastures, and in the fall they were grazed near villages on stubble [23: 190]. For farmers, the cow was one of the most important sources of subsistence, since the purchase of milk and dairy products was not customary; they were obtained from their own farm. Cattle were used for meat and also provided raw materials, such as leather.

The breeding of cattle, especially oxen – the main draft force in agriculture among semi-sedentary populations – just like sheep breeding, was of a commercial nature. Oxen were raised not only for personal farming but also for the market; they were sold to areas of irrigated agriculture, where there was great demand for them [23: 190].





The lack of feed has always limited the possibilities of raising cattle among the settled population. It was difficult to raise young stock for three to four years (calves until working age and heifers until the age of dairy cows) due to a lack of feed. Cattle (especially working cattle) were very valuable. Therefore, farmers cared for and looked after the working oxen. They were well aware that the success of many types of field work depended on the fatness and strength of the ox. The peasants paid especially great attention to them in the spring, so that the oxen would not let the owner down in the midst of field work. Mainly, the local breed of cattle was raised [23:190]. At the market, oxen were valued not based on their meat (weight), but based on their health and height. They were selected when they were young. Because of this, the price of young bulls in the markets was very high.

Camel breeding played a very important role in the economy of semi-nomadic and partly settled populations in the past. In the past, camel breeding was mainly carried out by the Uzbeks of the steppe and foothill regions of the Surkhan-Sherabad oasis. Most dromedary camels were bred in the oasis. Camels were divided into pack, draft, and harness. They carried all the heavy loads, used them as draft force when plowing the land, and harnessed them to *chigiri* when pumping water from canals for irrigating fields and lifting water from wells for watering livestock on the farms of sheep farmers in steppe and desert regions. They were used for riding and organizing trade caravans [18: 552].

In the Uzbek household, camels were not only working animals; their milk and meat were used for food. Butter was prepared from camel milk, and in the summer they made a good thirst-quenching drink called *ayran* (among the Kazakhs and Kyrgyz, "*kumys*"). Camel wool was highly prized. From one dromedary camel, you could get up to 5 kg of wool per year. The camel was considered a revered animal, and therefore its wool was protected from all impurities [19:196]. *Chakman* (men's winter outerwear), *dastarkhan* (tablecloths), and bags for collecting sour milk were woven from camel wool. *Chakman* and *Dastarkhan*, made of camel hair, were never washed, which was supposedly a sinful act. Camel meat was used as food with lamb, beef, etc. [23: 191–192].

The organization of labor in livestock farms and the division of labor between men and women differed from agricultural farms. For example, in livestock farms where sheep farming predominated, mostly women were engaged in cattle breeding and men were engaged in sheep breeding. Among the mountain farming population, especially Tajiks, only women participated in driving livestock to summer pastures. The men remained in the village to farm. The reason was that they had a custom of prohibiting





men from going out to summer pastures [14: 129]. The same custom is observed among the Karakalpaks [4:152].

When isolated groups settled together, they gradually borrowed work skills and traditions from each other. For example, in the past, semi-nomadic pastoralists, the Uzbek Barlas, switched to sedentary life in the middle of the 19th century. They settled in the Tajik village of Dashnabad and gradually adopted gardening and farming from their Chagatai neighbors. The Chagatai, in turn, learned to engage in cattle breeding. In the Tajik villages of Khufar, Maland, and Sangardak, after the Uzbek cattle breeders arrived there, Tajiks began to speak Uzbek and began to engage in cattle breeding. Many rich Tajiks owned more than 1000 heads of sheep.

The Kungrad Uzbeks, typical cattle breeders communicating with Tajiks on summer pastures, made many acquaintances among them and even entered into marriages with them. The Uzbeks learned a lot from the sedentary Tajiks and, in turn, passed on to them the techniques and methods of raising sheep. Tajik youths, sometimes teenagers, were apprentices to Kungrad shepherds for three to four years and roamed with them, learning the techniques of cattle breeding. In the past, the Kungrads did not know how wheat was cultivated, what a water mill (“*tegirmon*”, “*osiyo*”) was, or how to grind grain. In close contact with the Tajiks, they learned to grow bread and make flour. The Yuz Uzbeks and Koratamgals, engaged in rice cultivation in the valley, taught the mountain Tajiks to grow rice [21: 139].

At the beginning of the twentieth century, in the Surkhan-Sherabad oasis, livestock farming was considered an important socio-economic type of economy and was used not only to provide the population with food and generate income, but also as a means of saving additional funds, transport, labor, as collateral for a loan, as feed, as The gift, as a sacrificial animal, performed specific tasks as an important guarantee of life in times of crisis. Livestock husbandry occupied an important place in the lives of not only cattle breeders but also agricultural settlers. Therefore, this type of economy acquired not only economic but also important social significance in the lifestyle of the inhabitants of the oasis.

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