

The Social and Living Conditions of Rural Communities and The Standard of Living in The Fergana Valley, 1941–1943

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Abstract: This article examines the social and everyday lives of rural populations in the Fergana Valley—namely, Andijan, Namangan, and Fergana regions—during the Second World War. It analyzes changes in labor resources, food provision, the importance of private subsidiary plots, and humanitarian assistance provided to evacuated civilians. Rural life during wartime is considered not only in terms of agricultural production, but also through everyday living conditions, family labor, social solidarity, and humanitarian experience.

Keywords: Second World War, Fergana Valley, Andijan, Namangan, Fergana, rural population, collective farm, labor mobilization, household plot, food supply, evacuation, children, humanitarian assistance.

Introduction: The Second World War was a period in Uzbekistan's history when economic resources, labor, and everyday life were radically reorganized. The effects of the war were deeply felt even in areas far from the front: state procurement obligations for agricultural products intensified, part of the working-age population was mobilized for military service, and shortages of everyday consumer goods affected family life. Although the Fergana Valley played an important role in the home-front economy because of its agricultural potential and dense population, fulfilling this role placed a considerable labor and social burden on rural communities.

This article discusses wartime agrarian processes—including cotton growing, grain cultivation, livestock raising, and other sectors—in connection with rural living standards, food provision, household plots, and assistance to displaced people. It continues this approach by examining the social and domestic dimensions of rural history as an interconnected process.

The geographical scope of the study covers Andijan, Namangan, and Fergana regions. The article applies the principles of historicism, a systematic approach, and

comparative-historical analysis. General conclusions from research on the war years are compared with scholarly literature; figures that have not been verified and incomplete archival references are not presented as established facts.

1. Changes in the Social Composition of Rural Communities During Wartime

The outbreak of war sharply intensified problems related to agricultural labor resources. The conscription of men into military service reduced the workforce on collective farms and state farms. However, agricultural tasks still had to be completed on schedule, crops had to be tended, and harvests had to be gathered. As a result, a substantial share of work previously performed mainly by men fell to women, older people, and adolescents.

Women actively participated in cotton and grain production, hoeing, irrigation, harvesting, livestock care, and other farm activities. It is not enough to interpret this process merely as the replacement of missing workers in production. Alongside fieldwork, women also had to manage households, care for children, and provide food for their families. Thus, wartime labor mobilization also changed the internal

division of responsibilities within families.

The participation of older people and adolescents in agriculture also increased. Their labor was important for seasonal tasks and everyday farm activities. This does not mean, however, that agricultural production problems were fully overcome: the decline in the number of workers and experienced laborers affected production stability. Rural communities' wartime activities should therefore be understood as dedicated work carried out under conditions of considerable strain and limited resources.

2. Material and Living Conditions and Food Supply

One of the major problems facing rural residents during the war was access to food and everyday necessities. Since a large share of agricultural output was directed toward state and military needs, families' opportunities for daily consumption were limited. Collective farms operated a system of accounting based on labor-days, and the share of farm output distributed to residents under wartime conditions depended on various factors. Therefore, rural families' material circumstances cannot be measured by harvest volumes alone; the distribution of produce, remuneration for labor-days, and the labor resources available within each family must also be considered.

Private household plots and subsidiary farms served as a source of food for many families. Growing vegetables and melons, as well as keeping poultry or livestock, helped meet some household needs. At the same time, the productive capacity of a household plot depended on the family's able-bodied members, the size of the land, water availability, and other conditions. Household plots should therefore not be seen as having fully resolved wartime food shortages, but rather as an additional resource that improved families' chances of coping when centralized supplies were limited.

The circumstances of families whose members had gone to the front, as well as those of people with limited capacity to work, had a particular impact on rural living conditions. Assistance from local organizations, collective-farm administrations, and neighbors was important for such families. However, determining whether the scale and regularity of this assistance were uniform across all areas requires comparative examination of records from individual districts and collective farms.

3. Assistance to Evacuated People

As military operations expanded, people were relocated from front-line and occupied territories to safer eastern regions of the country. Uzbekistan was among the territories that received evacuees. In the Fergana Valley, their accommodation was closely

linked to the availability of housing, food, medical care, and employment. This task required the participation not only of local authorities, but also of rural communities and ordinary families.

