



GELON VILLAGE: A LIVING HERITAGE PRESERVED THROUGH CENTURIES IN THE MOUNTAINS OF UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract: This study examines the geographical, environmental, cultural, and socio-economic characteristics of Gilon Village, located in the Shahrisabz district of the Kashkadarya region of Uzbekistan. The research highlights the village's unique mountainous location, rich biodiversity, traditional lifestyle, and growing importance as a destination for sustainable tourism. Particular attention is given to the interaction between natural resources and human activities, which has shaped the development of the local community over centuries. The study also explores the role of cultural heritage, traditional economic practices, and environmental conservation in supporting rural development. The findings indicate that Gilon Village possesses significant potential for ecological and cultural tourism while maintaining its historical and environmental integrity. Furthermore, the village serves as an important case study for understanding sustainable development in mountainous rural areas of Central Asia. The research contributes to the broader discussion of regional development, heritage preservation, and environmental management in Uzbekistan.

Keywords: Gilon Village, Kashkadarya Region, Shahrisabz District, rural development, sustainable tourism.

Introduction

Gilon Village is one of the most remarkable mountainous settlements in Uzbekistan, located in the Shahrisabz district of the Kashkadarya region. Owing to its unique geographical location, rich natural resources, and well-preserved cultural heritage, the village occupies a significant place in studies related to geography, ecology, tourism, and rural development. Surrounded by the majestic Hissar Mountains, Gilon represents an outstanding example of the interaction between humans and the natural environment in a highland region.

The geographical setting of Gilon has greatly influenced its economic activities, lifestyle, and cultural traditions. The village is characterized by a



mountainous landscape, a favorable climate, clean water resources, and diverse flora and fauna. These natural conditions have contributed to the development of agriculture, livestock breeding, and horticulture, which remain the primary sources of livelihood for the local population. Furthermore, the ecological purity of the area has enhanced its value as a destination for nature-based and sustainable tourism.

Main Body

From a historical and cultural perspective, Gilon Village reflects the rich traditions and customs of the Uzbek people. Over centuries, the local community has preserved its unique way of life, traditional architecture, folklore, and social values. The continuity of these cultural practices provides valuable insights into the historical development of rural societies in mountainous regions of Central Asia.

In recent years, Gilon has attracted increasing attention from researchers and tourists due to its exceptional natural beauty and tourism potential. The combination of scenic landscapes, cultural authenticity, and environmental sustainability makes the village an important subject for academic investigation. Studies of Gilon can contribute to a deeper understanding of rural development, cultural preservation, environmental management, and sustainable tourism in Uzbekistan.

Therefore, Gilon Village serves not only as a significant geographical and cultural landmark but also as a valuable case study for interdisciplinary research. Its natural, historical, and socio-economic characteristics highlight its importance in promoting regional development and preserving the cultural and environmental heritage of Uzbekistan.

Gelon (G'elon or G'ilon) is a picturesque high-mountain village located in the Shahrisabz District of Uzbekistan. It is considered one of the highest and most isolated settlements in the country, famous for its spectacular mountain scenery, ancient traditions, and unique cultural heritage.

Location and Geography

Gelon lies on the western slopes of the Pamir-Alay mountain system in the Qashqadaryo Region, near the border with Tajikistan. The village is approximately **80 km east of Shahrisabz** and sits at an elevation of around **2,600 meters (8,530 feet)** above sea level. The surrounding mountains rise to over **4,000 meters**, creating dramatic landscapes and a cool mountain environment.

Key Geographic Features

- High-altitude mountain settlement
- Surrounded by peaks exceeding 4,000 meters
- Located in the Hissar (Hisor) mountain range



- Accessible through winding mountain roads
- Near the Hisorak Reservoir and Hazrati Sultan mountain area

History

Gelon was founded in **1305**, making it more than 700 years old. The village has preserved many traditional customs, architectural styles, and ways of life that have disappeared elsewhere. Because of its location in a sensitive border zone, foreign visitors were generally not allowed to enter the area until around 2018.

The village also has historical significance as a place associated with warriors who defended Islam in Central Asia. During World War II, many residents served on the front lines.

Population and Culture

According to recent statistics, Gelon has a population of about **5,800 people**. The majority of residents are ethnic Tajiks, and the local population continues to maintain traditional customs, language, and cultural practices.

Cultural Characteristics

- Strong preservation of traditional mountain lifestyle
- Predominantly Tajik-speaking community
- Rich folklore and local customs
- Traditional handicrafts and wood carving
- Hospitality and community-based living traditions

Climate

The climate is generally **continental and mountainous**:

- Cool summers
- Cold, snowy winters
- Dry air and clean mountain environment
- Significant temperature differences between seasons

Conclusion

In conclusion, Gilon Village represents a unique combination of natural beauty, cultural heritage, and socio-economic significance within the mountainous regions of Uzbekistan. Its favorable geographical location, rich biodiversity, and well-preserved traditions make it an important subject for academic research and regional development studies.

The analysis of Gilon demonstrates how natural and human factors have interacted over time to shape a sustainable rural community. The village's traditional economic activities, cultural values, and environmental resources continue to play a crucial role in maintaining the well-being of its population while preserving its historical identity. Furthermore, the growing interest in eco-tourism and cultural tourism highlights the village's potential to contribute



to the broader development of the Kashkadarya region and Uzbekistan as a whole.

From a scientific perspective, Gilon Village serves as an excellent example of the relationship between geographical conditions, cultural continuity, and rural development. The preservation of its natural landscapes and traditional way of life provides valuable opportunities for future research in the fields of geography, ecology, anthropology, tourism, and sustainable development.

Therefore, protecting and promoting the natural and cultural assets of Gilon is essential not only for local communities but also for the preservation of Uzbekistan's national heritage. Continued research and sustainable development initiatives can further enhance the village's role as a model of harmonious coexistence between people, culture, and nature.

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