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# Economic Characteristics of The Cattle Breeders of The Surkhan-Sherabad Oasis by Ethnoterritorial Location at The Beginning of the 20th Century

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**Abstract:** This article analyzes the economic characteristics of the cattle breeders of the Surkhan-Sherabad oasis by territorial distribution, the main differences in the composition and maintenance of livestock, as well as the factors that influenced the traditional economic activities of ethnic and ethnographic groups at the beginning of the twentieth century. Also presented are materials on the exchange of farms in connection with the mixed residence of cattle breeders with the sedentary agricultural population.

**Keywords:** Traditional economy, livestock farming, cattle breeders, mixed economy, Kungrats, Turks, Karluks, Katagans, Karakalpaks, Durmens, Barlas, Arabs, Tajiks, Turkmens.

**Introduction:** One of the main types of work that determines the way of life and source of livelihood for many peoples of the world is animal husbandry. The population of Uzbekistan has been engaged in animal husbandry since ancient times. This was facilitated by the vast pastures in the steppe, foothill and mountainous regions of the country. The Surkhan-Sherabad oasis is considered one of the regions of Uzbekistan with developed traditional livestock farming. The natural conditions of the oasis are very favorable for livestock farming; rich seasonal pastures and a hot climate make it possible in most areas to feed livestock with field and pasture grasses all year round. The presence of grassy mountain pastures, occupying large areas and rich in fodder, as well as the possibility

of grazing livestock on the cheapest pastures, largely contributed to the fact that livestock farming took a leading place in the oasis. In addition, the development of livestock farming here allows for the efficient use of lands that, for one reason or another, are unsuitable for agriculture.

The population of the Surkhan-Sherabad oasis, unlike the population of other historical and cultural regions, had some differences between the small territorial latitude and some large settlements. Thus, based on the natural and geographical features of the location of each territorial group, unique local characteristics were formed in the way of life, economy and material culture [12].

At the beginning of the 20th century, the population of the oasis mainly lived along the Surkhandarya, Sherabaddarya and its tributaries. In the mountainous and foothill zones, river oases lived a sedentary population, in whose economy agriculture and gardening predominated, and in the economy of the semi-sedentary population, cattle breeding was the leading activity. The mountainous regions of the oasis were mainly inhabited by Tajiks, the semi-steppe low-mountain regions and uneven steppes were mainly inhabited by semi-sedentary Uzbeks, and the foothills and mountain slopes were inhabited by a mixed population [4, 4]. Although the sedentary population of the oasis constituted a common ethnic unity of clans and tribes that migrated in different historical periods, they differed from each other in that they retained their origins, customs and some national traditions. According to the results of the conducted research, the distribution of the population and ethnic groups of the southern plain part of the oasis differed in comparison with its northern part. The Uzbeks lived in the foothills of Babatag and in the upper reaches of Surkhandarya, and the Tajiks lived on the right and left banks of the Tupalang, Sangardak, Obizarang, Khodjaipok, Kyzylsuw, and Karatag rivers [13].

In the past, cattle, along with cattle breeders, played an important role in the life of the agricultural population and in traditional agricultural economy as a necessary component. Farmers mainly used them as transport, auxiliary force and an additional source of income. In general, livestock farming provided the population with working animals (horses, donkeys, bulls, camels) and food products (meat, milk and dairy products), and also served as the main raw material (wool, leather) for domestic crafts (felt making, carpet weaving, leather making), and manure (poris) served as fertilizer to increase crop yields. In addition, livestock farming served as the main product of the internal and external trade of the oasis. Therefore, this branch of the economy occupied a leading place in the ethno-

economy of the oasis [12].

In the economy of semi-settled Uzbeks, cattle breeding occupied a leading or equal place to agriculture. The main areas of livestock breeding among semi-sedentary Uzbeks were sheep breeding (mainly fat-tailed sheep). They also bred goats, cattle, which served as the main draft force in agriculture, and camels. Horses were used in agriculture mainly for threshing (they were used to plow only in some areas) and, like camels and donkeys, for transporting sheaves, grain and straw.

The most typical cycle of migrations among semi-sedentary Uzbeks was as follows. Wintering areas (villages) were located in river valleys or on the southern slopes of adyrs (hills), in hollows of springs and wells sheltered from the winds; cattle were grazed in the zone of the villages. Only rich owners drove their flocks to desert pastures, where the cattle were under the care of hired shepherds. The high-mountain pastures were mainly grazed by the flocks of wealthy cattle owners. People of average income united their livestock in flocks to pasture their sheep in the highlands, hired shepherds or selected them from among themselves. The rest of the cattle, in particular dairy cows and goats, were not driven away [6, 47].

