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## MAHALLA TRANSFORMATION: FROM A TRADITIONAL COMMUNITY TO A SOCIAL INSTITUTION

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**Abstract.** This article is devoted to the study of the mahalla, which has historically been an important element of social organization in Central Asia and has undergone significant changes. Initially, the mahalla functioned as a traditional community based on kinship, shared values, and mutual assistance. However, over time, it has evolved into a key social institution integrated into the public administration system of modern Uzbekistan. This transformation process was driven by economic, demographic, political, and technological changes that redefined the role and functions of the mahalla in society. One of the key aspects of the mahalla's transformation is its institutionalization in the public administration system. In the past, the mahalla was an informal association where elders played an important role in maintaining order, resolving conflicts, and providing social support. However, after Uzbekistan gained independence, the mahalla became an officially recognized administrative unit responsible for local self-government, the distribution of social assistance, and the strengthening of social cohesion. This process has strengthened its role as a link between the State and the population, allowing for more effective implementation of public policy at the local level. Economic changes have also had an impact on the transformation of the mahalla. The transition from a centralized Soviet economy to a market model led to changes in employment patterns, migration processes, and urbanization. These factors have changed the demographic composition of mahalla communities, as internal and international labor migration has led to the transformation of traditional family structures. Mahallas have expanded their social support mechanisms, especially for vulnerable groups of the population.

**Keywords:** mahalla, community, social institution, transformation, traditions, management, social cohesion, digitalization, social support.

### Introduction

The term "mahalla" comes from the Arabic word "mahalloon", which means "place". The mahalla is considered an administrative-territorial unit in the cities where the population lives. Until the 1920s, the mahalla included an average of 50-60 households and was part of urban

neighborhoods (dakha) (Choriyev, 1999). The Mahalla plays an important role in the social, economic, and cultural life of people, contributing to the strengthening of public relations. Such structures ensure the stability of society, preserve traditions, customs, and national mentality. Historically, the mahalla has served not only as a territorial unit, but also as an important social institution contributing to the strengthening of society and the preservation of cultural values. Community is an integral part of human life, combining personal needs and common interests. In a community, people work together in various situations, such as difficulties and crises, holidays and celebrations, and social events. Through such connections, the community strengthens moral and ethical standards, creating a sense of security and equality among its members.

By becoming part of a community, a person adapts to the traditional norms of society and passes them on to the next generations. The community influences the individual by developing social responsibility and the capacity to act not only for the sake of personal interests but also for public interests. The community is a key carrier of traditions and values, passing them on from generation to generation. It creates unity, trust, and support among people.

The word "community" has similar variants in different Turkic peoples. Uzbek – "jamo'a", Tatar – jamoat, Turkmen – zhemagat. This term means a voluntary association of people based on mutual social ties and common goals (Язлыев, 1989). Thus, the community plays a key role in social life, preserving traditions, strengthening solidarity, and providing support among its members. Community and collectivism play a key role in shaping the ideological relations of society. The desires, aspirations, and goals of the members of the community are based on the unity of common ideas. Such a system of social relations turns society into an instrument for the implementation of a single idea, which helps to strengthen cohesion, stability of changes and reforms, unification, and joint actions for the sake of common interests, and increase people's social responsibility. This ensures that the community moves together to achieve common goals (Содиқова, 2019).

The purpose of this article is to analyze the process of transformation of the mahalla from a traditional community to a modern social institution, identifying the key stages of its evolution, as well as the factors contributing to this change. The research examines the historical development of the mahalla, its role in the social structure of society, the impact of economic and demographic changes, as well as the process of digitalization of mahalla management. Special attention is paid to the mahalla's interaction with state institutions, its social, economic, and cultural functions, as well as how it adapts to modern challenges and demands of society. The study aims to identify a balance between the traditional functions of the mahalla and its new administrative and social tasks, which allows for a deeper understanding of its importance in the system of local government and social development in Uzbekistan.

The community not only unites people but also enhances their social activity, directing it towards the realization of collective goals. The lifestyle formed on the basis of the neighborhood in the mahalla promotes the development of close social ties. These features are an integral part of the national mentality of the Uzbek people and have been passed down from generation to generation.

