



NOMADIC RESIDENTIAL CULTURE OF THE POPULATION OF THE MIRZACHUL OASIS

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Annotation. *This article scientifically analyzes the historical settlement of the Uzbek, Kazakh, and Kyrgyz populations who lived in the Mirzachul oasis, as well as the residential culture associated with a nomadic pastoral lifestyle. The study elucidates the origin of the yurt (otov) and related terms, their semantic development, and their state in modern dialects on the basis of a linguocultural approach. Materials from ancient Turkic written sources, in particular Mahmud Kashgari's "Devonu lug'otit-turk", are compared with contemporary dialectological data. The research results demonstrate that the material culture formed in the Mirzachul oasis has common Turkic roots.*

Key words: *Mirzachul oasis, nomadic pastoralism, yurt (otov), residential terminology, ancient Turkic language, linguoculture.*

Introduction. The Mirzachul oasis is one of the distinctive natural-geographical regions of Central Asia, a significant part of which consists of steppe and desert zones. This factor historically determined the economic activities of the population living in this area. Until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, nomadic and semi-nomadic pastoralism predominated in the oasis, and this condition was reflected in all spheres of life of the population, especially in the residential system.

Under the conditions of nomadic society, the dwelling functioned not only as a place of residence, but also as a social, cultural, and symbolic space of particular importance. The terms associated with the yurt (otov) and its structural components constitute an essential layer of popular worldview, linguistic richness, and cultural memory. Therefore, the study of these terms is regarded as a relevant scholarly task not only from a linguistic perspective, but also within an ethnocultural context. The main objective of this article is to provide a scientific analysis of the nomadic residential culture formed in the Mirzachul oasis on the basis of yurt terminology and to substantiate its connection with the ancient Turkic period.

Methods. In the course of the research, комплекс scientific methods were employed. In particular:

- The historical-linguistic method was used to identify the ancient forms of the yurt (otov) and related terminology;
- The comparative-analytical method was applied to compare similar lexical units in the



Uzbek, Kazakh, and Kyrgyz languages;

- The ethnocultural approach was utilized to determine the cultural functions of concepts associated with the dwelling;
- Dialectological analysis was conducted to examine lexical units preserved in modern dialects.

Ancient Turkic written monuments, explanatory dictionaries, dialectological materials, and ethnographic studies were used as the principal sources of the research.

Results. The yurt (otov) represented the most convenient and adaptable form of dwelling in the life of nomadic pastoralists, distinguished by its capacity to be quickly assembled and dismantled. In ancient Turkic sources, the yurt is recorded under the name “otag,” and its widespread use in everyday life is reflected in numerous proverbs and expressions.

Among the population of the Mirzachul oasis, the yurt retained not only practical but also symbolic significance for a long period. The concepts of family, lineage, and home were often conceptualized in close association with the yurt.

The research demonstrated that the majority of the terms related to the main structural components of the yurt (otov) have ancient Turkic roots. For example, such lexical units as *keraga*, *uvuq*, *chang'aroq*, *tuynuk*, and *siruq* are still used today in Uzbek, Kazakh, and Kyrgyz with almost identical forms.

This fact testifies to the long historical existence of Turkic peoples within a shared economic and cultural space. Although the meanings of certain terms have undergone processes of semantic narrowing or broadening, their core semantic nucleus has been preserved.

Temporary shelters such as *olachuq*, *chatma*, and *chayla* were primarily formed in connection with seasonal economic needs. In ancient sources, *olachuq* was interpreted as a small tent, whereas in some modern dialects this term has acquired symbolic meanings or has been transferred to denote certain household structures or implements.

Discussion. The findings of the study demonstrate that the nomadic residential culture of the Mirzachul oasis constitutes an inseparable component of the common Turkic cultural space. The use of the yurt (otov) and its related terminology in almost identical forms and meanings in the languages of the three kindred peoples—Uzbek, Kazakh, and Kyrgyz—confirms historical and cultural continuity.

