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FISH SPECIES OF THE AMU DARYA BASIN AND THEIR ROLE IN THE ETHNOCULTURE OF THE OASIS POPULATION

Annotation

This article examines the fish species that have historically inhabited the Amu Darya River Basin and the fishing culture of the indigenous population of the Khorezm Oasis from a historical and ethnographic perspective. Drawing on archival documents, field ethnographic data, and archaeological sources, the study provides a comprehensive analysis of the role of fishing, fish consumption, and fishery-related economic practices in the everyday life of the local population. The article also explores mythological beliefs associated with fish, their symbolic significance, and the purifying attributes traditionally ascribed to them in folk wisdom, highlighting the importance of fishing traditions as an integral component of the region's cultural heritage. Furthermore, the study assesses the prospects for developing ecotourism and fishing tourism in the Khorezm Oasis based on its rich fishing traditions and cultural resources.

Key words: Fish, Amu Darya River Basin, Khorezm Oasis, Kelteminar culture, ethnography, ethnomythology, fishing, fish consumption, halal food, ecotourism, fishing tourism.

AMUDARYO HAVZASIDAGI BALIQ TURLARI VA ULARNING VOHA AHOLISI ETNOMADANIYATIDAGI O'RNI

Annotatsiya

Mazkur maqolada Amudaryo havzasida qadimdan mavjud bo'lgan baliq turlari va Xorazm vohasi tub aholisining baliqchilik madaniyatiga qiziqishi, ularning kundalik maishiy hayotida baliq ovlash va iste'moli aholi etnologiyasida qanchalik o'rin egallaganligi xususida arxiv materiallari, dala-etnografik ma'lumotlari va arxeologik manbalar asosida tizimli tahlil qilingan. Shuningdek, maqolada voha aholisining baliq bilan bog'liq mifologik qarashlari, uning xalq donishmandligidagi g'ayritabiyy, "halollovchi" xususiyatlari hamda zamonaviy ekoturizm va baliqchilik turizmi salohiyati yoritib berilgan.

Kalit so'zlar: Baliq, loyqasuv, Amudaryo, Xorazm, Kaltaminor madaniyati, baliq yog'i, sazan, bakra, qormabaliq, etnomifologiya, halal luqma, baliqchilik turizmi.

ВИДЫ РЫБ В БАСЕЙНЕ АМУДАРЫ И ИХ РОЛЬ В ЭТНОКУЛЬТУРЕ НАСЕЛЕНИЯ ОАЗИСОВ

Аннотация

В данной статье на основе историко-этнографического подхода исследуются виды рыб, издавна обитавшие в бассейне Амударьи, а также традиции рыболовной культуры коренного населения Хорезмского оазиса. На основе архивных документов, полевых этнографических материалов и археологических источников проведён комплексный анализ места рыболовства, потребления рыбы и связанных с ними хозяйственно-бытовых традиций в повседневной жизни населения. Кроме того, раскрываются мифологические представления, связанные с рыбой, её символическое значение и приписываемые ей в народной мудрости «очищающие» свойства, а также значение рыболовных традиций как элемента культурного наследия. В статье также дана научная оценка перспектив развития экотуризма и рыболовного туризма в Хорезмском оазисе на основе традиционной рыболовной культуры.

Ключевые слова: Рыба, бассейн Амударьи, Хорезмский оазис, Кельтеминарская культура, этнография, этномифология, рыболовство, потребление рыбы, халяльная пища, экотуризм, рыболовный туризм.

Introduction. The Amu Darya River, with its cerumen, nutrient-rich turbid water, served not only for agriculture, but also for the formation of a unique rich ichthyofauna. This river basin has been one of the main factors determining the economic life and ethnocultural image of the population of the Khorezm oasis for centuries. Fishing and its consumption in the territory of Khorezm have a very ancient history. Archaeological research conducted in the region, in particular, scientists who studied the monuments of the Kaltaminor culture dating back to the 4th-3rd millennia BC (S.P. Tolstov and others), prove that fishing occupied an absolutely leading place in the economic life of these peoples, who lived along the banks of rivers and lakes and hunted with the help of special bone and stone tools[6. Pp.146].

This tradition continued consistently during the Khorezm Khanate. According to historical archival documents and the memoirs of tourists, special fish stalls and master chefs - "fish cooks" who cooked fish in various ways operated in the markets of Khiva, Urgench and other large cities. Today, as a result of changes in the Amu Darya ecosystem and anthropogenic impacts, many relict and endemic fish species are on the verge of extinction. The study of these ecological and ichthyological processes in their inextricable connection with the ethnographic life, traditional cuisine and mythological worldview of the oasis population is one of the urgent tasks of today's ethnolinguistics and cultural anthropology[4. Pp.325].