At the beginning of the 20th century, livestock farming in the oasis was mainly carried out by ethnographic groups that retained a semi-sedentary way of life and were divided into clans, such as the Kungrats, Turks, Karluks, Katagans, Karakalpaks, Durmans, and partly Central Asian Arabs, Tajiks, and Turkmens [14, 28]. Although they subsequently switched to a mixed economy due to their permanent sedentary lifestyle, livestock farming continued to predominate in most of their farms. The most interesting thing is that this type of economy did not lose its importance even for the population that switched to agriculture as their main activity.

Accordingly, the population of the oasis engaged in livestock farming can be conditionally divided into cattle breeders, cattle breeders-farmers and farmers-cattle breeders depending on their economic activity and the level of livestock farming. The pasture system of grazing cattle was predominant among cattle breeders, the transhumance-pasture system was predominant among cattle breeders-farmers, and the stall-pasture system was predominant among farmers-cattle breeders.

At the beginning of the 20th century, there was a peculiar distribution of this type of economy among many ethnic and ethnographic groups of the oasis, as evidenced by the information about their ethno-territorial location. The livestock breeders of the oasis were distributed differently depending on economic

conditions, occupied certain territories and specialized in breeding livestock species corresponding to the natural capabilities of the area where they lived. For example, the Kungrats specialized in sheep and camel breeding, the Karluks, Turks, Arabs, Turkmens and Karakalpaks - in sheep breeding, the Lakays - in horse breeding and sheep breeding, the Durmens - in sheep and cattle breeding, the Katagans, Yuz - in cattle breeding, the mountain Tajiks - in goat breeding, and the remaining groups of the population - in mixed grazing of livestock [12]. However, there were exceptions. For example, a small tribe of Karatamgali Uzbeks living in the Gissar oasis (southeast of the Uzun district) bred cattle year-round in the tugai forests along the rivers. Since the Karatamgals lived a sedentary life, they had few sheep and were not driven to distant pastures. According to Uzbek tribes, who belong to a semi-sedentary group of the population, they previously did not consider cows to be cattle and did not eat beef. From the last quarter of the 19th century, with the transition to a sedentary way of life in the oasis, they began to pay attention to cattle [3].

The types and composition of livestock on farms depended not only on natural and geographical conditions and types of pastures, but also on the social status of families. For example, wealthy cattle breeders had more sheep and horses, agricultural farms had more working bulls and cows, and poor farms had more goats.

During the times of the emirate, the Uzbek Kungrats occupied the second place after the Mangyts in terms of numbers among all the Uzbeks of Eastern Bukhara. Being the most numerous Uzbek tribe living in the oasis, they also gained fame as skilled cattle breeders. The Kungrats were widespread throughout the oasis and were located in settlements in the basins of the Baysundarya, Sherabaddarya, and along the banks of the Amu Darya and Surkhandarya. They are especially densely located in the northern and southwestern parts of the oasis [16, 329].

The nomadic type of cattle breeding was widespread among some Kungrats who lived in semi-desert areas (especially in the middle reaches of the Sherabad Darya basin). Here, herders and their families would follow their cattle through seasonal pastures, changing their campsites as the pastures became overgrazed. The Kungrats, for example, changed their campsites every two to three weeks. They roamed along specific routes within the territory of their tribal group. Only summer camps could be outside this territory [6, 47-48].

Before the national-territorial demarcation in Central Asia, the Kungrats led a semi-sedentary lifestyle, mainly engaged in livestock farming, in particular sheep

farming and partly camel breeding. In the flocks of the Kungrats living in the northern part of the oasis, the leading place was occupied by the Gissar sheep, and in the flocks of the inhabitants of the south, by the local breed of jaidar. In addition, goats and horses were bred on the farms. Cattle were very small due to their inability to adapt to long journeys. Of the cattle breeders who lived in the oasis, only the Kungrats were engaged in camel breeding [6]. However, later they also began to practice dry farming.

Until the end of the 19th century, before the Karluks transitioned to a sedentary lifestyle, their main occupation was animal husbandry. During this period, some groups of Karluks, in whose economy livestock farming predominated, were widespread in the upper part of Surkhandarya - in such villages of the Sariasysky region as Togchiyon, Boykishlok, Zagnozot, Pozilkuchdi, Kulmozor, Cholmiyon, Serimozor, Buyrapush, Neloba, Dashnabad, Sufiyon [9, 78]. Some studies indicate that there were more than 500 Karluk families in Sariasia during this period. The pastures of the Karluks living in the Shurchi and Sariasia regions are located on the southeastern slopes of Baysuntau [15, 68-69].

The Karluks were ancient shepherds who knew well the methods of grazing and breeding sheep. They taught their Tajik neighbors a lot in this area. The interaction in their culture is reflected in their economy, lifestyle, and customs. The Karluks living in other regions of Uzbekistan mainly bred Karakul sheep, and the Karluks of the oases bred Hissar sheep. Under the influence of the local sedentary population, they also gradually moved towards agriculture [16]. However, livestock farming remains an important type of economy for them. In their farms, livestock breeding was combined with dryland agriculture.

