
CONFERENCE ARTICLE**Changes In The Economic Life Of The Arabs Of Central Asia****Iskandarov Sherzod Abdiganievich**

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Abstract: This article analyzes the changes in the economic life of the Arabs of Central Asia. The study of the economic-cultural types of Central Asia examined not only the traditional forms of economic activity of the population, but also the influence of various ethnographic groups on these processes.

Keywords: Climate, water resources, landscape, Uzbek, Tajik, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Turkmen, Arab, desert, nomadism in deserts and semi-deserts, mountain, farming and animal husbandry, river.

Introduction

The economic life and way of life of the peoples of Central Asia have been formed, above all, in close connection with the region's natural-geographical conditions, climate, water resources, landscape features, and the historical-ethnic composition of the population. Under the influence of these factors, distinctive economic-cultural types emerged in different parts of the region, within which specific features of the population's economic activity, division of labor, way of life, and material culture took shape. From this point of view, the study of the economic-cultural types of Central Asia makes it possible to determine not only the traditional forms of economic activity of the population but also the place and participation of various ethnographic groups in these processes.

The economic activity of the Uzbeks, Tajiks, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Turkmen, Arabs, and other ethnographic groups who have long lived in the region has also been directly connected with these region-wide processes. In particular, the economic specialization of specific ethnic groups has been determined by their territory of settlement, the natural environment, their economic and ethno-cultural relations with other population groups, and historical migration processes. In this respect, it is important to study the economic life of the Arabs in Central Asia not in isolation from the region-wide economic-cultural processes, but as a constituent part of them.

The traditional economy of the Central Asian Arabs was connected, in particular, with such types of activity as animal husbandry, farming, horticulture, handicrafts, and trade. Their economic occupations took various forms depending on the natural-geographical conditions of the territories in which they lived. At the same time, the economic culture of the Arabs underwent certain changes in the course of long-standing economic and ethno-cultural relations with the local population. As a result, elements of traditional economic skills and way of life gradually merged with modern economic relations, urbanization, labor migration, and the emergence of new professions and sources of income.

From this point of view, in analyzing the economic life of the Arabs, particular attention should be paid to two important aspects: the preservation of traditional economic-cultural features, and their transformation under the influence of modern socio-economic processes. Such an approach makes it possible to

comprehensively reveal not only the changes in the Arabs' material provision and labor activity, but also the changes in their way of life, family relations, division of labor, living environment, and processes of ethno-cultural self-awareness connected with their economic activity.

Research has identified the following economic-cultural types [1] as characteristic of the Central Asian region: a settled population that developed artificially irrigated farming in river valleys and foothill areas (Uzbeks, Tajiks); pastoralists who were nomadic and semi-nomadic in deserts and semi-deserts; animal husbandry combined with farming in mountain and foothill areas; and specialized semi-settled hunters and fishermen along the banks of major rivers [2].

The majority of the Arabs who entered Central Asia also consisted of a settled, pastoral population; the second group — the nomadic population — retaining the custom of division into clans and tribes, began to live in the steppes and deserts of the region, while the settled Arabs mainly settled in cities as representatives of the ruling stratum [3].

The initial settlement of the Arabs in the region took place alongside the trading and craftsman population living in ancient cities such as Samarkand, Bukhara, Kesh, Nasaf, Termez, Shash, and Khiva, while in the oases surrounding the cities they began to engage in farming. The fact that at the beginning of the 20th century the Arabs settled mixed with the settled population that had developed artificially irrigated farming in the river valleys and foothill areas of present-day Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and partly Kyrgyzstan determines their economic characteristics adapted to the environment.

In the 19th–20th centuries, the traditional occupations of the Arabs can be divided into three economic-cultural types: a) settled economies; b) nomadic pastoralists; c) semi-nomadic (semi-settled) pastoralist-farmers. Thus, the Arabs whose economic activity was based on nomadic animal husbandry produced numerous household items from wool, such as cloaks (chakmon), carpets, rugs, saddlebags (khurjun), and bags (khalta). In this, goat down and camel and sheep wool served as the main raw materials for fabric production. The migration of semi-nomadic pastoral Arabs who resettled in farming regions had a significant impact on their economic-cultural characteristics. At the same time, their natural-extensive animal husbandry, carried out together with farming, began to acquire an intensive-commercial character.

From the mid-20th century, the Arabs engaged simultaneously in both farming and animal husbandry. The spread of farming based on artificial irrigation and the development of many desert territories, in turn, led to the intermingling of the Arabs in these areas with the local Uzbek, Tajik, Kyrgyz, Kazakh, and Turkmen peoples.

The Arabs of Katta Arab village in Andijan region reported that even up to the beginning of the last century, a single household kept more than five hundred sheep. "Our distinguishing feature compared to the surrounding villages was also that we kept sheep. However, with the development of pastures, communal grazing lands shrank, and now we have begun to engage in raising cattle (novvos/oxen)" [4]. The Arabs even note that the local Uzbeks are not as skilled as they are in sheep-raising [5].

It is known that animal husbandry occupied an important place in the traditional economic activity of the Arab ethnic groups who settled in Turan. Initially, most of them lived in desert and near-desert areas and engaged in animal husbandry in accordance with the natural-geographical environment. However, over time, some of them gradually shifted to a settled way of life and began to engage in farming. This process intensified especially during the period of the Bukhara Emirate, and by the 17th–18th centuries farming had become one of the leading occupations in the economy of a certain part of the Arabs.

The sedentarization of the Arabs and their adaptation to farming was also directly connected with their long-standing economic and ethno-cultural relations with the local population. They adopted practical experience from the neighboring Uzbek population in cultivating land, tending crops, irrigation, and growing certain agricultural crops. This process demonstrates a change in the traditional economic model of the Arabs — namely, a tendency to shift from a livestock-based economy toward mixed forms of economy adapted to settled farming.

Field ethnographic research also shows the continuation of this process in the present day. In particular, during a conversation held in 2023 in Katta Arabkhona village, Baliqchi district, Andijan region, a respondent noted that he grows potatoes and carrots on his farm, earning income from 22 sotix (0.22 hectares) of land, and that in recent years tobacco cultivation has been expanding in the village. According to the respondent, whereas this crop was previously grown mainly by Uzbeks, in recent times the practice of tobacco cultivation has also begun to spread to Arab households [6].

This information shows that the process of adopting regional agrarian experience and adapting to new sources of income in the economic activity of the Arabs is continuing.

Thus, the changes observed in the economic life of the Arabs cannot be limited solely to the transition from traditional animal husbandry to farming. This process can be assessed as a complex transformation connected with adaptation to the natural environment, sedentarization, the strengthening of economic-cultural ties with the local population, and changes in economic specialization under the influence of market relations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that the housing and material-everyday culture of the Central Asian Arabs took shape over a long historical development, and its features were formed under the influence of the population's traditional economic activity, the natural-geographical environment, social relations, and cultural ties with neighboring ethnic communities. Therefore, it is appropriate to assess the Arabs' dwellings not as a rigid and unchanging system strictly separated from the housing of other peoples, but as a distinctive manifestation of material culture that took shape under specific territorial and historical conditions.

References

1. By economic-cultural types is meant the historically formed

complex of economy and culture characteristic of peoples living under similar natural-geographical conditions and at the same level of socio-economic development.

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5. Field notes. Andijan region, Baliqchi district, Katta Arabkhona village, 2023.
6. Field notes. Khorezm region, Shovot district, Arabkhona village, 2024.