



## TRADITIONAL TYPES OF ECONOMY IN THE FOOTHILL VILLAGES OF THE KOHITANG MOUNTAINS

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### ABSTRACT

*This article analyzes the natural-geographical conditions, traditional economic system, and historical-geographical development factors of the villages located in the foothill areas of the Kohitang Mountains in Sherobod district of Surkhandarya region. The study highlights the influence of relief, climate, water resources, and land resources specific to foothill territories on economic activities. In particular, rain-fed agriculture, pastoral livestock breeding, and their integrated forms are evaluated as a traditional economic model adapted to the ecological balance of the region. In addition, the contemporary socio-economic and ecological problems of the area are analyzed through the examples of the G'urjak-2 and Uzunsoy citizens' assemblies. The research findings are of important scientific and practical significance for developing strategies of rational use of natural resources and sustainable development in the foothill areas of the Kohitang Mountains.*

**Introduction.** The foothill territories of Central Asia have historically been among the most important geographical spaces for human habitation and economic activity. In particular, the foothill regions of the Kohitang Mountains, located in the southern and southwestern parts of Surkhandarya region, are distinguished by the complexity of their natural conditions, limited water resources, and uneven relief. The population living in these territories historically developed a unique economic system adapted to the existing natural-geographical opportunities.

The foothill villages of Kohitang, including Vandob, Xatak, Kampirtepa, Gumatak, Sherjon, and other settlements, are mainly situated along mountain slopes and hilly terrains and are characterized by traditional rain-fed farming and livestock breeding. The harsh continental climate, seasonal precipitation, and scarcity of water resources contributed to the formation of economical and adaptive economic systems among the local population.

Today, climate change, water shortages, land degradation, and migration processes significantly affect the socio-economic development of foothill regions. Therefore, studying the

natural-geographical characteristics and traditional economic system of the Kohitang foothill territories from a historical-geographical perspective remains one of the actual scientific issues.

#### ***Natural-Geographical Characteristics of the Kohitang Foothill Areas***

The Kohitang Mountains are located in the southwestern part of Surkhandarya region and constitute one of the main factors shaping the natural-geographical landscape of the area. The complex geomorphological structure of the mountain system, altitudinal zones, and dry subtropical climate directly influence the economic activities of foothill villages.

The relief mainly consists of hills, low mountain slopes, and seasonal stream valleys. The diversity of soil layers and limited water resources caused agriculture to develop primarily in the form of rain-fed farming. Due to the uneven distribution of precipitation, agricultural activities evolved in accordance with the natural climatic rhythm.

In the Kohitang foothill territories, the relationship between humans and nature historically developed on the basis of ecological balance. Rational use of available land and water resources, avoiding overexploitation, and maintaining ecological adaptability formed the basis of the traditional economic system. In this regard, the region can be characterized as a relatively sustainable historical economic model from an ecological perspective.

#### ***Characteristics of the Formation of Rain-fed Agriculture***

Agriculture in the Kohitang foothill territories developed mainly in the form of rain-fed farming. Due to the insufficient development of irrigation systems, the population specialized in cultivating crops adapted to natural precipitation. Wheat and barley were the principal crops because of their low water requirements and resistance to arid conditions.

The local population traditionally used seed varieties passed down from generation to generation, which ensured relatively stable productivity. Melons, vegetables, and legumes were cultivated mainly near stream areas and household plots and played an important role in satisfying the food needs of the population.

Traditional agricultural tools such as hoes, shovels, and sickles were widely used in land cultivation. Although technically simple, these tools proved effective because they were adapted to the foothill relief. Labor processes were organized according to a seasonal calendar, and collective labor practices became especially important during sowing and harvesting periods.

The tradition of "hashar" emerged as an important social institution in agricultural activities. Through hashar, large-scale works such as plowing land, harvesting crops, and cleaning irrigation channels were carried out collectively. This demonstrates that agriculture functioned not only as an economic activity but also as a system of social solidarity and mutual assistance.