According to ethnologist A. Ashirov, in Uzbek society, the community plays the role of social control, ensuring mandatory human participation in public life, observance of moral norms through the pressure of collective opinion (Ashirov, 2004).

Natural sciences and humanities, makes it possible. It is necessary to rethink such traditional social formations as the mahalla in the categories of self-developing systems. At the same time, the philosophical foundation laid by Hegel and Engels remains relevant: "Hegel posed and investigated the question of the self-development of complex systems. From this position, he certainly belongs to the forerunners of synergetics" (Г.Г.Малинецкий, et. AlI, 2023).

Modern approaches to the study of social order are increasingly based on the concepts of self-organization, which have developed both in philosophy and economics. According to E.V. Shestakova, "man, society, enterprise, market" can be considered as open socio-economic systems with the ability to self-organize (Шестакова, 2012).

### **Research methodology**

The study of literature from a historical point of view is of great importance for highlighting the essence, history and development of the mahalla. In this sense, it is advisable to study the topic within the framework of historical science, as well as various issues related to the way of life of the people, in particular, aspects reflected in sources on the history and culture of Oriental peoples. In addition, this theme is reflected in the literature related to the ancient Zoroastrian religion. For example, in the Avesta, the community (vaeshvadatha) is described as the main social unit associated with neighborhood relations, and they conducted their activities within a certain territory (Маколевский, 1960). The Zoroastrian community, in turn, was divided into social groups, and the status of these strata of society is evidenced by both literary sources from the Avesta and the work of researchers.

However, with the development of society and the establishment of the state, kinship communities began to be replaced by neighborhood-based communities. The mahalla has become an important social institution that unites the historical traditions of family ties and modern principles of social unity, which is changing and transforming.

Heraclitus (lived in the 6th–5th centuries BC) is one of the most famous philosophers of the ancient world, and his views on social change have always attracted attention. The main ideas of Heraclitus are expressed in his principle of "everything flows," which is reflected in his famous statement: "You cannot enter the same river twice." In his opinion, social changes in society occur as a continuous process. From the point of view of Heraclitus, everything in nature and society is in motion and changing. He linked transformations in the human community with the laws of nature, considering social life as a constantly reshaping process. He considered contradictions to be the main driving force of social change. In his opinion, as a result of the struggle of various opposites, new forms and structures arise. For example, he saw death as the beginning of a new life and perceived contradictions as a source of harmony. In his theory, social change is subject to the general laws of nature, and society is seen as an integral part of it. He associated any transformations in society with the universal laws of the universe. Heraclitus' concept of social change is based on the idea of movement and development of society. His views had a significant impact on the development of social thought and subsequently became the basis of the dialectical approach. These ideas of Heraclitus still serve as the scientific basis for the study of social change in modern sociology (Ashirov, 2004).

The processes of transformation of local governments can be analyzed from the point of view of the sociological theories of such classics as Emile Durkheim – theory of "social facts",

Max Weber – theory of rational bureaucracy, social movements and their role in the legislative and managerial system, Talcott Parsons – theory of functionalism and social systems, Pierre Bourdieu – theory of social fields, types of capital, and habitus. And also based on the sociological concepts of such researchers as K. Davis, N. Smelzer, R. Merton, M. Levy, J. Mead, S. Frolov, which makes it possible to analyze the role and functions of the mahalla institute in the social system.

As noted by V.N. Kelasyev and I.L. Pervova, the processes of self-organization in society are formed on the basis of the interaction of social actors, leading to the emergence of new qualities reflecting the combined interests and goals of the participants (Kelasyev and Pervova, 2014). This allows us to consider the mahalla as a social institution that has gone from a local community to an element of a self-organizing social system (*Келасьев, 1960*).

Within the framework of Uzbek sociological science, the scientific study of various aspects of the mahalla institute is classified as follows. Institutional foundations of mahalla development Professor M. Bekmuradov considers the mahalla as an important mechanism providing a link between the state and society. Sh. Sodikova explores the problems of social change in mahallas. A. Umarov analyzes the features of the traditional way of life in conditions of social development. T. Matiboev studies the issues of social partnership in the reform of the mahalla system. Kholbekov emphasizes the need to comply with the principles of social justice in regulating the activities of the mahalla. T. Norboeva, Doctor of Sociology, puts forward the need for initiatives to develop mahallas in accordance with modern trends.