Until the first quarter of the 20th century, the Turks, whose main occupation was livestock breeding, lived mainly in the foothills and mid-mountain regions of the oasis. Therefore, in the literature they are sometimes called mountain Turks [4, 72]. While the Turkic migrations were close to the settlements of the Chagatai and Tajiks, the Chagatai and Tajiks occupied mountain river valleys, while the Turks usually occupied watersheds consisting of treeless hills. The Turks were engaged in pasture sheep breeding and partly horse breeding, keeping the cattle on pasture feed during the day [15]. Later they moved to a sedentary lifestyle and began to engage not only in livestock breeding, but also in agriculture.

The majority of the population of the village of Khodjigi, located in the Sherabad oasis, on the right tributary of the Sherabad River, were Durmens. The Durmens live in the northern part of Babatag and in the areas of the

middle and lower reaches of the Kafarnigan oasis [1]. Cattle and sheep breeding occupied leading places in the livestock industry of the Durmens. In the Sariasia and Denau regions, the Durmens live in a mixed state with the Yuz and Kungrats and in the past were mainly engaged in cattle breeding, raising Hissar sheep and cattle. They combined livestock breeding with agriculture on irrigated and dry lands. Later, the Durmens switched to other types of farming, in particular, to gardening [2].

Previously, the Katagans occupied mainly mountainous areas, specializing mainly in cattle breeding and partly in sheep breeding. They lived in the upper parts of the Surkhan-Sherabad oasis, mainly in Sangardak (mixed with Tajiks), Changlak, Bakhcha and other mountain villages in the areas of Denau, Altynsay, Sariasia. In addition to cattle breeding, the Katagans were also engaged in agriculture and gardening. In 1937-1938, many mountain Katagans descended to the oasis and continued to engage in cotton growing, livestock breeding and other branches of the economy [13].

The Barlas, who live in small numbers in the oasis, live mainly in such villages as Dashnabad, Kudukli, Karabandi, Shakishlak of the Sariasia district, in the Karatagdarya River basin and in a number of villages of the Denau district in a mixed form with the Uzbek-Chagatai and Tajiks. The Barlas mainly intermarried with the Tajiks. Accordingly, many aspects of their economy were borrowed from the Tajiks [13, 124-125]. Before 1917, their main occupation was animal husbandry, as well as agriculture, gardening, viticulture and crafts. They learned gardening from the neighboring Chagatai. Currently, gardening is one of their main occupations [4, 139]. After most of the Barlas had moved to a sedentary lifestyle, they later began to engage in agriculture, gardening, viticulture and, to some extent, crafts.

In the oasis, the Karakalpaks (clan) live mainly in the village of Khomkon in the Sherabad district, and livestock farming still occupies a leading place in their economy. They mainly breed Hissar sheep. After the resettlement in 1949-1953, the Karakalpaks from Khomkan live in the territories of "Tallimaron" of Angorsky, "Surkhan" of Jarkurgan, "Besh kahramon" of Kumkurgan, "Pakhtakor" of Bandikhansky, "Kallamazor", "Tallashkon" of Sherabadsky, "Navbahor" of Muzrabadsky, "Chilanzar" of Baysunsky districts [12].

The main occupation of the Tajiks living in the mountainous and foothill areas was livestock breeding. If earlier the basis of the economy of the mountain Tajiks was sheep and goat breeding, then the sedentary farmers, the Tajik Chagatai, mainly bred cattle. Goat

breeding was important in the economy of the mountain Tajiks. Goats could find food even on the difficult mountain slopes. Currently, only in the mountain and foothill villages of the Baysun district do Tajiks predominate, mainly engaged in livestock farming.

The Arabs living in the oasis, in particular the Arabs of the village of Rabatak, used to be mainly engaged in sheep breeding. The remaining Arabs were engaged in cattle breeding mixed with agriculture. The pastures of the Rabatak Arabs were mainly the deserts of Tallashkan and Kizirik, where they mainly grazed Hissar and Karakul sheep. Each rich Arab had up to 5-6 flocks of sheep and goats, and each flock contained 500-600 sheep [15, 30]. During Soviet times, agriculture became the main economic activity of the majority of Arabs living in the above-mentioned territories.

Turkmens mainly live in the modern Termez, Angorsk, Kumkurgan and Jarkurgan regions. In 1924, the Turkmen population in the oasis was 24 thousand people [7, 23]. In the oasis, the Turkmen lived in their own separate villages; a total of 12 Turkmen villages were identified. They lived mixed with the Uzbek Chagatai only in the village of Dzhuyzhangal [8, 257]. The Turkmens living in the oasis mainly belonged to the Ersari, Shikh and Sary clans, and at the beginning of the last century they were mainly engaged in livestock breeding. In the Termez region one can still meet Turkmen families of cattle breeders.