Methods. This study used historical-comparative, field-ethnographic observation and archaeological approaches

and methods. In addition, archival documents, field ethnographic materials, archaeological finds, and scientific literature were studied using historical-comparative, descriptive, and analytical methods. Through interviews with representatives of the older generation living in the territories of the Khorezm oasis (Urgench, Khiva, Khanka, Shovot, etc.), recipes, taboos, and magical beliefs related to fish were recorded.

The source basis of the study was the works of orientalists and ethnologists such as G.P. Snesev and V.V. Bartold, archival documents of the Khiva khans, as well as data from the "Red Book" of the Republics of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. The taxonomic description of fish species and their regional ethnonyms were compared and analyzed.

Results. As a result of the research, the fish species in the Amu Darya basin and their role in the life of the local population were classified as follows:

3.1. Ichthyofauna composition and endemic species. In addition to common species such as roach, bream, roach, white amur, and silver carp, the Amu Darya basin contains relict species that are considered unique worldwide. These are: The Amu Darya large shovelnose or killkuyruq (*Pseudoscaphirhynchus kaufmanni*): It belongs to the Acipenseridae family and lives in shallow, sandy and muddy waters of the river [3. Pp.134]. This species was scientifically named in honor of the first governor-general of Turkestan during the colonial period of Tsarist Russia, K.P. von Kaufman [5. Pp.139-140]. It is currently an endemic species that is on the verge of complete extinction. Aral trout (*Salmo trutta aralensis*): This valuable commercial fish, reaching a length of up to 1 meter and a weight of up to 14 kg, moves to breed in the lower and middle reaches of the river. Today it is listed in the "Red Book" of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

The fish world of the Amu Darya is inextricably linked with the history of the Aral Sea Basin. Fishing in the region has been developed since the Paleolithic and Neolithic periods. Archaeological excavations (in particular, ancient sites in the Khorezm oasis) prove that our ancestors viewed fish not only as food, but also as a craft and totemistic (sacred symbol) object [6. Pp.240].

Historically, the fish of the Amu Darya can be divided into two categories: Autochthonous (bottom) species: Species that have formed over millions of years in the natural conditions of the river, adapted to turbidity and strong currents. Introduced (transplanted) species: Fish brought from China and the Far East in the second half of the 20th century (1950-1960s) and acclimatized as a result of the Aral Sea crisis and changes in the hydrological regime of the river. Due to the turbidity and rapid flow of the Amu Darya water, its bottom fish have a unique morphological structure. Among them, the most famous and endemic (found only here) species are the shovelnose sturgeon [8. Pp.332].

In the middle of the 20th century, due to the construction of hydroelectric facilities (dams, canals) on the river, the breeding grounds of bottom fish were reduced. In order to maintain ecological balance and increase fish production, the following herbivorous and fast-growing fish were introduced into the river basin: White grass carp (*Ctenopharyngodon idella*): It helps clean canals and riverbeds by eating aquatic plants.

White and large-headed carp (Tolstolobik): Large fish of industrial importance, feeding on phytoplankton and zooplankton.

Carp / Carp (*Cyprinus carpio*): It reproduces very well in calmer parts of the river and in lakes and is currently one of the main species that is hunted. Today, the ichthyofauna of the Amu Darya is under serious anthropogenic (human activity) pressure. Due to the decrease in river water, pollution by industrial and agricultural effluents, and poaching (illegal fishing), the number of ancient fish species has sharply decreased [8. Pp.333].

A worrying fact: The Amu Darya small sculpin (sculpin) is one of the rarest fish in the world and is on the verge of complete extinction. Scientists are currently conducting scientific research on its artificial breeding. In order to preserve the natural ichthyofauna in the region, it remains an urgent task to protect the natural lake system in the river basin, develop artificial incubation workshops in fish farms, and most importantly, ensure the ecological flow of the river. The preservation of the most ancient relic of the Amu Darya - the shovelnose fish (kurakburun) - is currently the focus of attention not only of Uzbekistan, but also of world ichthyologists. Since the biological characteristics of this fish are very complex, large-scale scientific and practical work is being carried out to preserve it [8. Pp.332].

The spawning of shovelnose fish in the natural environment (in the river) has almost ceased. Therefore, scientists are working on their reproduction in special scientific laboratories and ponds.

Hormonal stimulation: Hormonal injections are used to artificially mature fish, and the resulting fry are maintained in special incubation devices [9. Pp.722].

Research centers: Scientists from the Institute of Zoology of the Academy of Sciences, in collaboration with special scientific and entrepreneurial fisheries in the Khorezm and Tashkent regions, have formed a reserve herd (matovinoestado) of shovelnose fish.