## Results and discussions

The Mahalla, as a public institution, has existed for a long time, but, like any social structure, it goes through transformation processes. The term "transformation" comes from the Latin *transformatio*, which means "change", "transformation", "transition from one state to another". The term was first used in the natural sciences (biology, physics, mathematics), and then spread to the social sciences and humanities.

The transformation of the mahalla as a social institution is an inevitable process that reflects changes in society and adapts to new historical conditions.

Global transformation of society: the concepts of E. Toffler and T. Parsons. In the context of studying social change, the concept of "global transformation of society" proposed by E. Toffler is used. He considers changes in society from a global perspective, understanding transformation as a process of qualitative changes that are not a simple continuation of the previous stage of society's development, but can radically change or even negate its previous state. This type of change is particularly characteristic of economic systems. Therefore, the transformation process is evaluated in terms of the depth of qualitative transformations of the systems. According to E. Toffler, "Transformation is the process of replacing the structural characteristics of one economic system with similar characteristics of another, as a result of which the entire economic system undergoes fundamental changes" (*Beck, 1992*).

In the economic sense, "transformation" means profound changes in the economic system or its individual sectors, structures, and industries. This process is carried out through the introduction of new resources, technologies, market relations and economic models.

The transformation of the economy is associated with economic development, structural changes, and globalization. Thus, "transformation" is the restructuring, changing the forms

and methods of economic activity, as well as the reorientation of its target areas. In economics, the concept of "transformation" encompasses a change in the relationship between economic sectors (agricultural, industrial, services), the institutional development of market relations – the processes of liberalization and globalization, the introduction of new technologies – increases labor productivity and leads to the emergence of new production methods, a change in the role of the state in the economy – the state can either reduce or increase its market impact (Sachs, 1996).

In historical science, "transformation" means profound changes in social processes, events and strata of society, the transition to a new stage of historical development. This process is driven by economic, political, cultural, and social changes. This is a change in the social structure of society – the transition from the slave-owning system to feudalism, then to an industrial society. Political transformation is a change in the form of government (the French Revolution, the collapse of the USSR). Cultural and spiritual changes – the Renaissance as a period of restoration of the ancient heritage. Scientific and technological revolutions and their impact on history (Braudel, 1980).

Transformation is a universal process that encompasses various fields: politics, biology, technology, and psychology. It can occur gradually (evolutionarily) or dramatically (revolutionarily), leading to qualitative changes in systems, structures, and processes.

The transformation processes of the mahalla institute in Uzbekistan are aimed at updating the traditional structure of the mahalla and giving it an active social role in accordance with the needs of the socio-economic development of the country. Today, the mahalla is no longer limited to the support of the population and public control, but is becoming an important tool for implementing the state's social policy. The transformation of the mahalla turns it into a key performer of state social policy, strengthening its role in society.

The main directions of transformation in the mahalla:

- Expansion of social services and support for the population;
- Through mahallas, the population receives various social services, assistance and support programs;
- The Mahalla is turning into the first center of citizens' appeal, helping to solve their problems and provide support.;
- Job creation and economic support;
- Mahallas are involved in the fight against unemployment and the creation of new jobs;
- Vocational training and entrepreneurship support programs are being implemented, which contribute to improving the standard of living of the population;
- Strengthening civic responsibility and social control;
- Mahallas play a key role in the formation of social solidarity, justice and responsibility;
- They are used to prevent crime and support young people in making the right life choices.;
- A link between the state and society;
- Mahallas serve as an intermediary between the state and the population, which makes it possible to effectively bring local problems to government structures and facilitate their rapid resolution.;
- Support for cultural and spiritual development of the population;
- Various cultural events and educational meetings are held aimed at strengthening national and cultural values among the population.

The transformation of the mahalla institute in Uzbekistan is aimed not only at preserving traditional values but also at strengthening its role as an auxiliary structure in the public administration system.

Economic reforms and the transition to a market economy have significantly affected the functions of the mahalla. Although the mahalla retains its key role in social support for the population, its effectiveness largely depends on public and private support.

The state implements various social services through mahallas:

- Identification of low-income families and provision of social assistance.
- Improving the standard of living of the population.