#### ***Livestock Breeding and Pasture System***

Livestock breeding has been one of the leading branches of the economy in the Kohitang foothill territories. Mountain slopes and hilly areas were mainly used as pastures, while sheep and goat breeding became the dominant direction. Cattle breeding, however, developed mainly within household economies.

One of the main features of local livestock breeding was the system of seasonal pasture migration. During summer, livestock were moved to higher and cooler pastures, while in winter

they were returned to foothill and lower territories. This system allowed natural pastures to regenerate and played an important role in maintaining ecological balance.

Livestock products such as milk, meat, butter, wool, and leather occupied an important place in the daily life of the local population. Particularly, wool and leather products were closely connected with local handicrafts, reflecting the multi-sectoral character of the economy.

#### ***Integration of Agriculture and Livestock Breeding***

In the Kohitang foothill territories, agriculture and livestock breeding developed as an interconnected economic system. Agricultural products served as fodder resources for livestock, while livestock breeding provided natural fertilizers and additional economic resources for agriculture.

This integrated economic system shaped traditional economic views among the local population, such as “avoiding waste” and “living in harmony with nature.” In this sense, the economic activities in the Kohitang foothill areas can be regarded as an ecologically adaptive traditional model.

Moreover, agriculture and livestock breeding were closely linked with the cultural life, customs, and rituals of the local population. Ceremonies related to harvesting, livestock migration, and sowing constituted important elements of regional culture.

#### ***Socio-Economic Processes on the Example of G‘urjak-2 Citizens’ Assembly***

The G‘urjak-2 citizens’ assembly in Sherobod district represents an important empirical example for analyzing socio-economic processes in the Kohitang foothill territories. Established in 1994, this mahalla is distinguished by dispersed settlement patterns and traditional forms of economy typical of foothill regions.

The territory of the mahalla covers 273 hectares and is located approximately 46 km from the district center. Its population numbers 3,964 people, and households mainly consist of individually built low-rise houses. Most of the working-age population is engaged in agriculture.

Livestock breeding occupies the leading position in the local economy. Although agricultural opportunities are limited due to insufficient irrigation systems, some farms specialize in horticulture and vegetable cultivation.

One of the major problems of the mahalla is related to ecological conditions. Water scarcity, soil salinization, and saline groundwater negatively affect public health. Therefore, introducing water-saving technologies and protecting land resources remain among the urgent issues for the region.

#### ***Economic and Infrastructure Features of Uzunsoy Citizens’ Assembly***

The Uzunsoy citizens’ assembly, also belonging to the Kohitang foothill territories, clearly reflects the influence of natural-geographical conditions on economic activities. Located in the northwestern part of Surkhandarya region, the majority of its population is engaged in agrarian activities.

Household farming and private farming constitute the basis of the local economy. Livestock breeding, dairy processing, and greenhouse farming are relatively developed. At the same time, unpaved internal roads, interruptions in electricity supply, and drinking water shortages negatively affect the socio-economic development of the territory.

Labor migration constitutes a significant proportion of local social processes. In particular, the migration of young people abroad for employment is linked to the lack of

permanent jobs. The outdated electricity and water infrastructure represents one of the main obstacles to modern development in the region.

**Conclusion.** The foothill territories of the Kohitang Mountains represent one of the geographically complex and distinctive regions. The foothill relief, limited water resources, and dry subtropical climate appear as the main factors shaping the economic activities of the local population.

The research results demonstrate that the system of rain-fed agriculture and pastoral livestock breeding formed in the Kohitang foothill villages developed over a long historical period in adaptation to natural conditions. The integrated form of agriculture and livestock breeding played an important role in ensuring the economic stability of the region.

The analysis conducted on the examples of G'urjak-2 and Uzunsoy citizens' assemblies revealed the existence of modern challenges such as water scarcity, soil salinization, infrastructure problems, and labor migration in the foothill territories. Therefore, introducing water-saving technologies, strengthening ecological protection measures, and modernizing rural infrastructure are essential factors for sustainable development.

Overall, the Kohitang foothill villages represent an important scientific research object as a model of historical-geographical development characteristic of the foothill territories of Central Asia.

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