

**SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND STRATIFICATION IN UZBEKISTAN: HISTORICAL
TRANSFORMATION AND CONTEMPORARY TRENDS**

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Annotatsiya. Ushbu maqolada O‘zbekistondagi ijtimoiy struktura va stratifikatsiya jarayonlarining tarixiy ildizlari hamda zamonaviy transformatsiyasi tahlil qilingan. Muallif an’anaviy ijtimoiy tuzilmalar, sovet davri merosi va bozor islohotlarining jamiyat qatlamlanishiga ta’sirini ko‘rib chiqadi. Shuningdek, Yangi O‘zbekiston taraqqiyot strategiyasi doirasida ijtimoiy qatlamlarning o‘zgarishi, demokratlashuv va iqtisodiy liberallashuv jarayonlarining o‘zaro bog‘liqligi statistik ma’lumotlar va ilmiy manbalar asosida yoritilgan.

Tayanch so‘zlar: ijtimoiy struktura, stratifikatsiya, transformatsiya, ijtimoiy qatlam, o‘rta sinf, ijtimoiy institut, liberallashuv, ijtimoiy ierarxiya.

Аннотация. В данной статье анализируются исторические корни и современная трансформация процессов социальной структуры и стратификации в Узбекистане. Автор рассматривает влияние традиционных социальных структур, наследия советского периода и рыночных реформ на социальное расслоение общества. Также на основе статистических данных и научных источников освещаются изменения в социальных слоях, взаимосвязь процессов демократизации и экономической либерализации в рамках Стратегии развития Нового Узбекистана.

Ключевые слова: социальная структура, стратификация, трансформация, социальный слой, средний класс, социальный институт, либерализация, социальная иерархия.

Abstract. This article analyzes the historical roots and contemporary transformation of social structure and stratification processes in Uzbekistan. The author examines the impact of traditional social structures, the Soviet legacy, and market reforms on the social stratification of society. Furthermore, based on statistical data and scientific sources, the study highlights changes in social layers and the interconnection between the processes of democratization and economic liberalization within the framework of the Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan.

Keywords: social structure, stratification, transformation, social layer, middle class, social institution, liberalization, social hierarchy.

Introduction. The social structure of society is its internal structure, a set of stable relationships between social groups, strata and institutions. In the conditions of Uzbekistan, the processes of social stratification represent a complex system formed as a result of both ancient traditional structures, the legacy of the Soviet era, and market reforms in the years of independence.¹. Today, the change in social strata in Uzbekistan is inextricably linked to the state's reforms towards democratization and economic liberalization.

Key words: social structure, stratification, transformation, social stratum, middle class, social institution, liberalization, social hierarchy.

Historical roots of social structure

Social stratification in Uzbekistan has had a complex hierarchical system for many centuries.

¹ Bekmurodov M. Zamonaviy sotsiologiya: nazariya va amaliyot. – Toshkent: “Yangi asr avlodi”, 2020-y. – 144-b.

During the khanate period (until the end of the 19th century), social status was determined mainly by two factors - origin (lineage) and land ownership. The upper class consisted of "Sayyids", "Khojas" and governing beks and emirs. The main stratum consisted of farmers, herders and artisans². Mahalla instituti o'sha davridayoq ijtimoiy nazorat va jipslikning asosiy birligi bo'lib xizmat qilgan.

The Soviet era (1924–1991) introduced the idea of "class equality" into the social landscape of Uzbekistan. However, in practice, society acquired a new vertical structure. In this case, the state apparatus (nomenklatura) formed the upper stratum, and the intelligentsia, workers, and peasants formed the lower stratum. Social mobility during this period was mainly achieved through loyalty to the Communist Party and the state education system.

The period of independence and the transition to a market economy

The transition from an administrative-command system to a market economy after 1991 led to a fundamental change in the social structure. The privatization of state property led to the emergence of new social strata.