In some cases, mahallas are unable to provide the necessary financial support in a timely and complete manner, which limits the satisfaction of the social needs of the population.

The Mahalla Institute in Uzbekistan is adapting to the new economic conditions, maintaining its traditional role, but also becoming a key element of the country's socio-economic development.

The active participation of mahallas in social and economic development contributes to a more effective implementation of government policies aimed at improving the living conditions of the population. These measures help to preserve the mahalla as a key institution of social support.

The changes in the State's approach to the mahalla institution and the administrative reforms carried out have become an important step in strengthening its role. The mahalla, as an integral part of public administration, performs an important function of communicating the social policy of the state to the population. The State supports the implementation of social programs through mahallas, including assistance to poor families and needy segments of the population. The active participation of mahallas strengthens their role as a "bridge" between the state and society. Effective delivery of social programs to the population through mahallas makes it possible to better identify the needs of citizens and provide targeted assistance. Mahallas ensure the rapid and flexible transfer of state social initiatives, which strengthen social stability in society.

## Conclusion

Thus, the mahalla has become a key institution responsible for social cohesion and the sustainability of society in the new conditions. The state has transferred part of the social tasks to the Mahalla Institute. The Mahalla has assumed responsibility for supporting low-income families, people with disabilities, single elderly people, and needy segments of the population. She participates in the fair distribution of social benefits, which has increased her credibility among the population. Government programs to support youth and women are implemented through the mahalla, which enhances its active role in social processes.

The mahalla has become a key intermediary in the development of entrepreneurship and job creation. Cooperation between the private sector and the mahalla has contributed to the development of small businesses and handicrafts, which has helped to increase employment. Support for entrepreneurship has ensured economic stability at the local level.

Economic reforms have expanded the social functions of the mahalla, making it an important socio-economic institution. The Mahalla has strengthened its role as a tool for supporting those in need and developing the private sector. In the context of the transition to a market economy,

the mahalla has become a key institution for ensuring the socio-economic well-being of the population.

The state policy of Uzbekistan has significantly strengthened the role of the mahalla in society, transferring to it the functions of social assistance, public control, and registration of the population. The expansion of the mahalla's powers and institutional status has strengthened its influence in public administration. The State has entrusted the mahalla with the organization of social assistance, public control and registration of the population. The Mahalla plays a key role in the fair distribution of social benefits among the low-income, people with disabilities and single elderly citizens. She also acts as an intermediary in ensuring order in public life, compliance with legislation and conflict resolution. The collection and monitoring of population data have become one of the main functions of the mahalla in cooperation with government organizations. The expansion of the mahalla's functions has increased its influence in society, making it a key institution in social assistance, public control and monitoring of the implementation of state programs.

The development of modern technologies has increased the efficiency of the mahalla, but weakened some traditional social ties. Electronic registration made it possible to more accurately track the social status of residents. Digital document management systems have accelerated and simplified administrative processes. The use of digital tools in the distribution of government programs has increased equity and efficiency.

Thus, the mahalla remains an important institution in ensuring social stability and implementing government programs in Uzbekistan. The expansion of the mahalla's powers has strengthened its role in managing social processes. Migration and urbanization have changed traditional social ties, but the mahalla has adapted, taking on new social functions. Modern technologies have modernized the mahalla's work, making it more efficient and transparent. The mahalla's communication with residents is organized through modern means of communication. Automation of administrative processes has created new opportunities for the development of public initiatives. The Mahalla remains a key institution that combines historical traditions and modern social functions, contributing to the development of society and the interaction of the state with citizens. The stability of society largely depends on the continuity of spiritual education in the family, educational institutions and mahallas. An important step is to develop a map for optimizing the socio-spiritual environment based on the principle: Mahalla → district → region → republic. The introduction of modern information and communication technologies in this process is expedient and necessary. Implementation of the idea "Youth are the creators of the New Uzbekistan" within the framework of the concept "New Uzbekistan – the Third Renaissance" (Ixtiyarov, 2023). Thus, strengthening spiritual education is a strategically important task that ensures the harmonious development of the individual and society.