Modern biotechnological methods are being used to preserve the genetic diversity of the shovelnose dolphins.

The sperm of the fish is cryopreserved (frozen) at ultra-low temperatures in liquid nitrogen. This method will allow the species to be genetically restored in the future, even if the population in the river completely disappears.

The Amu Darya shovelnose dolphins have come to the attention of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the Global Environmental Fund (GEF), and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Creation of natural microreservoirs: In the upper and middle reaches of the river (in particular, in the Surkhandarya and Khorezm regions), fishing is completely prohibited, and their habitats are being transferred to the status of protected natural areas (reserves).

Monitoring and Tagging: Special microchips are installed on caught wild fish and released back into the river. This allows us to track their migration routes and lifespan.

3.2. Culinary culture (Gastronomic ethnography). The cuisine of the inhabitants of the Khorezm oasis is distinguished from other Uzbek oases by its "fish farming". The main traditional dishes made from fish meat are shown in the table:

T/r	Type of dish	Method of preparation and uniqueness
1.	Fried fish	Fried in cotton or sesame oil over high heat, a symbolic dish of oasis weddings.
2.	Fish soup (Suyuqosh)	It is prepared from the head and small parts of the fish and is considered medicinal.
3.	Dimlama and kebab	Fish pieces are cooked with special spices on the river bank or in the oven.

4.	Driedfish (Dried)	Fish is salted, dried in the sun and prepared for long-term storage.
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The results of the study showed that the fish resources of the Amu Darya basin played an important role in the lifestyle and economic activities of the inhabitants of the Khorezm oasis[1. Pp.45-46]. Fishing and consumption of fish were not only a source of food, but also formed an integral part of the customs, rituals and traditional knowledge of the people. In addition, fish is a symbol of purity, halal sustenance in folk beliefs and interpreted as a symbol of blessing. The study substantiated the possibilities of preserving tangible and intangible cultural heritage related to fishing and its effective use in the development of sustainable tourism.

Discussion. 4.1. Fish-believing and ethnomythological views.

The ethnography of the Lower Amu Darya basin testifies to the ancient pre-Islamic layers of the fish cult. In the worldview of the Khorezm population, fish was considered such a pure creature that it was absolute as a "halal bite". The expression "We ate fish and became holy" among the local population arose from the belief in the cleansing, magical properties of fish meat, not only physically, but also spiritually and spiritually[2. Pp.204]. This image is also partially observed in the Fergana Valley and is associated with the tradition of eating fish before the beginning of the month of Ramadan (fasting)[4. Pp.325-326].

However, this concept of purity is also limited by certain ethnic prohibitions (taboos). For example, a woman who has just given birth (in the chill period) is strictly forbidden to eat fish for up to forty days. The reason for this is the ancient mythological fear that the cold properties of fish and its "supernatural powers" can negatively affect the baby and mother[7. Pp.65-66]. Also, hunting and eating fish during the months when they are breeding (reproducing) was considered disrespectful to the secrets of nature and a great sin, which served as a traditional institution for maintaining ecological balance.

4.2. Fishing and modern economic and tourist potential
The tradition of fishing in the oasis is not only a source of

livelihood, but also a favorite socio-cultural activity of men, a means of psychological rehabilitation (calming the nerves). Today, on the basis of this traditional culture, fishing tourism (ethno-fishing tourism) is being rapidly developed in the Khorezm region[1. Pp.46].

Currently, the region is improving its roadside infrastructure (reconstruction of the Urgench-Khiva highway), national-style mobile tents, huts, master classes on fishing, and schools for preparing traditional Khorezm fish dishes are being organized for foreign and local tourists. This allows us to adapt the ancient ethnological heritage to the requirements of the modern economy.

Conclusion. The following conclusions were drawn as a result of the study: The Amu Darya basin, with its complex hydrological and turbid water composition, has formed a unique ichthyofauna in the region, including such rare relict species as *Pseudoscaphirhynchus kaufmanni*.

In the ethnogenesis and economic life of the Uzbeks of the Khorezm oasis, fishing has systematically served as an economic and cultural foundation from the Kaltaminor culture to the present day.

Ethnographically, fish is a complex mythological object that embodies a system of moral purity and honesty in the minds of the oasis population, and at the same time a certain system of social prohibitions.

Preserving the traditional fishing culture and transforming it into an ecotourism brand is of great strategic importance in promoting the economy and cultural heritage of the oasis on an international scale.

The fishing culture of the Khorezm oasis is an integral part of the historical and ethnographic heritage of the region. Its in-depth scientific study, protection and integration into modern tourism infrastructure will serve to preserve the national cultural heritage, increase the tourist attractiveness of the region, and ensure sustainable socio-economic development.

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