In the first half of the 20th century, the main ethnocultural processes intensified in the Surkhan-Sherabad oasis - mutual cultural influence, the process of rapprochement and partial assimilation of the sedentary and pastoral population. Undoubtedly, the process of transition to a settled way of life and the disappearance of clan traditions in areas where semi-settled Uzbeks and Turks lived densely in the oasis occurred gradually. Despite the fact that until the 1930s, agriculture was widespread in Uzbek tribes such as Kungrat, Karluk, Lakai and Durmen, they retained elements of a semi-sedentary way of life and a tribal system [5, 100]. Only among the small number of representatives of the above-mentioned ethnic and ethnographic groups living among the sedentary population, differences in comparison with the original groups became noticeable over time. The most interesting thing is that, despite the fact that over time the majority of the oasis's cattle-breeding population completely switched to a sedentary lifestyle, their material culture retained economic forms characteristic of the cattle-breeding culture, in particular, types of home crafts associated with the processing of livestock products (felt making, carpet weaving).



Cultural interaction and rapprochement between pastoralists and the sedentary population occurred not only as a result of the transition of pastoralists to a sedentary way of life and cohabitation with the sedentary population, but also as a result of the preservation of semi-sedentary livestock breeding and sedentary agriculture. The two types of farming - irrigated agriculture and pasture livestock farming in the oasis complemented each other and were harmoniously combined. As a result, interethnic ties were revived, and this harmony served as a factor strengthening the processes of integration, consolidation and assimilation.

Due to the development of new lands in the oasis, the population living in the mountains and foothills was resettled to the lower regions. Due to the increase in internal migrations, most of the ethnic and ethnographic groups living in the oasis began to live in a mixed way. This led to the fact that the main population of the oasis carried out mixed economic activities. In addition, economic exchange processes took place in these regions. For example, after the resettlement of Uzbek cattle breeders to Tajik oasis villages such as Khufar, Miland, Sangardak, Tajiks began to speak Uzbek and engage in livestock breeding [13, 127]. In addition, the Kungrats, who were closely associated with the sedentary Tajiks, taught them the rules of sheep herding. In turn, the Kungrats learned to grow wheat and flour from the Tajiks.

In the basins of Surkhan and Sherabaddarya, yurts were common among the settled Uzbek and Tajik population as summer dwellings. In some places, Tajik women began to make patterned felt products from wool and even wove pile products for yurts [11]. The method of storing cow fat in a container made from a ram's intestine, etc., entered into the life of Tajiks from cattle breeders. The Uzbek Yuze and Karatamgals were engaged in rice cultivation in the oasis and taught the mountain Tajiks how to grow rice. Obviously, under the influence of the process of settling, specific changes occurred in the economy and way of life of the population. In subsequent years, livestock farming did not lose its importance in the economy of the oasis population. This is due to the fact that livestock farming played an important role in the lifestyle and family economy of the above-mentioned ethnic and ethnographic groups.

Uzbekistan, in particular the steppe and semi-steppe regions of the Surkhan-Sherabad oasis, i.e. the unique "nomadic steppes", in contrast to the highland and foothill zones, retained pasture and pasture livestock farming in connection with extensive agriculture and domestic crafts. This was not a nomadic way of life, as noted in some studies of the Soviet period, but only a

form of traditional livestock farming adapted to natural and geographical conditions in the economic and cultural environment of the region. It should also be noted that although the Karluks have lived in this area for many centuries, the favorable environment in the oasis for livestock farming allowed a certain portion of the Karluks to engage in semi-sedentary livestock farming until the beginning of the 20th century.

In general, ethnocultural ties and mutual influence between various ethnic and ethnographic groups in the Surkhan-Sherabad oasis at the beginning of the 20th century were manifested in their material and spiritual culture. Depending on the ethno-territorial location of the cattle breeders living in the oasis, the economic style was also unique. Among the population of the oasis, they did not completely mix with the sedentary population; some retained their tribal customs, in particular, their unique way of life, customs, culture and some ethnic characteristics.

According to the ethno-territorial location in the oasis, cattle breeders specializing in breeding various livestock in accordance with the natural capabilities of the area subsequently began to live in a mixed state with other ethnic and ethnographic groups in the oasis due to internal migrations, although the types of livestock in their farms became diverse and moved to a mixed economy, in the farms of representatives of some ethnic and ethnographic groups, the predominance of livestock breeding remained. However, in their material culture (types and objects of household crafts, tools, dishes), household activities (weaving carpets, felting, leather making, etc.) the preservation of some elements of the economic culture of cattle breeders was observed.

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