Providing assistance to people relocated during the war placed an additional social responsibility on rural residents. Although local people themselves faced shortages of food and household goods, sharing shelter, meals, and everyday necessities was a practical expression of humanitarian concern. This process should be studied not only as an official administrative measure, but also as a practice of mutual assistance embedded in the daily life of local communities during wartime.

Care for evacuated children and minors who had been left without parents was a particularly important issue. Placing children in orphanages or local families and meeting their needs for food, clothing, and upbringing required coordinated action by local organizations and citizens. The evacuation of children and children's institutions to Andijan, Namangan, and Fergana regions has also been examined in separate studies; this research demonstrates the need for a deeper, source-based study of the history of evacuation in the region [2].

It is important here to distinguish between evacuation and forced deportation. Evacuation generally refers to moving people from areas threatened by military danger to safer locations, whereas deportation means the forced relocation of certain peoples or population groups by state decision. Both processes may have affected the demographic composition of the Fergana Valley during the war, but their legal foundations, conditions of relocation, and social consequences should not be conflated as a single phenomenon [3].

4. Andijan, Namangan, and Fergana Regions: Commonalities and Regional Characteristics

A comparison of the wartime experiences of the three regions first reveals several shared features: the importance of agriculture to the home-front economy, a decline in labor resources, the participation of women and young people in work, difficulties in food supply, and the task of accommodating evacuees. At the same time, identifying differences among the regions requires comparing data according to consistent criteria, including cultivated areas, the number of collective farms, the working-age population, crop yields, the number of evacuees, and forms of assistance.

The Fergana Valley's natural, geographical, and economic conditions were important factors shaping rural life. Irrigated farming and seasonal work associated with cotton and other crops defined the

daily rhythm of labor. However, limiting the experience of all three regions to a general description may reduce the precision of scholarly conclusions. The comparative approach used in existing research should therefore be continued, with archival documents, statistical data, and local historical materials analyzed separately for each region.

Regional comparison leads to another important conclusion: rural residents during the war were not merely a workforce carrying out state assignments. They simultaneously had to provide for their families, keep farms operating, support the front, and assist people who had been relocated to the region. This multifaceted responsibility is central to understanding the historical experience of rural communities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A synthesis of research on the living conditions of Uzbekistan's rural population during the Second World War, viewed from the perspective of social history, yields several findings. First, mobilization for the front changed the composition of the agricultural workforce and increased the responsibilities borne by women, older people, and adolescents. Second, the obligation to supply produce for state needs and shortages of consumer goods made rural families' material circumstances more difficult. Third, household plots and subsidiary farms remained an important additional source of food for families. Fourth, although receiving evacuees placed further pressure on existing social resources, it also demonstrated practices of mutual assistance and humanitarian concern.

One of the article's key conclusions is that rural history cannot be explained solely through production plans and harvest figures. The stability of agricultural production was closely connected with families' access to food, the division of labor, household conditions, and local solidarity. Future research should therefore compare collective-farm reports, district executive committee records, evacuation commission materials, and personal recollections.

CONCLUSION

The social and everyday life of rural communities in the Fergana Valley in 1941–1945 was shaped by complex relationships among the demands of the home-front economy, changes in labor resources, and families' daily needs. The mobilization of men to the front altered the division of labor in production, while women, older people, and adolescents assumed a substantial burden of agricultural work. At the same time, obligations to deliver produce to the state and shortages of everyday goods affected the population's material circumstances.

Private household plots and subsidiary farms played an important role in partially meeting families' food needs. Assistance to evacuated civilians and children placed an additional responsibility on local communities, while demonstrating that humanitarian values and mutual support endured even under difficult conditions. A more precise assessment of the scale and regional variation of this assistance requires wider use of primary documents at regional, district, and collective-farm levels.

Overall, studying rural life during the war through the examples of Andijan, Namangan, and Fergana regions reveals not only the agrarian and economic dimensions of Uzbekistan's history, but also its social and human aspects. The labor of rural residents, their everyday coping strategies, and the assistance they provided to evacuees should be regarded as an important part of the historical experience of wartime society.

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