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### **МАХАЛЛАНЫҢ ТРАНСФОРМАЦИЯСЫ: ДӘСТҮРЛІ ҚОҒАМДАСТЫҚТАН ӘЛЕУМЕТТІК ИНСТИТУТҚА ДЕЙІН**

**Андатпа.** Бұл мақала Орталық Азиядағы әлеуметтік ұйымдастырудың маңызды элементі болып табылатын махаллаға арналған, ол тарихи тұрғыдан елеулі өзгерістерге ұшырады. Алғашында махалла туыстық байланыстарға, ортақ құндылықтарға және өзара көмекке негізделген дәстүрлі қауымдастық ретінде жұмыс істеді. Алайда уақыт өте келе ол қазіргі Өзбекстанның мемлекеттік басқару жүйесіне интеграцияланған негізгі әлеуметтік институтқа айналды. Бұл трансформация процесі экономикалық, демографиялық, саяси және технологиялық өзгерістермен анықталды, олар махалланың қоғамдағы рөлі мен функцияларын қайта қарастыруға алып келді. Махалла трансформациясының негізгі аспектілерінің бірі – оның мемлекеттік басқару жүйесінде институционализациялануы. Бұрын махалла бейресми қауымдастық ретінде қалыптасып, онда ақсақалдар тәртіпті сақтау, дауларды реттеу және әлеуметтік қолдау көрсету мәселелерінде маңызды рөл атқарды. Алайда Өзбекстан тәуелсіздік алғаннан кейін махалла жергілікті өзін-өзі басқаруға, әлеуметтік көмек бөлуді ұйымдастыруға және қоғамдық бірлікті нығайтуға жауапты ресми әкімшілік бірлікке айналды. Бұл процесс оның мемлекет пен халық арасындағы байланыстырушы буын ретіндегі рөлін күшейтті, бұл мемлекеттік саясатты жергілікті деңгейде тиімдірек жүзеге асыруға мүмкіндік берді. Экономикалық өзгерістер де махалла трансформациясына әсер етті. Кеңестік орталықтандырылған экономикадан нарықтық үлгіге көшу жұмыспен қамту құрылымына, көші-қон процестеріне және урбанизацияға өзгерістер енгізді. Бұл факторлар ішкі және халықаралық еңбек көші-қонының салдарынан дәстүрлі отбасылық құрылымдардың трансформациялануымен қатар, махалла қауымдастықтарының



демографиялық құрамының өзгеруіне әкелді. Махаллалар әлеуметтік қолдау тетіктерін кеңейтті, әсіресе аз қамтылған отбасылар, қарт адамдар және осал топтар үшін көмек көрсетуге ерекше көңіл бөлді.

**Негізгі ұғымдар:** махалла, қауымдастық, әлеуметтік институт, трансформация, дәстүрлер, басқару, әлеуметтік бірлік, цифрландыру, әлеуметтік қолдау.

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## **ТРАНСФОРМАЦИЯ МАХАЛЛИ: ИЗ ТРАДИЦИОННОЙ ОБЩИНЫ В СОЦИАЛЬНЫЙ ИНСТИТУТ**

**Аннотация.** Данная статья посвящена изучению махалли, которая исторически была важным элементом социальной организации в Центральной Азии и претерпела значительные изменения. Изначально махалля функционировала как традиционная община, основанная на родственных связях, общих ценностях и взаимопомощи. Однако со временем она превратилась в ключевой социальный институт, интегрированный в систему государственного управления современного Узбекистана. Этот процесс трансформации был обусловлен экономическими, демографическими, политическими и технологическими изменениями, которые по-новому определили роль и функции махалли в обществе. Одним из ключевых аспектов трансформации махалли является ее институционализация в системе государственного управления. В прошлом махалля была неформальным объединением, где старейшины играли решающую роль в поддержании порядка, разрешении конфликтов и оказании социальной поддержки. Однако после обретения Узбекистаном независимости махалля стала официально признанной административной единицей, ответственной за местное самоуправление, распределение социальной помощи и укрепление сплоченности общины. Этот процесс укрепил их роль в качестве связующего звена между государством и населением, что позволило более эффективно осуществлять государственную политику на местном уровне. Махалли расширили свои механизмы социальной поддержки, особенно для уязвимых групп, таких как семьи с низким доходом, пожилые люди и другие группы риска.

**Ключевые слова:** махалля, община, социальный институт, трансформация, традиции, управление, социальная сплоченность, цифровизация, социальная поддержка.

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