The class of entrepreneurs and property owners: As a result of the liberalization of the economy, a new "Uzbek bourgeoisie" was formed. This stratum became the main owner of economic resources in society³.

Labor migrants: A unique aspect of the social landscape of Uzbekistan is that a large part of the population is associated with external migration, which directly affects the income and social status of families.

Intellectual and technological layer: As a result of globalization and digitalization, a new layer of "knowledge holders" has been formed, consisting of IT specialists, consulting and highly qualified service professionals.

Criteria for modern stratification

Today, social stratification in Uzbekistan is carried out on the basis of the following criteria⁴:

Criteria	Description
Income Level	The existence of a gap between the rich, middle and poor.
Education and Skills	The rise of the educated and digitally literate.
Urbanization	The gap in lifestyle and opportunities between urban and rural populations.
Civil Service	Position in the governance system remains an important status symbol.

Important trend: In recent years, the functioning of "social elevators" (the opportunity to rise to the upper class through education and entrepreneurship) has been increasing in Uzbekistan.

Social policy and poverty reduction.

The main mechanism for managing stratification in modern Uzbek society is the poverty reduction strategy. To prevent society from becoming sharply polarized (very rich and very poor),

² Azamat Ziyo. O'zbek davlatchiligi tarixi. – Toshkent: "Sharq", 2001-y. – 312-b.

³ Aliyev B. O'zbekistonda ijtimoiy stratifikatsiya jarayonlari // O'zbekiston ijtimoiy fanlar jurnali. – 2022-y. – №4. – 18-25 b.

⁴ O'zbekiston Respublikasi Davlat statistika agentligi ma'lumotnomasi. "Aholining turmush darajasi va ijtimoiy tarkibi", 2024-y.

social protection mechanisms such as the “Iron Book”, “Women's Book” and “Youth Book” have been introduced⁵.

Conclusion

Summing up the processes of social structure and stratification in Uzbekistan, it can be said that the country's society is experiencing a complex and fundamental turning point in the transition from a "traditional-static" model to a "modern-dynamic" model. This transformation process is reflected not only in economic indicators, but also in the system of social consciousness and values.

Firstly, the transformation of the factors determining social status is leading to the primacy of the principles of "meritocracy" (assessment according to personal abilities and services) in society. If earlier a person's place in the social hierarchy was determined more by his origin, clan-tribal ties or administrative position ("lineage and position"), today intellectual capital - the level of knowledge, professional qualifications and knowledge of foreign languages - has become the main factor. In the conditions of global competition and the digital economy, representatives of the high-tech sector and modern managers are rising to the upper strata of the social pyramid faster.

Secondly, entrepreneurial activity in society is not only a means of accumulating wealth, but also the most effective social elevator. The layer of owners formed as a result of the liberalization of the economy forms the basis of the “middle class” that ensures the social stability of society. Entrepreneurship has given a person the opportunity to move to a higher stratum through vertical mobility, regardless of social origin. This has changed the passive social mood in society to active, result-oriented actions.

Thirdly, the modern stratification of Uzbekistan has a unique “symbiosis”. In this, economic rationality inherent in the West and traditional Eastern institutions (neighborhood, family values, public opinion) work in harmony. The status of a person in society is measured not only by his material wealth, but also by his spiritual authority and the benefits he brings to society. The system of “social notebooks” introduced by the state has become an important social mechanism that serves to mitigate social polarization and prevent inter-class conflicts.

As a final conclusion, it is worth noting that the future social stability of Uzbekistan depends on the effectiveness of investments in human capital. As a result of ensuring the quality of the education system and equality of economic opportunities, the share of a strong, independent and intellectual middle class in society will further expand. This will make the social structure of New Uzbekistan not only stable, but also resilient to external and internal challenges.

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⁵ Mirziyoyev Sh. M. Yangi O‘zbekiston taraqqiyot strategiyasi. – Toshkent: “O‘zbekiston”, 2022-y. – 115-b.



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