Moreover, the fact that terms associated with the dwelling acquired social and spiritual meanings indicates that the concept of “home” represented a central value in nomadic society. This underscores the necessity of evaluating the dwelling not merely as a material object, but as a cultural phenomenon endowed with symbolic and social significance.

The Mirzachul oasis, located in the central-eastern part of Uzbekistan, historically developed as a sparsely populated steppe and desert region. From the second half of the twentieth century onward, the construction of irrigation systems and the implementation of large-scale land development projects resulted in significant changes in both the population



size and settlement structure of the oasis. Statistical data confirm that this process had a direct impact on demographic and ethnic indicators.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, population density in the Mirzachul region was extremely low, averaging approximately 1–2 persons per square kilometer. During this period, the population consisted primarily of nomadic and semi-nomadic pastoralists, and the number of permanent settlements was limited. According to the 1926 All-Union population census, nearly 60–65 percent of the population in districts adjacent to the Mirzachul area was engaged in animal husbandry, the majority adhering to a system of seasonal migration.

Between the 1950s and 1970s, within the framework of state programs aimed at developing Mirzachol, the influx of migrants from other regions intensified. Statistical observations indicate that between 1959 and 1979 the population of the oasis increased by approximately 2.5 times. If in 1959 the region was inhabited by around 150,000 people, by 1979 this figure had reached 380,000–400,000. Population density also rose sharply, reaching 25–30 persons per square kilometer in certain irrigated areas.

If attention is paid to ethnic composition statistics, it becomes evident that a historically multiethnic environment was formed in the Mirzachul oasis. According to statistical data from the late 1970s, approximately 65–70 percent of the oasis population consisted of Uzbeks. Kazakhs accounted for about 10–12 percent, Kyrgyz for around 3–5 percent, while the remaining share was composed of Russians, Tatars, and representatives of other nationalities. In particular, the relatively dense settlement of the Kazakh population in the northwestern and northeastern parts of the oasis is clearly reflected in statistical indicators.

Significant differences are also observed in settlement patterns. Statistical data show that by the 1980s nearly 75–80 percent of the population of the Mirzachul oasis had begun living in permanent rural settlements. This indicates that the nomadic and semi-nomadic way of life was gradually replaced by a process of sedentarization. At the same time, a certain proportion of the population engaged in animal husbandry preserved seasonal pasture-migration traditions.

Statistical indicators concerning labor activity are likewise of importance. In the 1980–1990 period, approximately 45–50 percent of the oasis population was employed in the agricultural sector; of this share, about 20–25 percent was engaged in livestock breeding, while nearly 25 percent was involved in crop cultivation. These figures demonstrate that the transition from nomadic pastoralism to settled agriculture in the Mirzachul oasis proceeded in parallel rather than as an abrupt replacement.

During the years of independence, the rate of demographic growth accelerated further. According to statistical estimates, by the early 2000s the population of the Mirzachul oasis had exceeded 600,000. The proportion of Uzbeks in the population reached approximately 75–80 percent, while the relative shares of Kazakh and Kyrgyz populations slightly declined. However, this development does not indicate the disappearance of ethnic cultural elements; rather, it reflects changes in proportional distribution against the background of overall demographic growth.





Statistical data indicate that the forms of housing have also undergone significant transformation. Whereas at the beginning of the twentieth century the majority of dwellings consisted of temporary shelters and portable yurts (otov), by the beginning of the twenty-first century more than 90 percent of the housing stock was represented by permanent, capital constructions. Nevertheless, in the spiritual and cultural memory of the population engaged in animal husbandry, the yurt and its associated traditions have retained their important symbolic significance.

Conclusion. The nomadic residential culture formed in the Mirzachul oasis is the product of a long historical process, the foundation of which lies in pastoral economic practices. The rich system of terminology related to the yurt reflects the common historical memory and cultural heritage of Turkic peoples. The results of this study serve as an important scholarly source for the investigation of both the material and intangible culture of the Turkic peoples of Central Asia.

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